***Mission Statement***

Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ,

we, the members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council of Kildare and Leighlin,

will strive to bring the message of Christ into an ever-changing world.

We will seek to identify and respond to the pastoral needs of the people of our Diocese,

so that together we continue the journey towards being an inclusive, welcoming and flourishing Church.

In his opening address to the newly formed Diocesan Pastoral Council in April 2019, Bishop Denis made clear that the DPC would not be a ***“holy huddle”.*** That the title DPC is a working title and not cast in stone. He stated that ***‘more important than what it is called, is what it will do’.*** He said he would like the DPC to advise him on the pastoral life of Kildare & Leighlin, that we need a new voice of what our mission is. He wanted the DPC to assist him in a ***“root & branch review”*** of the Diocese that can be brought back to parishes and deaneries.

The DPC worked with Jim Deeds and Paula McKeon in the early stages of formation and in the preparation of our Mission statement….. *(read Mission Statement)*

Working with Jim & Paula our initial task focused on identifying and developing key working themes in order to guide and direct the way forward.

We were mindful that the ***DPC does not operate in isolation*** and there should be support and partnership across all aspects of diocesan planning. Each diocesan group should see each other as resources and not separate entities, that there is wisdom to be shared amongst the groups and in communication with one another.

In 2020 through Covid restrictions we continued to meet via zoom as we developed and finetuned our five themes and working principles. Bishop Denis expressed his desire that the DPC and Council of Priests would work together and the DPC would also work in partnership with various diocesan groups such as:

* The Diocesan Liturgical Commission - Faith Development Services - Diocesan Finance Committee to ensure that all groups are working on the needs of the Diocese together.
* In July 2020 in an easing of restrictions we delivered an in-person presentation to members of the Priests’ Council, Bishop’s House, Carlow College, Diocesan Finance Committee, Diocesan Pastoral Council, Faith Development Services, Diocesan Commission for Liturgical Formation and Bishop Denis. An account of the work of the DPC was presented and details of the Working Principles and the five themes were outlined.

**The five working themes that had emerged were**

1. *Sharing the good news of our faith & getting to know Jesus*
2. *Lifelong faith formation*
3. *Reaching out and being present to all*
4. *Life giving liturgies that lift up our hearts to God*
5. *Animating and supporting Parishes*

**Under those headings various initiatives have taken place** *(a couple of examples)*

* **A Survey for Parishes** during Lent 2021. This survey was a first step by the Diocesan Pastoral Council in reaching out to parishes in a supportive conversation about the realities of parish life, particularly during the pandemic and how parishes can assist one another.
* **Listening Lent Synodal Listening Conversations** in parishes and groups of parishes. A series of videos were recorded, featuring people from different backgrounds walking together on a Synodal Journey in order to engage a diverse group of participants during the Lent.
* **Focus Groups meetings** were held alongside the Listening Lent Conversation and together with online and individual submissions were all part of the K&L Diocesan Submissions toward the National Synod Synthesis.
* **The DPC** as well as having delegates to the National Synod Committee participated in the K&L Synod Synthesis Day preparing the submission for the Diocese.

Several sub groups emerged from the five working themes and work continued in these throughout. As the conversation developed it became clear that perhaps the most pressing need for examination is the future role of the Parish and the Parish Priest.

From the *Future Parish Structures Group*, came the working document **“Put Out into the Deep Water”.**

* Before last summer Bishop Denis met with clergy in the seven pastoral areas where this document, “Put out into Deep Waters” was presented and generally welcomed among the clergy.
* In November 2022, Jim Deeds was invited by Bishop Denis to work with the DPC to facilitate the continued development of the process. Jim met with clergy in each Pastoral area over recent months and has also met with the Diocesan Faith Development Services.
* Bringing us up to date, we reached the next stage of the process, to meet with lay & clergy in the seven Pastoral areas when Jim injured his back and so those planned Lay & Clergy meetings were postponed at very short notice. Rather than defer until September and halt the momentum that has been built up it was decided by a sub-group of the DPC & Council of Priests, to work with the Pastoral Area in this hybrid style of meeting. *(handover to Jim)*