

FORWARD TOGETHER
IN
H O P E

Parish Questionnaire



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

Forward Together in Hope – Parish Questionnaire



This questionnaire provides a framework for each parish community in the Diocese to explore its vitality and future direction. The prayer, consultation and reflection that lead to your responses are of central importance to this whole process; the questionnaire is simply the document for systematically recording the outcomes of your deliberations.

The accompanying document, *Exploring the Way* provides further background information and guidance.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is presented in 3 parts.

Part A – *A Picture of Our Community* – provides the opportunity to gather, explore and present facts and figures about a wide range of facets of parish life.

Part B – *Reflective Questions* – key questions under 10 main headings for open discussion by your parish community, and the opportunity to highlight existing good practice.

Part C – *Our Community's Initial Thoughts and Ideas about the Future* – where your parish community is asked to provide its first thoughts about how it might move forward.

Ultimately, we would like all parishes to provide their final responses using an on-line questionnaire as this will allow us to collate and analyse responses efficiently – and we will be providing information later in the year about how to do this. However, while drafting and sharing your responses within the parish, you may find that the electronic version of the questionnaire (on the *Exploring the Way* Resources CD and on the *Forward Together in Hope* website) proves to be the best way of recording and storing your responses.

The Data Pack

Accompanying the questionnaire is a data pack for each parish community. This contains summary information about your parish held centrally by the Diocese. It is hoped that by providing this information communities are spared at least some of the work of collating it at parish level.

We have used our best efforts to provide information and statistics that are accurate and up to date but no matter how carefully such information is checked, inevitably inaccuracies can creep in and we apologise in advance if this is the case.

Please get in touch if you have any questions or if you have any comments or suggestions to make.

The *Forward Together in Hope* Team: Jim O'Keefe, Tony Sacco and Nancy Gash can be contacted on:
Telephone: (0191) 243 3304 E-mail: hope@diocesehn.org.uk

Background Details

Name of parish:

Details of church(es) in the parish:

Church name	Church address

Key parish contacts:

Priest(s)	Permanent Deacon(s)	Forward Together in Hope Contact(s)

Details of main contact for this questionnaire:

Name:		Address:
Telephone No:		
Email Address:		

Part A – A Picture of Our Community

Part A of the questionnaire takes respondents through the 10 main headings and requests detailed responses to a number of factual questions under each.

Please note: The information in the data pack, unique to each parish, should prove useful when responding to some of the questions in this section. Specific references are made in the text where this is likely to be the case.

1 The Christian Faithful

1.1 Please complete the grids below to indicate how the number of those worshipping in your parish community has changed since 1985. (See Section 1 of your parish data pack).

Mass attendance

1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014

Baptisms

1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014

Confirmations

1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014

Marriages

1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014

Receptions

1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014

1.2 Are you aware of any significant demographic changes (e.g. a large increase / decrease in the overall population, an increase in the number of immigrants etc.) in your local area in the last 10 years that have impacted / will impact on your parish?

- Yes
 No

1.3 If Yes, please give a brief description of the changes and their impact on your parish community.

Brief description of change	Impact or potential impact

1.4 Are you aware of other significant changes in the local area that are impacting / likely to impact upon your parish? (Examples could include: major housing developments, the closure of a large employer, the development of a new industrial estate, an increase in youth unemployment etc.)

- Yes No

1.5 If Yes, please provide a brief description of the changes and their impact / potential impact on your parish community as far as you are able.

Brief description of change	Impact or potential impact

2.2 Please describe the situation in your community regarding a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) or equivalent group.

