

## **The Vision is for its appointed time II**

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### **Pastoral Areas:**

The sixty parishes of the diocese are grouped into nine pastoral Areas. The Pastoral Areas provide an opportunity for parishes to work together in such a way that individual parishes are supported in their efforts to ensure that they will continue to exist as vibrant communities of faith into the future. Even though our experience of such inter-parish co-operation in the diocese has been mission-centred rather than utilitarian or pragmatic there is an awareness that the declining numbers of available clergy and religious lend a sense of urgency to this development.

### **Pastoral Area Team:**

In each Pastoral Area there is a Pastoral Area Team which includes laity and clergy. This team is responsible for discerning and co-ordinating the gifts and strengths of the community in the service of communion and mission; it oversees pastoral activities and initiatives that take place on a Pastoral Area basis. This requires a strong ethos and strong support among the parishes of the cluster for active Parish Pastoral Councils, encouraging the provision of resources for adult religious education, formation of lay ministers etc, in conjunction with the Diocesan Pastoral Centre but also ensuring that the Area's own resources in these areas are identified and encouraged and tapped. The Pastoral Area Team seeks to encourage cooperation and meetings among the pastoral groups that are active in the parishes – liturgy groups, baptismal groups, prayer groups, bereavement groups etc. Some or all of these may be organised on the basis of the cluster or the Pastoral Area.

### **Pastoral Leaders:**

Within each Pastoral Area Team a leadership role<sup>1</sup> is exercised by a Pastoral Leader and in some instances an Assistant Pastoral Leader. The Pastoral Leaders support the Pastoral Area Team in fulfilling its role as outlined above; they act on behalf of the Bishop exercising responsibility for certain aspects of the pastoral life of the Area. The effectiveness of the Pastoral leadership role relies heavily on the co-operation of the clergy within the area. They regularly meet together as a group and meet also with the Bishop as they exercise their role. The Pastoral Leader seeks to ensure that the priests of the vicariate meet regularly; he shows concern for the well-being of the clergy within his area, encouraging social interaction and mutual support; and particularly supporting those who are ill. Schedules are organised within the Pastoral Area that allow adequate cover to enable priests to have a day off each week and their annual holidays, as well as ensuring that there is cover in the case of sickness or of other reasons which necessitate being away (including absences at short notice such as bereavement or family illness). This involves reviewing from time to time the Mass schedules.

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<sup>1</sup> The pastoral leader exercises his function with the canonical authority of a Vicar Forane.

The primary responsibility for encouraging ongoing formation among clergy and ensuring that clergy have adequate sabbatical, study, retreat and formation opportunities lies with the existing diocesan bodies (e.g. Ongoing Formation Committee, Pastoral Care of Clergy group); however, the Pastoral Leader has a role in linking clergy within the Area with these opportunities and working with the other priests around scheduling to ensure that it is possible for a priest to avail of such opportunities. Similarly, it remains the primary care of the Bishop of the Diocese to ensure the administration of the parish continues in the event of a priest being absent for a prolonged period because of illness or another cause and if he has not been able to make arrangements for the care of parish finances, registers, correspondence etc. The Pastoral Leader links with the appropriate diocesan authorities in this regard; similarly it is the responsibility of all the priests in the Area to work together to ensure that adequate cover can be provided in the event of a priest being absent. The diocese has people charged with the responsibility to ensure that churches and presbyteries are maintained in good condition and they liaise with the Pastoral leaders in fulfilling this role.

### **Practical Guidelines:**

#### **1. *Members***

- Members undertake to be representative of the whole community and focus on what is best for the whole Pastoral Area, not individual parishes or groups.
- Members shall be available to attend a minimum of four meetings in the space of one year, and on-going formation and training as organised for the team.

#### **2. *Pastoral Area Team membership***

- To ensure effective communication and decision making, each parish shall ensure that at least one of their representatives is a member of their Parish Pastoral Council.
- The Pastoral Area team may co-opt further members on an ad-hoc basis where relevant talents and experience are needed.

