

3rd June 2018

Dear Father Alex

Thank you for taking the time to share the letter dated 14th May from Archbishop Cushley today. I can imagine this was challenging particularly as you had had to postpone sharing this with the parish for two weeks until your brother priest returned.

It was interesting to hear Archbishop Cushley's proposal however, following mass today and only now having some short time for reflection, there are a number of points that raise significant concern and require further clarification. These are outlined below and would ask that these are shared with whoever you feel is the most appropriate person to ensure that these are expedited in a timely manner.

Following the two-year consultation and redesign process exploring how the pastoral care of our parishes can be best served we had reasonably expected that any proposal shared with the parish would provide full and detailed information outlining exactly what we, as a parish, are being asked to consider.

The letter provides none of this other than to state that the "building will remain open". This is simply not acceptable, and it is extremely disappointing after this length of time. Of particular concern is the withholding or omission of the eventual hub parish – surely the key component in the proposal. It is public knowledge that other parishes affected by these changes and who were informed of their respective proposals two weeks ago (in the same letter also dated 14th May) have had this crucial information given to them. It would be helpful to understand why this has not been reciprocated in our case.

Overall, there is simply not enough information on which to base such an important decision and prior to any discussion at parish level further detail is clearly required.

An outline proposal should be provided detailing the following;

- Where will the "hub"/main parish be and what information this decision was based on? E.g. parish size/parish fabric and buildings/demographic profile of the parish
- We should be provided with this information before our consultation period begins. It is **not** appropriate for the 28-day consultation period to begin **until** this has been shared with the parish so that any decision would be an informed one

It also noted that the merging of these three parishes covers a considerable geographic footprint and sizeable number of parishioners. As a parish priest who already covers two parishes, this proposal appears to be a considerable challenge and a significant burden for a single priest to serve and cope with.

While change can always be unsettling what we do know is that the human side of managing this change needs to be managed with compassion and a high level of emotional intelligence. This brings me to another area for consideration for our parish that I believe (and hope) is rather more unusual.

As you know this parish has had a significant trauma to deal with. While you are now parish priest you initially came to help us as parish administrator so while you have been here for a few years now it is only in the last 3 (or 4) that you have been parish priest with all the responsibility and accountability that this brings. Pastoral ministry is the ministry of shepherding and leading the parish and our parish are only just beginning to recover from such a difficult and unprecedented time. They need robust and steady leadership to continue to build on the foundation for healing that has been established over the past 4 years.

While it is acknowledged that change and redesign is needed in the current landscape of reducing vocations concern remains that parishes are being asked to consider a proposal that is not complete nor detailed and would lead me to contemplate whether the consultation was meaningless, and it is ultimately a fait accompli. This would be disappointing to say the least.

Thank as always for your work within our parish and for the leadership you have shown us during these past difficult years.

Lesley O'Donnell, Colin Whitlock on behalf of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Dunfermline