- No PPC or equivalent is in place (*Go to Question 2.11*)
- A PPC or equivalent is in place but is having little or no impact on the parish community
- A PPC or equivalent is in place and is having a significant impact on the parish community

2.3 Where a PPC or equivalent is in place, please indicate the year that it was established.

2.4 Where a PPC or equivalent is in place, does it have a written constitution?

- Yes
- No

2.5 Where a PPC or equivalent is in place, how frequently does it meet?

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Monthly | Every
2 months | Every
4 months | Every
6 months | Annually | Other |
| <input type="radio"/> |

If other, please specify

2.6 What is the process for setting the agenda for the PPC or equivalent?

- The agenda is agreed at the beginning of the meeting
- The agenda is set at the previous meeting
- The chair seeks items in advance
- The chair determines the agenda
- There is a standard agenda for every meeting

2.7 Who chairs the PPC or equivalent?

- Priest
- Deacon
- Lay person
- Religious



2.8 How are people in the parish informed about the membership and work of the PPC or equivalent?

2.9 Which parish(es) is / are represented on the PPC or equivalent?

2.10 What is the number and approximate age profile of members?

Age range	Number
Under 40	
40 -70	
Over 70	
TOTAL	

2.11 Is there a Finance Committee in place in the parish?

- Yes No

2.12 If Yes, how frequently does it meet?

- Monthly Every 2 months Every 4 months Every 6 months Annually Other

If other, please specify

2.13 What is the process for setting the agenda for the Finance Committee?

- The agenda is agreed at the beginning of the meeting
- The agenda is set at the previous meeting
- The chair seeks items in advance
- The chair determines the agenda
- There is a standard agenda for every meeting

2.14 Who chairs the Finance Committee?

- Priest Deacon Lay Person Religious

2.15 How are people in the parish informed about the membership and work of the Finance Committee?

2.16 What is the number and approximate age profile of members?

Age range	Number
Under 40	
40 -70	
Over 70	
TOTAL	

Glory be to the Son -
whose name we bear and
who calls each of us to be
his disciples;

3 Active Involvement of People

Note: Section 3 of the accompanying data pack includes information about the number of people in your community whose ministries are subject to a DBS check and details of paid roles in parishes.

3.1 How many people in your parish community are registered for ministries that were subject to DBS (formerly CRB) checks in 2015?

3.2 How does this compare with the position in 2010?

3.3 Are there any paid workers for your parish community?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide details below.

Role Title	Number	Total hours contracted per week

5.2 Does your parish offer a Journey in Faith programme to support Catholics who wish to learn more about their faith?

- Yes No

Young people in schools and their families

Note: Section 5 of the accompanying data pack includes information that should assist with the completion of this section.

Catholic primary school(s) serving your parish

5.3 For each Catholic primary school serving your parish please complete the following information:

School Name:			
	2007	2011	2014
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2007	2011	2014
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2007	2011	2014
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2007	2011	2014
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2007	2011	2014
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2007	2011	2014
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

5.4 Please describe briefly how the primary school(s) and the parish work together to prepare children for the sacraments.

5.5 How is / are the primary school(s) involved in the adult faith formation of the children’s parents?

5.6 Where a Parish Pastoral Council or equivalent exists is there representation from the Head Teacher(s) or other staff member?

- Yes
 No

5.7 Where a Parish Pastoral Council or equivalent exists does the membership include school governors?

- Yes
 No



5.8 Please describe how the primary school promotes links with the parish community and how the parish community promotes links with the school (e.g. Mini Vinnies, Fair Trade, joint social activities etc.)

Link	Brief description
<i>Example: Joint Social Events</i>	<i>Termly joint fund-raising social events held in school hall</i>

5.9 Please give details of any joint parish / school celebrations of the Eucharist. Please include frequency and location.

5.10 Please give details of any joint school / parish non-Eucharistic celebrations. Please include frequency and location.

5.11 Please describe any ways in which the school and parish share their buildings and other resources. (e.g. Hall, meeting rooms, minibuses etc.)

Catholic Secondary (including Middle) school(s) serving your parish

5.12 For each Catholic secondary school serving your parish please provide the following information:

School Name:			
	2007	2011	2014
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
<hr/>			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2007	2011	2014
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
<hr/>			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2007	2011	2014
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
<hr/>			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

5.13 Please describe briefly how the secondary school(s) and the parish work together to prepare young people for the sacraments.

5.14 How is / are the secondary school(s) involved in the adult faith formation of the children's parents? (Include any joint work with the parish).

