

DEPARTMENT FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND EVANGELISATION



CALLED TO BE *a people of*

**HOPE**



# Pastoral Councils

## IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

*This booklet  
is a guide to  
implementing our  
pastoral guidelines  
'Called to be a  
People of Hope'*



[cliftondiocese.com](http://cliftondiocese.com)

## DIOCESAN PRAYER

“GOD OUR FATHER  
*open the horizons  
of our minds and hearts  
so that we can see  
what hope your call holds for us.*

*Pour out the overflowing gifts  
of your Spirit  
so that we, your Church,  
may become a people  
of hope for our world.*

*We ask you this,  
through Jesus Christ Our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God for ever and ever.*

OUR LADY  
*Woman of Hope, pray for us*

ST PETER  
*Rock of Hope, pray for us*

ST PAUL  
*Apostle of Hope, pray for us”*

FRONT COVER: The picture, by Richard Jeffrey-Gray,  
is of the Baptismal Font at Clifton Cathedral.  
THE INSCRIPTION READS: Once you were no people  
but now you are God's people (1 Peter 2:10)

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## INTRODUCTION

Very quickly documents have a tendency to find a convenient niche on the bookshelf and before long they are gathering dust. Following all the effort and reflection that went into Called to be a People of Hope, it would be sad to let this happen.

The consultation process was entered into with much interest and the presentations around the diocese were celebrated with enthusiasm. This booklet is intended to build on all we have achieved so far and to present some simple ideas of how the guidelines may be implemented.

It should be remembered that these are only suggestions. If your parish has made its own start then that should continue. Nor should these recommendations replace or derail any initiatives that are already happening. The guidelines do not encompass everything within parish life and the work of organisations such as the Catholic Women's League, the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Union of Catholic Mothers and Newman Society are understood to be the foundations upon which further growth can be achieved. It is acknowledged that there exist many other organisations which form part of parish life, which have to be incorporated at local level.

So this implementation guide attempts to provide a simple approach which might help you to develop your own way of implementing 'Called to be a People of Hope'. The deanery pastoral council might consider ways of working together in some areas and neighbouring parishes might find it wise to pool resources.

+ Declan

RIGHT REVEREND DECLAN LANG  
BISHOP OF CLIFTON

ANN FOWLER  
FATHER MICHAEL MCANDREW  
CANON BERNARD MASSEY

Called to be a People of Hope Steering Group



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With thanks  
to the Diocesan  
Pastoral Council,  
the the parishes  
of Corpus Christi,  
Weston-super-Mare;  
St Joseph's, Portishead  
and the Salisbury  
parishes for their help  
in the preparation of  
this booklet.

## A REMINDER HOW WE HAVE ARRIVED HERE

The publication of the diocesan guidelines, *'Called to be a People of Hope'*,<sup>1</sup> is part of the process of diocesan planning which began in 2006. The guidelines are not intended to be the conclusion of the process but the starting point for further action. They present a common vision.

In January 2007 all parishes, schools and communities of our diocese were asked to look at all they do and to reflect on the following question:

***“Is what we do deepening prayer, enabling communion, and strengthening mission?”***

To help us engage with this question, *'Seeking the Face of Christ'* was published. It consisted of a series of reflections on what it means to be Catholic today.

A series of study days, led by Bishop Declan, were held around the diocese. Almost all parishes and most schools were involved in the process. At the beginning of 2008 draft guidelines were issued and the same process of study days and parish reflection was followed.

*'Called to be a People of Hope'* gathers together all the responses that have been received in the past two years. Responses are presented together in answer to the Bishop's initial question and so are presented under the headings of Prayer, Communion and Mission. To underline our Catholic heritage, we have drawn from the lives of saints who best exemplify these characteristics:

**MARY** the woman of hope, who teaches us to nourish our lives at the living spring of God's Word.

**PETER** the rock of hope, who keeps us in communion of mind and heart with the universal Church for it is within the community of believers that hope takes root.

**PAUL** the apostle of hope, who reminds us that the essence of our Christian life is to share in the mission of Christ and to be witnesses to our faith.

These saints have particular significance for us as they are all patrons of our diocese.

*'Called to be a People of Hope'* is parish-centred. The guidelines set out priorities in a simple way. It is clear that much is already happening in parishes. *'Called to be a People of Hope'* gives us impetus for renewal and growth.

Our guidelines are a resource for the next five years. They are the starting point for our pastoral activities for the foreseeable future.

