

## **House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests**

### **St Barnabas Southampton: Report of the Independent Reviewer**

#### **Introduction**

1. On 21 December 2020 I received a letter from the PCC Secretary of St Barnabas Southampton, a resolution parish in the Winchester diocese, asking for assistance in relation to the diocese's wish to abolish the parish and amalgamate it with St Mary's Southampton, its neighbour and a non-resolution parish. The letter was copied to the Bishop of Winchester and others.
2. The letter explained that the PCC had unanimously passed a resolution on 20 December authorising an approach to me on the grounds that the bishop's proposed action constituted discrimination against a resolution parish in the Catholic tradition, contrary to the House of Bishops' Declaration.
3. After taking advice I responded on 7 January. I explained that there were statutory processes under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 and that these were the means for challenging proposed pastoral reorganisations. It was not my responsibility to adjudicate on their merits. If, however, the PCC believed that the bishop had acted in a discriminatory fashion contrary to the terms of the House of Bishops' Declaration and its five guiding principles then that was potentially something within my remit to investigate under the House of Bishops' Declaration.
4. I added that before I decided whether to deal with the PCC's grievance and carry out a review I needed to know whether the PCC had given the bishop an opportunity to address the grievance. I also needed to know that the resolution authorising the bringing of the grievance was passed either by a majority of all the members of the PCC (including any absent from the meeting) or by a majority of those present, with at least two-thirds of the PCC being present.
5. The PCC Secretary replied on 11 January [Annex A]. As well as providing further background information and supporting argument he confirmed that all members of the PCC had been present and supported the resolution of 20 December authorising the grievance. He also said that the letter of 21 December had been copied to the bishop to give him the opportunity to comment on the grievance.

#### **A valid grievance?**

6. This is the first instance where a PCC has sought to bring a grievance to my predecessor or me in the context of a proposed pastoral reorganisation so I needed first to consider whether I could properly consider it under the Regulations made by the House of Bishops (GS Misc 1087).

7. They provide that a grievance may be brought in relation to any action or failure by an office holder under paragraphs 16-29 and paragraph 33 of the House of Bishops' Declaration. Those paragraphs refer to the process by which PCCs may pass resolutions on grounds of theological conviction and the consequences which flow from them, including the arrangements which a diocesan bishop needs to make for the parish concerned.
8. They do not make any specific mention of pastoral reorganisation. The complaint of St Barnabas Southampton is not about the arrangements put in place by the Bishop of Winchester following the PCC's resolution of 4 December 2016 but about their potential disappearance as a result of the proposed pastoral reorganisation.
9. Clearly, however, a proposal to abolish a resolution parish is an action which has the effect of sweeping away all arrangements. My conclusion, therefore, endorsed by the Legal Adviser, is that where the PCC of a resolution parish believes that a bishop has proposed its abolition because it is a resolution parish rather than simply because the parish is no longer considered viable, it is entitled to bring a grievance under the Regulations and the Reviewer must then carry out a review.
10. As a result I wrote to the Bishop, with a copy to the PCC Secretary on 18 January indicating that, while I had reached no view on its merits, I regarded the grievance as in order and would therefore be required to conduct a review to determine whether it was justified. I also sought clarification on certain matters raised by the parish. The Bishop responded to me on 22 January and also copied to me his letter of 23 January to the PCC Secretary [Annex B] setting out his comments on the PCC's letters of 20 December and 11 January. The PCC Secretary then wrote to the Bishop with a copy to me on 25 January confirming that, notwithstanding the points made in the 23 January letter, the PCC stood by the grievance.

### **The view from the parish**

11. The original St Barnabas church was built in 1903. It was the first of Southampton's church buildings to be destroyed by enemy bombing in September 1940. The present building was consecrated in October 1957. Its ministry stands squarely within the Catholic tradition of the Church of England.
12. The parish passed a resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration on 4 December 2016 and in the light of that it was agreed on 28 June 2017 that pastoral and sacramental ministry would be provided only by male bishops at whose consecration a male bishop presided and who stand in the historic apostolic succession of bishops so ordained and by male priests ordained by them. Episcopal ministry for the parish has been provided by the Bishop of Richborough. The parish is listed on the Forward in Faith website as one for which ministry is provided by a bishop of the Society under the patronage of St Wilfrid and St Hilda.