#### **3. *Term of Office***

- Members of the team are appointed for a three year term. No member shall serve more than six consecutive years on the team. While former members are very welcome to serve again, there should be a minimum gap of three years between memberships.
- It is the team's responsibility stagger the turnover of membership, so as to ensure continuity of service.
- A member, who has not been present at three consecutive meetings, without giving good reason, will be deemed to have resigned.

#### **4. *Officers***

The team shall have three officers: president, chairperson, and secretary. Members may serve a maximum of four years as either chairperson or secretary during their time with the pastoral area team.

- ***President***

The Pastoral Leader has been entrusted with the care of the Pastoral Area by the Bishop; he convokes the meetings and is the president of the team.

- ***Chairperson***

The chairperson is elected by the members of the team for a two year term with an option for renewal. The role of the chairperson is to prepare the agenda with the president and the secretary and to facilitate the meetings of the team. A vice chairperson may be appointed to assist the Chairperson.

- ***Secretary***

The secretary is responsible for keeping a record of the meetings of the team and for circulating, in advance of meetings, relevant material to the team members. In order to ensure continuity of service by officers, it is recommended that a secretary is initially elected for one year. Thereafter a secretary is to be elected for two year terms. This would mean only one officer in the team would change per year.

- ***Responsibilities of all members***

All member of the Pastoral Area team are required to:

- attend meetings of the team
- provide input to deliberations of the team
- make regular reports to the PPC of the work of the Pastoral Area Team
- assist with the implementation of agreed-upon policies in the Pastoral Area
- grow in knowledge and awareness of what is happening in the Pastoral Area.
- take part in the training & on-going formation of team members.

## **5. Meetings**

The team will meet a minimum of four times annually.

- ***Agenda***

The agenda for each meeting will be finalised by the secretary, chairperson and the president of the team one week in advance of the meeting. It shall be circulated to team members in advance of the meeting, together with any notes or other relevant material required. Minutes of the meeting will be circulated within two weeks of the meeting.

A period of time should be set on the agenda for prayer and reflection.

- ***Quorum***

Fifty percent of the membership, plus the Pastoral Leader, or his delegate, must be present, for a meeting to be considered to have reached a quorum

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## **Recommendations:**

- There would be regular meetings of the Pastoral Leaders with the Bishop of the Diocese.
- The role of the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the role of the Council of Priests needs to be clarified and separated to ensure that there is not an overlap of agendas which creates a 'parallel-lines' way of dealing with issues. Similarly, the role of the Clergy Area meetings needs to be clarified. Pastoral concerns should be addressed at the level of Pastoral Areas and the Diocesan Pastoral Council.
- Clergy Area meetings should meet on the basis of Pastoral Areas. The Council of Priests should be represented by each of the nine Pastoral Areas and of these nine members six should be drawn from the Pastoral leaders or Assistant Pastoral leaders.
- The Diocesan Pastoral Council should draw its representation from the nine Pastoral Areas; one lay person from each Pastoral Area and six clergy representatives drawn from the Pastoral leaders or Assistant Pastoral leaders

(two from the West, two from the South, two from the City).

**Proposed Schedule of Meetings:**

September: Meeting of Pastoral Leaders and Assistant Leaders.

Nine Pastoral Area Meetings.

Nine Clergy Area Meetings.

October: Council of Priests' Meeting.

Diocesan pastoral Council Meeting.

November: Nine Pastoral Area Meetings.

Meeting of Pastoral Leaders and Assistant Leaders.

Nine Clergy Area Meetings.

December: Council of Priests' Meeting.

Diocesan Pastoral Council Meeting.

January: Meeting of Pastoral Leaders and Assistant Leaders.

Nine Clergy Area Meetings.

February: Nine pastoral Area Meetings.

Council of Priests' Meeting.

March: Diocesan Pastoral Council Meeting.

Meeting of Pastoral Leaders and Assistant Leaders.

Nine Clergy Area Meetings.

April: Nine pastoral Area Meetings.

Council of Priests' Meeting.

May: Diocesan Pastoral Council Meeting.

Meeting of Pastoral Leaders and Assistant Leaders.

Nine Clergy Area Meetings.

June: Council of Priests' Meeting.