



YOUR NEXT STEP IN FAITH

MAKING • MATURING • MISSIONING

Opportunities for Discipleship at
The Most Holy Redeemer

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Foreword

The word “disciple” literally means “learner” and this booklet is designed for all of you who feel that you still have your “L plates” on when it comes to your faith but who are eager to discover the next step that God wants for you in your life. Thankfully this won’t involve having to take your driving test again(!) but it will mean being prepared to leave your comfort zone and to try something new. The whole concept of discipleship may be daunting but for those who have started to explore the path of becoming a missionary disciple, they have found not only that their own faith has been renewed, but that they have also been able to make a profound difference in the lives of those around them and in their parishes.



In this booklet we list a number of different “discipleship pathways” which we would ask you to reflect upon, depending on where you feel you are in your own faith journey. While the decision to become a disciple is a personal one, we want you to know that you will receive support and encouragement in taking the next step in your faith, whatever that looks like for you.

As our parish vision prayer says: ***“Loving Father, we ask you to bring this vision to life within us. Embolden us with a desire to grow and mature as missionary disciples of Jesus. Give us the courage and grace to reach out to others within and beyond our parish with compassion and perseverance, so that they too may encounter Jesus and become His disciples.”***

Yours in Christ,

Father Dan Mason

Parish Priest, Most Holy Redeemer, Billericay

Summary

Since 2019, the Most Holy Redeemer has been on a journey of parish renewal led by Fr Dan, the Parish Leadership Team and our Parish Pastoral Council (PPC). They have been looking at how our Parish Vision of

“Making Disciples, Working Together & Growing in Love & Fellowship” can be implemented. It was agreed that the focus over the

next three years would be to establish “discipleship pathways” to enable everyone who is associated with our parish to find opportunities to become missionary disciples of Jesus.

The path of faith varies from person to person and everyone is at a different stage in their faith journey. Movement through the different stages of faith will look different for each person but it is important that as a parish we are equipped to offer a number of opportunities for people who want to go deeper in their faith.

This booklet is split into two sections. The first explains what a disciple is and what it means for each and every parishioner. We have split the “Discipleship Pathway” into three stages: ***Making***, ***Maturing*** and ***Missioning***. Depending on where you may be on your faith journey, there are suggestions for what involvement you may consider to deepen your faith, and use your gifts to deepen the faith of others.

The second section is an account of how our parish has changed since we began the process of parish renewal and what we would like to see taking place in the future. Parish renewal is parish growth, not necessarily in size, but in terms of faith and engagement. This second section outlines how existing provision within our parish has been reviewed and revised through the lens of parish renewal.

The major changes in the parish include:

- **increased support for families seeking sacraments for their children**
- **the employment of a Parish Family Co-ordinator**
- **the introduction of the Alpha programme**

We have identified areas where our provision could be improved and priorities for the next three years including:

- **the introduction of Faith Sharing Connect Groups**
- **the training of Lay Leaders**
- **the establishment of a Faith-in-Action Group for children**

These goals are ambitious but through prayer and a collective desire to bring them about, we believe that they are achievable.

