



Deanery Meetings

September/October 2015

Good Practice and Positive Things Emerging

Thank you to everyone who participated in the *Forward Together in Hope* Deanery Meetings in September and October. We met with over 650 people – Parish Representatives, Head Teachers, Teachers, Parishioners, Deacons and Priests. The meetings were lively and informative. Some people even asked for more of them! This document simply reflects the wide range of points under the headings of ‘*Good Practice*’ and ‘*Positive Things Emerging*’. I appreciate that we are now a long way into the present phase of ‘Exploring the Way’ – but don’t worry, there will be a further phase once we’ve returned the Questionnaires to our parish communities. The richness contained in the following ideas may offer suggestions for parish communities to explore.

What is happening in the local community?

- Every two weeks our PP refers to 2 questions, we have them on paper, we think about them and then bring our reflections to the parish meeting.
- We watched the DVD during Sunday masses, the priest has dedicated time after the Gospel for us to explore what we think about the questions, we hand them in and they are collated by a parishioner.
- We have 10 pillars in our Church. A parishioner has invited comments on the questions posted up for discussion.
- We have a ‘Prayer Station’ in our Church with FTiH as the main focus. We provide prayers and posters and an opportunity for people to make suggestions.
- We have had an Altar Cloth and Lectern Cloth embroidered by parishioners with the *Forward Together in Hope* Logo on them.
- We have the *Forward Together in Hope* prayer printed on every newsletter, and we say it at every mass.
- We have distributed the *Forward Together in Hope* prayer to all our housebound.
- We have had a brilliant 24 Hour Prayer Vigil for our Diocese.
- Our 24 Hour Prayer Vigil was really helpful.
- We have used the DVDs in Church and in group discussion.
- New things have started...we have Tea and Coffee after Mass, are looking to strengthen links between the parish and the school and have kept in touch with our Confirmation group.
- We have dropped a leaflet in the door of every parishioner on our Parish Register.
- We have created 1 newsletter for 2 parishes.
- We have parishioners crossing ‘boundaries’ to lead Eucharistic Services.
- We have identified the Housebound and are now looking to promote ‘Anchors’.
- We are looking to build a closer relationship with other parishes.

Initiatives with lay people

- Lay Representatives and members of Steering Groups talking to congregations during mass.
- A small group completing Part A of the Questionnaire and making a synopsis available to the rest of the parish.
- Lay Representatives arranging fortnightly meetings to explore the questions two at a time, once the parish priest has introduced them at Mass.
- A new Steering Group has been set up – with some people who have never volunteered before.
- We have divided our Parish Council into new teams to look carefully at the Headings and explore how we can take things forward.
- A summary of Section A has been made available for every parishioner – we hope it helps them have a realistic picture of our parish community and how many people are involved.
- Meetings are ‘Quality Occasions’ – we are comfortable, share simple food and take time to be together.
- Some of us have begun meeting with parents in the playgroup gatherings.
- We have talked at Mass about *Forward Together in Hope* and have made available a ‘Post Box’ for suggestions.
- People are now involved who have never been involved before.
- Priests are taking a ‘hands off’ approach and encouraging parishioners.
- We should have done this many years ago!
- We are bringing people together across the deanery in a realistic way.
- The example of ‘Prayer Vigils’ across the Diocese is a good thing.
- *Forward Together in Hope* creates a ‘safe space’ for the deanery to come together and explore the future.
- The *Forward Together in Hope* emphasis on prayer can only be good.
- Good to ask non-practicing Catholics what they think of us.
- We are beginning to think beyond: ‘Why can’t we have our own priest?’
- We are moving away from the idea we have inherited: 1 parish, 1 priest.
- People are feeling enabled by the process.
- One parish has a weekly meeting of *Forward Together in Hope* facilitators – which has resulted in one person seeking to become a Catholic.

Relationships with schools and young people

- We have included the link to the individual Questionnaire on our School Website and Newsletter.
- The parents of children in our school have been given the link regarding the Individual Questionnaire.
- We have brought *Forward Together in Hope* onto the agenda of our Governors’ meetings.
- We have produced a new Newsletter for parents to engage in the *Forward Together in Hope* programme.

- We have engaged with those who have been Confirmed to think about how they will be involved in 'Church' in the future.
- We have arranged a 'Youth Mass' with FTiH as the main theme.
- As a parish community we are trying to develop links with both the local Junior and Secondary Schools.
- A hardcopy of the Individual Questionnaire has been given to all the families in our school.
- We have created a 'Child Friendly' version of the Questionnaire for our school.
- The *Forward Together in Hope* Website is now mentioned in all our School Newsletters and our School Website.
- We are hoping that the JPii Awards will make a difference in the relationship between our parish and the local Secondary School

Other

- We are impressed by the 'transparency' of the data available. It helps to give us a realistic picture of where we are.
- The process has identified areas where we need to improve.
- It has given 'everyone' the opportunity to speak...this is a nice change.
- Reflecting data back to the parish has been really helpful.
- There is much more conversation between schools and the community and families in the parish.
- In the future, how do we serve those who simply cannot travel to Mass?
- How can priests do what they really have to do?
- With all this mobility – what do we mean by Parish Community?

As you can see there are some very thorough and imaginative suggestions and practices. I hope this is a respectful reflection of everything that was noted during our meetings. We simply offer them to you as food for thought and with the thought that you might want to share them with your own groups and those who joined you for the meetings.

Thank you once again.

Jim O'Keefe - 10 November 2015