

Part H – Step A – The Parish Return Form

Sections 1-5 to be completed and returned

by 23rd April 2026

Section 1: Introduction

In dialogue with your community, especially young people (in line with synod guidance) reflect on your local data sheets alongside the diocesan context. Please summarise your reflections from Part E, F and G by completing this template and returning it by 23 April 2026 to discernment.returns@diocesehn.org.uk

PARISH NAME:	Our Lady's and St Oswin's, Tynemouth and St Mary's, Cullercoats
PARISH TOWN:	Tynemouth and Cullercoats
DEANERY:	Newcastle and North Tyneside
<p>What was the process followed to reach these conclusions? E.g. clergy & laity involved, young people's voices considered, prayer & listening shaped decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) members attended the Diocesan Pastoral Strategy webinar, then met to determine the process for the parish ensuring that all parishioners were provided with opportunities to contribute. • The parish bulletin provided links to the Mission Discernment Toolkit on the Diocesan website and parishioners were able to contact the office for hardcopies. A copy of Section E on pages 15-16 of the Mission Discernment Toolkit was included in every bulletin and announcements were made by PPC members after Sunday mass in each of our churches, outlining the 4 areas of mission and the prompts to support reflection. All parishioners were invited to attend two open parish meetings to contribute to the process and those unable to attend the meetings were encouraged to submit their reflections via email to the parish office. Each meeting began with prayer and an opportunity for reflection and ended with a prayer. Mgr. Faley and Fr. Hughes were present at both meetings, and the meetings were led and supported by members of the PPC. • The first meeting (approx.35 attended) considered the 4 areas of how we Serve, Worship, Teach, and build Community. Working in groups 	

parishioners discussed and noted on post-its what was working well and where are the challenges. These reflections were then collated by members of the PPC.

- The second meeting (approx.25 attended) considered our reflections on Mission and the questions in part 2 of the Parish Return Form. Working in groups parishioners completed draft responses, these were then collated and used by the PPC to support the completion of the form.
- The Parish Finance Committee reflected on how parish resources serve the Mission (Part F - Stewardship Review) and provided a report of their reflections with details of the parish finances to the PPC together with a draft response to Section 4 of the form.
- Parents/carers of children at our Parish Primary School were provided with opportunities to contribute. The invitation to open meetings was in successive weekly parish news bulletins which are routinely distributed to parents/carers with the school's newsletter each week. In addition, the Headteacher devised and sent out an online questionnaire (1 response was submitted).

Beacons of Mission: *Practices that either show signs of hope others could learn from, or faithful responses uniquely shaped by your local context:*

- Existing examples of successful cross-parish teamwork: Consolation Team, Baptism preparation.
- The Partnerships Journey of Faith programme is an excellent example of parishes in the partnership working together to support Mission.

Section 2: Mission Discernment

Please use the suggested prompts at **Part E of The Mission Discernment Toolkit** to guide your conversations and complete the following section.

Mission: WORSHIP - Celebrating the Sacraments as Places of Encounter

Reflection and conclusions:

- We have no resident priest in the parish, despite this, the two excellent priests from neighbouring parishes have managed to offer Sunday and weekday masses so far, though, with the exception of Holy Thursday, the Easter Triduum had to be celebrated outside the Parish.
- Monsignor Andrew's retirement in September means further changes may be necessary quite soon.
- In both churches most volunteers involved in the key lay ministries are in the older age bracket. It is vital we develop strategies to recruit younger volunteers as in 5 years many existing volunteers will not be fit enough to continue.
- The diocese needs to offer more training opportunities for new volunteers
- Within 5 years there may be fewer priests trying to minister to 6 churches

across North Shields and Whitley Bay. In order to achieve clarity and maintain a vibrant community for the future, we feel that Our Lady and St Oswin's should merge with North Shields parish and St Mary's with Whitley Bay parish.

