

EPSOM DEANERY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #7

July 2026



Fr Chris writes:

Since the last Deanery newsletter, we have had the joyful news of the appointment of Fr Stephen Wang as our new Bishop. We look forward to welcoming him to the Diocese and working with him in the mission of proclaiming the Gospel. His in-tray is going to be rather full, I imagine, and we look forward, in due course, to his thoughts on the priorities for the Diocese and in particular on the Pastoral Plan.

Also in recent weeks, we have received the news that Fr Charles Howell will be taking a sabbatical, beginning in the autumn – we wish him well and pray that this time may bring all the blessings that Fr Charles is hoping for, and many others besides.

Canon Jonathan Martin has told us that, sadly, there is no plan for a priest to come to Effingham and Fetcham and that the clergy of the entire Deanery ought to begin to reflect together on how pastoral provision is offered, not just to these communities, but to all the communities in this area. Although we have not yet been formally re-constituted as one parish served by all the priests together, we are being encouraged to think and plan in this way. This is what is meant by the concept, rooted in Canon Law, that the clergy serve in *solidum*. Put simply, this means that all the priests are individually and collectively responsible for the pastoral life of all, working with the deacons and lay faithful. The clergy together are the Parish Priest, or perhaps better, the parish priests.

The benefit of working together in this way is that it promotes an approach that builds collaboration and support, and where the gifts and talents of each are offered in service to the whole area. This willingness to think across the board has been evident in the discussions clergy have had in the last few weeks about pastoral provision, and the generous sense that we, and the people in our communities, should share the impact of change. Whilst there are many aspects of pastoral life that will need to be considered, an important issue that needs addressing early is that of Sunday Mass times. Theologically, this is the greatest prayer the Christian community offers together; practically, for many people, it's an important weekly moment of contact, albeit often brief, with a priest. As we began to think about Sunday Mass times, it seemed wise to acknowledge that, at some point in the not-too-distant future, some of our priests will move into well-earned retirement. There's no date on this, and no hurry(!), but it needs to be factored in.

The task before the clergy, then, is to draft a schedule of Sunday Masses that could be served by eight priests in the Deanery. Again, as we prayed and reflected together, although we very much hope that there will continue to be retired priests able to supply, this isn't something that can be counted on, and so it also seemed wise to factor in a little bit of breathing room to allow us to cover for each other for holidays, retreats, pilgrimage or sickness; indeed, although blessed to be making plans for eight priests, we have to acknowledge the possibility that numbers in the Deanery could reduce in the future. In addition, we felt that it's important to bear in mind, and include in our plans as far as possible, the greatly valued connection between people, place and priest. Finally, rather than make changes piecemeal – some this autumn, and then more in the next couple of years – we think it would be a good idea to plan for the new schedule now. The clergy have had a couple of meetings to date where these principles have been thought through. We're going to reflect on and pray about what we've discussed so far over the summer and reconvene in the autumn as we finalise plans.

Please do pray: for Bishop-elect Stephen; for Fr Charles; and for each other, the clergy and lay faithful in our communities; that guided by the Holy Spirit, we may have the strength and courage to look to the future with confidence that, even where there are changes, we remain rooted in the unchanging love of God who provides abundantly for his people.

Fr Chris Bergin

Celebrating our Communities

Taking time to celebrate what has happened amongst us over the last twelve months

It is just twelve months since the initial meeting of our “**Leadership Team**” – that is, a group of clergy and laity drawn from each of the existing parishes across our Deanery, in line with the direction from Bishop Richard (as he was at the time) that each area should have such a group to help develop local plans for responding to the **Diocesan Pastoral Plan: The Call to Mission**. There is much to celebrate around our communities since then, including:

Engaging our communities through ‘Have your say’ in Advent 2025

- One of the things identified in early discussions of the Leadership Team was the need to engage parishioners across all our communities, not just to share plans as they began to form and explain how everyone could get involved, but also to understand what is important to parishioners in their life as part of the Church. Towards the end of last year, the Team put together the proposals for a series of local meetings at the start of 2026 and ran the associated “**Have your say**” process in Advent to capture as many views as possible through postcards and on-line contributions.

The Team had no idea what sort of response we would get to the request for views in the busy run-up to Christmas and we were delighted with both the amount of input and the range and frankness of the views expressed. Even though the planned ‘roadshows’ were then deferred (following the announcement in December of Bishop Richard’s new appointment), this feedback provides a wonderful base for understanding what is important to people and – whatever the local organisation structure turns out to be – what we should be doing together. A summary of the feedback – and the initial actions taken in response to it – was included in *Deanery Newsletter #6 (Lent 2026)* and you can still read it on our Deanery website [see below]; the Leadership Team will continue to work through the material over the coming months.

And you can continue to have your say: if there is something you want to hear about in the newsletter and/or on the website, please let us know at epsomdeanerynewsletter@gmail.com.