13. The most recent incumbent had been appointed in 1987, before women were ordained to the priesthood, and had the freehold until he reached his seventieth birthday in 2019. It is his retirement<sup>1</sup> that has triggered the sequence of events that have led to this grievance.

14. On 11 October 2019, the Bishops of Winchester and Richborough wrote to the PCC of St Barnabas with their thoughts about future ministry. In particular they wrote:

*‘the church in the Parish of St Barnabas can no longer be considered sustainable going forwards, or the best way in which to further the whole mission of the Church of England either in the parish or the wider City of Southampton. Clearly there are significant local needs and mission opportunities, but we believe that it is now time to seek fresh ways in which to address these. The other Society parish in Southampton faces similar issues and is also receiving much the same letter from us. We do not believe that the best way forwards involves bringing these two parishes together, but rather a new departure in both places.*

15. The letter went on to say that the process of drawing up a pastoral scheme for St Barnabas would start with a meeting between the Archdeacon and the PCC. The bishops said that such a scheme was likely to involve:

- *‘the ending of the existence of the Parish of St Barnabas as a parish, and the union of the territory it currently embraces with one or more neighbouring parishes’*
- *‘the consequent ending of the organisational life of the parish with its own church officers and PCC. Decisions relating to the current Parish of St Barnabas will therefore be taken by a new PCC with responsibility for a wider area and drawing in people and worshippers from elsewhere’ and*
- *‘either the transfer of the church building into the new and wider parish created by the pastoral scheme, or its redundancy’.*

16. The archdeacon met the PCC on 20 November 2019. It took some time after this before the Southern Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee of Winchester Diocese formulated pastoral proposals in relation to the parish on 2 September 2020. These were then approved by the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee at its meeting on 21 September 2020. It was the notification of the proposals to the PCC on 5 November that led to the PCC resolution authorising the bringing of a grievance to me. The PCC also wrote a letter of objection which falls to be considered separately under the normal arrangements for handling proposals for pastoral reorganisation.

17. It is not for me to assess whether the proposed pastoral reorganisation makes ‘better provision for the cure of souls’, the statutory test which applies under the Mission and

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<sup>1</sup> He has challenged at an employment tribunal the lawfulness of his enforced retirement at the age of 70.

Pastoral Measure 2011. The issue for me under the House of Bishops' Declaration and Regulations is a narrower one, namely whether the parish is under threat of abolition because it is a resolution parish.

18. The PCC believes that its identity as a Traditional Catholic parish is the reason for the proposals to abolish it. Its letter of 11 January, attached at Annex A, sets out the basis for its grievance. In summary its case is that:

- There has been a lack of clarity in explaining why the parish should be abolished. The assertion that it is 'no longer considered sustainable' is contested;
- Granted that the parish has suffered decline, this can be attributed to a lack of support over many years, indeed neglect from the diocese and from the diocesan bishop and his predecessor
- Its treatment compares unfavourably with its next door neighbour parish which is benefitting from £800k of additional funding under a national scheme that the diocese has been able to access
- The next door parish is not a suitable partner for it given that it is a non-resolution parish of a completely different churchmanship and style of worship
- There is a wider diocesan pattern of neglect towards resolution parishes in the Catholic tradition, as evidenced by the parallel proposal to abolish the parish of Holy Trinity Millbrook in Southampton, potentially leaving this city of nearly a million people with no Traditional Catholic parish.

#### **The view from the diocese**

19. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the bishop has painted a rather different picture in his letter of 23 January to the PCC Secretary (attached at Annex B). He notes that:

- Between 2010 and 2019 the parish's electoral roll had declined from 57 names to 16
- The average worshipping community, which was only 27 in 2015, had fallen further to 17 in 2019
- In the 9 years from 2010-2018 there were just 7 baptisms, 7 funerals and no marriages.

20. With a parish population of some 5000, St Barnabas attracts an attendance of only 0.3% of the population, the lowest figure for Anglican churches in Southampton. This is despite the fact that demographically the area is one of significant opportunity, with 61% aged 18-29 and a high proportion of households being students in high density accommodation. The strategic challenge which the diocese wishes to grasp is engaging with this younger generation.

21. For many years, the diocese has been meeting the cost of a full time stipendiary priest for this single parish benefice. The cost to the Diocesan Board of Finance of a full time stipendiary incumbent minister is approximately £70k per annum in stipend,

national insurance and pension contributions and housing. By contrast, over the past 10 years, the annual Common Mission Fund contribution requested from the parish has varied between £2,000 and £15,000. In the two or three years that the contribution requested exceeded £10,000, the actual contribution received was £1,000 or less. The parish's current request and contribution is roughly £7,500, in other words, only 11% of the cost of providing ministry to the parish.

22. There are currently 8 resolution parishes in the Winchester Diocese, 3 of which are in the evangelical tradition and receive ministry from the Bishop of Maidstone and 4 of which (including St Barnabas Southampton and Holy Trinity, Millbrook in Southampton) are in the Catholic tradition and receive ministry from the Bishop of Richborough. Another parish, which has two churches covering a variety of traditions, receives ministry from the Bishop of Richborough (though is not listed on the Forward in Faith website as being a Society parish). So, the diocesan team has plenty of experience of relating to resolution parishes.
23. The diocesan bishop affirms his commitment to nurturing the diversity of the Church of England and has expressed regret that the pastoral changes envisaged in Southampton are likely to reduce the number of resolution parishes in the Catholic tradition. He has written: *'I would be delighted if a community in that tradition were able rise to the demands of mission and ministry in a parish with the demographics of St Barnabas.'* Nevertheless, St Barnabas has, in his view, reached the point where it now lacks the capacity and willingness to stimulate growth even if further resource were invested in it.

### **My assessment**

24. It is not surprising that a parish which is under threat of abolition should be dissatisfied and consider itself hard done by. As already noted, the law confers on parishes facing pastoral reorganisation rights to challenge the decision and St Barnabas will be able to make use of those as and when the time comes. It is not for me to anticipate that process by addressing the merits of the proposed reorganisation.
25. My task is simply to assess whether the reason that the parish finds itself in this unhappy position is because it passed a resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration. For good reason, the Declaration does not provide resolution parishes with any special status or protections in relation to potential pastoral reorganisation. But it does provide principles and processes designed to ensure that they are treated fairly. It would clearly be contrary to the whole intention underlying the 2014 settlement if bishops started to discriminate against parishes and propose their abolition because of their theological conviction.
26. It seems to me that any assessment of the conflicting arguments in this case must turn on two questions:

- Are the reasons given by the diocese for proposing to abolish the parish sufficiently credible and coherent to avoid leaving the suspicion that some ulterior consideration must also exist?
  - Is there any convincing evidence from the conduct of the bishop and diocese that they have acted towards the parish with a degree of prejudice against the parish's theological tradition?
27. As to the first, **the case assembled by the diocese in relation to the decline of the parish and its continued sustainability seems to me to be compelling.** Whatever the right new pattern may be for ministry in the area, the bishop and the diocese clearly have sound reasons, on the basis of the serious decline that has occurred, for concluding that the status quo cannot continue. It does not require the addition of some additional and unacknowledged consideration-such as prejudice against resolution parishes- to explain what has happened. The figures speak for themselves.
28. As to the second, it is clear that there has been quite a long period of difficult relations between the parish and the diocese, going back at least a decade to when the then incumbent was suspended and then reinstated. The circumstances surrounding those events (which occurred before the present Bishop of Winchester was in office) are beyond the scope of this review and I pass no comment on them save to note that this difficult backdrop may go some way to explaining why some in the parish may be inclined to put the worst possible complexion on the motivations of the bishop and other diocesan officers.
29. Be that as it may, **I see nothing in what has happened to indicate a degree of animosity to the parish on the grounds of its churchmanship and theological conviction.** I note, in particular, that the Bishop of Winchester discussed the situation with the Bishop of Richborough before putting the parish on notice, in October 2019, of possible abolition. The Bishop of Richborough was, moreover, a co-signatory of the letter to the parish, indicating his agreement to what was proposed.
30. It is an unhappy set of circumstances that the two weakest parishes in Southampton now facing pastoral reorganisation are both resolution parishes but there is nothing to indicate that this is a situation that is welcome to the Bishop of Winchester. Indeed he has been explicit in regarding it as a matter of considerable regret.
31. To this the St Barnabas PCC might, of course, retort that actions speak louder than words and that they would place greater reliance on what the diocesan bishop now says if he had been willing to seek significant financial support for the parish from the national church, as he has done for the neighbouring St Mary's. This is, however, to misunderstand the nature of the national funding scheme and the responsibility placed on diocesan bishops to come up with proposals which have a good prospect of helping to grow the church in particular areas. The funding is limited and bishops, with their senior teams, inevitably have to make difficult choices over where financial

investment is most likely to make a real difference given the capacity and vision which already exist within parishes.

