

## **Proposal 1: Invest in People – employ a worker – youth/ outreach, lay training**

### **Opportunities**

#### **1. Youth Engagement & Support**

- **Encourage Young People:** The proposal offers a chance to reach out to young people, making them feel relevant and included in the Church community. By employing a youth worker or training young people, the Church can foster a sense of belonging and help them develop a deeper connection to their faith.
- **Targeting Youth Where They Are:** Using social media and connecting with schools allows for direct outreach to young people in places where they are already engaged, which can encourage participation and attendance.
- **Bridging the Gap Between Church and Schools:** A youth worker or dedicated outreach programme could serve as a bridge between schools and the Church, creating a welcoming space for young people and helping them understand that church can be a place where they are accepted.

#### **2. Strengthening the Church Community**

- **Involving the Entire Church Family:** By employing a worker to support young people, parishes can also bring together families, catechists, and the wider community, thus breaking down barriers and creating stronger connections between all groups within the parish.
- **Lay Training and Empowerment:** Investing in lay people, especially in training catechists and volunteers, can strengthen the overall parish community by relieving pressure from priests and enhancing sacramental preparation. This also helps ensure that the Church remains vibrant, even as the number of priests decreases.

#### **3. Improving Parish Outreach**

- **Decreasing Stress on Parishes:** The proposal could provide much-needed support to parishes, reducing the stress on individual clergy members. This would also create more opportunities for active lay participation, which is essential as the Church faces challenges like fewer priests and changing parish dynamics.

- **Increased Knowledge and Skills:** Through lay training and youth worker support, parishes would benefit from more knowledgeable and better-equipped individuals to lead and support various church activities, helping them become more sustainable and responsive to the needs of their communities.
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## Concerns

### 1. Sustainability & Funding

- **Central Funding?:** One of the main concerns is how to fund the role of a youth worker or lay training programme. The issue of who will pay for salaries or support the roles is a recurring concern, especially considering the lack of dedicated resources.
- **Financial Burden:** Some worry that the cost of hiring professional staff, including youth workers or lay trainers, would place a heavy financial burden on parishes. There's concern that it might be difficult to sustain such roles long-term without proper funding.

### 2. Capacity & Resources

- **Too Thinly Spread:** Many feel that the focus of the proposal is too narrow and that one worker may not be enough to address the broad needs of multiple parishes. There are also concerns about the capacity of a single person to handle the workload effectively, which could lead to burnout or underperformance.
- **Lack of Suitable Candidates:** The idea of finding someone suitable for the role of youth worker or lay trainer also raises concerns. Not all parishes may have access to trained or experienced candidates, and there are worries about whether the right person can be found.

### 3. Resistance & Support Issues

- **Resistance from Clergy and Parishes:** There is a potential for resistance from clergy or parishioners, especially if they feel that the introduction of lay workers or youth workers undermines their traditional roles or adds additional responsibilities. Some worry that not all parishes are ready for such changes, and there could be opposition.
- **Need for More Than One Worker:** Several comments suggest that employing just one person may not be sufficient to address the growing needs of youth engagement, lay training, and parish outreach. This raises the concern of needing more resources or a team approach.

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## **Conclusion**

The proposal presents valuable opportunities to strengthen youth engagement, empower lay people, and reduce the pressure on clergy within the Church. By hiring a youth worker or investing in lay training, the Church can foster deeper connections with young people, encourage greater participation, and provide more support to parishes. However, there are significant concerns regarding the sustainability and funding of such roles, as well as the capacity of a single worker to meet the diverse needs of the community. Furthermore, there is a need to address potential resistance from clergy and parishioners and ensure that there are enough suitable candidates for these roles. A well-thought-out plan that includes funding, resources, and broad community support will be essential to turn these opportunities into lasting, positive change.

**Proposal 2: Hub and satellites – one central hub and other locations with mix of church/ presbytery/ social/ (whole) community activity (beyond Catholic population)/ centralised admin – including possible multi-purpose space**

**Opportunities**

**1. Enhanced Collaboration & Resource Sharing**

- **Shared Strengths and Talents:** The Hub and satellite model provides an opportunity for parishes to collaborate, sharing skills and resources more efficiently, which can reduce costs and enhance the overall church experience. Centralising administration and community activities can streamline processes, helping parishes that lack these resources.
- **Working Together More Effectively:** The model encourages more partnership working, combining resources to benefit all parishes involved, creating a stronger sense of unity and shared purpose. Shared skills and a centralised admin system could improve outreach and community activities, benefiting both the Church and the wider community.