Improved collaboration

- One of the clear priorities identified from parishioner contributions was a desire to get better at working together. Many of you will have noticed an increase in the way we promote each others’ activities and events in our local newsletters and websites. Parish secretaries / office managers across the Deanery have met more than once to discuss how they can better work together. The way in which Bereavement Teams have been working together was covered in *Newsletter #6* and the communities of Effingham & Fetcham combined with Ashted in preparation for this year’s Confirmations.

Developing our Deanery identity

- In the past, the existence of the local Deanery was rarely mentioned and many people simply did not know which other churches were in the same Deanery as them. This is our seventh *Deanery Newsletter* and we hope there is a growing understanding of our collective identity and how we are working together.
- Our inaugural ‘**Deanery 24-hour Adoration with the Lord**’ took place at the end of May at St Joseph’s, Epsom, with parishioners from across our communities coming together to maintain an uninterrupted vigil between Mass on Friday morning and Mass on Saturday morning. The Friday evening included an hour of sacred music sung by ‘*Epsom Deanery Singers*’, with members from the choirs of many of our constituent parishes.
- **There is another Deanery celebration coming up on Tuesday 28th July**, to mark the visit of the relics of St Gerard Majella as part of the nationwide tour marking the 300th anniversary of his birth. [*‘Epsom Deanery Singers’ will be re-forming, with old and new members, to lead the music at the concelebrated Mass.*]
- We have a **Deanery website:** www.epsomdeanery.com
This went live at the start of Advent 2025 to support the “**Have your say**” initiative and now includes:
 - A **Parish Directory**, with details of all our churches / clergy / parish office hours & contact details / regular weekly Mass times & other regular opportunities to pray and meet together
 - **Latest news** and a rolling **calendar** of up-coming events across the Deanery and beyond

- Past editions of the *Deanery Newsletter*, including

#3 **Focus on Prayer**

#4 **Focus on Formation**

#6 **Focus on Mission**

#6 **"Have your say"**

a summary of the
contributions received

- **More information** about the Pastoral Plan and how we have been responding to it in this area, plus excerpts from scripture / Church teaching, with many external links, for those who want to explore further

➤ **New local groups have been activated, including:**

Youth Group
St Michael's, Ashtead
Every Friday
6:30-8:30pm

Social Hub
St Clement's, Ewell
Every Friday
2:00-4:00pm
incl. July & August

Youth Group
St Joseph's Dorking
Thursday fortnightly
Restarting in September

Family Faith Formation Group
St Joseph's, Epsom
Saturday 25th July
& last Sat. monthly
3:00-5:00pm

Please check local newsletters – some groups may take a summer break!

➤ **Improving the ways we manage our money**

We have established a new Deanery-wide finance group, with lay representatives from each of the nine local finance teams, plus three clergy members. Irrespective of any structural change, this group has already been getting to know each other and identifying opportunities for shared efficiencies and cost savings across our communities. In due course, if we become a single parish, this group will become the Finance Committee and will be responsible for developing the relationship between the new single Finance Committee and local finance teams who will continue to advise the clergy about matters in their community.

More reasons to celebrate

Baptism
More than 240
infants & children
baptised this year

First Holy Communion
Some 260 children
have made their First
Holy Communion

Confirmation
120 young people
received the sacrament
of Confirmation this May

Adult Reception
More than 60 adults have been
received into full Communion
with the Roman Catholic Church

○ **Milestone anniversaries:**

- **Fr Ian Vane:** 40th Anniversary of Ordination (*July 1986*)
- **Fr Alexander Lucie-Smith:** 30th Anniversary of Ordination (*April 1996*)
- **Fr Simon Iduh:** 20th Anniversary of Ordination (*July 2006*)
- *and not forgetting ...* **Fr Gary Carter:** 1st Anniversary of Ordination (*July 2025*)
- **St Joseph's, Epsom:** 25th Anniversary of Consecration of the new church (*1st May 2001*)

Getting to know each other



Rev. Dr. Ian Patrick McDole

Growing up in Northern Kentucky, I felt a draw to priesthood from an early age. My parents were not necessarily 'religious' by American standards. We went to Mass every Sunday and I was sent to our parish school and my parents and grandparents encouraged my interests in the Bible and the Catholic Church. At High School, I was lucky to meet many good friends who also supported and encouraged me in my discernment towards priesthood. I had a rather typical experience though - running Cross Country and Track, going to parties, and hanging out with friends in various places.

I attended Xavier University for my first two undergraduate years, finally settling on a BA in Classics, History, and Philosophy, after starting off studying the Natural Sciences. I transferred to the University of Notre Dame, where I quickly found myself in a friend group of committed Catholics, many of whom went on to priesthood, religious life, and teaching at Catholic universities.

