

**From Bishop David Evans to all parishioners in the Deanery of
Cathedral and Birmingham South**

To be read at weekend masses of 14th January 2024

My Dear Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ

As Pope Francis has reminded us we live in age of change, more rather a change of the age.

In our Deanery there are thirty nine parishes currently served by twenty four priests and their average age is 64. It is estimated that in a decade this number may diminish to as low as six.

Furthermore, we currently celebrate 84 weekend masses in the deanery, all more or less at the same time, and often within less than two miles of each other, particularly in the city.

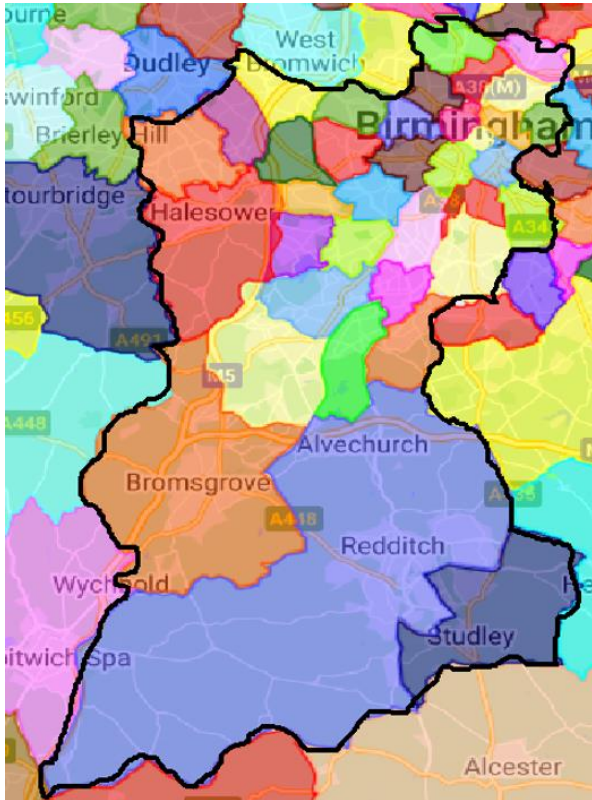
With this in mind as Christians it would be irresponsible to not discern and move towards a model for our parishes which is sustainable but also outward focussed and missional, this is a moment to rediscover our shared identity as disciples.

Change is inevitable, but this is an opportunity to shape that change rather than wait until it is forced upon us. In the coming months, you will be invited to gather to consider proposals which will enable an appropriate response to these changing circumstances. I would like now to encourage parishes, and the deanery as a whole to be part of this conversation and to do so in a generous prayerful spirit.

With my prayerful best wishes for the New Year

Bishop David Evans

ABOUT YOUR DEANERY



Our Deanery as it is now came into being with the merger of the old Cathedral Deanery and Birmingham South, as well as embracing parishes from Northern Worcestershire and towards the Black Country.

In total there are 39 parishes, many of them within the Birmingham City Ring Road but also including Bromsgrove, Redditch and Studley to the South.

At the moment we celebrate 84 Sunday masses, and a cursory glance at timings reveals an

almost identical pattern across the deanery which means of course that active serving priests cannot support neighbouring parishes in the event of illness, holiday or other weekend commitments.

The Dean is Fr Gary Buckby, supported by Mgr. Timothy Menezes and Fr John Peyton as Vice Deans.

Deanery meetings usually take place on the second Tuesday of each month, usually hosted by a deanery parish. At these meetings priests and deacons meet for mutual support and fellowship, as much as to discuss and plan strategically, or reflect on issues of concern, within parishes, within the deanery, within the diocese and indeed globally.

With an aging presbyterate, and an awareness of a need to proactively respond to changing circumstances, the faithful of our deanery are being encouraged to engage with the ongoing conversation alongside their clergy about how we might all play our part in building up the life of our parishes moving into a challenging future.