

Called to Bear Fruit

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF
THE ARCHDIOCESE



ARCHDIOCESE *of*
SOUTHWARK

Growing communities
that *evangelise*, form
disciples, and inspire
witness.

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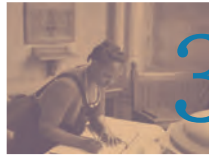
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About



In 2023, Archbishop John Wilson launched “Called to Bear Fruit”, a process of renewal, which seeks to ensure that all parishes in the Archdiocese of Southwark are equipped with the **vision, leadership, resources** and **infrastructure** needed to enable them to become growing communities that *evangelise, form disciples, and inspire witness*.

In this booklet we seek to achieve two things. First of all, we want to share with you our **current situation**. Secondly, it’s your chance to **help us** understand how to support our parishes to become effective communities of missionary disciples.

So, the question is: **how do we grow as communities of missionary disciples?**



Called to Bear Fruit



“The priority, above all, is how we renew ourselves to move forward in **evangelising service of the Kingdom**. This will mean some pruning for mission, as I have phrased it, but it is not something either to fear or feel threatened by. *I did not become your Archbishop to manage decline*. I became your shepherd because I want the Church in our Archdiocese to flourish. *I want all of us to be renewed in the power of the Holy Spirit* so that we can witness, in word and action, that the Lord Jesus reveals the Father’s love for every person. **Our first priority is, and always will be, to call people to life in Christ** through his Church”.

Archbishop John Wilson



God is at work in our Archdiocese

There are many signs of life and hope in our Church and we want you to be part of that renewal.

Adult Baptisms

Across the Archdiocese people are meeting Jesus Christ for the first time and finding a home in his Church. In 2024, **450** adults were baptised or received into full communion with the Catholic Church at Easter, a **164% increase** from the year before and the highest figure since 2015.

Caritas

We have now launched Caritas Southwark, the social action agency of the Archdiocese, sharing what is happening to serve the needs of the poor at local level and inspiring more parishes to coordinate their witness of charity.

Some Definite Service

Thanks to the work of Some Definite Service, the Archdiocesan-wide approach for parish growth in Evangelisation, Catechesis, and Formation, we now have **27** deanery mentors and **177** parish leads helping parishes formulate plans for evangelisation, catechesis, and discipleship. The Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis continue to help missionary parishes form missionary disciples.

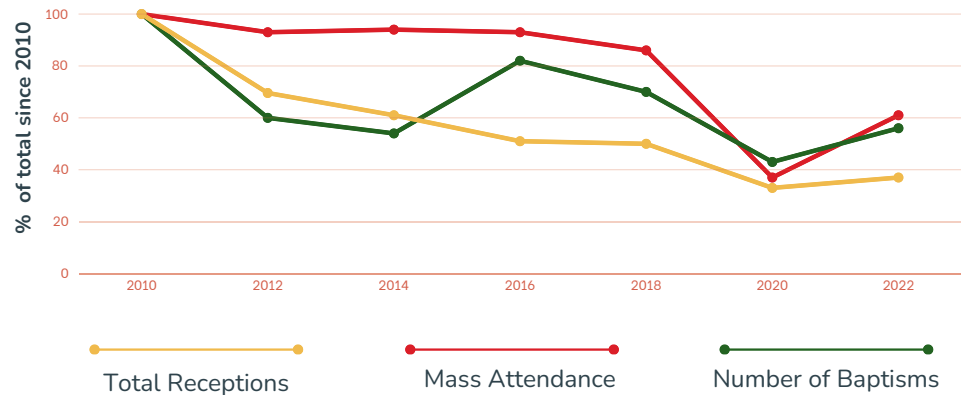
Schools and young people

Our schools are being reorganised into academies and we are developing new and effective approaches to youth and young adult ministry through the Southwark Catholic Youth Service.



The challenges we face

Since the year
2010



Mission

Many parishes are spending most of their resources simply maintaining the parish buildings with little money available to spend on mission.

69% of parishes have had two or fewer Receptions into the Church on average in the last 20 years.

The average number of baptisms has fallen by 49% since 2000, from 7,126 to 3,613.

Priests

41% of our priests will have reached retirement age (75) by the end of 2025.

Financially

69% of our parishes are financially challenged or seriously concerning. In 2024, it cost the Archdiocese £250,000 to make up the shortfall in Christmas and Easter offerings. Very few of our parishes are able to afford the staff they need.

The purpose of a parish



*The Church
'exists to evangelise'.*

Pope St Paul VI

Parishes exist...

- To evangelise.
- To sanctify God's people by forming disciples with Word and Sacrament.
- To give a witness of charity; embracing those in need and being the face of Christ.

Your opportunity

You now have the opportunity to help shape the future of our Archdiocese by telling us:

- **what** your parish **needs** to evangelise, form disciples, and inspire witness
- **how** we can **grow** as communities of missionary disciples.

How

It's easy. **Form a small group** and **respond to the questions** set out in this booklet.

You can choose to meet over several hours, days, or weeks to talk about each of the six themes.

Let us have your responses by **6th April**.

See page 34 for details on submitting your responses.

This is not led by your parish priest. We need **your** voice to help shape our Archdiocese.



Group Meetings



Meetings may take place on parish premises, in people's homes, or online. The desire is to consult as many people as possible.