1. What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

- NOW Ask the bishop to agree to the merger of Our Lady and St Oswin's with North Shields Parish and St Mary's with Whitley Bay parish (Responsible: Parish Council)
- NEXT Develop strategies to encourage younger volunteers to offer to serve so there will be a cohort to replace the volunteers who in five years will be too old to continue (Responsible: As well as invitation in bulletin, priests, older volunteers, event leaders to approach suitable parishioners)
- NEXT Develop strategies to support families before and after the sacraments (Responsible: Catechists with priests and PPC)
- NEXT Request the diocese to offer more training for volunteers especially for eucharistic ministers and lay leaders (Responsible: PPC to send letter to Diocese formation team who need to respond with appropriate training.)
- LONGER TERM: Consider the timing and number of masses and use of church buildings Responsible: Partnership, Deanery, Parish priest(s) and PPCs (See answers to question 5)

2. Why are we proposing this? (*Link to Mission.*)

- We are proposing the above actions in order to maintain a vibrant and sustainable community and further our mission for future generations
- to ease the workload of fewer priests and involve the laity more in delivering our mission

3. Dependencies: (*What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)*)

- The approval of the bishop for the merger.
- The cooperation of the partnership parish pastoral councils.
- The formation of lay ministers and volunteers and the diocese providing training.
- Decisions on sharing finances.
- Decisions on the use of churches for masses and other services.

4. What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?

- A deterioration in the health of the priest(s) and the Masses and services offered in each church.
- Not be enough volunteers to offer the ministries needed for the church community to thrive and promote our mission.

5. How will worship be organised in the area if there are less priests and less worshippers?

The following decisions will need to be taken:

- the number and timing of Masses and services on offer and the churches used
- the accessibility of churches for parishioners.
- Sunday masses may have to be celebrated in the larger churches to accommodate more worshippers and in churches more accessible with better transport links
- The priest(s) could alternate masses across the churches, however, there may not be enough worshippers to warrant all existing church buildings.
- Lay leaders could offer services of word and communion during the week in other churches or buildings.
- A transport rota might be devised offering special buses for Sundays.

Mission: TEACH - Handing on the Faith

Reflection and conclusions:

- The parish community is served by good catholic schools, St Mary's Catholic Primary School and St Thomas More High School. They teach our children and young people well, providing opportunities for them to lead prayer, liturgy and contribute to school masses. Through school they receive instruction in Catholic Social Teaching and are involved in issues of social injustice and charitable work and fundraising. However, this does not follow through to attendance or contributions to/through the parish.
- There are opportunities for the parish to support young people at our High School e.g. volunteering opportunities to support young people with their Duke of Edinburgh and John Paul II awards, fund raising for the HCPT Lourdes trip.
- Parents are supportive of the sacramental preparation programme, however we are not involving them or providing any opportunity for them to deepen their own knowledge and faith.
- The Partnership's Journey in Faith programme is a successful example of parishes working together across the partnership, with the last couple of years seeing increases in the number of people being received into the church in our parishes.

1. What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

- NOW Find out what hymns children and young people are singing in School and include these in our parish masses. (Responsible: PPC, Organists, Music Group)
- NEXT Look at how to involve parents in their child's preparation for sacraments so that they can deepen their own understanding and faith. (Responsible: PPC, Parish Priest, Catechists)
- LONGER TERM: Consider appointing a Youth Worker to work across the

partnership to encourage and advocate for the involvement of our children and young people in parish life and provide a point of coordination/link between our Catholic High School and our parishes. (Responsible: Partnership, Parish priest(s) and PPCs, Headteachers)

2. Why are we proposing this? (*Link to Mission.*)

- We are proposing the above actions to improve engagement with our young people who are the church of the present and future
- to support Catholic Life and Mission in our Catholic Schools
- to support the teaching and passing on of our faith.

3. Dependencies: (*What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)*)

- The appointment of a Youth Worker is dependent on collaboration with other parishes across the partnership and ensuring that St Thomas More High School supports the proposal.
- The ability of parishes across the partnership to contribute to the funding of the post.
- Support from the Diocese with the recruitment and appointment process.
- Ensuring safeguarding policies are followed.