5.15 Where a Parish Pastoral Council or equivalent exists is there any representation from the secondary school(s)?

- Yes No

5.16 Please describe how the secondary school(s) promote links with the parish community and how the parish community promotes links with the school(s) (e.g. Fair Trade, John Paul II Award, joint outreach activities etc.)

Link	Brief description
<i>Example: Lenten Fundraising initiatives</i>	<i>Joint fundraising effort between parish and school with a specific outreach cause identified each year.</i>

5.17 Please give details of any joint parish / secondary school celebrations of the Eucharist. Please include frequency and location.

5.18 Please give details of any joint parish / secondary school non-Eucharistic celebrations. Please include frequency and location.

5.19 Please describe any ways in which the school and parish share their buildings and other resources. (e.g. Hall, meeting rooms, minibuses etc.)

6 Outreach

6.1 Does your parish / deanery offer a RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) programme?

- Yes No

6.2 If Yes, how often does this take place?

6.3 Please indicate any outreach activities that your parish is involved with *in the local area* (e.g. Food banks, Homeless projects, Asylum Seekers / Refugees, Prisoners / the families of prisoners, Drop-ins, Chaplaincy, Justice and Peace, Lourdes Youth etc.) Please indicate whether the parish makes a financial commitment.

Outreach activity	Brief description	Financial Commitment (Yes / No)	
		Yes	No
<i>Example: Elmwood Food Bank</i>	<i>10 parishioners are involved on the weekly rota for this ecumenical project across the Town. All parishioners are asked to contribute canned goods which are collected each week.</i>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6.4 Please describe any active involvement your parish has in the cultural and political life of the local neighbourhood / district (e.g. local governance, social action, ward meetings, community forums etc.)

6.5 Please describe any links that the parish community has *with other parts of the world*. (e.g. CAFOD, MISSIO – Red Boxes, Aid to the Church in Need, Little Way Association, parish overseas projects etc.) Please indicate whether the parish makes a financial commitment.

Outreach activity	Brief description	Financial Commitment (Yes / No)	
		Yes	No
Example: Kenya Project	A strong link has been in place for 10 years with Community in Kenya resulting in the development of various activities including a village-based water project and a chicken farming project for	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6.6 During the past 12 months in what ways has the priest / deacon / religious engaged with other Christian faith leaders in the locality?

- 6.7 During the past 12 months in what ways has the parish community engaged with other Christian communities in the locality? (Please include activities / services as part of Churches Together, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Joint acts of witness / shared worship, joint social activities and joint outreach activities.)

Activity	Brief description
<i>Example: Good Friday Walk of Witness</i>	<i>Around 70 people from all Christian denominations in the town walked behind a cross being carried between the churches concluding with prayer in the Town Centre.</i>

- 6.8 Over the past 12 months in what ways has the parish community engaged with Faith communities other than Christians in the locality? Please include visits, talks, joint activities etc.

Activity	Brief description
<i>Example: Talk about the Jewish Passover Festival</i>	<i>Well attended evening talk at St Michael's Church with invitations to all Christian denominations in the area.</i>

- 6.9 In what ways does the parish publicise itself and its activities to the wider community locally? (e.g. local media, posters in public buildings, website, leaflets etc.)

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7 Finances

Note: Section 7 of the parish data pack includes information about parish income, expenditure and Gift Aid.

7.1 With reference to the parish data pack please complete the details below.

a) Income and Expenditure

£'s	2005	2009	2014
Income:			
Offertory			
Gift Aid			
Donations			
Other income			
Total Income			
Expenditure:			
Property			
Personnel			
Other costs			
Total Expenditure			
Surplus / (Deficit)			

b) Surplus / deficit ignoring any extraordinary income or expenditure

£'s	2005	2009	2014
Surplus / (Deficit)			

NB. This represents income minus expenditure, ignoring any extraordinary income or expenditure, e.g. one-off legacy or significant property repairs, etc.

Please answer the following questions based on the information collected above.

