MINUTES of a joint parishes meeting held on Sunday evening 15th May 2022 at St Charles church.

THE MEETING began with a prayer led by Fr Don, who then welcomed those . . .

PRESENT : Phil Anderson, Anne Black, Kath Holtom, Anne Urquhart, Madeleine Dyson, Annette Scullion, Margaret Blackburn, Angela Clayton, Damian Norton, Lynn Hockey, Sylvia Shaw, Nick Collins, Derek Handley and Rob Cranston.

Fr Don briefly summarised the need for the meeting:

1. Firstly, the Bishop has asked us to do so; this is one of the many gatherings looking at the future shape of parishes and deaneries throughout the diocese.

2. Secondly, this is a follow-up to the meeting in Matlock of the parishes of the Amber Valley and Peak deaneries six weeks ago. At this 'roadshow'-event the Bishop, the Vicars General, the Chief Operating Office and the Moderator for the Curia, gave an informative presentation– on the dearth of vocation and ordinations, and the need to reshape deaneries and parishes. Attenders were grouped in parishes, which were then asked to discuss the proposed new coalescence arrangements. That meeting was designed to cover two aspects of future developments proposed for the diocese – of deaneries (the Peak with Amber Valley) and parishes – in our area Glossopdale, (comprising the two Glossop parishes,) with Hadfield; and Marple Bridge/New Mills to embrace Immaculate Conception & St Margaret's. A response is needed ahead of the next Matlock meeting with the VG (later determined for Thursday 23rd June)

Two parishioners had submitted written notes ahead of the evening's meeting. The first note dwelt on the financial difficulties of parish mergers: how the money is sourced, accounted for, saved and spent. The second note dwelt on the deeper difficulties cause by an ageing clergy and laity.

Fr Don invited those gathered to voice their opinions on the merger proposals for our two parishes.

Amongst the comments raised:

- Shift the focus away from the priest, and allow the laity to take more responsibility.
- Relieve the burden of day-to-day admin presently borne by the parish priest. Under the proposals for Glossopdale would it be possible to employ an administrator?
- Whilst important to be concerned with heavier admin burdens in parishes, of greater importance is the parish's spiritual growth.
- The laity need to take control of parish initiatives for missionary outreach, rather than simply worry about who 'owned' a particular parish.
- The age-profile and number of the laity regularly.supporting our parishes is worrisome
- The difficulty in finding folk to take responsibility.
- One priest having responsibility for three parishes with all schools, churches and presbyteries would be too burdensome.
- The question of one priest saying too many Sunday Masses (vigil or actual) is acute.
- This issue might be resolved by rotating Masses, and parishes having lay- or deacon-led Sunday services by monthly rotation.

- Though there are many deacons ordained for parish support throughout the diocese, most of these are also ageing
- Having a single parish council and Finance &Fabric group across the three churches would, produce challenges but could be more effective and cost saving. How will this be restructured under the proposals?
- Historically the parish based at Immaculate Conception was founded and maintained by Hadfield, and later by Glossop St Mary's until it acquired independent parish status in the early '70s. It belongs to the Glossop area, not to New Mills/Marple Bridge.
- There is a history of good and supportive co-operation between the present 'Hadfield/Charlesworth' parishes. Immaculate Conception wanted to remain within Glossopdale.
- Marple Bridge parish should be amalgamated with the (Shrewsbury diocese) parish of Holy Spirit, Marple.
- It was noted that elsewhere in the diocese there were many overseas priests active in parishes.
- Furthermore many parishes elsewhere in the diocese were much more ethnically/racially more diverse than was the case in our area.
- These immigrants had swelled congregation numbers, reduced age-profile and revitalised parishes.
- ' Divine Renovation' was a worthy parish-regeneration system, but was a long-term initiative and depended on younger parishioners being prepared to adopt and support it.
- Importance of learning from the good practice of other parishes : St Mary's Glossop's parish mission and Sycamore Course was noted.
- It was important to welcome 'new faces' in our congregations, but not to frighten them off by asking them to take on responsibilities too quickly.
- Need to work closely with schools and encourage young people into the church.
- Reference was made to spirited and successful campaigns in a nearby diocese to moderate and even reverse diocesan proposals for parish-mergers, and even church-closures;
- If we want to effect change we can't merely put forward objections we need to provide alternatives to the proposals.

Fr Don drew the meeting to a close by asking the parishes to engage amongst themselves in further conversations, and to speak with one, positive voice. Parishioners should message Sylvia or him with contact details and statements of agreed opinion.

It was accepted that if there was to be a follow-up parish meeting, it should be held at Immaculate Conception church.

The meeting ended with a prayer after 1 hour 10 minutes.