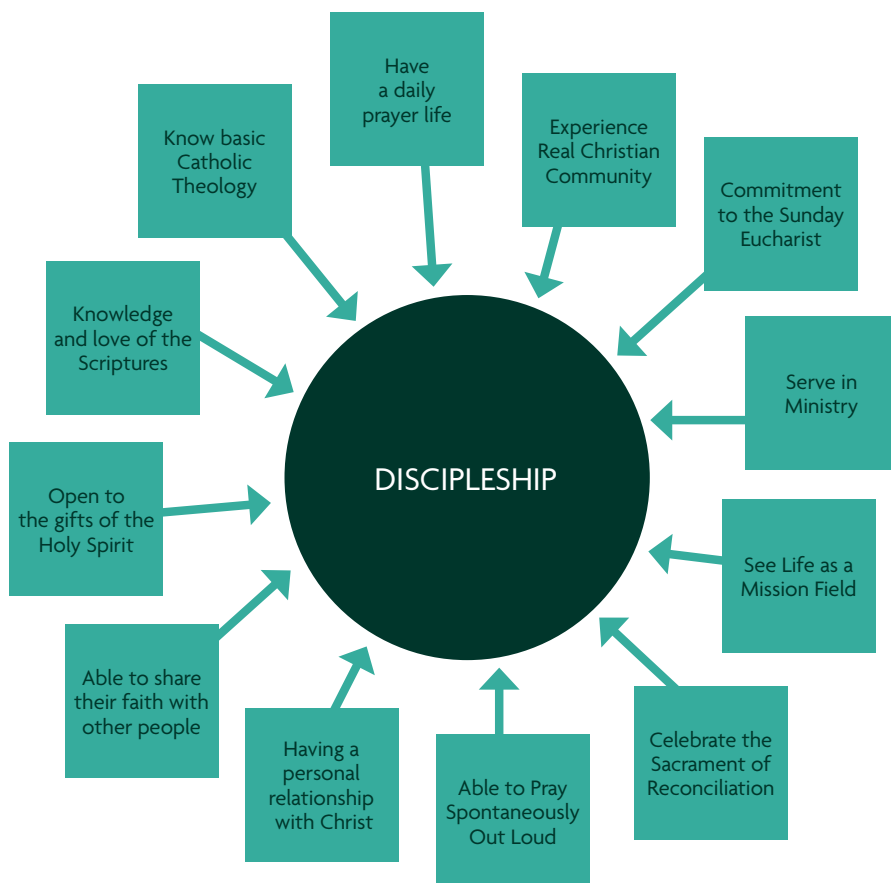


What is Discipleship?

What does it mean to be a disciple and how is this different from what I am already doing?

“To be a disciple means to know and trust Jesus, to know what He teaches and strive to follow it and to be able to describe all of this in a personal way.”¹

In the “Divine Renovation Guidebook”², a missionary disciple is given the following characteristics:



¹Diocese of Little Rock “Report on the State of Faith Formation” P1

² Father James Mallon, Divine Renovation Guidebook P158-159

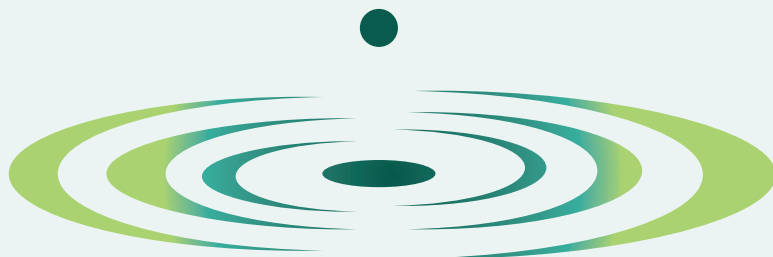
It is important to acknowledge from the outset that there isn't one way or one path to becoming a missionary disciple. The path of faith varies from person to person and everyone is at a different stage in their journey of faith.

Our aim is that by 2026 our parish will be one where everyone will recognise and respond to the fact that they are being called by Jesus to be missionary disciples. It is important that as a parish we are equipped to offer a number of different opportunities for people at all of these different stages to deepen their faith, whether they are new to our parish or they have been coming to the Most Holy Redeemer all of their lives.



Our Discipleship Pathway³

Think of a pebble cast into a pool, the first ripple is Faith in God and as our faith grows so does the effect it has on the wider community.



MAKING

The first stage is about coming to know Jesus and experiencing His love for us in a personal way.

MATURING

The second stage is for those who have chosen to make a personal commitment to follow Jesus, to grow in their faith and who regularly give their time and effort to be part of parish life.

MISSIONING

The last stage is for those who have a desire to share their faith with other people in their parish and in the wider community. People at this stage have the wish to act on Jesus' call to "make disciples" and should access training to make them effective evangelisers.

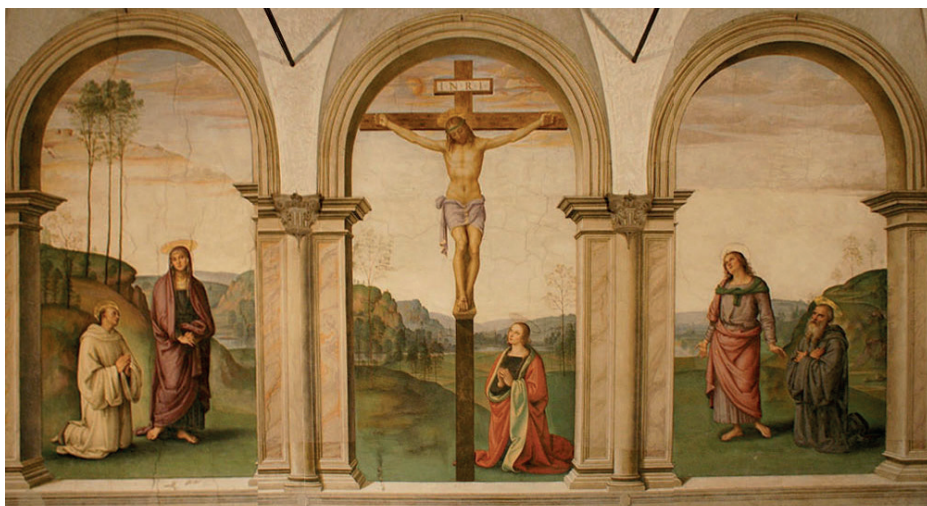
³ Deacon Keith Strohman quoted in the Diocese of Little Rock "Report on the State of Faith Formation" P3

What does this mean for me?