7.2 Does the current annual income for the parish meet its annual expenditure?

- Yes No

7.3 How has the parish income changed since 2005?

7.4 What are the major factors that have impacted upon parish income since 2005?

7.5 With reference to the data pack please provide the following information about parish balances:

£'s	Amount at March 2005	Amount at March 2009	Amount at March 2014
Parish Deposit (or loan)			
Parish Current Account			

7.6 What is the percentage of people in the parish community who are signed up to Gift Aid?

7.7 What is the average offertory per head each week?

7.8 Please describe how parishioners are informed annually of the parish finances.

- By verbal statement
- By a displayed written statement
- By each person receiving a written statement (e.g. in bulletin)
- Through a general meeting
- Other – please describe

7.9 Please describe any significant fundraising activities that are in place within the parish at present.

Purpose of fundraising	Method(s) used
<i>Example: To subsidise costs for young people going to Lourdes</i>	<i>Raffles and sponsored walk</i>

7.10 Please identify any factors (e.g. population shift, changes in local employment etc.) that will have a significant impact on the *financial position* of the parish over the next 5 years.

Factor	Potential Impact

7.11 Please describe any expenditure (excluding property costs) of more than £15K per individual project, anticipated within the next 5 years.

Nature of Expenditure	Anticipated Cost



8 Facilities

Note: Where there is more than one church within a parish, this section will need to be repeated for each church site. Additional copies of this section and the next (Section 9 – Geographic Distance) are available on the Resources CD and website. Please use as many of these as you require.

- 8.1 Please provide information about the buildings associated with each church site within the parish. (Note: Section 8 of the data pack will assist with some questions)

Parish Name		Church Name		Capacity	
In your opinion		Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
8.2	What is the overall state of repair of the Church?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.3	What is the overall state of repair of the Presbytery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.4	What is the overall state of repair of the Church Hall?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
				Yes	No
8.5	Is there a car park?			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.6	If Yes, how many parking spaces are there?				
8.7	Is there a parish office?			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.8	Are there secure on-site storage facilities for confidential documentation?			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.9	Is there an appointed Welfare Officer?			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.10	Are the following regular check-ups up to date:				
	• Portable electrical appliances?			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	• Gas safety			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.11	Are the following facilities available for people with disabilities?				
	• Accessible toilets			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	• Level access			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	• Ramped access			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	• Loop system			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.12	If any of the above provision is lacking are there plans in place to improve the facilities?			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.13	If Yes, please elaborate:				

8.14 Does the church have a cemetery?

- Yes No

8.15 If Yes, who has responsibility for its care?

8.16 Please identify any other land / property for which the parish is responsible. (e.g. Residential lettings etc.)

Property / Land	Description

8.17 Please describe the meeting spaces that the church has and how many people they can accommodate.

Meeting Space	No. of people

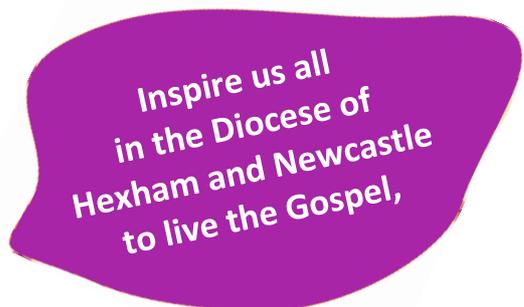
8.18 Is there a place for smaller weekday masses?

- Yes No

If Yes, please provide details

8.19 Does the community have property that is in excess of its requirements?

- Yes No



8.20 If Yes, please give details and any suggestions of ways to realise its potential.

Property / Land	Details / Suggestions

8.21 Are your premises used by external groups / organisations?

- Yes No

8.22 If Yes, please provide details of the nature and frequency of the activity and whether the organisation pays a hire charge.

Group	Activity	Frequency	Hire charge (Y / N)	
<i>Example: Scouts</i>	<i>Pack Meeting</i>	<i>Weekly during term time</i>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8.23 Does the parish collaborate with other denominations locally regarding use of buildings?