4. What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?

- Accelerated decline in mass attendance and potential future volunteers to sustain all areas of Mission across the partnership.

Mission: SERVE - Sharing Christ's Love in Action

Reflection and conclusions:

- Volunteers are serving our parish community by taking holy communion to the sick and housebound, and working together with other parishes to provide practical support and consolation to the bereaved. However, most of these volunteers are older parishioners and younger volunteers will be needed to sustain this in the longer term.
- We collect for our local Food bank via a collection box in St Mary's Church, this could be extended to Our Lady and St Oswin's too.
- Second collections, Tea and Coffee donations after mass, and parish social events raise funds for charities for causes support people in our local community and overseas e.g. CAFOD, Mary's Meals, Candles for Ukraine, CRISIS, Macmillan, People's Kitchen, Little Sisters of the Poor, Sarah's Star, Bay Food Bank. Our local Catholics sponsor young Catholics on the HCPT pilgrimage to Lourdes.
- There is currently only limited social outreach beyond local practicing

catholics in our area.

- Our web presence is very limited; we have no social-media presence and the only updates to our website are copies of the weekly bulletin. How do others know about us?

1. What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

- NOW Start a collection for the Bay Food Bank at Our Lady and St Oswin's. (Responsible: PPC to seek a volunteer from St Oswin's)
- NOW Identify local social action needs in our area and existing groups across our parishes that we can support/contribute to. (Responsible: PPC)
- NEXT Promote these opportunities for social action/community service within our parishes e.g. volunteers for lay ministries, consolation team; and more widely in our area e.g. Tyne and Wear Citizens, Parish Nursing North Tyneside, Street Pastors. (Responsible: PPC, Parish Secretary)
- NEXT Work with other parishes across the partnership to reinvigorate the Partnership website. (Responsible: Partnership, PPCs, Parish Secretary)
- LONGER TERM: Consider appointing a Pastoral Worker to work across the partnership to support volunteers and co-ordinate parish ministries and outreach. (Responsible: Partnership, Parish priest(s) and PPCs)
- LONGER TERM: To sustain lay ministry with aging and declining numbers of volunteers, consider the timing and number of masses and use of church buildings (See answers to question 5 in the WORSHIP section.) (Responsible: Partnership, Deanery, Parish priest(s) and PPCs)

2. Why are we proposing this? (*Link to Mission.*)

- To be more active in our Mission to serve our local community, putting our faith into action through social action and to ensure this is sustainable.
- To better serve our elderly, sick and housebound parishioners.
- To provide examples of applying our faith in action that may inspire and encourage more involvement from younger generations.

2. Dependencies: (*What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)*)

- Openness of other churches and community groups to our involvement.
- Collaboration with parishes across the partnership to strengthen support for all volunteers in our parishes.
- Funding and resources for publicity materials and reinvigorating the website/social media presence to enable us to use multiple channels for raising awareness.
- The appointment of a Pastoral Worker is dependent on collaboration with other parishes across the partnership, the ability of parishes across the partnership to contribute to the funding of the post and support from the Diocese with the recruitment and appointment process.

- Ensuring safeguarding policies are followed.

4. What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?

- A decline in our mission to serve as pressure on clergy and reducing number of volunteers increases.
- If our churches close would anyone in the community notice?
- We will be seen to be insular, not relevant, uncaring and not inclusive.

Mission: COMMUNITY – Building a Family of Faith

Reflection and conclusions:

- For some parishioners St Mary's already 'feels' aligned to Star of the Sea Parish and Our Lady and St Oswin's already 'feels aligned to St Cuthbert's and St Joseph's Parish
- There is a feeling that we do not do a great deal in the broader community, outside of our Catholic Community
- As many volunteers are older people, there is a need to attract younger Catholics to future proof our parish work
- The diocese needs to offer more training opportunities for new volunteers

