

AI Summary

The "Into the Future" (4th Edition, 2026) is the latest proposed **Pastoral Plan for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Wrexham**, presented by **Bishop Peter Brignall**. Released for widespread consultation, the plan addresses systemic challenges across North and Mid Wales and establishes a strategic roadmap for parish life moving forward.

Key core themes and objectives of the 4th edition include:



1. Parish Restructuring & Reorganisation

- **Addressing Clergy Shortages:** The plan addresses the dwindling number of active, resident diocesan priests. It handles realities like upcoming retirements and reliance on regular (religious) order priests who are serving past standard retirement ages.
- **Formalising Parish Unions:** Over recent years, multiple parishes have begun operating under shared leadership. The plan aims to officially formalise these unions and structural combinations (such as the recent creation of the *Vale of Clwyd* parish merging Denbigh, Ruthin, and St Asaph).



2. Transitioning to a Missionary Model

- **Evangelisation over Maintenance:** Bishop Peter calls for a shift from a church that merely "welcomes those at our door" to creating active disciples who step out into their families and communities to proactively proclaim the Gospel.
- **Adapting to Changing Infrastructure:** The diocese faces ongoing changes to its properties and historic sites (such as the closure or redevelopment of the legacy Penrhos site), requiring flexible worship solutions like creating new chapels within multicultural communities.



3. Diocese-Wide Consultation & Listening Exercises

- **An Open Call for Feedback:** The 4th Edition is specifically framed as a proposal under comprehensive consultation. Priests and parishioners are warmly invited to examine the documentation through their local parish hubs (such as Our Lady of the Assumption RC Church Rhyl) and submit their views.
- **Difficult Decisions Ahead:** The Bishop's plan prepares the community for upcoming changes, acknowledging that structural adjustments regarding parish independence, mass times, and resource management may be difficult or painful but are essential to sustain the church's health.

The problem

Wrexham Diocese covers the top half of Wales. In the Diocese of Wrexham there are

- 4 Episcopal Vicariates)
- 49 Churches
- 29 Parishes
- 24 Priests (plus 2 not here?)
- Circa 758,600 inhabitants
 - of which 31,200 are Catholics
 - of which 4,200 attend Mass
 - attendees contribute an average of £6/week
 - (income $6 \times 4200 = £25,200$)

Cost of a priest is £385/week (plus utilities, Insurance. Repairs etc. etc.). For 26 priests this equals £10,010.

In five years' time, only 6 of our current diocesan priests will remain under canonical retirement age (75).

Facing up to this the Bishop is currently :

- rationalising (amalgamating) parishes
- rationalising Mass times (to allow priest to cover more parishes)
- consulting at all levels.

Currently :

- No Diocesan Pastoral Council
- Difficult to maintain Vicariate Pastoral Councils, struggle to maintain a Parish Advisory Council or even mandatory Parish Finance Committees

Priests who regularly celebrate more than two Masses on a Sunday (defined as the liturgical day, and so encompassing the Vigil Mass) must attempt to make arrangements with neighbouring priests if pastoral necessity means that the number of Masses cannot be reduced. If this is not possible, this is to be discussed with me as the Ordinary and I will make a determination.

Bishop says:

Although there will, of necessity, be some reduction of the number of Masses offered each Sunday - it is my firm conviction that each church in the Diocese will continue to have a celebration of the Eucharist each Sunday

Questions – Parish and Dioceses Only

Personal response from G S Robinson

For Parishes

Parish mission statement

The Bishop said :

The fundamental work of the Church is threefold:

1. prayer and worship;
2. the proclamation of the Gospel;
3. care for those who are poor and vulnerable.

Possible mission statements :

1. aligning its community life and local outreach with the broader pastoral framework of the Diocese of Wrexham and general Catholic traditions of communion and service
2. Rooted in Christ and guided by the spirit of St. Teresa of Lisieux, we are a welcoming Catholic community in Abergele, growing in faith and sharing God's shower of roses through service to one another.
3. Inspired by St. Teresa's 'Little Way,' we strive to make God's love known in Abergele through service to one another and by simple acts of kindness, joyful worship, and a welcoming heart for all

If we are going to have a mission statement 3 is my favourite. We would then need a strategy to deliver the mission.

Formation of Adults (An American term)

This is deepening their understanding, practice, and relationship with God and their religious community

Goals and Purpose

- **Lifelong learning:** Updating spiritual maturity to match adult life experiences and challenges.
- **Active discipleship:** Equipping individuals to share their beliefs with confidence and clarity.
- **Spiritual nourishment:** Preventing spiritual burnout by offering ongoing support and fellowship.

Core Dimensions

- **Knowledge of faith:** Exploring scripture, church tradition, and theological teachings.
- **Liturgical life:** Engaging more deeply with sacraments, prayer, and worship.
- **Moral formation:** Building a Christian conscience and applying ethics to daily life.

- **Community and mission:** Connecting with other believers and serving the wider world through justice and evangelisation.

