

The Pastoral Area of St Alexander Briant



*“Zeal for your house
will consume me”*

John 2:17



Pastoral Area of St Alexander Briant

Sunday 8th October 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

In his Pastoral Letter from the beginning of September, Bishop Declan explained how the diocese has now been subdivided into 9 'Pastoral Areas', foregoing the previous structure of 13 deaneries. This, he said, is for the purpose of making more effective the mission of our diocese to the wider community. This is clearly a missionary venture, with the hope that parishes will start to work more closely together, share resources and join forces as families of parishes. The Church's mandate is to evangelize and the time has come to join together more closely in this mission!

The parishes within our Pastoral Area are:

check map on back page

The Sacred Heart	Chew Magna (South Bristol Mission Area)
The Immaculate Conception	Clevedon
St Dunstan	Keynsham (South Bristol Mission Area)
St Gerard Majella	Knowle
Christ the King	Knowle West
St Francis of Assisi	Nailsea (partnered with St Joseph)
St Joseph	Portishead (partnered with St Francis)
St Bernadette	Whitchurch (South Bristol Mission Area)
St Pius X	Withywood (South Bristol Mission Area)

Four of these parishes currently work together as a family of parishes under the banner of 'The South Bristol Mission Area', with shared staff, catechesis, finances and other resources. St Francis of Assisi and St Joseph work closely together sharing staff and communications.

The 'dean' of the Pastoral Area:

I would simply like to introduce myself to you as the 'dean' of this new Pastoral Area. My name is Matt Anscombe. I am currently parish priest of the four parishes of the South Bristol Mission Area. I feel passionate about how we, as parishes, might listen to each other, and the signs of the times, and seize this opportunity to go where the Holy Spirit is leading. Bishop Declan has tasked the deans with initiating discussions across parishes in each Pastoral Area with a view to developing a medium and long-term plan for each area. I hope you will be supportive of this. It's time to be proactive rather than reactive. It's time to be bold.

Our Patron Saint:

Our Pastoral Area is named after the martyr St Alexander Briant, who was born in Somerset and ministered in this area after being ordained priest. He is one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, having been executed at Tyburn in 1581. The image on the left of this letter is from a stained-glass window in the church of St Francis of Assisi, Nailsea. Let us invoke his intercession and pray for the zeal that drove him forward in a time of great peril.

An invitation:

I would very much like to start a process of listening going across our Pastoral Area in order to move forward in hope. I would like us to gather and share thoughts and vision for the future on how we can collaborate more closely and move forward the mission of the Church. We will also discuss some of the outcomes of the Diocesan Day. These meetings will eventually move around the Pastoral Area but, to start with, **I invite you to come to St Francis of Assisi, Nailsea on Saturday 2nd December from 10am to 12pm. Refreshments will be provided.**

I do hope parishioners from all of the parishes of our Pastoral Area will come along. As Bishop Declan reminds us, "If we are inward looking we will die but if we are outward looking, we will be challenged but we will live and know that we are faithful to the Gospel."

God bless,

Fr Matt Anscombe

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**A Prayer for Missionary Zeal
in our Pastoral Area**

**Father, pour out your Holy Spirit
upon the parishes of our Pastoral Area
to deepen in us a thirst and passion for mission.
Grant that your gifts of faith, hope and love
will lead us in true discipleship,
so that the Good News of Jesus Christ
will find a home in our hearts
and open us to the needs of all.
Then, trusting in your Almighty power,
give us the desire and courage to proclaim
our faith in Him to a broken world. Amen.**

St Alexander Briant
Pray for us
Our Lady Help of Christians
and all our patron saints
Pray for us