<sup>1</sup> *'Called to be a People of Hope'* is available from [cliftondiocese.com](http://cliftondiocese.com) and our Department for Adult Education and Evangelisation, Alexander House, 160 Pennywell Road, Bristol BS5 0TX 0117 902 5595

## HOW TO IMPLEMENT CALLED TO BE A PEOPLE OF HOPE

This guide is to be used with *'Called to be a People of Hope'*. It is a spring board to engage with our pastoral guidelines. There are fourteen areas in *'Called to be a People of Hope'* and it might be a little daunting if parishes felt that we have to tackle all fourteen areas at once.

It is envisaged that every parish will have a pastoral council which will be an instrument of implementation. The vision that Bishop Declan has given us becomes a reality when the whole parish, from the youngest to the oldest, from the most active to those who are housebound, are involved in the life of our Church.

The success of *'Called to be a People of Hope'* depends upon the collaboration which effective pastoral councils bring about. Guidance and resources to help you set up a pastoral council will be found at the end of this booklet.

The following resources are also being prepared:

**Called to be a People of Hope Implementation Guide to Schools**

Autumn 2009

**Handbook for Priests**

Summer 2009

**Catechists certificate course**

begins Autumn 2009

**Guide to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults**

Summer 2009



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## PLANNING AHEAD

In his introduction to 'Called to be a People of Hope' Bishop Declan said:

*“The guidelines are intended to provide principles which give direction to our actions. They cannot provide detailed plans as the needs of our parishes and schools vary, but together we can have a sense of common purpose.”*

To plan ahead we need to remind ourselves of the fourteen areas which are addressed in 'Called to be a People of Hope':

- Prayer
- Liturgical prayer
- Collaborative ministry
- Adult education and formation
- Ecumenism
- Vocation
- Youth
- Family Life
- Catholic schools
- Acting justly
- A people of welcome
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
- Environment
- Interfaith dialogue

To explore all the areas over the next five years, a realistic approach might be to look at three areas each year. You could consider:

- 1 **Something that is already well developed in your parish.**
- 2 **Something you are not engaged with at all.**
- 3 **Something that has begun and could be improved.**

## 1 SOMETHING THAT IS ALREADY WELL DEVELOPED IN YOUR PARISH

Maybe your parish is very engaged in supporting the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and other parish projects. Therefore, you may feel that the area Acting Justly is already well developed in your parish community. To further grow in this area, look at page 27 of 'Called to be a People of Hope'. Each area is divided into four parts:

- **Guiding principle:** the vision for each parish
- **Pastoral guidelines:** how the guiding principle will enrich the life of the parish
- **Parish action:** how the guideline can be implemented. The highlighted bullet point is the action that could have the most impact on parish life
- **Diocesan and other resources:** further information

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The guiding principle underpins what you do in each particular area.

*“This is what the Lord asks of you, only this: that you act justly, that you love tenderly and walk humbly with your God.”<sup>2</sup>*

### PASTORAL GUIDELINES

The pastoral guidelines are: *Every parish needs to be aware of its responsibilities to the wider world. Jesus' fundamental option for the poor is not an optional extra but is essential to who we are as a people.*

Before you turn to the action points you could ask yourselves: *How could these guiding principles be more widely shared with the parish community? How could they be incorporated into our Sunday liturgy?*

### PARISH ACTION

- **Look at the parish action points and decide which ones you can achieve.**

### RESOURCES

Are there resources listed on page 27 of 'Called to be a People of Hope', which would be of use to you and which you are not currently using?

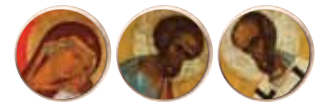


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<sup>2</sup> Micah 6:8



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## 2 SOMETHING THAT YOU ARE NOT ENGAGED WITH AT ALL

Most of us are aware of environmental issues as individuals. The question is: What can we do as a parish?

If you have identified the environment as something which the parish has not begun to address at all, then turn to page 30 of 'Called to be a People of Hope'.

As with all areas we divide them into four parts:

- **Guiding principle:** the vision for each parish
- **Pastoral guidelines:** how the guiding principle will enrich the life of the parish
- **Parish action:** how the guideline can be implemented. The highlighted bullet point is the action that could have the most impact on parish life
- **Diocesan and other resources:** further information

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The guiding principle underpins what you do in each particular area.

