



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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DEPARTMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND RENEWAL

2 September 2016

Dear all,

It is just over two years since Bishop Séamus launched *Forward Together in Hope* on 16 July 2014. During his reflection he said: *'I am very aware of what is happening in our Diocese. I am also becoming aware that parish communities might indeed flourish if we became less 'parochial', if we became more aware of our neighbours, more willing to work together and explore new possibilities.'*

We are now at the point where we must take Bishop Séamus' words fully to heart and begin to look seriously at how we work more closely together and develop the shared leadership we need to ensure our communities can flourish in the future. Jesus introduced his disciples to very different experiences: fishermen would not usually visit Samaritan towns; no respectable Jew would touch lepers and therefore have to live with them; no master would wash the feet of his servants or companions. These new experiences, although challenging, helped the disciples to develop as individuals and prepared them for the task of building up the early Church. Today, we are building upon those foundations and continuing the work that Jesus calls each one of us to do.

Every parishioner and every parish is now invited to step a little further into the unknown by exploring a new 'partnership' arrangement with neighbouring communities. By the beginning of advent we need all parish communities to have included themselves within a partnership proposal with other parishes and to have been involved in the completion of the enclosed ***Our Partnership Proposals*** document.

In doing so, every community is invited to look at the ***Observations*** and ***Profile of our Parish in Numbers*** already made available, and ask the question: *'How can we ensure that we have a viable and flourishing community in the future?'* It is clearly an advantage if copies of these documents have been made available to everyone in the community. Each community needs to look at the working document ***Our Partnership Proposals*** to prepare for meetings with neighbouring communities over the next couple of months. It would also be helpful if every community has sight of the ***Observations*** and ***Profiles*** of neighbouring communities. To help you to place all of this within a context of prayer and discernment we have prepared prayer and reflection resources that can be drawn upon and

FORWARD TOGETHER
IN
H O P E

Forward Together in Hope is a 3-year process of development and renewal across the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. It is being funded by grants from external organisations for whose generous support we are very grateful. The initiative is being led by Fr Jim O'Keefe, Diocesan Development Director and managed by Tony Sacco, Diocesan Development Officer. They can both be contacted on hope@diocesehn.org.uk

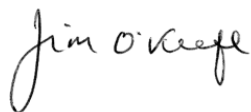
personalised for your parish situation. A hard copy is included within this pack and the electronic version is available from the website.

Between now and 27 November, every parish will be involved in creating a 'partnership area' and the accompanying document will need to be returned electronically to us reflecting the partnership proposals for your area. The return must reflect the view of the whole partnership, not individual parishes. The template - and the prayer resources are available for downloading from the *Forward Together in Hope* website at www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk.

We will then take up the urgent task of creating a report for Bishop Séamus and the Diocesan Board for early January 2017. I would urge you therefore to work closely with your local Dean to ensure that this task is completed.

This is indeed new ground for all of us, but with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit we will discover how best we can move forward together in hope.

God bless

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim O'Keefe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev Jim O'Keefe
Diocesan Development Director

PS. We have taken the opportunity of using this mailing to include a few other items which are explained in the annex to this letter. Please get in touch if you need more copies or have any questions.



Annex to Parish Mailing

DETAILS OF THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION INCLUDED IN THIS MAILING

POSTER

We have responded to a request to provide some 'key messages' that can be displayed for all parishioners. We would encourage you to display the enclosed poster that highlights the forthcoming Vicariate meetings, draws attention to the Observations documents and reminds parishioners about the 'Imagine new ways...' leaflet and tear-off slip. There is room at the bottom of the poster to write in a contact point in the parish. Incidentally we still have copies of the 'Imagine new ways...' leaflet. Just get in touch if you need more.

THE WAY WE SEE IT – SCHOOL-LEVEL SUPPLEMENT

We recently sent you copies of the full report of the young people's survey '*The Way We See It*' which presented the views of almost 5,500 of our young people. We have now produced a brief extract for each secondary school based on the replies from that school. The document(s) for the relevant secondary school(s) for your parish is/are included. In a small number of cases the limited number of responses from a school means that this isn't possible.

CHALLENGES AND HOPES – PARISH-LEVEL SUPPLEMENT

We also sent all parishes copies of the full *Challenges and Hopes* report – the summary of the views of 1720 people about the Church in the Diocese. Around 50 individual parishes had sufficient responses to make a parish-level summary possible. Where this is the case we have included copies of the supplement in this pack.

If you require any additional information about these items, or require electronic copies, please get in touch.

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