As a parish (I feel) there are individual initiatives but no co-ordinated programme to develop core dimensions.

Finance Committee & Pastoral Councils

Why isn't there a diocesan Pastoral council? Who should be on it?

Our council is in place. Could finance committee do with more support as it seems only to report?

Stewardship of Time, Talent, and Treasures amongst the faithful

- Currently seems to be managed by the deacons.
- Who knows what talents and treasures parishioners have (Deacons?)?
- More delegation to individuals and teams is possible to alleviate load on priest and deacons so more people can give time and treasures and talents of others can be recognised more widely.

Diocese of Wrexham Mission

MISSION STATEMENT for The DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

We are sons and daughters of the One Father,
disciples of Jesus Christ,
and members of the Catholic Church
in the Diocese of Wrexham.

We share in the rich history and culture of Wales.

Nourished by God's Word and Sacraments,
we commit ourselves both as individuals
and as parish communities
to live out the mission given to us in Baptism.

We declare our commitment:
- to deepen our Faith;
- to share our sense of God and his love for everyone;
- to witness to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

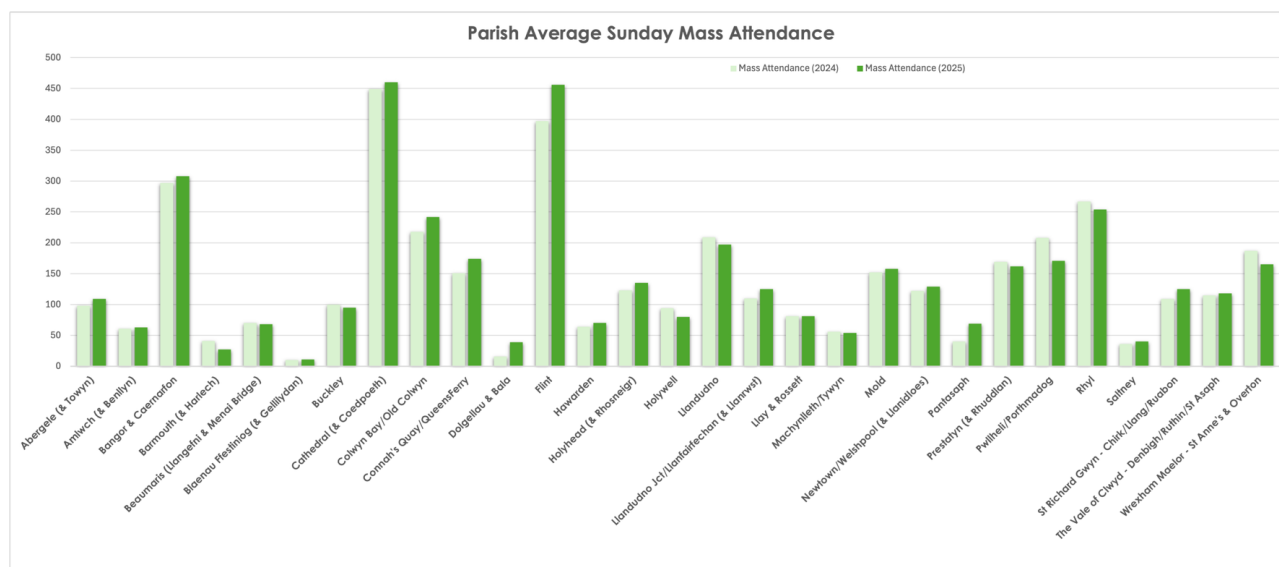
Thus renewed, we are led by the Holy Spirit
to reach out more effectively
to the people of the world in which we live.

(Diocesan Pastoral Assembly – May 1992)

So what?

Parishes Struggling financially

I would say all parishes are struggling to meet financial commitments. It is not rocket science that parishes with smaller attendance will struggle more.



Parishes with higher attendance or one priest covering more than 1 parish, the cost of the priest can be spread over more people. Reducing the number of church/parishes may have a negative affect due to people having to travel much further.

How many Incardinated priests

Bishop forecasts 6 priests (under 75) in 5 years. In 10 years unlikely to be more even with missionary preists. With this number of priests there can not be a mass in 29 parishes every Sunday no matter what the objective/mission of the Pope and the Bishop are

With a dioceses of the size of Wrexham amalgamating parishes and closing churches will mean travelling a long way to get to church/Mass

The Bishop is committed to celebrating (is that another word for Mass) the Eucharist on Sunday but he also recognises that there will not be as many masses being said. Indeed he is limiting the number of masses a priest can say on Sunday to 1. the logical conclusion is that there must be an alternative celebration of the Eucharist to a mass that can be lead by others (lay people or Deacons).

Readings, Payers and communion is an alternative form of celebration. Sermons could be used for formation of adults etc. Clearly those leading such celebrations would need training and education, but this resource is already established in the church through Deacons and Deaconesses. The historical parish institution must not remain a prisoner of immobility or of a worrisome pastoral repetition