*“Humanity, if it truly desires peace, must be increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology, or respect for nature, and human ecology. Experience shows that disregard for the environment always harms human co-existence, and vice versa. It becomes more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men. Both of these presuppose peace with God.”<sup>3</sup>*

### PASTORAL GUIDELINE

The pastoral guidelines are: *We need to rediscover a sense of wonder and awe about the whole of creation. We are called by God to be stewards of creation, where this is understood in terms of service and nurturing rather than domination and exploitation.*

Before you turn to the action points you could ask yourselves: *How could these guiding principles be more widely shared with the parish community? How could they be incorporated into our Sunday liturgy?*

#### PARISH ACTION

- **Look at the parish action points and decide which ones you can achieve.**

### RESOURCES

Are there resources listed on page 30 of 'Called to be a People of Hope', which would be of use to you and which you are not currently using?

<sup>3</sup> Pope Benedict XVI: Message for World Peace Day 2007

## 3 SOMETHING THAT HAS BEGUN AND COULD BE IMPROVED

All of our parishes are involved in preparing and receiving adults into the Church. If you have identified The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is as an area you could improve, turn to page 29 of 'Called to be a People of Hope'.

As with all areas we divide them into four parts:

- **Guiding principle:** the vision for each parish
- **Pastoral guidelines:** how the guiding principle will enrich the life of the parish
- **Parish action:** how the guideline can be implemented. The highlighted bullet point is the action that could have the most impact on parish life
- **Diocesan and other resources:** further information

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The guiding principle underpins what you do in each particular area.

*“The RCIA is the way in which we welcome and share with others our faith and way of life as Catholics. The RCIA is not a programme but the process by which we engage with others who seek the face of Christ. It involves the whole parish and is the responsibility of all the Baptised.”<sup>4</sup>*

### PASTORAL GUIDELINE

The pastoral guidelines are: *Parishes are called to help people grow in confidence and knowledge in sharing their faith with others especially those who seek to join the Church. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is in this section because its primary focus is those who do not know Christ and are yet to be baptised. The RCIA can be sensitively adapted for those who have already been baptised and who seek full communion with the Church. The distinction between the baptised and those not baptised should always be clear.*

Before you turn to the action points you could ask yourselves: *How could these guiding principles be more widely shared with the whole parish community? How can you more widely share the guiding principle during the bidding prayers and in the parish newsletter?*

#### PARISH ACTION

- **Look at the parish action points and decide which ones you can achieve.**

### RESOURCES

Are there resources listed on page 29 of 'Called to be a People of Hope', which would be of use to you and which you are not currently using?

<sup>4</sup> 'Diocesan Guide to The Rite of Christian Initiation': Introduction Bishop Declan Lang

## PASTORAL COUNCILS

'Called to be a People of Hope' is based on the principle that every parish and deanery has an effective pastoral council.

In the past forty years pastoral councils have been a feature of parish, deanery and diocesan life. In 2003, at the Chrism Mass, Bishop Declan preached about the need to renew the place of pastoral councils in our diocese. He said:

*“There is a need for a place, a forum in which effective mission can be worked out - a means by which vision is translated into action. The action must be owned by all and not imposed by one group upon another. That is where parish, deanery and the diocesan pastoral councils come into play. These councils can work out the direction in which we need to go at a level that is appropriate for each community.”*

As we can see from Bishop Declan's words, parish councils are to be concerned with the mission of the Church. So, although parishes use different terminology such as parish teams, parish councils, pastoral councils, and others, the assumption is that these groups seek to be a place where, as Bishop Declan said: 'vision is translated into action'. This means the work of parish finance and property committees is best dealt with separately from the parish council.

Each parish will find its own way of gathering people to serve on the pastoral council according to local pastoral needs. However, experience demonstrates that parish councils are most successful when selection is made in as open a way as possible, and also when as many parishioners as possible are engaged in the process.

## PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS

These are questions which are frequently asked:

### *Why have a pastoral council?*

A pastoral council is a means of facilitating collaborative ways of working in a parish. The aim is to further the work of the Church by leading parishioners to respond actively to their baptismal call to mission.

### *What is a pastoral council?*

A pastoral council consists of the parish clergy together with a group of parishioners from the community. They share responsibility for building a vital Christian community focused on living and promoting God's values of love, justice and peace.

### *How does a pastoral council operate?*

They work closely in partnership to identify the pastoral needs of the parish and the community they serve, and to enable those needs to be met.