- Yes No

8.24 If Yes, please elaborate.

8.25 Do you anticipate any instances of expenditure on property (£5k or more on a single item / project) in the next 5 years?

- Yes No

8.26 If Yes, please provide details.

Expenditure	Anticipated Cost

8.27 Please indicate the distances from the nearest primary and secondary schools to the church.

Name of school	Distance

9 Geographic Distance

Note: Where there is more than one church within a parish, this section will need to be repeated for each church site. Additional copies of this section and the previous one (Section 8 – Facilities) are available on the Resources CD and website. Please use as many of these as you require.

Parish Name	Church Name

9.1 How many miles is it by road to the nearest 3 Catholic churches from this church?
(See data pack)

Church Name	Distance

9.2 From which parish church was your parish originally founded?

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9.3 With which local parish / church communities does your parish have the strongest relationship(s)

9.4 Please describe any significant geographical obstacles between this church and other Catholic church(es) in your locality.

9.5 Based on the experience of your parishioners, how accessible is this church using public transport?

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Easily | Moderately | With difficulty | Not at all |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Please elaborate.

9.6 Does the parish provide any regular transport to church services?

- Yes No

9.7 If Yes, please explain.

10 Young People

10.1 Please describe how work with young people is co-ordinated within your parish.

- No co-ordination in place
- Co-ordinated by the priest
- Co-ordinated by a permanent deacon
- Co-ordinated by a paid youth worker
- Co-ordinated by a volunteer
- Co-ordinated by a group of volunteers
- Co-ordinated by the Parish Pastoral Council
- Other (please describe)

*to be open to change
and to move
forward together in hope.*



10.2 What activities, opportunities or projects are currently in place specifically for young people in your parish?

Activity	Brief description

10.3 How are young people involved in the wider planning / decision-making within the parish?

10.4 Please describe the level of involvement that your parish has with opportunities provided by our Diocesan Youth Service (YMT) and other Diocesan opportunities for young people.

Activity	Not involved	Limited involvement	Quite involved	Very involved
Area / School missions programmes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Source	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth Retreats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth Council	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flame Events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
World Youth Day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth Festivals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adult Co-workers Group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
John Paul II awards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lourdes Pilgrimage – Youth Section	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Others – please specify:				

Thank you for completing Part A of the questionnaire.
Part B is very different, encouraging more reflection and discussion.



Part B - Reflective Questions

When Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee and called his first disciples (Mt 4:18), they must not have had a clue what they were getting into. Four fishermen became 'apprentices' to an itinerant leader, teacher and healer, overnight. In Mark's Gospel (Mk 1:21) the first thing they did was to accompany Jesus into the Synagogue in Capernaum, where he proceeded to break the Jewish law by healing a possessed man on the Sabbath.

There is something exciting about being a disciple, an 'apprentice' of Jesus. There is so much to learn and discover. Jesus walked around the countryside with his followers, both women and men; they were a community, a community on the move. The disciples were formed and shaped within this community.

Once Jesus died and rose from the dead, the disciples were terrified. They ran away (to Emmaus) or hid in an upper room or reverted to their previous job – seven of them went back fishing. Time after time Jesus came among them and reassured them. They were totally taken over by the Holy Spirit and began their work as missionaries; they are instructed to go out into the world and proclaim the Gospel.

We live in a very different world today. But as a result of our Baptism, we are called, gifted and sent. We too are sent into the world. We are missionaries within our local population, disciples among all the residents in our neighbourhood.

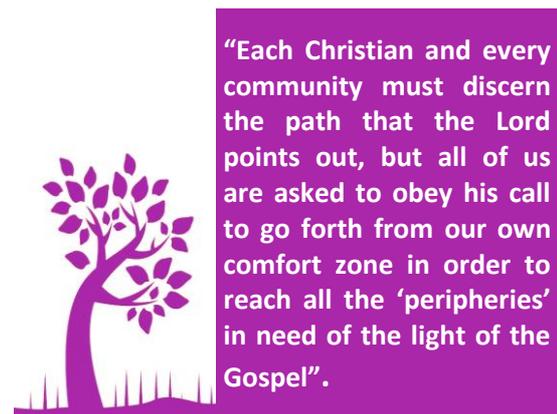
The local priest looks after the already gathered flock. The flock, the rest of us, is immersed in the world; we engage with each other, with those hurt by the Church, those separated from the Church for whatever reason and those beyond the institution of the Church. Every one of us has a particular pathway of discipleship to follow, and many of us discover it through the communities within which we live.