**2. Cost Efficiency & Sustainability**

- **Cost Savings:** A centralised hub could help reduce administrative costs and improve resource allocation, making better use of current locations. Centralising resources, such as admin or properties, could cut costs and save money in the long term, which could be redirected to other areas of parish life.
- **Revenue Generation & Long-Term Viability:** With careful planning, the hub model could be a revenue earner, generating funds through shared spaces or community activities. The model could also be sustainable and future-proofed, ensuring the Church remains viable in the long term.

**3. Building Stronger Community Connections**

- **Bringing People Together:** The central hub model provides an opportunity to bring together people from different parishes and backgrounds, fostering greater inclusivity and unity within the Church. It allows parishes to maintain their individual identities while building closer relationships within the wider family of churches.
- **Community Engagement:** The hub model opens the church up for more community use, which can engage not just parishioners, but also the wider community. This helps the Church remain relevant and visible in the

local area, showing that it matters and is a space for people to gather, not just for worship.

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## Concerns

### 1. Practical & Logistical Issues

- **Travel & Accessibility:** One of the primary concerns is how people, particularly the elderly, disabled, or those without transport, will be able to access the hub or travel between satellite locations. The logistics of transport, especially in larger geographical areas, could create significant barriers, leading to exclusion or isolation of some parishioners.
- **Geography and Practicalities:** The geography of the area may be too large to make the hub and satellites effective for all parishes, with some locations being too far for easy access. There are concerns about how this will work in practice, particularly in terms of site selection, transport links, and how the buildings will be used.

### 2. Loss of Local Identity & Community

- **Dilution of Parish Life:** Many people are concerned that the hub model may dilute the identity and sense of community within individual parishes. With centralised resources, some fear that local traditions, needs, and concerns might be overlooked in favour of a more uniform approach that may not suit the local context.
- **Emotional Attachment to Local Communities:** Parishioners may have an emotional attachment to their own communities, and some worry that they will feel disconnected or excluded from the new, centralised structure. People who are already invested in their local church may feel as though their community is being lost or diminished.

### 3. Resistance to Change & Implementation Challenges

- **Clergy and Parish Resistance:** There is potential resistance from both clergy and parishioners who may feel that the centralised hub threatens their sense of authority, privilege, or control. Some clergy members may be reluctant to embrace changes in their roles, while others may feel that this model undermines their pastoral duties.
- **Lack of Clear Planning & Implementation:** The concerns around the model being 'messy' or lacking clarity in terms of planning are significant. There are questions about what the hub will look like in practice, how the satellites will function, who will staff these spaces, and what the

decision-making process will be. Without clear, detailed planning, this model may not meet the needs of all parishes involved.

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## **Conclusion**

The Hub and satellite model presents several exciting opportunities for the Church to become more efficient, sustainable, and inclusive. By pooling resources, centralising administration, and building stronger connections between parishes, this model can help reduce costs, foster collaboration, and engage more people from diverse backgrounds. It has the potential to bring people together, maintain individual parish identities, and create a more accessible Church for all.

However, the implementation of this model raises significant concerns, particularly around accessibility for vulnerable groups, the risk of losing local identity, and the potential resistance from both clergy and parishioners. To overcome these challenges, careful planning, community involvement, and clear communication will be essential. Addressing logistical issues, such as transport and site selection, as well as ensuring that the model is tailored to local needs, will be crucial in ensuring its success. Ultimately, this proposal needs careful consideration and broad support to make it a sustainable and effective solution for the future of the Church.

## **Proposal 3: All current Parish church buildings consolidated to create one central church campus – multi-purpose – church, social, community**

### **Opportunities**

#### **1. Cost Efficiency & Resource Optimization**

- **Cost Savings:** One of the key opportunities of a central campus is the potential for significant cost savings. By selling existing church buildings and consolidating resources, the Church can free up funds to reinvest in training, community events, and staff. Centralising admin and services can further reduce overheads, making the Church more efficient and sustainable.
- **Sustainable & Future-Proofed:** A central campus model could be designed with future needs in mind, ensuring the Church is better prepared for long-term viability. This model could streamline operations and allow for more sustainable management of resources, helping to address the decline in numbers and the challenges posed by under-utilised properties.

#### **2. Community Engagement & Accessibility**

- **Bringing People Together:** A centralised campus could act as a hub for various community activities, providing more opportunities for people to connect with each other and with the Church. This could include outreach programmes, training, and multi-purpose use of the facilities, making the Church a more integral part of community life.
- **More Accessible for Wider Audiences:** With a central location, the Church could become more attractive to young families and youth, as it would offer a more modern, accessible space. Additionally, longer opening hours and more volunteers could help create a space that caters to a wider range of people, especially if it includes public transport links and parking options.