At the end of my third year, as many friends were thinking about how to go to grad school, law school, or medical school, I decided to look at where to apply for seminary studies. I did not particularly want to stay in my home diocese, but when I wrote to the vocations promoter out of curiosity, the bishop immediately set up a meeting and accepted me. I was sent to the North American College in Rome for seminary and studied at the Gregorian University. After being ordained a deacon in 2009, I was asked to study Canon Law in my final year of seminary. I was ordained in the Cathedral in Covington, Kentucky on 19 June 2010.

FEEDBACK: epsomdeanerynewsletter@gmail.com

Upon completing the degree in canon law in June 2012, I returned to Covington where I served as a judge in the diocesan tribunal, an instructor and chaplain to Covington Catholic High School, the bishop's assistant Master of ceremonies, and on the bishop's canonical council. Eventually I also was asked to serve as the director of the office of worship and as vice chancellor, an observer on the board of governors at Thomas More College, and a member of the Diocesan Review Board.

In 2016 I asked my bishop for a reprieve from administrative duties. I came to London that autumn to complete the Masters in Medieval History at King's College London and then went on to pursue doctoral work in history at the University of Oxford. In 2020, with the encouragement of Canon Jonathan Martin, I asked Bishop Moth if I could take up some pastoral ministry in the Diocese of A&B. He assigned me to Horsham as weekend help as I completed my research. In 2022, the position of Catholic Chaplain to Eton College was open. With permission of both Bishop Moth and my own bishop, I applied and was offered the post.

After two years at Eton, I decided to seek a different ministry. Bishop Richard received me back into the diocese and appointed me to St Ann's parish at Banstead. In addition to my parochial responsibilities, I serve as a defender of the bond of marriage on our tribunal and for the National Marriage Appeals Tribunal of Ireland. I am also an honorary lecturer at St Mary's University, Twickenham, and assist with the RC chaplaincies at High Down & Downview prisons.

Featured in previous issues – all these profiles are available at: www.epsomdeanery.com/deanery-clergy

#1		#2		#3	#4			#6
								
Fr Alexander Lucie-Smith, Ewell	Deacon Paul Fisher, Cobham	Fr Rajesh Minz, Tadworth*	Deacon Ian Wells, Effingham & Fetcham	Provost William Davern, Epsom	Fr Gary Carter, Epsom	Fr Daryl George, Cobham	Fr Charles Howell, Effingham & Fetcham	Fr Ian Vane, Dorking

Still to come: Fr Chris Bergin, Fr Michael Masterson, Fr Simon Hall, Fr Simon Iduh & Deacon David Pattinson

* Fr Rajesh was recalled to India in January 2026 and Fr Simon Iduh is now at Tadworth

Upcoming events

There is rolling calendar of upcoming events across our communities and beyond on our Deanery website: see www.epsomdeanery.com/calendar. If there are other events that you would like to see on the website, please use the contact address at the foot of every website page. Upcoming highlights include:

Discover the Meaning of the Roman Catholic Mass	7 Saturdays (Jun – Dec) 10:30am-12:20pm	Assisi Room, St Augustine's Abbey, CHILWORTH Separate sessions, must be booked in advance, go to: https://www.ticketsource.com/whats-on/guildford/st-augustines-abbey/discover-the-meaning-of-the-roman-catholic-mass-public-talk-series/2026-06-27/10:30/t-0eeopnn
Visit of the Relics of St Gerard Majella	Tue. 28-Jul from 6:00pm	St Joseph's Church, EPSOM Private prayer from 6:00pm, Mass at 7:00pm, followed by blessings
CELEBRATE Festival	Sat. 15-Aug-Wed. 19-Aug	Worth School, WORTH For full details and to book, go to: https://www.celebratetrust.org/
Young Adult's Retreat Day	Sat. 26-Sep 10:00am-6:30pm	St Wilfrid's, BURGESS HILL To book your place or find out more, visit the Diocesan Website events page: https://abdiocese.churchsuite.com/events/zzkhkfhj
Marriage Anniversaries Mass	Sat. 3-Oct 11:30am	ARUNDEL CATHEDRAL To book (free): https://abdiocese.churchsuite.com/events/em7etalu
Adoremus Eucharistic Festival 2026	Sat. 10-Oct 10:30 until Sun. 11-Oct	SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL & WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL Saturday 10:30am @ Southwark (Mass at noon); procession 3:00pm; Benediction (5:00pm), Mass (6:00pm) @ Westminster, followed by Holy Hours & all-night vigil to 6:00am
A&B Diocesan Pilgrimage to Walsingham	Fri. 23-Oct- Sun. 25-Oct	Departing from St Philip Howard Centre, CRAWLEY For details / to book, go to: https://abdiocese.churchsuite.com/events/kjbnthfp
Parish Mission	Mon. 30-Nov- Wed. 2-Dec	St Ann's Church, BANSTEAD