1. What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

- NOW Ask the bishop to agree to the merger of Our Lady and St Oswin's with North Shields Parish and St Mary's with Whitley Bay parish (Responsible: Parish Pastoral Council)
- NOW Invite members of other denominations to ecumenical services in our churches (Responsible: Celebrant and PPC)
- NOW Ask for more volunteers. (Responsible: PPC / Newsletter / Current volunteers / PP appeal)
- NOW Organise our own training and involve the Partnership Parishes (Responsible: PPC with Diocese)
- NOW/ONGOING Consider how all of our churches could be used for community events e.g Mouth of the Tyne Festival, Heritage Open Days, Christmas Shopping Evening, Whitley Bay Festival etc. Advertise our presence within the community more – a wooden cross in St Mary's and Our Lady and St Oswin's garden? (Responsible: PPC / Current users)
- NOW/ONGOING Use Parish facilities more – promote current social activities e.g Brownies, quilting, pilates etc. (Responsible: PPC / Current users)
- NOW Support RCs moving into the area (Responsible: Whole church community)
- MEDIUM TERM Recruit expert to improve the website and use social media more (Responsible: Website Creator, PPC, Partnership)
- LONGER TERM Employ Pastoral Worker to support volunteers – not

necessarily full time and shared between the Partnership. (Responsible: PPC)

- LONGER TERM Link in with NT Council, VODA and NT Big Local to avail of funding and community development opportunities (Responsible: Pastoral Worker, Partnership, PPCs)

2. Why are we proposing this? (*Link to Mission.*)

- Parish members do not feel that we currently do enough in the community
- Larger Parishes will provide more resources
- Training will ensure no-one is excluded from volunteering and it could assist in disability / impairment / literacy skills
- Ease pressure on PP and current volunteers
- Access to churches and making the broader community more aware of churches if they are opened on 'festival' type occasions
- Awareness raising and sharing of faith

3. Dependencies: *What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)*

- More volunteers, money and time
- Enthusiastic leaders to encourage other parishioners and people in the community
- Cooperation between parishes
- Diocese to make training more accessible and local
- Setting up of social media 'pages'
- Bishop and diocese to accept proposals

4. What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?

- Decline in Mass attendance, social connection in the community etc

Section 3 - Stewardship and Our Common Home (Property)

Accessibility (to be completed by Parish)

Site Name	Building Name	Estimated Occupancy Capacity	Estimated hours of use per week	Estimated number of car parking spaces	Level access into and within the building (Yes/No)	Accessible WC within the building (Yes/No)	% of people travelling by car	Describe local public transport links
Our Lady and St Oswin's	Church	130	3 (plus 50% of weddings in the partnership)		Y	Y in adjacent meeting room	Not known	Bus stop within a 2 minute walk with 2 bus services (301, 306) each runs every 20 minutes on a weekday and every 30 minutes at weekends. Tynemouth Metro station within an 6 minute walk.
	Meeting Room	20	4	0	Y	Y		
St Mary's	Church	180	4	31	Y	Y	Not known	Bus stops within a 2 minute walk with a weekday bus service (301) every 20 minutes and a weekend service every 30 minutes. Cullercoats Metro station within a 15 minute walk (or 3 minute bus journey).
	Hall	80	10					
	Chapel	20	9					

Notes: **Estimated occupancy capacity** – This is simply intended to be a reasonable estimate of the capacity of our churches, halls and meeting spaces. In the future it may be necessary to check these capacity figures against the site Fire Risk Assessment the survey programme for which is currently underway across our Diocese.

Existing and potential future uses (to be completed by Parish)