### *Should a pastoral council have a constitution?*

Although formal constitutions are best avoided, some time needs to be given to working out a consensus of how the group will work together. Initially this will help the group to pray together and to listen to each other. Begin with prayer, and spend time in prayer, ten or fifteen minutes given to pondering the Scriptures will bear much fruit.

### *What are the tasks of the pastoral council?*

The primary task is to ask themselves how members will listen to God and to each other to focus on the needs of the parish which they serve. The group should be a listening group able to articulate its vision and to involve the wider parish community in decisions.

An agreement will need to be made about how much time should be given to prayer and what form it should take. How will the group continue to listen to the concerns of the wider parish community?

The group will decide who will chair the meeting, draw up an agenda and keep and publish minutes.



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## HOW DOES THE PASTORAL COUNCIL FULFIL ITS PURPOSE?

The Second Vatican Council's Decree on Bishops said that pastoral councils have a three-fold purpose:

*//to investigate and consider matters relating to Pastoral activity and to formulate practical conclusions concerning them//*<sup>4</sup>

The decree suggests a threefold way of working for pastoral councils:

- That it **investigate** the pastoral activity of the parish,
- That it **consider** what this means and
- That practical conclusions should be **formulated** to help the parish move forward.

The way in which a council works is simple. It is called to:

- 1 **Have a sense of where the parish is in a particular area**
- 2 **Look at ways in which it needs to grow and develop**
- 3 **Propose practical ways of achieving this**

'Called to be a People of Hope' guides the shape and purpose of our pastoral councils. Pastoral councils are called to look at, and apply the threefold approach to the fourteen areas set out in 'Called to be a People of Hope' and decide in which order to address them.

<sup>4</sup> Decree on Bishops para 27

## MODEL GUIDELINES FOR A PASTORAL COUNCIL

A parish pastoral council is a representative group of parishioners working in partnership with the clergy to carry out Christ's mission, the mission of the Church, in this time and place.

- A parish pastoral council is founded on the recognition that we work together as equals.

*//We are all ministers of God sharing, through our anointing at Baptism and Confirmation, in the royal priesthood of Christ.//*<sup>5</sup>

We work collaboratively, founded on the understanding that lay people and clergy need one another.

*//Without one another we are incomplete. Our relationship with one another is not about power or control but about service that enables effective mission.//*<sup>6</sup>

- The council is pastoral, that is, sharing in the ministry of the Good Shepherd. To be a part of the pastoral council is to have a sense of mission, of being sent by God the Father to serve this community by:
  - Articulating a vision for the parish
  - Building a welcoming Christian community
  - Enabling the community to discern its mission
  - Encouraging and deepening the faith of all
  - Enabling all the baptised to be aware of their active responsibility for the mission of the Church
- For this form of collaborative ministry to be sustained and developed there are certain requirements:
  - The building of a relationship of trust and respect between members
  - A commitment to pray together
  - An understanding of various forms of decision making
  - An acceptance of co-responsibility
- The parish pastoral council should be a group that prays together, listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd and developing the practice of constantly listening to the Scriptures to help understand its mission.
- It is recognised that parish finances are the work of the parish finance committee (Canon 537) and not the responsibility of the pastoral council.
- Rather than working with a specific constitution, the group prepares a vision statement, way of working, and practical procedures as a part of the formation process.

It represents the parish community. The council has collective responsibility and each member should avoid lobbying for a particular interest group. Twelve members is an appropriate number.



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<sup>5, 6</sup> Bishop Declan  
Chrism Mass  
Homily 2003.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS  
COMMISSIONING RITE

This is a suggested Rite of Commissioning which could take place at Sunday Mass after the homily.

**Priest:**

I invite those who have been chosen to serve our community as members of the parish pastoral council to come forward.

Members of the parish pastoral council come to the sanctuary, the congregation remains seated.

**Priest:**

Each of you has been called from this parish community to serve as a member of the parish pastoral council. Do you accept this ministry on behalf of our parish?

**Parish Pastoral Council members:**

*We do*

**Priest:**

Do you promise to strive to follow Christ faithfully so that you will better be able to serve his people?

**Parish Pastoral Council members:**

*We do*

**Priest:**

I now invite you to make together the promise of commitment.