32. St Barnabas clearly feels aggrieved that a style of church with which it is not in sympathy is being encouraged and supported when Traditional Catholic parishes appear to be on the edge of extinction in Southampton. The question being asked is, in effect, why the bishop and diocese are not doing more to sustain the full range of churchmanship that has existed up to now in the city and the wider diocese. In other words, are they by their actions and alleged inaction undermining the principle of ‘mutual flourishing’ in the House of Bishops’ Declaration?
33. In considering this it’s important to understand what the phrase ‘mutual flourishing’ means in the Declaration in the context in which it’s being used there. It comes in the fifth of the guiding principles which states, ‘*pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority within the Church of England will be made without specifying a limit of time and in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England.*’ In addition principle four affirms that those unable on grounds of theological conviction to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests should be enabled to ‘*flourish within [the Church of England’s] life and structures.*’
34. The requisite pastoral and sacramental provision has been made for the parish of St Barnabas for many years and it has been given the opportunity to flourish. As the bishop fairly points out, over the past decade the parish has received far more each year in terms of stipendiary ministry than it has been able to contribute financially in return. At the end of the day whether a particular parish flourishes cannot be primarily down to the actions of diocesan bishops and their senior teams but to the effectiveness and commitment of local leadership ordained and lay.
35. Bishops and their teams may make a real difference at key moments but the main responsibility for sustaining the life of a parish church rests with its local ministry and its worshippers. Whatever the churchmanship of a church and whether or not it’s a resolution parish, it cannot, in the final analysis, be otherwise.

## **Conclusion**

36. For the reasons given above, I find the grievance to be unjustified.

Sir William Fittall  
Independent Reviewer

25 February 2021

Sir William Fittall  
The Independent Reviewer  
Church House  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3NZ

11 January 2021

THE PARISH OF ST BARNABAS, SOUTHAMPTON  
Referral to the Independent Reviewer  
LETTER OF GRIEVANCE

Dear Sir William,

Thank you for your letter, information, advice and direction.

I now understand more clearly your role in connection with the House of Bishops' Declaration and its five guiding principles, and that an extensive separate process exists in respect of any proposed pastoral reorganisation.

I would be grateful if you would advise whether the following, reformulated from the two letters sent, comprises satisfactory evidence to support the grievance. If not, I would again be grateful if you could point us in directions to secure satisfactory evidence.

I confirm:

- our 21 December letter, together with this letter, constitutes an opportunity for the bishop to address the grievance.
- the resolution authorising the bringing of the grievance was passed unanimously by the full PCC on 20 December 2020.
- Bishop Dakin kindly authorised alternative episcopal oversight following a meeting with him at Wolvesey on 14 June 2017. A copy of the letter is attached / enclosed.
- that the proposed new parish would be an extension of the existing parish of St Mary's, Southampton, currently enjoying funding as an HTB project and therefore unsympathetic with any resolution parish.

Paper copies posted.

cc. Bishop Timothy Dakin  
Mr Richard Pearcey Church Warden  
Mr Peter Barrie Church Warden

Yours sincerely,

Steve Castle  
PCC Secretary

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11 January 2021

To whom it may concern.

LETTER OF GRIEVANCE

At a meeting of the full PCC of the Parish of St Barnabas, Southampton on Sunday 20 December 2020, its members unanimously passed a resolution authorising the bringing of the following grievance.

The current Bishop of Winchester has acted in a discriminatory fashion contrary to the terms of the House of Bishops' Declaration and its Five Guiding Principles.

A key feature of the Declaration and Principles is a provision for the mutual flourishing of both those who either nurture, or cannot accept, female ministry. The bishop has discriminated against a resolution parish (Southampton, St Barnabas) by proposing to abolish it, thereby preventing its flourishing. An intention to abolish the Parish was first conveyed in a Letter of Termination (LoT) dated 11 October 2019 and specifically in a Proposal for pastoral reorganisation dated 05 November 2020. The LoT stated: "The ending of the existence of the Parish of St Barnabas ..."