It is only right that we pray for more men to respond to the call of God to become ordained priests; indeed there is a prayer for vocations to the Priesthood in the spirituality resources available with these documents. It is also true that we all need to explore how God is calling us to make a difference in the world we live in. This calling (or vocation) may be to marriage, parenthood, the single life, nursing, policing, taxi-driving, professional football or any mixture of any of those. God has an infinite imagination; there is a unique calling for each one of us. We become disciples when we learn to look at our world through the eyes of Jesus.

This questionnaire will help us to look at our community and discover how it can help each and every one of us become an apprentice of Jesus.

We have heard the facts and figures, the prospect of having 50 priests in our Diocese in 2030, the need for a wider variety of leadership in the Church and the very basic need to become more open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit who is leading us into the future.

Pope Francis gives us clear guidance when he says in *Evangelii Gaudium* (para 20):



With this call in mind, let us begin to explore the questions before us.

Notes:

- *The accompanying Exploring the Way document contains suggestions for how you might go about consulting with members of your parish community on the questions in this section.*
- *Please use a maximum of **250** words in response to each of the questions.*

1 The Christian Faithful

The Christian Faithful are the heart of every worshipping community. If it is to flourish, a community needs a core of members who are committed to the Gospel of Christ and are willing to make the community a priority, giving generously of their time, imagination, gifts and other resources. A viable parish needs a minimum of active members.

- a) **How can your community look to sustain and increase the number of people worshipping with you towards 2030?**

2 Leadership

It is certain that in the future even more communities will be sharing a priest with other worshipping communities. Priests and deacons will be working more collaboratively with people. The prospect of having around 50 active priests in our Diocese in 15 years' time (2030) certainly sharpens the mind. While we must continue to pray that men will respond to the call of discipleship as ordained priests and deacons, we also need to look carefully at the development of other forms of leadership in the Church.

a) What lay leadership is currently viable and effective in your community?

b) For what other areas of your community life could trained lay men and women assume responsibility?

3 Active Involvement of People

In parishes where the same small, ageing group of parishioners has served the community extremely well over very many years, there may be some real anxiety about the future. As that small group retires and withdraws from active involvement, the community is at risk of floundering if younger parishioners are unable or unwilling to take their place.

a) How diverse and active are parishioners within the community?

b) How can the parish community invite and prepare more people to support it?

4 Worship and Spiritual Life

A flourishing community has worship at the centre of its life. The ultimate goal is to make Jesus Christ known and loved. This is why Jesus Christ is at the heart of every worshipping community. The Eucharist is the principal means in which we celebrate this. The Holy Spirit may well be leading us to discover a variety of forms of worship and devotion in the future. For this very reason a living community makes every effort to encourage parishioners of all ages and backgrounds to participate fully in prayer, devotion, worship and study.

God loves us individually. We respond to God's love in our own ways. When we come together for worship we all need to have a sense that our relationship with God is strengthened and affirmed.

- a) Are there aspects of your community's regular worship together at Mass that are working particularly well and deepen the spiritual life of those present?**

- b) Is there anything your community can do to encourage a deeper prayer life and engagement with Scripture?**

5 Education and Continuing Formation

A flourishing community will be able to show that the Catholic faith is handed on to children, young people and adults by means of regular programmes of religious education and Christian Formation.

- a) **What good experiences has your community had in the past and what opportunities would you like to see for 'continuing formation' in the faith for members of your community?**

- b) **How can closer relationships be developed between the worshipping community, the school(s) the young people attend, and the families that belong to both?**

6 Outreach

A flourishing community extends a spirit of hospitality and invites people to become members. It also looks way beyond itself to discover how the spirit of Jesus can be brought to bear on everything that concerns us in the world: our relationship with other Christian Churches, women and men of other faiths and all men and women of good will in our world.

