

Describing our Mission in Heavenfield

The Bishop has laid out a Pastoral Strategy for the next 10 years based on the Diocesan Vision we have discussed in recent years. Implementing this strategy will need every parish and partnership in the Diocese to reflect on their mission and to form a realistic, clear and honest appraisal of where we are and what we need to do. The Bishop has clearly stated that our priority is “Mission, Mission, Mission” and that “we must act now to strengthen our Mission, support Clergy and lay leadership, and steward our resources wisely so that now and for future generations we have a Church that is vibrant, sustainable and faithful.”¹

We will be provided with a template to help us discern and reflect locally on our local mission, community life, ministries and physical resources (including buildings). Following the Bishop’s Pastoral Letter this weekend in which he describes what he wishes us to do, we have this template which will ask us all to engage with a series of questions prompting us to clearly describe our mission here in West Northumberland.

As a Partnership, we are asked to complete the local phase of this discernment by 23rd April 2026 and it will then pass on to the Deanery for consideration and consolidation into the Diocesan wide plan. To do this we will need to involve every part of the community in all our parishes, and help them to understand and express their local mission, strengths and challenges and to do this honestly and with a view to the future.

The Bishop is very clear that the principle behind this discernment is Mission first, Structures second. That is, our first task is to look at Mission in all our communities, and then to consider the resources we need in place to fulfil that mission.

The template is structured in exactly this way. We are asked firstly to consider our Mission in terms of how we worship, how we teach the faith, how we serve, and how we build the family of faith. Then (and only then) we will look at how our resources serve the Mission. This will include finances, buildings, people, and sustainability.

Our task then will be to summarise in a single document for the Partnership the key issues:

- What is thriving and must be strengthened?
- What should be adjusted?
- What drains Mission and may need to be released?
- Where is the Holy Spirit prompting bold steps?

All of you are invited to take part in this discernment. We will provide many opportunities and ways for you to join us in building this mission together, and we ask your prayers that it might be fruitful path for us all.