The following evidence of discrimination demonstrates the reason that the Parish is under threat of abolition is that it is a resolution parish.

The LoT contained no information on which the decision to abolish the Parish was based apart from a generalisation: 'to develop a new renewed and refreshed missional life moving forwards', along with several other points disputed below. That this is a generalisation is suggested by the LoT's grateful recognition that for 'many years the life and mission of the Parish' had been 'sustained.'

The LoT advised that the Parish was now 'no longer considered sustainable.' The quota has been met over the last several years through use of other parish buildings, and as advocated by a report generated in 2017 by The Centre for Theology & Community, 'A Time to Sow', which demonstrated Church of England catholic parishes in London experiencing growth.  
(<http://www.theology-centre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CTC-Research-Report-9-A-Time-To-Sow-2017online.pdf>)

The LoT advised that the Parish was now 'no longer considered sustainable' despite enhanced mission opportunities having become available, especially via an increased and large number of young people within the Parish; as confirmed by the diocese.

Adverse discrimination has been evidenced by situations of non-flourishing resulting from an absence of proactive support, at best, or neglect, at worst. The funding of mission opportunities appears to have been unfairly distributed between non-resolution and resolution parishes in Southampton.

Positive discrimination for mission within the non-resolution Southampton parish of St Mary was demonstrated by £800,000 of proactive financial support for an

Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) plant in 2018. Conversely, adverse discrimination, the absence of such proactive support for mission within one or other of the two resolution Southampton parishes, facilitated the closure of the parish of Southampton, Holy Trinity, Millbrook on 3rd January 2021. The alleged poor geographical roadside location of the church building has not prevented continued use of the parish's premises by Orthodox communities and others. Potential for mission in the parish is demonstrated where the adjacent RC parish of The Holy Family, Millbrook continues to attract large numbers. Their recent popular parish priest had previously trained at St Stephen's House, Oxford. Rev'd Fr Dr James Bradley subsequently took up a chair in canon law at Washington, USA. (<https://canonlaw.catholic.edu/faculty-and-research/faculty-profiles/bradley-james-rev/index.html>)

The congregations of the parishes of St Mary comprised, and St Barnabas comprises, of a small number of non HTB-orientated people aged over-30. That an HTB plant typically caters mainly for younger people allowed the then bishop of Southampton, in a confusion of choral accompaniment, incense and candles to conflate these with catholic teaching, and advise the subsequently surplus St Mary's congregation of the availability of a full range of non-HTB alternatives at an adjacent church, provided by Ridley Hall-trained staff and similar colleagues. (David Deboys in 1990 and Mohan Uddin in 1999.)

Discrimination against resolution parishes across Hampshire's See of Winchester is now evidenced by the existence of only two other resolution parishes. Discrimination against them continues. The Parish of Bournemouth, St Ambrose has been without an incumbent since 2013, when an older house-for-duty priest-in-charge was appointed, and the Parish of Winchester, Holy Trinity since 2017, whose website advises the current vulnerability of the church building fabric.

Discrimination resembling 'ethnic cleansing' has awarded the few remaining resolution parishes with a sect-like ambience. Paradoxically, discrimination has favoured a sect-like brand. Gumble's HTB Alpha course has been criticised for "presenting too narrow a version of Christianity ... lead[ing] people into a self-centred religion." (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1460552.stm>) Bishop Philip North is purported to have claimed that if only a small percentage of the alleged large number of Alpha subscribers had continued to worship within the Church of England, its numerical decline would have been at least halted. This is alluded to at: <https://archbishopcranmer.com/bishop-philip-north-good-news-poor/>

Were the Parish of St Barnabas abolished, Southampton would be positioned as one of the largest populated areas without a catholic Church of England parish. The abolition of the Parish would continue the creation of an 'experimental area' where purging half of the Church of England's historic protestant / catholic roots and identity results in a situation of 'no catholic faith, no Church of England'. Nevertheless, the LoT suggested supporting the Parish of St Barnabas would not be 'the best way to further the whole mission of the Church of England either in the Parish or the wider city of Southampton.'