#### **3. Stronger Collaboration & Clergy Support**

- **Priests Working Together:** A centralised model could provide better support for priests, with opportunities for collaboration and shared roles. This could lead to a stronger sense of community within the clergy, helping to address the challenges of a decreasing number of priests by pooling resources and expertise.
- **Skills Development:** The central hub could offer more training opportunities for lay people, young people, and women in leadership

roles. This would allow for greater involvement and empowerment of the laity, ensuring the Church is not solely dependent on clergy and that the next generation of leaders is nurtured.

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## Concerns

### 1. Accessibility & Loss of Local Community

- **Transport and Accessibility Issues:** A major concern is that many parishioners, especially the elderly and disabled, may find it difficult to travel to a centralised campus. Public transport access may not be sufficient for all areas, and the geographical layout of the community could make it harder for people to attend Mass regularly. For some, this may lead to feelings of exclusion and isolation.
- **Loss of Parish Identity:** Many people are concerned that centralising the Church would result in the loss of individual parish identities. Parishioners have deep emotional ties to their local communities and fear that a centralised campus could dilute the unique character of their parishes, leading to a loss of local traditions and a sense of belonging.

### 2. Resistance to Change & Potential Negative Impact

- **Fear of Losing What We Have:** Many parishioners are wary that the shift to a central campus could lead to the closure of churches and a significant loss of community. People are concerned that the move could segregate communities and create divisions, as those who are unable to travel may stop attending Mass altogether. There is also concern that the centralisation might not meet the needs of all communities, particularly in less accessible areas.
- **Clergy and Parishioner Resistance:** There is significant apprehension from both clergy and parishioners about the practicalities and emotional impact of such a major change. Some clergy members may feel disempowered or resistant to the idea of centralisation, fearing a loss of control or influence. Similarly, parishioners may feel that their voices and needs will be overlooked in a larger, more perhaps impersonal structure.

### 3. Financial & Logistical Challenges

- **High Costs of Implementation:** While a centralised campus could save money in the long term, the initial cost of setting up such a large facility, including a new build and potential renovation, could be prohibitively expensive. There are also concerns about how to sustain the financial



model, especially if the new campus is not used enough to justify the ongoing maintenance costs.

- **Logistical Challenges:** The logistics of managing a central campus that serves multiple parishes could be complex, particularly in terms of ensuring adequate space, facilities, and staffing. There are also concerns about how the new structure will operate in terms of Mass schedules, volunteer management, and integration with existing parish programmes.

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## Conclusion

The proposal to create one central campus offers several promising opportunities for the Church, including cost savings, better use of resources, and increased community engagement. It could help centralise admin, reduce overheads, and foster greater collaboration among clergy and parishioners. The model also offers the potential for better accessibility and outreach, particularly to younger families and the wider community.

However, there are significant concerns that need to be addressed before such a transformation can take place. The primary concerns centre around accessibility, especially for the elderly and vulnerable, and the potential loss of local parish identity. There is also resistance from clergy and parishioners who fear that centralisation will lead to the loss of traditional community structures and the closure of beloved local churches. Financial challenges, including the high cost of setting up and maintaining a new centralised facility, further complicate the proposal.

In conclusion, while the central campus model presents an innovative way to address the Church's challenges, its success will depend on careful planning, strong community buy-in, and addressing the concerns of those who may feel displaced or excluded by such a change. A phased approach, clear communication, and attention to the practicalities of implementation will be essential in making this vision a reality.

#### **Proposal 4: Focus on activity/ies to bring parishes together:**

- **A central BIG event at a neutral venue**
- **Journey through parishes for different Masses/ services**

#### **Opportunities**

##### **1. Community Building & Connection**

- **Bringing People Together:** Both the "BIG Event" and the "Journey through Parishes" offer great opportunities to build stronger community ties between parishes. These events could allow parishioners to meet others from different communities, break down barriers, and foster a greater sense of unity. For example, a big event or a community retreat could create deeper relationships and build a stronger, more inclusive Catholic community across parishes.
- **Sharing Best Practices & Learning from Each Other:** The "Journey through Parishes" offers an opportunity for parishioners to showcase what they have to offer, share good practices, and learn from each other. By visiting different parishes and engaging with their unique activities, communities can get inspired by new ideas and spread positive examples of successful initiatives, enriching the overall experience of all participants.

##### **2. Spiritual Growth & Inclusivity**

- **Building Deeper Spirituality:** The "BIG Event" could be a chance for spiritual renewal, with potential for retreats or days of reflection that bring people together in prayer and shared experience. Such gatherings could help people grow spiritually while also strengthening the bonds between parishes.
- **Encouraging Inclusivity:** These events can help to ensure that all parishioners feel represented, including minority groups and those with special needs. Careful planning to include everyone—whether through transport options for the elderly or accessible venues—would allow these initiatives to truly be inclusive and unifying.

