

# Amalgamation of Goudhurst and Cranbrook parishes in the event of a reduction in clergy numbers

(Note: Includes churches in Benenden, Cranbrook, Goudhurst and Hawkhurst)

## Update on the thoughts so far 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019

### Some facts

- Size of congregations growing – significant house building in both parishes.

- Not one church in the two parishes is large enough for the combined congregations, even on normal mass days.

- There are no dedicated parish rooms in any of the churches. Presbyteries are currently used.

- Point of clarification: Eucharistic Services do not fulfill the Sunday obligation and should be reserved for emergencies only.

- Priests should only be expected to do 3 masses per weekend.

(Information on each parish is being collected to give to the Deanery)

### Some key thoughts

- Both parishes are very passionate about what they have and what they do. This should be respected. (eg: Children's liturgy, First Holy Communion – opportunities for some joint sessions throughout the course where priest involved).

- We need to serve our communities.

- Our families, children need to be nurtured and feel part of their community.

- We need to consider the needs of those who are not so mobile (accessibility, lifts etc.).

### Sunday Masses

- Goudhurst and Cranbrook could each continue to deliver a 'family' mass on Sundays (Children's liturgy and First Holy Communion offered at both). This keeps class sizes manageable and nurtures families.

- One service could be at 9.00am and the other at 11.00am.

- Under this proposal Hawkhurst & Benenden would lose their Sunday masses.

- **Consultation with the parishes to be held .**

### Other Masses

The following suggestions have been made:

#### - Saturdays

Late afternoon/early evening masses alternating between Benenden & Hawkhurst

#### - Holy Days

(weekdays)  
Evening Mass at centre next to priest's home

Daytime in either Goudhurst or Cranbrook (depending where evening one held)

#### - Week day

Either at the mass centre of the serving priest or alternating between 4 centers

- **Consultation with the parishes to be held .**

### Opportunities for early stage cross-parish activity

There are areas where we could begin to work together:

- Catechesis - Formation of Faith (Youth groups, Adult formation, Rosary groups, Charismatic groups, prayer groups)

- Social events (Parish Fairs, Films, BBQs)

- Confirmation preparation

Individuals with particular areas of responsibility to start up conversations.

### Other Issues

- Priest's residence to be decided by serving priest.

- Parish Finances  
Joint finances would need to be set up in the event of an amalgamation. The two Finance Committees will meet to lay ground work.

- Parish Administration (a combined parish would have a combined parish council, finance officer and secretary)

- Liturgy (music, organists, etc.) will be worked out by the communities and priest at the time.

Fr Peter (West Malling) said 'there is no hurry for a decision to be made, but we need to have a plan in the event one of the current priests in the Deanery is no longer available'. He said 'it is the Community that should be at the heart of all these discussion and what might look right in terms of numbers, financial or administrative measures might just not be right for the communities we are seeking to serve'. The current discussions are supporting the continuation of the four mass centres. We (the diocese) don't want to close centres so some accommodation must be reached.

Either this is achieved or we run the risk of decisions being taken out of our hands and possibly a mass centre being closed.