Site Name:	Building Name	Existing uses	Potential future uses
Our Lady and St Oswin's	Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masses and sacramental celebrations • Lenten Stations of the Cross 	
	Meeting Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshments after Sunday Mass • Parish meetings/events • Refreshment/Rest space for Street Pastors at weekends. • Adhoc bookings e.g. Polling Station, NTC for Mouth of the Tyne Festival 	<p>St Oswin's garden's two spaces, on enclosed, on private could be available to be booked for community events.</p> <p>Promote availability of the meeting room to be booked for community groups and events etc.</p>
St Mary's	Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masses and sacramental celebrations, including whole school and class masses. • Lenten Stations of the Cross • School Services e.g. Junior Carol Service, Infant Nativity. 	
	Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Liturgy • First Holy Communion preparation sessions • Refreshments after Sunday Mass • Parish meetings/social events • Rainbows and Brownies • Local Quilting Group • Pilates Classes • Adhoc bookings e.g. Birthday Parties, Baptism celebrations 	Promote availability of the hall to be booked for community groups and events etc.
	Chapel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Prayer 24/7 (via keycode) • Rosary Group (before weekday masses) • Confessions (after Saturday mass) 	Promote as a venue for Prayer meetings e.g. across the partnership, euchmenical groups.

Section 4: Stewardship Review Discernment

Please use the suggested prompts at **Part F of The Mission Discernment Toolkit** to guide your conversations and complete the following section.

Stewardship: FINANCES

Please summarise your conclusions based on F1. Discussions

- Our finances are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by both the Parish accountant and the Parish Finance Committee.
- Our income has increased over the last financial year. However, this has been offset by a rise in costs for repairs and improvements which were deemed to be either necessary or beneficial for the parish. Works were undertaken in respect of all the parish buildings.
- Major costs for a new roof and replacement windows at St. Mary's church are due to be incurred in the new financial year. These works have been planned with the Diocesan property department and approved by the Board of Trustees.
- There are sufficient financial resources to ensure that we can cover all future recurring and non-recurring expenditure.
- The parish is financially sustainable over the next 5 years.

Stewardship: BUILDINGS

Please summarise your conclusions based on F2. Discussions

- Our 2 churches strengthen Mission. St. Mary's parish hall and Our Lady and St. Oswins meeting room strengthen Mission and enable the parish community and wider community to interact (see section 3).
- The Presbytery at St. Mary's was subject to a program of refurbishment following it becoming vacant. The property is rented out and provides a good income (£1900pcm) for the parish. In addition, savings on utilities and council tax have been generated by the tenancy.
- Our buildings are accessible, safe and fit for purpose following the works of repair and improvement with further works planned.
- St Mary's church is co-located alongside St Mary's Catholic Primary School. Whole school masses, class masses, school carol services and nativities are held in the church, and the school accesses the church and chapel on occasion for prayer e.g. Minnie Vinnies, Stations of the Cross.
- St Mary's car park is used by school staff and by parents etc. for school drop offs/pick-ups.
- The replacement of the roof and windows at St. Mary's will be undertaken to a specification required by the Diocesan Property Department which is intended to reduce the carbon impact of this building.

Stewardship: PEOPLE

Please summarise your conclusions based on F3. discussions and the following questions:

- There are insufficient volunteers, many of the volunteers are elderly and fulfil multiple roles. There is a need to develop further volunteers and lay leaders.
- Our Lady and St. Oswins is located in the centre of Tynemouth. St Mary's is situated in a large area of housing and related amenities.
- There are neighbouring churches in North Shields (2) and Whitley Bay and Monkseaton. All of these churches are accessible by public transport and are a short car journey from our parish.
- We believe it would be possible for parishioners with a disability to access these churches. There are informal arrangements for parishioners to give lifts to other parishioners, and we believe this would continue.

How does your parish benefit from its Parish Finance Council and Parish Pastoral Council?

- The Parish Finance Committee is constituted in accordance with Diocesan guidelines it meets regularly to monitor and review financial and other related matters. The Parish Finance Committee includes representation from the Parish Council and an estate and property professional.
- The finance committee supports the parish's mission by managing resources in an organised and methodical way, supporting the fabric of the church and ensuring transparency, and aligning spending with pastoral priorities so that worship, ministry, and outreach can thrive. This includes overseeing second collections for charitable causes, ensuring they are handled and reported properly so the parish can confidently support the wider Church's work for those in need.
- The Parish Pastoral Council meets regularly and has managed the Mission Discernment process.

Does your parish have active representation on the Partnership Development Group?