Each small group should be composed of not less than four and not more than seven people. Each small group will need a **facilitator** to lead the discussion and to feedback to the Called to Bear Fruit team.



Anyone can form a small group. They do not have to be convened by or registered with the parish although we recommend that you let your parish priest know if you are forming a group.

Format

01. Invite the Holy Spirit

Each meeting will begin with an invocation of the Holy Spirit and personal prayer.

02. Input on the Purpose of a Parish

A short input on the purpose of a parish will be read from this booklet, which will prompt the group's reflection and questions.

03. Conversation in the Spirit

A guided time of discussion and listening will encourage the group to consider where their parish is currently heading and where they want to be heading. Thinking beyond the parish, consider how neighbouring parishes might help one another be more effective in their mission.

04. Conclusion & Post-Meeting

The meeting concludes with the date of the next meeting and any notices followed by the Archdiocesan Prayer (page 35). After the meeting, the facilitator sends the group's feedback to the Called to Bear Fruit team (instructions on page 34).

Example Group Gathering

19:00*

Gather and welcome.
Each person may wish to bring a drink/some food for sharing.

19:05

Begin with prayer. Take some time to be still and listen to God.
All invoke the Holy Spirit, praying out loud, "Come, Holy Spirit".
Each person may share their own prayer requests.

19:10

Someone reads the input on the theme for that month.
These are provided in the following pages.

19:15

Discuss the questions for reflection provided in this booklet. Follow the guided format provided on the next page, for 'Conversations in the Spirit'.
There are 3 questions per theme.
Someone should take notes of the conclusions reached by the group.

20:00

Date for the next meeting is shared.
All pray the Archdiocesan Prayer, found on page 35.
The facilitator will then send the notes on behalf of the group to the Called to Bear Fruit team.
Instructions for sending in your notes are found on page 34.

You will need:



A facilitator



Leader for Lectio Divina



Someone to read the input



Note-taker



Conversations in the Spirit

1

Think

Spend 5 minutes thinking about the questions offered for each theme. What is your personal response to these questions?

2

Speak

Each person has 4 minutes to speak in response. Everyone listens and does not respond. The note-taker writes down what is being said.

3

Reflect


Spend 1 minute in silence, praying and reflecting on what has been said.

4

Respond

Each person has 2 minutes to offer their response to what has been heard. Again, the note-taker writes what is being said.





And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:44-47





Theme 2

Proclaiming the Word

Notes

Scripture

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

Input

Pope St John Paul II

I wish to invite the Church to renew her missionary commitment. [...] Missionary activity renews the Church, revitalises faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!

What moves me even more strongly to proclaim the urgency of missionary evangelisation is the fact that it is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world.

Redemptoris Missio, 2

Theme 2



Proclaiming the Word

Notes

Questions

1. How missionary is our parish? What is the evidence for our answer?

Think: What do we do to reach new people? How often is evangelisation spoken about in our parish? How do we welcome new people and families?

2. What does our parish do to reach new people?


Think: Do we use a tool like Alpha or Sycamore? How do we welcome others into our church?

3. Are there local parishes which we could team up with to reach new people? Which ones?

Think: What resources could be shared (print/digital resources, space, and/or volunteers)?



Inspirational Notre Dame Woman?
You be faithful to the charism of St. Julie?



Every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the “way of beauty” (*via pulchritudinis*).

Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties.

Pope Francis





Theme 4

Living Discipleship: Prayer and Community Life

Notes

Scripture

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me'. In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Input

Pope Francis

Evangelisation with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelises and is herself evangelised through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelisation and the source of her renewed self-giving.

Evangelii Gaudium 24

Theme 4

Living Discipleship: Prayer and Community Life

Notes

Questions

1. Pope John Paul II described parishes as ‘schools of prayer’. How are people taught to pray in our parish?

Think: Courses, signposting to other resources, prayer ministry...


2. Is regular Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament available in our area? Where? How available is the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Think: Are working professionals able to make the times offered? Are the times readily available?

3. Imagine visiting our parish for the first time. What would the experience of Sunday Mass be like for you?

Think: Welcome, music, follow-along books/sheets, invitations to further involvement.





No act of devotion on the part of the faithful gives God more pleasure than that which is lavished on his poor. Where he finds charity with its loving concern, there he recognizes the reflection of his own fatherly care. In these acts of giving do not fear a lack of means.

A generous spirit is itself great wealth. There can be no shortage of material for generosity where it is Christ who feeds and Christ who is fed. In all this activity there is present the hand of him who multiplies the bread by breaking it, and increasing it by giving it away.

Pope St Leo the Great







Submitting Responses

Only **ONE** response is required per group. The facilitator should arrange for the conclusions of the group to be submitted after each session on the six themes (i.e. six submissions). Please submit by the **6th April 2025**.

Online Form

Please scan the QR code on your mobile device, or type in to your browser the web address below:

<https://forms.office.com/e/xcCm3CeQxW>



Post

If you wish to submit a hard-copy of your group's responses, please send your notes to: Called to Bear Fruit, St Elizabeth of Portugal, The Vineyard, TW10 6AQ

Archdiocesan Prayer

God our Loving Father,
pour out on us afresh
the gifts of your Holy Spirit.
Open our ears to hear your Word,
open our eyes to see your presence,
open our minds to understand your Wisdom
and open our hearts to be more available
for your mission
so that strengthened by your grace
we can truly be a sign and instrument
of your presence in our world today.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



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