**Parish Pastoral Council members:**

*We are grateful for the trust that has been placed in us and accept this ministry within our parish of ...*

*We will try to serve with love and commitment.*

*As we pray and work we will strive to be conscious of the needs of all our parishioners, and of the wider community of which we are part, following the example of Christ who came among us as one who serves.*

*We ask the prayers of all as we undertake this ministry.*

**Priest:**

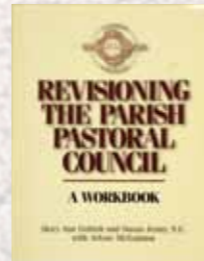
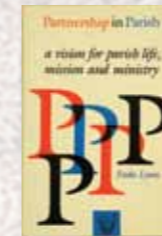
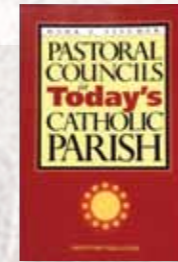
May God bless and sustain you in the role you have taken on for this Parish community. May you be a beacon of light in the life of the Church.

The priest now asks the congregation to stand and to promise their support for the parish pastoral council.

**Congregation:**

*We promise our prayer and support for our Pastoral Council, that they may be inspired by the Holy Spirit in the work of pastoring and guiding our parish of ...*

The parish pastoral council members remain standing for the profession of faith and the prayers of the faithful.



BOOK AND RESOURCES

**Parish Project**

by John O'Shea, Declan Lang, Vicky Costick, Damien Lundy  
published by Harper Collins  
ISBN 0 00 599317 2

**The Sign We Give**

by Bishops' Conference of England and Wales  
published by Matthew James  
ISBN 1 898366 14 4

**Pastoral Councils in Today's Catholic Parish**

by Mark F Fischer  
published by Twenty Third Publications  
ISBN 1 58595 168 4

**Parish Pastoral Councils: a Handbook**

by William Dalton  
published by Columba  
ISBN 1 85607 009 3

**Partnership in Parish**

by Enda Lyons  
published by Columba  
ISBN 0 948183 36 5

**Developing a Vibrant Parish Pastoral Council**

edited by Arthur X Deegan II  
published by Paulist Press  
ISBN 0 8091 3556 6

**The Parish as Covenant**

by Thomas P Sweetser  
published by Sheed & Ward  
ISBN 1 58051 110 4

**Prayer Services for Parish Councils**

by Robert D Eimer and Sarah A O'Malley  
published by Liturgical Press  
ISBN 0 8146 2304 2

**Parish Leadership Groups**

by Oonagh O'Brien and Julie Kavanagh  
published by Columbia Press  
ISBN 1 85607 317 3

**A Concise Guide to Pastoral Planning**

by William L Pickett  
published by Ave Maria  
ISBN 978 1 59471 135 0

**The Dilemma of Priestless Sundays**

by James Dallen  
published by Liturgy Training Publications  
ISBN 978 1 56854 042 9

**Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry**

by Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano  
published by Ave Maria  
ISBN 0 87793 683 8

**Revisioning the Parish Pastoral Council**

by Mary Ann Gubish, Susan Jenny and Arlene McGannon  
published by Paulist Press  
ISBN 0 8091 3957 X

**Parish Renewal**

by Donal Harrington  
published by Columba  
ISBN 1 85607 192 8

**A Handbook for Parish Pastoral Councils**

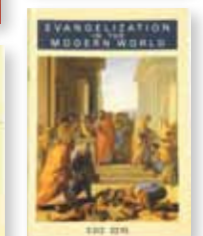
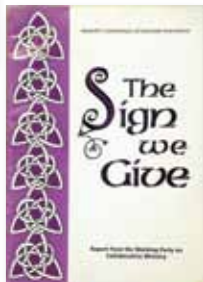
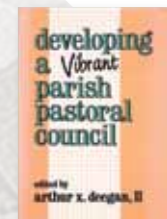
by Jane Ferguson  
published by Columba  
ISBN 1 85607 474 9

**Evangelii Nuntiandi: Evangelisation in the Modern World**

by Pope Paul VI  
published by Catholic Truth Society  
ISBN 0 85183 158 3



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## PRAYER OF ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMERO

It helps now and then to step back  
and take the long view:  
the kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,  
it is even beyond our vision.



We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction  
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.  
Nothing we do is complete,  
which is another way of saying  
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.  
No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection,  
no pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No programme accomplishes the Church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.  
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted,  
knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects  
far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything,  
and there is a sense of liberation in realising that.  
This enables us to do something,  
and to do it well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,  
a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter  
and to do the rest.

We may never see the end results,  
but that is the difference between  
the master builder and the worker.

We are the workers, not the master builders,  
ministers, not messiahs.

We are the prophets of a future not our own.  
Amen //