*What can I do in order to become a disciple
and to develop and deepen my faith?
And if I have children, what can I do to
help them on their faith journey?*

The following tree diagrams show some suggestions you may consider, each coloured leaf represents **Making (dark green)**, **Maturing (moss green)** and **Missioning (lime green)**. The **Making** stage includes coming to Mass and participating in groups or courses run in the parish. **Maturing** means actively participating beyond simple attendance, and **Missioning** involves taking on leadership roles within the parish and becoming involved in the wider Christian community.

If you know family members and friends who are Catholic and who are not currently going to church, please consider inviting them to Alpha or to one of the other evangelisation events that the parish runs. For more information, please look at the discipleship pathways listed at the end of this booklet.



FOR ALL PARISHIONERS



ABC (About Becoming Catholic, formerly known as RCIA) is for non-Catholics who wish to explore whether God is calling them to become full members of the Catholic Church.

Alpha is a series of sessions covering key elements of the gospel in a way that is easy to follow and leaves space for attendees (Catholics and non-Catholics) to explore questions about life, faith, and God.

Connect Groups are small informal faith sharing support groups hosted in the homes of parishioners which meet on a regular basis to pray, explore and discuss different aspects of the Christian faith.

Active roles in Masses and Ministries: including readers, welcomers, music etc.

Prayer Groups include Sacred Space and the Padre Pio Prayer Group.

Lay Leaders are those leading the sacramental programmes and other groups in the parish. There will be regular training days for lay leaders focusing on developing leadership skills.

Discipleship in the wider community includes supporting and becoming involved in ecumenical initiatives within Billericay such as Churches Together, Food Bank and Street Pastors, and beyond within the Diocese.

Testimonies

Testimonies are given by parishioners who wish to share their experiences, such as following ABC or Alpha.

FOR FAMILIES & CHILDREN



Family Masses: Monthly Masses led by primary school children

St Peter's Led Masses: Termly Masses led by a year group from St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Children's Liturgy: Age-appropriate activities centred around the readings during 9am and 11am Masses for pre-school and primary aged children (up until year 4).

Sacramental programmes for children: Baptism, Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Faith in action is a group of children (year 4+) led by our Parish Family Co-ordinator who are focusing on actively fundraising for various charities as well as helping to organise community projects.

Youth Club: held monthly for children in school years 6 to 8.

Youth Leader: a youth leader assisting with Faith in Action, Youth Club or Confirmation.

Parish Renewal

Introduction

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”⁴

When we embarked upon the process of parish renewal back in 2019, a conscious decision was made to move away from a “maintenance model” which concentrates on maintaining the existing structures to a model focused on mission. We decided to be intentional in shifting our focus away from maintaining buildings to investing in people. As a parish we recognise that there are a number of areas which we need to work on so that all parishioners have opportunities to experience the love of God and for our parish to be a place that enables people to get to know Jesus, not just to know about Him. The following section outlines the progress we have made towards parish renewal since 2019 and areas where we consider our parish could improve further, together with priorities for the next 3 years.

⁴ Matthew 28: 19



FOR ALL PARISHIONERS

What we currently have

Alpha

Our parish is using the Alpha Course as its primary discipleship tool. Alpha is primarily designed as an evangelistic tool for those who are not familiar with the gospel message, but we have found that Alpha has enabled “cradle Catholics” to come to a much deeper understanding of their faith. It has helped many parishioners to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in a way that has not only transformed them but has also enriched the wider parish community.



ABC (formerly known as RCIA)

The ABC (About Becoming Catholic) course is designed to be an encouraging and welcoming place for those who are discerning whether God is calling them to become full members of the Catholic Church. The course is for adults who are not Catholic or for Catholics who have not made their Confirmation.

