



BISHOP MICHAEL'S FOREWORD

One of the fruits of our diocesan process in 2003-2004, which we called 'Forward and Outward Together', was a desire for a stronger sense of being one diocesan family in East Anglia.

The diocese is not a loose confederation of autonomous parishes. Our parish communities are integral parts of the diocese, of the 'particular Church' of East Anglia. As the *Code of Canon Law* puts it,

A diocese is a portion of the people of God, which is entrusted to a Bishop to be nurtured by him, with the cooperation of the *presbyterium*, in such a way that, remaining close to its pastor and gathered by him through the Gospel and the Eucharist in the Holy Spirit, it constitutes a particular Church. In this Church, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ truly exists and functions. (*Canon 369*)

A parish is a certain community of Christ's faithful stably established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor. (*Canon 515.1*)

Each parish has a distinctive character, and there is plenty of room for local initiative and creativity.

It is important, however, that we maintain and deepen our sense of being one diocesan family, and thus able to move Forward and Outward Together in Christ.

Since 2003, we have worked closely together – bishop, priests, deacons and lay people – to discern the way forward together.

This folder draws together much of that work. It has all been through a process of consultation.

Besides the law of the universal Church (in the *Code of Canon Law*, liturgical norms, etc), the overarching pastoral policy for the Diocese of East Anglia is our ***Diocesan Pastoral Plan*** published in August 2004. This was voted on by the joint meeting of all parish priests and the Diocesan Council of priests on 1st July 2004, and then promulgated as diocesan policy by myself as bishop.

The *Diocesan Pastoral Plan* itself contains a number of mandatory policies required of all parishes. These are listed at the beginning of this folder. These policies, and the others contained in this folder, should be read in the context of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

Most of the other policies in this folder are a working-out of the implications of certain aspects of the *Diocesan Pastoral Plan*; they have been the subject of discussion at Deanery Meetings, and at the College of Consultors and Council of Priests, as well as in some cases the College of Deacons and Council of Laity, and a number of them have been voted on at the annual meeting of parish priests. A few are simply a drawing together of long-established procedures; others (e.g. Child Protection Policy, Redundant Churches) are required by external agencies. Not everyone will agree with each and every policy, but I would like to think that most of them are the fruit of our working together in partnership. My thanks to all of you who contributed to this process. Each policy is subject to review and revision. Others will be added as the need arises.

Each policy now constitutes a formal part of the 'customs of our diocese' in accordance with which parish priests and others are to exercise their ministry. They are now the way we do things in East Anglia.

My hope, however, is that they will play some part in giving us a sense of being one diocesan family, and that – in their own small but significant way – they will give us the freedom to move 'Forward and Outward Together in Christ'.