

Thank you to all those who have attended meetings and returned questionnaires on the issues raised by “Working Together to Evangelise Our Diocese”

Your Stewards recently attended another meeting in Brentwood. We discussed, among other things, questions raised by parishes across the diocese. Our parish did not raise all these questions but you might find the full record interesting. This is my record of what was said.

Why can't we stay as we are; everything is fine?

Unfortunately things may feel OK to individuals but the number of practising Catholics in the Diocese, in line with the number across the country is falling. And practising is quite a loose definition; attending Mass once a month or so.

How can we cope with all this development on our doorstep?

The total population of the diocese has increased but the proportion of practising Catholics has fallen. More people might be a great help to us.

Why should we co-operate with the diocese? The answer is to get some foreign priests in to help.

Priests are needed all over the world. Look at the ratios below;

Continent	Priest to people	
Europe	1:1,595	
South America	1:5,000	
Africa	1:5,000	
Asia	1:2,185	Also, in the UK there are tight Visa restrictions.

Why should we co-operate; the Bishop will just do what he wants?

As Bishop Alan has repeatedly told us the Church is a hierarchy and he will have to make the final decision and the responsibility is his. However he does want to hear our opinions and suggestions and feels he will make better decisions if he is better informed.

Surely we just need to pray for more vocations?

We should certainly pray and do much else to encourage people to recognise their vocation to the priesthood and the other sacred roles. There is much else to be done to help existing priests and demonstrate within our parishes a model for life.

Couldn't we solve everything by ordaining more married men or women?

It doesn't seem to have helped the Church of England was the first response given. More fundamentally these options are outside the Bishop's control

For more information look at www.dioceseofbrentwood/departments/development/

If you want to give further feedback my e-mail is jmowens@doctors.org.uk