Under this heading we include: hospitality; Ecumenism; Interfaith relationships; involvement in local social and political issues and much more. It explores the practical ways we have of becoming 'missionary disciples'.

- a) What good experiences has your community had regarding our call to be involved with other Christians, other faiths, all men and women of good will?**

- b) How can your worshipping community become more immersed in the local community?**

7 Finances

A sustainable community must have an annual income that is sufficient to cover its expenses. There needs to be a reliable level of stewardship among the faithful who willingly give of their time, gifts and energy to sustain the work of the community.

- a) **How do you feel about the average weekly offertory donation in your community? Does this need to increase to enable your community to flourish in 2030?**

- b) **If you are a finance-rich community, how do you feel about sharing some of your resources with very poor parts of the Diocese?**

8 Facilities

A flourishing community needs good facilities which need to be well maintained. It cannot undertake any building projects, renovations or improvements unless it has the resources to pay for them. It may be that in some places, there is a need for a plan for the community and a plan for the buildings, and they may be separate plans. It is also true to say that our buildings can be a witness to the presence of the Church in our world, or a drain on resources and energy.

- a) **What sort of use can your community foresee for any unused or underused parish facilities in the future?**

- b) **How can the community develop the capacity to look after its facilities in the future?**

9 Geographic Distance

A flourishing community may be influenced by its location. The proximity of neighbouring parishes can have a real impact on the vibrancy of a community. If several communities are in close proximity with large, ageing buildings that are only half-full, this will need to be taken into account when considering the future.

Our basic question is about how we can enable communities to flourish in order for us to deepen our sense of discipleship and service. Our parish churches are not private chapels maintained simply because the community has enough money to cover the expense.

- a) How does your community feel about the possibility that the only way to ensure flourishing in the future is to become part of a new parish community?**

- b) Are there ways in which your community can serve and support neighbouring communities?**

10 Young People

Young people are not just the 'future' of the Church; they are very much part of the present. We all need to look at how actively young people are encouraged and affirmed in their contribution to the community throughout the year. The enthusiasm and energy of young people can sometimes be daunting to those who are older, but they are also signs of the Holy Spirit within us and among us.

a) What good experiences regarding Church life do the young people have in your community?

b) How can the presence and witness of young people be more encouraged and supported in the community?

11 What Else?

- a) Given all the findings you have explored in Part A of this questionnaire, what would you see as the priorities to ensure a viable and flourishing community in 2030?

- b) Do you have any other observations - particularly about anything we may have missed?

12 Good Practice

There is no doubt that there are some really innovative things going on within our worshipping communities from alternative Halloween evenings for children to imaginative liturgies during Holy Week; from exciting Confirmation programmes to pilgrimages and vigils.

a) Is there something your community is involved in which will be of interest to others in the Diocese? Please use as much space as you need.

Thank you for completing Section B.
The final section is brief but does need serious thought.

Part C

Our Parish Community's Initial Thoughts and Ideas about the Future

Based upon the wide consultation and reflection that has taken place in completing parts A and B of this questionnaire, please use this section to provide an indication of your parish community's initial thoughts about its future. You are also asked to provide information about the consultation process that has taken place to inform these views.

a) Our initial thoughts and ideas

Based on everything you have prayerfully and carefully considered so far please set out below the initial thoughts and ideas from your community about the way forward for your parish. You may also wish to provide a view about anything that is emerging regarding the ability of your parish to flourish into the future – either on its own or in conjunction with another community.

Please feel free to use as much space as you need.

Our initial thoughts and ideas (continued)

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for handwritten or typed responses to the questionnaire question.

FORWARD TOGETHER
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H O P E

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, Department for Development and Renewal
Tel: (0191) 243 3304 E-mail: hope@diocesehn.org.uk Web: www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk

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