

Part H – Step A – The Parish Return Form
Sections 1-5 to be completed and returned
by 23rd April 2026

Section 1: Introduction

In dialogue with your community, especially young people (in line with synod guidance) reflect on your local data sheets alongside the diocesan context. Please summarise your reflections from Part E, F and G by completing this template and returning it by 23 April 2026 to discernment.returns@diocesehn.org.uk

PARISH NAME:	Saint Osmund
PARISH TOWN:	Gainford
DEANERY:	Cleveland & South Durham
<p>What was the process followed to reach these conclusions? <i>E.g. clergy & laity involved, young people’s voices considered, prayer & listening shaped decisions:</i> Parishioners were given information about the Diocesan Pastoral Strategy both in person at church and via church website and asked to provide their feedback using either post it notes on a board, a Feedback Box or a dedicated email address to the priest. A Parish meeting was well attended and included two priests and laity. After this meeting, families with children and young people were contacted separately and asked to share their views.</p>	
<p>Beacons of Mission: <i>Practices that either show signs of hope others could learn from, or faithful responses uniquely shaped by your local context:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Osmund’s is served by Father Thomas Mason, a Priest of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. Father Thomas also serves the congregations of St Mary’s Barnard Castle and the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. • Over several years, the transition from Diocesan to Ordinariate clergy has proved very challenging. The PPC and Father Thomas Mason have worked consistently over the past three years to come to a better understanding of each others situation and continue to do so. 	

- Although a small congregation, there is a cohort of willing volunteers working with Father Thomas to move the parish forward
- Feedback has included gratitude for Father Thomas and his care and kindness
- Father John Butters is also a welcome presence as a retired priest living on site
- There is a fortnightly, lively Children's Liturgy during Sunday Mass
- Each year there is a small cohort of children who make their First Holy Communion, supported by Father Thomas and a Catechist from the Parish.
- A well-presented Parish Centre is currently used by the parish, also by St Augustine's Darlington as an 'Away Day' for the Alpha Course. There are opportunities for more extensive use eg. Retreats.

Section 2: Mission Discernment

Please use the suggested prompts at **Part E of The Mission Discernment Toolkit** to guide your conversations and complete the following section.

Mission: WORSHIP - Celebrating the Sacraments as Places of Encounter

Reflection and conclusions: There are two separate and distinct congregations currently worshipping at St Osmund's. There is a fortnightly (Diocesan) Sunday Mass with a Saturday (Diocesan) Vigil Mass in between-shared with St Mary's Barnard Castle. Where there are five weekends in a month, St Osmund's has three Saturday Vigil Masses and two Sunday Masses. Mass is also celebrated every Tuesday with an Ordinariate Mass on Friday. The Ordinariate congregation have Mass every Sunday at St Osmund's. Attendance at the Saturday Vigil Mass falls by around 75% compared to Sunday attendance. Several members of the PPC and some other parishioners, feel strongly that there must be equity between the two congregations at St Osmund's.

We lose contact with children after First Holy Communion, often due to Sunday sports. We need to find a way of maintaining contact with our young people. In other feedback, it was noted that 'there is little opportunity to worship outside of Mass, apart from joint services with other faiths'.

What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

- Continue to address these issues at PPC meetings
- Await the outcome of a second review re Mass times

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult parents and young people in our parish about how we can best maintain contact, possibly through non- Sacramental liturgies (linked to current World Concerns) and social events • Seek parishioners voice re other opportunities for worship other than Holy Mass
<p>Why are we proposing this? (<i>Link to Mission.</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that there is equity between the Ordinariate and the Diocesan congregations • To increase attendance at Mass • To engage with our young people -especially after First Holy Communion • To ensure all voices are heard
<p>Dependencies: (<i>What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operation of St Mary's Barnard Castle • Co-operation of the Ordinariate congregation • Willingness of parents and young people to engage • Willingness of volunteers to be pro-active
<p>What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?</p> <p>A significant number of parishioners will continue to choose not to attend Saturday evening Mass. Young people will continue to be absent from St Osmund's-we will have a congregation of the very young and more mature adults. Parishioners' voices will not be heard</p>
<p>How will worship be organised in the area if there are less priests and less worshippers?</p> <p>By utilising Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist to lead Eucharistic Services</p>

<p>Mission: TEACH - Handing on the Faith</p>
<p>Reflection and conclusions:</p> <p>Parents bring their children for Baptism, preparation for which is given by the Parish Priest.</p> <p>Younger children attend Children's Liturgy and First Holy Communion preparation is well established.</p>

A weekly newsletter offers both a Reflection on the Gospel and a weekly column written by Father Thomas.

Young people of Secondary School age are not attending Mass regularly. We have close contact with our nearest Catholic Primary School (Barnard Castle) but no contact with Carmel College (Darlington) or St John's (Bishop Auckland).