Discrimination against the Parish of St Barnabas takes place within Southampton's evangelical saturation as evidenced by non-conformity's Community Church, Above Bar Church and Portswood Evangelical Church amongst others. In addition, the parish of Highfield provides a similar orientation for university students and other younger people. The parish of Shirley similarly thrives. The LoT seeks to ensure, and assure of, 'fresh ways to address' (unspecified) 'significant local needs and mission opportunities' Mission in Southampton thereby appears available only to the young middle-class and its opportunities firmly in the possession of non-resolution parishes.

As an, perhaps unconnected, aside, the Venerable Peter Rouch recently and unexpectedly resigned as Archdeacon of Bournemouth. The LoT had accorded him responsibility for drafting any future pastoral reorganisation proposal.

We conclude that a resolution parish is being discriminated against precisely because it is a resolution parish. The discrimination demonstrates a vulnerability characteristic of some supportive of female ministry. Many of those who find female ministry unacceptable would, nevertheless, have no reason not to encourage those supportive of it, to be confident in their view.

Steve Castle  
PCC Secretary

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The Rt Revd Dr Tim Dakin

Mr Steve Castle  
PCC Secretary  
Parish of St Barnabas, Southampton  
**By Email**

23 January 2021

Dear Steve

### **Pastoral Proposals Relating to the Parish of St Barnabas**

Thank you for your letter of 22 December 2020 enclosing copies of the correspondence which you had sent by e-mail to Jonathan Neil-Smith on the previous day.

I have not responded until now because I felt it appropriate to give Sir William Fittall, the Independent Reviewer, the opportunity to respond to your letter to him before commenting. He has now responded to you by e-mail, and you have provided further information about the nature of your grievance.

As you have confirmed in your most recent letter, I only became aware of your grievance when I received a copy of your letter to the Independent Reviewer. In his response, he noted that a grievance should only be made after the Diocesan Bishop has been given a reasonable opportunity to respond to the complaint. As you know, the Bishop of Richborough and I wrote to you in October 2019 with a clear outline of the plans being considered for the future of St Barnabas, and your complaint to the Independent Reviewer was the first written communication which we have received from you since that letter.

In your original grievance, the substance of your grievance appeared to relate primarily (if not exclusively) to the proposals made under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 which are currently the subject of a statutory consultation. Having advised you many months ago of the likelihood of such proposals, you now have an opportunity to set out your objections to those proposals through the consultation process (which you have done in the "Letter of Objection"). I share the Independent Reviewer's initial view that the consultation process provides an appropriate forum within which to ensure that those objections are properly considered.

In your subsequent letter of 11 January 2021 you provided additional reasons for your complaint. It will, of course, be for the Independent Reviewer to consider whether this information provides grounds for a grievance under the House of Bishops Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests.

However, since the further information which you have provided appears to us to reiterate what are substantially objections to the proposed pastoral reorganisation, I believe it would be helpful to you, as well as to the Independent Reviewer, if I were to provide a response which addresses some of the issues you have raised. Regrettably, having not had an opportunity to address these concerns at an earlier

stage, and prior to the involvement of the Independent Reviewer, some of the comments must now be put more starkly than might have been possible in a meeting or conversation between us.

In summary, you have suggested that by considering pastoral change which, if implemented, would result in the closure of St Barnabas as a Traditional Catholic place of worship, I have acted detrimentally towards St Barnabas and that these actions are motivated by a desire to favour one theological tradition over another in a way that is inconsistent with the Declaration.

As Bishop Norman and I explained in our letter in October 2019, the reasons for the pastoral change at St Barnabas now being under consideration are not related to its theological tradition, but rather to its current context and circumstances. I will set out below some of the processes and factors which have led to the pastoral proposals being formulated.