**BETWEEN 2019-22,
12 ADULTS
HAVE COMPLETED
THE ABC COURSE**

Life in the Spirit Seminars

The “Life in the Spirit” seminars provide an opportunity to learn more about living a life fully alive in the Holy Spirit and how to deepen our relationship with Jesus and become more fruitful as His disciples. Participants are encouraged to ask for gifts and charisms that nurture and sustain them in their Christian life and empower them for mission in building up the body of Christ in the world today.

Worship and the Sunday Experience

Over the last few years we have invested in the choirs at the 9am and 11am Masses. A network of Welcomers are present at all of the weekend Masses and offer a friendly face and a helping hand to people as they come into church. We also currently have two prayer groups: Sacred Space and the Padre Pio Prayer Group.

PERCENTAGE OF PARISHIONERS CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN MINISTRY

We estimate that approximately **15%** of our parishioners are currently involved in some form of ministry within our parish

OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 3 YEARS

Development of Connect Groups



For people to grow in their faith and to become disciples they need the support of those around them. Small faith sharing groups, known as Connect groups, involve like-minded parishioners meeting on a regular basis to pray, explore and discuss different aspects of the Christian faith.

Our aim within the next three years is to establish a number of Connect groups beginning with those who have already experienced faith sharing while attending the Alpha Course. Although Connect groups are informal, lay leaders will be trained to facilitate these groups and resources will be provided by the parish. We aim by 2026 to have developed the Connect groups as the medium through which people can experience a genuine sense of community and belonging.

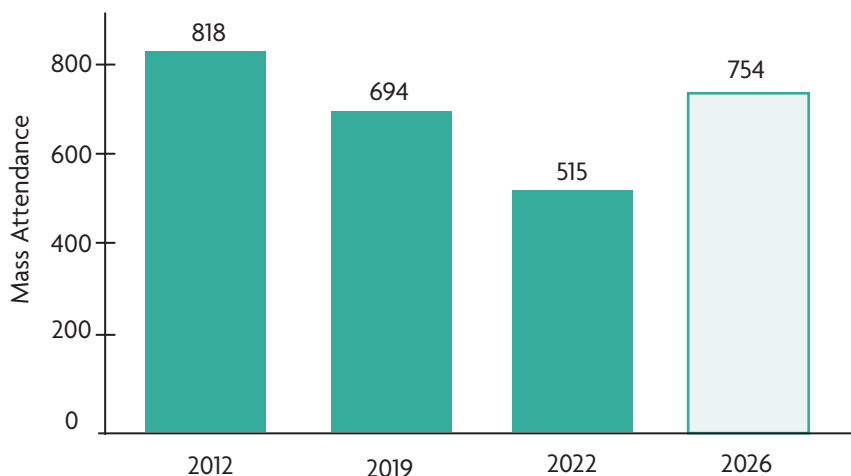
Training and Resourcing Lay Leaders

In the past, many Catholic parishes operated on the basis where each programme was led and organised by the priest. Not only is this unsustainable, it also prevents parishioners from exercising the gifts that they have been given through their baptism. For our parish vision to become a reality, our aim over the next three years is to identify more parishioners to take on leadership roles. Resources, such as the “Awaken” course, that help develop leadership skills will be offered to equip new and existing lay leaders.

Worship and the Sunday Experience

Our aim is to increase the number attending weekend Masses by a minimum of 10% each year from now to 2026 by enhancing the experience of those attending in the following ways:

- **Organise more preaching series which enable Father Dan to develop themes over a number of weekends.**
- **Facilitate more opportunities for personal testimonies from parishioners who have experienced Christ working in their lives, for example Alpha, ABC, Connect groups.**



FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

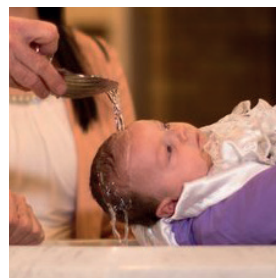
What we currently have

Family Co-ordinator

In 2022, we employed a Family Co-ordinator to support and reach out to families in our parish. She has made significant steps in providing opportunities for families to take part in activities and established the Faith-in-Action group where children of primary school age regularly meet and embark on community-based activities within the parish. She has also strengthened the link between the parish and St Peter's Primary Catholic School.

Baptism

Families requesting baptism for their children are linked up with a member of the Baptism Welcome Team who supports them through the sacrament. Families attend two preparation sessions.



Toddler's & Children's Liturgies

Liturgies for pre-school children and school age children up until Year 4 take place in the Pastoral Centre during the 9am and 11am Masses during term time. The catechists who lead the liturgies explain the scripture readings in a way that the children are able to understand and run age-appropriate themed activities centred around the readings.