What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

- PPC to look at ways to link with the two Catholic Secondary Schools - possible visit of a group of pupils to visit St Osmund's- at a time to meet with our young people.
- Engage with our young people by offering a regular Social Event and non-Sacramental Liturgy planned by them

Why are we proposing this? (*Link to Mission.*)

To encourage the young people of our Parish to continue their Journey in Faith following their First Holy Communion- and to further foster a sense of belonging to their wider Catholic Family.

Dependencies: (*What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)*)

- Willing Volunteers
- Safeguarding procedures to be in place
- Co-operation of schools and willingness of pupils/parents

What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?

Our congregation will be diminished by the absence and vitality of young people.

Mission: SERVE - Sharing Christ's Love in Action

Reflection and conclusions: There is regular support for the local Food Bank. Over the years the Children's Liturgy Group have engaged parishioners in supporting CAFOD. This year we have raised money for Darlington Assistance for Refugees (DAR) in partnership with Churches Together in Gainford.

Gainford Arts and Design (GADs) are delighted to meet in a church owned property. The Village Children's Play Area is owned by the church and maintained in partnership with the Village Parish Council.

Sacramental Outreach is currently provided by Father Thomas.

What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

- There is scope to further develop partnership through Churches Together- eg. advertise ‘Messy Church’ which takes place at the Village Parish Church
- Offer use of Parish Centre for Village events-while being mindful of existing local venues, eg Village Hall
- St Osmund’s owns a property in the village which is currently rented out. There are plans to further develop part of the property to provide a Community Café.

Why are we proposing this? (*Link to Mission.*)

To further support our local community and share the Gospel Values-eg. providing a Community Café will offer a place for people to get together and socialise.

Dependencies: (*What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)*)

- The rental property needs further remedial building work which is currently being investigated
- Finance/grants to be sourced
- Churches Together events to be advertised in our Newsletter and Noticeboard

What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?

St Osmund’s will become more insular and divorced from Village Life instead of being an active participant in the community. The church rental property will fall into disrepair

Mission: COMMUNITY – Building a Family of Faith

Reflection and conclusions: There is a well-established rota of Greeters to welcome people as they enter the Church. The Parish Centre offers refreshments and an opportunity for parishioners to meet after Sunday Mass. A small number make use of this.

There are a number of elderly, isolated parishioners who are no longer physically able to come to Church. Currently, Father Thomas offers a weekday visit to bring Holy Communion to those who request it. There are several parishioners who do not take up the offer.

It is a relevant part of our local context that 'difference' is experienced here at St Osmund's by two congregations whose style of worship is indeed, different. This has been a source of friction for both congregations over past years.

In the years since St Osmund's has been served by Ordinariate Clergy, there has been no involvement of existing Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

1. What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

- A volunteer will find out if there is a desire for our elderly parishioners to receive Holy Communion on a Sunday
- The second review of Mass times may lead to the mutual respect and equity for both congregations.
- Discussions are taking place at Diocesan level re the Ordinariate moving to St Mary's Barnard Castle

2. Why are we proposing this? (*Link to Mission.*)

We do not want to lose contact with elderly members of our Church Family. We embrace the opportunity to live out Gospel Values. Furthermore, establishing respect through equity between our congregations will promote this.

3. Dependencies: *What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)*

- Isolated elderly parishioners to be contacted
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to receive training update and more volunteers to come forward
- Safeguarding procedures to be met
- Bishop(s) approval of current developments re the Ordinariate moving to Barnard Castle and the review of Mass times

4. What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?

- We will lose a valuable cohort of parishioners who will not feel the support of the Church Family
- Parishioners will feel they are not offering the support that the laity, and Eucharistic ministers specifically, could provide
- There will continue to be unresolved friction for some parishioners

Section 3 - Stewardship and Our Common Home (Property)

Accessibility (to be completed by Parish)

Site Name	Building Name	Estimated Occupancy Capacity	Estimated hours of use per week	Estimated number of car parking spaces	Level access into and within the building (Yes/No)	Accessible WC within the building (Yes/No)	% of people travelling by car	Describe local public transport links
<i>Gainford St Osmund</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>Bus stop within a 5 minute walk with a half-hourly weekday service (to Darlington and Barnard Castle). Sunday service every two hours, with the first bus too late for current Mass time.</i>

Notes: **Estimated occupancy capacity** – This is simply intended to be a reasonable estimate of the capacity of our churches, halls and meeting spaces. In the future it may be necessary to check these capacity figures against the site Fire Risk Assessment the survey programme for which is currently underway across our Diocese.

Existing and potential future uses (to be completed by Parish)

Site Name:	Building Name	Existing uses	Potential future uses
Gainford St Osmund	Parish House and Social Centre	Upstairs Flat is lived in by retired Diocesan Priest Downstairs Social Centre: Children's Liturgy, Refreshments after Mass, Lent Lunches etc.	Could be hired out for small groups to use - with consideration given to Village Hall which provides a similar offer. Very suitable for Retreats -could be advertised within the diocese and further afield.