1. Pastoral proposals are not made by the Diocesan Bishop. Discussions about pastoral reorganisation are had at deanery, archdeaconry and diocesan mission and pastoral committees. In this case, the decision to formulate pastoral proposals affecting St Barnabas Southampton was taken by the Southern Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee at its meeting on 2 September 2020 and approved by the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee at its meeting on 21 September 2020. The committee will only make a recommendation to the Bishop once consultation has been completed, and there are further steps that are yet to unfold before any changes can be implemented. In your complaint to the Independent Reviewer you suggest that I have done something which (a) has not yet been done; and (b) is not mine to do without due process. If a pastoral scheme is ultimately made, it will be made by the Church Commissioners after legal process and in consideration of all submissions, including those relating to the theological tradition of St Barnabas and the wider context of mission in the Deanery of Southampton and Diocese of Winchester.
2. Even before alternative plans had begun to be considered, the future of St Barnabas had been discussed between the Bishop of Richborough and me, with our Diocesan and Society colleagues, in the context of a conversation which took place over several months between mid-2018 and early 2019 about the flourishing of Traditional Catholic parishes in the Diocese of Winchester. For the reasons including those explained below, it was our shared view that St Barnabas was not in a strong position, and that a hopeful future for ministry in that parish would require significant change.
3. As a courtesy, we wrote to you in October 2019 to draw to your attention the likelihood that pastoral reorganisation of some sort was likely, and to share our view that any such change would likely bring to an end the Traditional Catholic integrity which had shaped the community's worship over the past decades. We summarised the reasons for this view in our letter, and you had the opportunity to seek further clarification if it were needed when the PCC met with the Archdeacon of Bournemouth on 20 November 2019.
4. Among the factors behind our view that pastoral reorganisation should be considered are the following:
  - a. Until his retirement in 2019, the Parish of St Barnabas had enjoyed the ministry of a full-time, stipendiary incumbent for over 30 years. During that time, attendance has

- dwindled and the parish has become increasingly reliant on its modest income from hall lettings.
- b. For example, the parish's electoral roll included 57 names in 2010, and has fallen steadily over 10 years to a figure of 16 in 2019. Statistics for Average Worshipping Community are available from 2015, and these show a decrease over 5 years from 27 to 17.
  - c. During the same 10-year period, the roles of churchwarden, PCC secretary, treasurer, gift-aid officer, electoral roll officer and parish safeguarding officer have been held by the same 7 people (excluding the incumbent).
  - d. The statistics provided by the parish for the years 2010-2018 indicate that during those 9 years there were 7 baptisms, 7 funerals and no marriages.
  - e. The population of the parish is roughly 5,000 people, which means that attendance at St Barnabas equates to 0.3% of the population, the lowest of any parish in Southampton.
  - f. The parish's finances reflect its dwindling congregation. Were it not for the income generated by the rental of the parish hall, the church would have to manage on less than £2,500 per year, more than half of which is given by just 3 regular givers contributing an average of £10 per week.
  - g. Over the last 10 years, the CMF (Common Mission Fund) requested from the parish has varied between £2,000 and £15,000. In the two or three years that the contribution requested exceeded £10,000, the actual contribution received was £1,000 or less. The parish's current request and contribution is roughly £7,500.
  - h. Stipendiary clerical ministry in the Diocese of Winchester is funded by the Winchester Diocesan Board of Finance, a registered charity. The cost to the WDBF of a stipendiary incumbent minister is approximately £70k per annum in stipend, national insurance and pension contributions and housing. Unlike some dioceses, the WDBF does not have significant legacy income from which to fund these costs. Its principal source of income is the contributions received from parishes to the Common Mission Fund. Just as 80% of the WDBF's income is received from parish giving, so 80% of its expenditure goes on providing stipends and housing for its clergy. The net effect of this is that the cost of clerical ministry in this diocese is met by parishes. As you may know, the contribution to the CMF which is requested from parishes is calculated by using a formula which is intended to reflect the community's capacity to contribute to the cost of sustaining the ministry in its own context and also that of others, taking into account the size of the community and the relative affluence of the area. This means that larger and more affluent communities contribute to the support of pastoral and mission ministry in smaller communities and less affluent areas. There is therefore an expectation that those communities which benefit from greater investment will at least be good stewards of what they receive. The parish's financial position as described above indicates that it is a net recipient of over £60,000 of the funds pooled by parishes each year, raising questions about the sustainability of the present arrangements.
5. While there are many ways to describe a church community, and its mission cannot be reduced to statistics, the clear impression given by this data is of a parish which, despite substantial investment in full-time clerical ministry over several decades, has continued to diminish in size



