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14<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the past several years, Pope Francis, and now Pope Leo, have been guiding us to rediscover synodality as our way of being Church. Synodality is an invitation for us to walk together with openness of heart, listening for the Spirit in one another's hopes, and concerns. This shared journey helps us discern how God is calling us to be Church in this time and place; "driving participation, deepening communion and directing mission". With this in mind I am inviting parishioners from around the diocese to enter into a time of synodal reflection. The synodal question that I invite you to consider is, "**What sort of parish are we called to be**" (see the following page). This time of reflection can help guide your Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Priest and will also help inform me as your bishop as to how God is calling us to be the church here in Dunedin diocese. If you would like some more information about the synodal discernment process or some assistance in leading these sessions, please contact Amy Armstrong on [amya@cdd.nz](mailto:amya@cdd.nz).

I also invite some of our parishes to consider some more practical proposals. In a continuation of the 2005 diocesan-wide consultation, I invite the parishes that were formed as part of a Pastoral Area in 2005 to consider becoming single parish entities instead of pastoral areas. While such a change will have little impact on the day-to-day life of our communities, the change will help ensure that our diocese and our parishes are less focused on administrative matters and more focused on the pastoral mission of the church. Your parish may develop a more localised discussion document.

Finally, I re-state my support for our rural church communities. In the accompanying document I give an outline of a proposal for how we can support our rural communities, particularly around maintenance of our churches and also to ensure the provision of Mass and the sacraments.

I encourage you to arrange a time to engage in this process in the New Year. Could you please provide me with your feedback by Easter 2026.

Yours In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Hooley'.

Bishop Michael