Section 4: Stewardship Review Discernment

Please use the suggested prompts at **Part F of The Mission Discernment Toolkit** to guide your conversations and complete the following section.

Stewardship: FINANCES

Please summarise your conclusions based on F1. discussions:

The church benefits from income generated by an historical generous bequest. Finances are becoming more transparent than in recent years and are regularly monitored. The Treasurer is currently not a member of the parish but works diligently and effectively to present accounts as required. A Financial Statement for parishioners is overdue-responsibility of the Finance Council.

Major costs currently linked to 16 High Green renovation work. When completed, the building could generate further income. Income is currently generated from the rental of two church-owned flats.

Stewardship: BUILDINGS

Please summarise your conclusions based on F2. Discussions:

Buildings are safe, accessible and fit for purpose. Two church owned flats have been successfully renovated in recent years.

The Parish Centre could be used more. The Church had a new roof last year and extensive exterior repointing has taken place. Plans are in place to repair internal plaster work and carry out necessary renovation in the near future. The church has beautiful grounds and out door space which are adequately maintained and currently being developed further. There is a clear programme of renovation in place, however, this has not been passed on to parishioners, prompting in feedback the comment: 'proper care for the fabric of the church'. This will be addressed asap.

Stewardship: PEOPLE

Please summarise your conclusions based on F3. discussions and the following questions:

How does your parish benefit from its Parish Finance Council and Parish Pastoral Council?

Does your parish have active representation on the Partnership Development Group?

Are there potential lay leaders in the parish and would they be willing to be trained?

The Parish Finance Council and PPC have worked hard over the years to ensure essential repairs are carried out-the replacement of the Church roof an example. The sound system inside the church has been replaced providing much needed improvement. Members of the PPC work with Father Thomas to develop initiatives such as Children's Liturgy, First Holy Communion Liturgies and seasonal celebrations. The congregation sings well, and are encouraged to do so with a mix of traditional and modern hymns-with no resident organist.

Before COVID, there was active representation on the Hogarth Partnership Development Group, but this has lapsed. There are members of the congregation capable of becoming lay leaders if this was needed.

We are currently preparing to re-introduce Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to distribute from the chalice at Mass, and considering re-introducing them for Communion to the housebound..

Stewardship: SUSTAINABILITY

Please summarise your conclusions based on F4. discussions

What is your assessment on sustaining current mission provision over the next 10 years? St Osmund's is financially secure with a regular income stream (see endowment above) and rent from two properties. There is a consistent congregation with new housing being built in the village potentially bringing more families and children. We have families with young children currently and need to keep hold of them as they progress from primary to secondary school.

Section 5: Snapshot Summary and Parish Conclusions

Please refer to **Part G of The Mission Discernment Toolkit** to guide your conversations and complete the following section. Provide clear, honest, and prayerful conclusions.

What is thriving and must be strengthened?

Communication between priest and people

Families with young children feel welcome

Children come regularly to the Children's Liturgy

Parishioners support initiatives involving raising money for charity

There is a small group of willing volunteers

Lay Ministries are in place for Greeting, Reading, Prayers of Intercession, Newsletters, Music, Flower arranging, Church maintenance and First Sacramental Preparation

What should be adjusted?

There needs to be much better communication between PPC and parishioners

PPC meetings could be more regular and new people invited to join

We need more contact with secondary school age children

We need more contact with elderly parishioners no longer able to attend Mass

We hope to establish more involvement of the laity where needed

Priest and people will hopefully strive to listen and understand each other's point of view

Equity between Diocesan and Ordinariate parishioners

What drains Mission, is unsustainable, and needs to be released?

There has been friction arising from the manner in which the Ordinariate congregation arrived at Gainford; though this has lessened in recent years, there has been concern resulting from the circulation of radical 'religious' publications, circulating within the Ordinariate, containing extremely anti Vatican II views. These were found to be very offensive and have caused significant distress. The Parish Priest states that he has made clear his opposition to such literature, and that it cannot be shared through the church.

Where is the Holy Spirit prompting bold steps?

The Holy Spirit is asking for honest dialogue, openness and an understanding of different points of view, in particular, to do with how the Mass is experienced by Priest and Parishioners.

What are our next steps as a parish?

To address our concerns about lack of contact with our young people and the very elderly.

To inform parishioners of planned maintenance work and provide a financial statement.

To re-visit possible changes to the times of Mass.

To continue open dialogue between priest and people.

A REMINDER OF NEXT STEPS

Once completed, the parish should **submit this Part H** which is a summary of findings from The Local Mission Discernment (Part E), The Stewardship Review (Part F), and The Parish Snapshot Summary and Conclusions (Part G) to **discernment.returns@diocesehn.org.uk** by **23rd April 2026**.