THE BISHOP of  
WINCHESTER



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

- as a worshipping community. It is difficult to imagine a greater disparity between the level of clerical ministry offered in a parish and the level of attendance and community engagement.
6. Many explanations could be offered for the reasons for the parish's decline. However, if the Parish of St Barnabas is not flourishing, then this is clearly not because the Bishop and Diocese of Winchester have not afforded it an opportunity to do so. Rather, it has received very generous investment in the form of a full-time stipend from the pooled financial resources of the parishes across the diocese, i.e. the Common Mission Fund (totalling roughly £700k over just the last 10 years). If after such investment over a long period of time the church has continued to experience serious decline, then the Bishop and those with whom he shares a responsibility for mission and pastoral planning must consider alternatives. Although we recognise the faithfulness and commitment of those who continue to serve in the parish, and are aware that this will be sad and difficult news for you, those of us who hold a responsibility for the stewardship of these shared resources across the diocese must make difficult choices in order to ensure the provision of pastoral care and missional endeavour.

From this summary, it ought to be clear that there is an objective case for pastoral reorganisation which has nothing to do with a desire on my part to see a Traditional Catholic witness lost from Southampton. This can be clearly seen from the fact that the need for pastoral change at St Barnabas was discussed with the Provincial Episcopal Visitor many months before any plans were considered, and after Bishop Norman had agreed that such changes were necessary.

Any complaint to the Independent Reviewer from the PCC of St Barnabas must rest on questions of its own arrangements under the Declaration. It is therefore neither necessary nor appropriate for me to comment at this point on the circumstances of other parishes which you mention. However, your complaint also includes objections to the proposed pastoral reorganisation on the grounds that union with the Parish of St Mary is indicative of positive discrimination towards another churchmanship at the expense of the Traditional Catholic integrity of St Barnabas. In the interests of transparency, I will share some of the data available from Experian on the area covered by the Parish of St Barnabas:

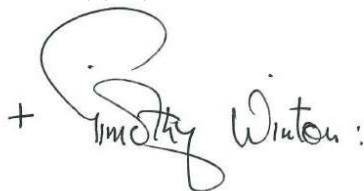
- a. The population of St Barnabas parish is 82% White ethnic with smaller numbers of BAME individuals, including 6% South Asian and 6% East Asian. The parish is 42% Christian, 48% no religion or none stated, and has smaller numbers across other religions, including 5% Muslim, 2% Sikh and 2% Hindu.
- b. The parish is ranked as the 2,582<sup>nd</sup> most deprived parish, and the population consists of 1,828 households within an area of 0.2 square miles.
- c. St Barnabas has an age profile centred on young adults, with 40% aged 20-24 years, 61% aged 18-29 years and 85% of working age. Just 7% of the population are aged under 18 years, and 7% aged 65 years and above. 75% of the population are single, with 16% married or civil partners, and 6% divorced or separated.
- d. Approximately 90% of households are students living in high density accommodation, students amongst local residents or young graduates seeking vibrant locations close to jobs and nightlife. Adjoining parishes also have significant numbers of students and young graduates.

There are many different communities in Southampton, but in considering the Parish of St Barnabas the picture is one which suggests considerable potential for intentional engagement with significant numbers of young students. The mission and pastoral plans being developed for St Barnabas recognise those realities and seek to respond to them. The churchmanship of the parish with which it is suggested that St Barnabas be united is incidental; the objective reasons for considering such a union is the demonstrable capacity (and willingness) of the Parish of St Mary to undertake such intentional engagement.

I trust that this information explains the objective justification for the proposed pastoral changes, and allays any concern that they are motivated by a desire to discriminate against a Traditional Catholic parish. Given, as you have indicated, the very limited offering of Anglo-Catholic worship in Southampton, I would be delighted if a community in that tradition were able rise to the demands of mission and ministry in a parish with the demographics of St Barnabas. In this, Bishop Norman and I are of one mind. Sadly, despite the commitment of a faithful few, that does not appear to be the case and I hope that the proposed alternative arrangements will remedy this.

If, notwithstanding this response, you are minded to pursue your complaint to the Independent Reviewer, then my colleagues and I will happily provide any further information or assistance he requires in order to resolve the matter.

With my prayers and best wishes



+ Tim Dakin

The Rt Revd Dr Tim Dakin  
The Bishop of Winchester

Cc. Sir William Fittall, The Independent Reviewer  
The Rt Revd Norman Banks, Bishop of Richborough  
The Ven Richard Brand, Archdeacon of Winchester