##### **3. Collaboration & Joint Activities**

- **Collaboration Between Parishes:** Both ideas provide opportunities for collaboration. A "BIG Event" could involve all parishes working together to make it a success, while the "Journey through Parishes" encourages mutual support, where each parish has the opportunity to share their strengths and celebrate together. This could foster a collaborative spirit

that extends beyond the event itself, creating lasting partnerships between parishes.

- **Youth Engagement & Family Activities:** Offering family-focused activities, such as youth masses or summer groups, could attract younger families and children. These events could be opportunities to engage youth with the Church, helping them feel included and connected to the larger faith community.

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## Concerns

### 1. Logistical & Accessibility Issues

- **Transport Challenges:** A major concern across both events is the transport network, especially for the elderly, sick, and those without easy access to cars. For these events to be inclusive, a transport network must be set up, particularly for those who need assistance in getting to central events. Without proper logistics in place, people may be excluded, preventing them from participating in the community-building efforts.
- **Location & Accessibility of Events:** Finding suitable, neutral locations for these events can be difficult. In some cases, accessibility could be a barrier, especially if the event is not held centrally or does not have good public transport links. Additionally, for those with mobility issues, attending these events may present a significant challenge.

### 2. Cost & Resources

- **Cost of Organising Events:** Both the "BIG Event" and "Journey through Parishes" would require significant resources, both in terms of funding and manpower. Concerns about where the money will come from to cover expenses are valid, especially if the events are ambitious in scope. Without a clear plan for fundraising or sponsorship, costs could be prohibitive, making it difficult to ensure the events are successful and sustainable.
- **Staffing and Coordination:** Organising these events, especially if they are large in scale, will require careful planning and coordination across different parishes. There's a concern that the workload could fall on a small group of people or volunteers, which may lead to burnout or poorly executed events if not properly managed. Additionally, ensuring that events are organised without disturbing the day-to-day services of individual parishes is important to avoid disruption.

### 3. Effectiveness & Relevance

- **What Will Be Achieved?** Some are unsure of the actual impact that these events will have. While bringing people together is valuable, it's important to define what the "BIG Event" or "Journey through Parishes" aims to achieve. Is it about building community, educating parishioners, or addressing larger challenges like church buildings or declining attendance? Clear goals and outcomes need to be set for these events to feel like they are addressing real issues, rather than just being a social occasion.
- **Not Enough on Its Own:** There is a concern that these events, while valuable, may not address the larger, deeper issues facing the Church. For example, the "BIG Event" may not resolve the structural issues related to church buildings or long-term sustainability. While these events can build community, they may not be enough to solve broader challenges such as a decline in attendance or the need for structural reform.

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### Conclusion

The proposed events—the "BIG Event" and the "Journey through Parishes"—present valuable opportunities for community building, spiritual growth, and greater collaboration between parishes. They offer ways to bring people together, foster inclusivity, and create deeper connections through shared experiences. These initiatives could provide much-needed opportunities for parishes to showcase their strengths, support each other, and engage with a wider audience, especially the younger generations and families.

However, there are significant concerns that need to be addressed for these events to succeed. Key logistical challenges include transport access for vulnerable parishioners and ensuring that the locations are accessible to all. There are also concerns about the cost of organising such events and the need for clear coordination to ensure that the workload is properly distributed. Lastly, the effectiveness of these events must be carefully considered—while they are beneficial for fostering community spirit, they may not be sufficient to tackle deeper issues like church sustainability, declining attendance, or the need for infrastructure reform.

In conclusion, while these events have the potential to bring about positive change, careful planning and a clear focus on outcomes are essential. With proper organisation, clear goals, and attention to accessibility and cost, the events can be a positive step forward in forming a family of Parishes within Huyton and building a more united faith community.

### **Additional Comments: A Summary**

The comments reflect a strong desire to balance tradition with change in parish life, with many respondents emphasising the importance of preserving the core community of dedicated parishioners. There is concern that changes aimed at attracting new attendees might alienate those who are already committed to supporting the church. A recurring theme is the need for effective leadership—a good leader can make a transformation successful, while poor leadership could harm the community. While there is openness to the idea of centralising resources (particularly in a combination of Options 1 and 2), there are worries about the loss of local identity, the geographic layout of the area, and practical challenges such as transport and accessibility, particularly for the elderly and vulnerable. Many also stress the importance of involving young people and families, with specific reference to schools, youth groups, and the need for family-focused activities. There is a clear call for financial transparency and realistic planning to ensure that proposals are both affordable and achievable, and that the church's future is built on a sustainable foundation. While change is necessary, the overall message is that it must be handled sensitively, inclusively, and in a way that respects both the church's heritage and its evolving mission.