

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

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To the Parishioners of St Oscar Romero, Blackburn

Dear Parishioners

I am writing to you about the church and parish hall at St John Vianney. You will be aware that a decision was taken to close these over the winter months. As we emerge from the winter, it seems wise to consider the future of these buildings and whether or not the parish really needs to retain them.

One of the factors prompting this suggestion is the fact that a number of parishioners have already raised this question within the parish. They have asked whether there is a need to re-open these buildings or not. It would seem that parishioners have adapted to the temporary closure and that the parish has been functioning well without the use of these buildings. So, there is a question of whether or not this would be the right time to make that temporary decision a permanent one.

The second factor prompting this suggestion is that, during this period of closure, a number of parties have expressed an interest in either purchasing or leasing what they presumed were closed buildings. Amongst those interested parties is the Syro-Malabar community, a Catholic community from Kerala in India which has a strong presence within our diocese of Salford. There is a group of Syro-Malabar Catholics already meeting in the Blackburn area but without any permanent base. St John Vianney could provide that for them.

Whilst our conversations with the Syro-Malabar community are still at a very early stage, it seemed appropriate to inform you of these discussions and to invite you to share any thoughts you have about this with your parish priest. We will obviously have a more formal period of consultation if the suggestion moves to the next level and there are more concrete proposals to consider.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely,

Michael J. G. Cooke

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