First Holy Communion



Children in school Year 4 and above are currently able to join the First Holy Communion preparation. Since 2019 the parish has adopted a family catechesis model using the “With You Always” resource where parents and children work together during the sessions with the support of their catechists. After making their First Holy Communion, children are actively encouraged to remain involved in the parish by joining the Children’s Choir or becoming altar servers.

Youth Club

Our monthly Youth Club caters for children in school Years 6 to 8. Alternate club nights follow the “Edge” programme which include fun activities themed around aspects of the Catholic Faith to help our young people learn more about their faith and see how it relates to their daily lives.



Confirmation

Our Confirmation preparation is open to young people in school Years 10 and above. Since 2017 we have been using the “Youth Alpha” resource which involves a series of sessions exploring different aspects of faith along with a Holy Spirit Day. This is combined with a weekend retreat at Walsingham House, the Diocesan Youth Retreat Centre.

OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 3 YEARS

Our aim over the next three years is for the sacraments not to be seen as “one off” events, but to become more meaningful encounters so that families wish to stay connected with our parish.

Replacing age-based catechesis with on-going faith formation

Currently our sacramental programmes are based around receiving the sacraments at specific ages. However, we know that children and young people come to a deeper understanding of their faith at different ages. As an alternative to this fixed-age model of sacramental preparation, we aim to move towards a system where the sacraments are incorporated into an on-going faith formation process which is available for children from school age upwards. The sacraments are incorporated within the life of the parish and this helps families who want their children to receive the sacraments to become more involved in parish life.

Youth Discipleship

A significant area of weakness within our parish is the lack of opportunities we offer for our youth. The number of young people wanting to be confirmed has declined sharply in recent years and our retention rate after they have received the sacrament is very low. Our aim over the next three years is to improve our provision in the following ways:

- **To lower the Confirmation age to those in school year 9 and above. Year 8 children who attend the parish Youth Club will be encouraged to view Confirmation as the next step in their faith journey.**
- **To develop a youth space within the Pastoral Centre for young people to feel welcome and comfortable.**

- **Following Confirmation, to encourage young people to take on ministries such as becoming Welcomers, Readers or Youth Leaders, join a choir, or assisting with the audiovisual so that they become a valued part of parish life.**
- **To actively encourage and to invite our young people to be involved with the activities offered by the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service (BCYS) and to encourage participation in the Diocesan Youth Pilgrimage to Lourdes and World Youth Days.**



Conclusion & Summary

Our aim is to establish a culture of discipleship within our parish. We want everyone to feel that they can get involved and that they can use their gifts and talents to help build up a thriving, faith filled community. Our goals are ambitious and challenging but through prayer and through a collective desire to bring them about we believe that they are achievable.

In summary, by 2026 we aim as a parish to have achieved the following:

- **To expand the Alpha programme to existing parishioners and to the wider community giving more people the opportunity to explore their faith.**
- **To have a series of Connect Groups within the parish.**
- **To have a training scheme for Lay Leaders which is open to anyone who wishes to grow in their faith and to take on a leadership role within the parish.**
- **To have established a faith formation process for all children.**
- **To improve our provision for young people to develop their faith**
- **To have doubled the percentage of parishioners who are serving in some form of ministry to 30%**
- **To have increased our average weekend Mass attendance from 515 to over 750**

Discipleship Pathways:

What's your next step?

For those who are not Catholic and/or not attending Mass:

- Start attending one of the parish Masses
- Attend Alpha
- Join the About Becoming Catholic (ABC) course

For those who come to Mass but aren't actively involved:

- Attend Alpha
- Join a Connect Group after the completion of Alpha
- Involvement in a ministry

For parishioners who are actively involved in the parish and desire to do more:

- Attend Alpha
- Join a Connect Group after the completion of Alpha
- Join ecumenical initiatives taking place in Billerica (Street Pastors, volunteering at the Billerica Food Bank)
- Consider serving in leadership positions within the parish

For families and children:

- Be involved in the children's liturgies (children up to year 4)
- Join the "Faith in Action" group (children from year 4)
- Join the Parish Youth Club (for children in Year 6-8)

For young people:

- Join the Confirmation course (for young people from year 9)
- Involvement in a ministry
- Attend events organised by the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service (BCYS)



“Loving Father, we ask you to bring this vision to life within us. Embolden us with a desire to grow and mature as missionary disciples of Jesus. Give us the courage and grace to reach out to others within and beyond our parish with compassion and perseverance, so that they too may encounter Jesus and become His disciples.”

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