- Not currently. Our Partnership Development Group has not been active since COVID. The Mission Discernment process at the partnership level will provides the prompt for this to be reinvigorated.

Are there potential lay leaders in the parish and would they be willing to be trained?

- Yes, however, the logistics of attending the training at the locations/dates the Diocese has offered training has, to date, not enabled them to complete the training.

Stewardship: SUSTAINABILITY

Please summarise your conclusions based on F4. Discussions

- *What is essential for Mission?*

Mass, prayer, clergy, trained parishioners to support ministry, other volunteers and a base with facilities.

- *What is no longer sustainable?*

The current number of masses across the 9 churches in the partnership will be unsustainable in the next 5-8 years when there may only be 1 or 2 priests serving the parishes in our partnership.

The Parish is currently sustainable for the next few years. Our once empty Presbytery is now rented out bringing additional income to the parish, our churches have been refurbished, and Sunday masses are well attended, and the parish is financially sustainable for at least the next 5 years.

- *What could be shared, merged, or released?*

We are proposing that our Parish is dissolved and our churches merge with the two neighbouring parishes. See section 2 above for suggestions we are making for working collaboratively across the partnership.

- *Are there any other sources of income that could be utilised? E.g. expanding the use of the parish hall.*

Improved promotion of the availability of our Hall, Meeting room and gardens for private, income-generating bookings

- *If we had no buildings to maintain, how might we redirect that energy toward evangelisation, service, or formation?*

The financial costs of maintaining some of our buildings would be freed up to employ pastoral and youth workers, whilst noting that some buildings are not a drain on resources e.g. the £1900pcm rental income the parish receives from the presbytery.

- *What opportunities exist to reduce carbon impacts from clergy and parishioner travel?*

Public transport, minibuses for shared transport, car rota, electric vehicles for clergy.

What is your assessment on sustaining current mission provision over the next 10 years?

- We feel that a church provides a focal point for Mission. Churches need priests and people to serve and to support Mission.
- We feel that parishes will need to merge to ensure sustainability for the future.
- If the current trends of reduced numbers of priests, lower mass attendances, decreasing numbers of baptisms and marriages continue there is likely to be a reduced need for all the existing church buildings.

Section 5: Snapshot Summary and Parish Conclusions

Please refer to **Part G of The Mission Discernment Toolkit** to guide your conversations and complete the following section. Provide clear, honest, and prayerful conclusions.

What is thriving and must be strengthened?

The good work in our Catholic Schools is thriving and can be strengthened by improving links with parishes.

What should be adjusted?

The number of parishes in our partnership and in due course the number of churches.

What drains Mission, is unsustainable, and needs to be released?

The number of masses that the clergy and associated lay ministries support across our parishes.

Where is the Holy Spirit prompting bold steps?

1. The future of the parish in the absence of a resident parish priest prompts the bold step of dissolving our parish and merging each of our churches with the neighbouring parishes in Whitley Bay and North Shields.
2. The future of our partnership with the probability of only 1 or 2 parish priests in 5-8 years' time, prompts the longer-term bold step of closing churches, forming new parishes and parish communities across larger geographic areas in order to sustain and potentially enrich our mission across North Tyneside.

What are our next steps as a parish?

More detailed next steps are listed under each area of Mission in Section 2. In summary:

- NOW Follow canonical law to seek the dissolving the Parish and the merger of Our Lady and Our Lady and St Oswin's 's with North Shields parish and St Mary's with Whitley Bay parish.
- NEXT Develop strategies to encourage younger volunteers to offer to serve to ensure succession and sustain lay ministry in our two churches.
- NEXT Develop strategies to support families before and after the sacraments.
- NEXT Request the diocese to offer more training for volunteers especially for eucharistic ministers and lay leaders.
- NEXT Develop strategies to develop our outreach through social action.
- NEXT Promote our parishes and how we support our communities.
- LONGER TERM: Consider the timing and number of masses and use of church buildings.
- LONGER TERM: Consider appointing a Youth Worker and a Pastoral Worker to work across the parishes in our Partnership.