

# BEYOND HOPE

It has been an immense privilege for the *Forward Together in Hope* team to have spent the last three years responding to the 'Invitation to take part in a Journey of Renewal' alongside every Catholic in our Diocese.

When we began we didn't know that there would be 18 new partnerships, that we would have prayer vigils of all kinds taking place around the Diocese, or that we would have employed someone to help us use our property more imaginatively or someone to take a fundamental look at how we can all be formed as Disciples of Jesus.

We have been deeply heartened and encouraged by the generosity of all those who have supported this work in so many ways. As we move beyond *Forward Together in Hope* to implementation please continue to pray for Bishop Séamus and all those involved in exploring how best to ensure that our Diocese does indeed continue to flourish into the future.

God of all Creation,  
You have constantly poured out your Spirit  
upon our Diocese  
and kindled here a light  
which has spread throughout the world.

Lord Jesus, you gathered disciples to yourself  
to learn from you  
and to model their lives on you.  
Your Holy Spirit empowered them  
to continue your work in the world.

Come upon us, Holy Spirit,  
deepen the faith you invite us to share  
and inspire us to become faithful witnesses.

As we begin to develop our partnerships,  
help each one of us  
to use the gifts you give us  
to nurture one another,  
to serve the world  
and to live in harmony  
with the whole of creation.

All of this we ask in the name of  
Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.



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# Pointing the Way

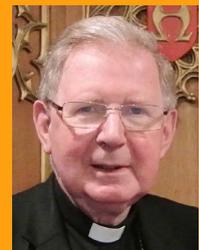


## Developing Partnerships

Pentecost sees the formal launch of the 18 new partnerships across our Diocese. Partnerships are described by Bishop Séamus as '... a group of parishes agreeing to work together, to share resources, both human and material, to become stronger and better equipped for furthering the Kingdom of God'.

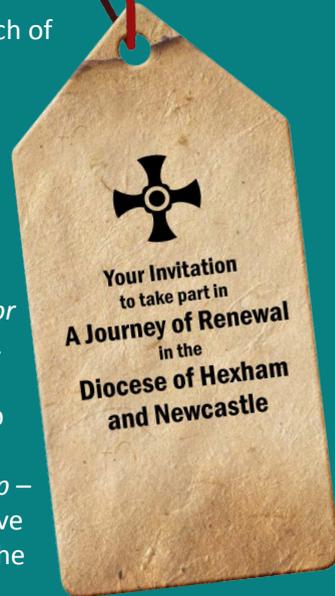
Each one is led by a Partnership Dean who will establish a *Partnership Development Group* – a forum genuinely representative of the clergy and laity in all of the parishes within the partnership. The group will be chaired by a lay person and will be responsible for putting in place a partnership plan for developing and nurturing the new partnerships.

Initial advice for partnerships has been provided in '*Partnership Guidelines – First Steps*' available via the website. It will be followed by more detailed information on key topics and information sessions will be provided to 'bring the guidance to life'.



Pentecost was a most dramatic and sudden experience which inspired the followers of Jesus to go out into the world and proclaim the Gospel to everyone. The Apostles were filled with courage and were willing to communicate with people right across the Mediterranean world.

Over the last three years our Diocese has also been inspired by the Holy Spirit. We committed ourselves to



## Reflections from across the Diocese

When Bishop Séamus and our Board of Trustees met for three and a half days in January, agreeing the new partnerships was just one part of their work. Even more important was their prayerful reflection on the very wide range of topics which emerged from all of the questionnaire responses – from young people, individuals, priests and deacons, as well as from numerous deanery and vicariate meetings – not to mention the views gleaned from a wide range of other meetings, letters, emails and phone calls. This has all been summarised into a short document entitled, '*Pointing the Way – Reflections from across the Diocese*' available at [www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk](http://www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk). Bishop Séamus and the Diocesan Board of Trustees see the issues as important areas to be explored in the months and years ahead.

They include:

- **Formation for all** – locally where possible and with both priests and people together.
- **Support for Clergy** – and provision for them in retirement and when becoming frail.
- **Engaging with Young People** in our worshipping communities.
- **Developing coherent and integrated communications** at all levels in the Diocese.
- **Worship** – supporting local communities to develop their worship – especially when Mass is celebrated less often and in fewer churches.
- **Radical Hospitality and Inclusion** – offering the compassionate welcome of Jesus to all.
- **Outreach** – how we respond to Pope Francis' encouragement to be part of truly 'Missionary Communities'.
- **Diocesan Services** – and how they can support the development of partnerships. Human Resources will be particularly important when partnerships begin to take on more volunteers and even paid staff in the future.
- Undertaking two exciting diocesan projects – how best to use our resource on **Holy Island**, and an **Inner City Mission** across Newcastle and Gateshead.
- How **Diocesan Finance** is used and how we might generate new income for the future.

All of this will be overseen by an **Implementation Group** which will develop a **Strategic Plan** for our Diocese to focus our resources and energy on ensuring that we witness to the person of Jesus in the years to come.

pray that the Spirit would 'pour out grace and guidance' so we could be formed and renewed. We have looked seriously at what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and have worked together to discover how to face the future as our numbers continue to decline. We now commit ourselves to working in partnership, sharing our gifts and talents, supporting one another and dedicating ourselves together to witness to the Gospel. This is the beginning of a new chapter in the history of our Diocese and an opportunity for us all to look to the future with faith and hope.

Thank you all for your generous contribution to *Forward Together in Hope* - I pray that priests and people continue to share responsibility in our communities, encouraging the formation of everyone, serving one another and worshipping God with increased commitment and dedication.

Thank you once again and God bless you.

+ Séamus