

A Vision for Partnerships



I spent the days between 17th and 20th of January this year with our Diocesan Board and the *Forward Together in Hope* Team. It was a time of deep prayer, serious discussion and decision making. In the weeks and months ahead we will devise ways of addressing the wide range of hopes and concerns you, the people of our diocese, have voiced in many meetings, over 7,000 documents, letters and emails. We will look at extremely important questions about how worshipping communities can deepen their relationship with young people, how we support communities where there is no celebration of Mass on the Lord's Day, how we care for our sick and frail priests and many other concerns which are close to the hearts of our communities.

This booklet describes the new partnerships which will be established in the near future. A partnership is 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. They offer our diocese unlimited potential as we seek to ensure viable and flourishing communities of people who want to deepen their commitment to Jesus and witness to him in our world.

Our new partnerships will offer opportunities to ensure that:

- A range of formation programmes can be developed, at a more local level, to help communities provide pastoral care for many groups of people, catechesis, marriage preparation and worship.
- Support can be made available for smaller communities.
- The gifts, talents and financial resources in a wider area can be put at the service of more people.
- Responsibility for a range of services such as finance, health and safety, administration and communication can be coordinated across a wider area.
- Priests can be freed to concentrate on their essential calling to preach, call the community to worship and the celebration of the sacraments.
- A thorough and careful review of property and its uses can be carried out throughout the area.
- Opportunities can be found for people to come together across the area to celebrate and worship together.
- Leadership teams including priests, deacons and people can develop to help everyone deepen their understanding of what it means to be a witness to Jesus in our world today.

I hope that our whole diocesan family will continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us into the future with confidence, a deep sense of mission and a willingness to witness to the coming of the Kingdom of God.

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+ Séamus Cunningham
Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle