

Praying at Meetings

We have all been at meetings which have begun and ended with a quick prayer. This is not a bad thing but is a little like seeing prayer as the bread in a sandwich—it certainly holds the contents in safely but is not really seen as important as the filling in the middle.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is present throughout our meetings. Jesus himself said that where two or three of us are gathered together he is present in our midst. This means that he is there at the beginning and the end—but also in the middle... when our attention begins to drift - when we are angry - when we cannot see what someone is getting at - when things suddenly fall into place—when a consensus is reached that we had begun to think was impossible.

There are various things you could consider. For example, invite your 'Anchors' to pray at the same time as your meeting.

Begin your meeting with a time of Adoration... Or open the meeting with a brief introduction as to what is to be covered or dealt with and then invite people to go into church or chapel and spend time before the Lord sharing their thoughts and concerns with him and being open to his guidance for the meeting to follow.

Invite other people to spend time before the Blessed Sacrament during the meeting.

Use an extract from scripture (ideally), church document or other inspiring words that relate to the things you will be reflecting on together.

Call on your parish, deanery and diocesan patron saints at the beginning or end of the meeting.

A leaflet outlining in more detail a possible format for a parish or other group meeting is available in the folder.



Diocesan Festival

The **Diocesan Festival** will take place over the weekend of 20-21 June. This will have a **Forward Together in Hope** dimension but also offers people around the Diocese the opportunity to come together to pray, share ideas and socialise in a friendly and informal setting.

Look out for the publicity in parishes and on the diocesan website.

Deanery and Parish visits

Kathryn Turner hopes to visit each of the deaneries over the course of 2015 to support local initiatives and the Department's Administrator, Karen Brown, will be getting in touch with Deans to arrange these. Where appropriate, sessions could also be offered at cluster or parish level.

If you would like a particular date, please get in touch as soon as possible to ensure that it is booked for you!

Department for Spirituality
St Vincent's Offices, St Cuthbert's House,
West Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. NE15 7PY
0191 243 3302 | E-mail: spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk

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Prayer and Liturgy Resources



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

Prayer in Forward Together in Hope

Bishop Séamus has asked that the *Forward Together in Hope* process be underpinned by prayer. At a meeting of the Diocesan Board of Directors, they reflected on what their vision of 'success' would look like.

In the area of prayer and spirituality, they said,

'We hope that as a result of *Forward Together in Hope* every Catholic in the Diocese will experience an increase in enthusiasm and an openness to the presence of the Holy Spirit through prayer; that we are all open to different ways of praying and there are more churches open so that people can take the opportunity to visit and pray. Communities of prayer will appreciate the richness of the Scriptures and the need for silence. We will all become closer friends of Jesus and see the decisions we make through his eyes.

'Our worshipping communities will look outward with confidence, engage with marginalised groups and seek to welcome those who feel excluded. We will deepen our relationship with other Christians and seek to appreciate the presence of people of other faiths. We will come together with all men and women of good will to work for the Common Good and the Kingdom of the Lord.'

Prayer can take many forms and, over the next few years, a range of ideas and resources will be offered to support individuals, parishes and other groups. It is not envisaged that everyone will want or need to use everything. Think of the resources as elements of a buffet—to select or set aside as appropriate for you and your community. Try to use a selection so that people will find something suitable to their interests and needs. This booklet offers some initial thoughts to help in your planning and accompanying leaflets are included in the folder. More ideas and resources can be downloaded from the *Forward Together in Hope* website: www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk



Anchors

The word 'Anchor' links us to the old word, 'anchorite', someone who chose to live next to their parish church and spend the rest of their life there in prayer. People in the town would have known that the anchorite was there and would probably have dropped by to ask for prayers. They would never have been 'too busy'—and would, quite possibly, have offered a spiritual anchor to the community — a still point in amongst the busyness and occasional storms of life. Our modern 'Anchors' pick up the tradition.



In our parishes, there are people whose chief place of prayer is their home and they have a vital part to play in *Forward Together in Hope*. We are often aware of what we offer them by our visiting and taking Holy Communion but this reminds us that they are powerhouses of prayer. Through their prayer, they can support their parishes – the clergy and lay people – their schools. Not everyone will know where they are physically—but they will know they are there spiritually. They will not be 'too busy' to pray for the needs of their community and to know that they are there will be reassuring to those who are occupied with more active ministries.

It may be possible to commission your parish 'Anchors'. A leaflet to hand to Eucharistic Ministers or potential Anchors is available along with a short commissioning rite.

Many people will already have the *Forward Together in Hope* prayer card—if not, this is an opportunity to ensure that they are distributed widely—large print versions are also available. Parishes might also like to give a symbol of prayer to their 'Anchors' - a holding cross or candles. These can be blessed at the service and given to those who are there and passed on to those unable to be present. It might be possible to conclude with tea and cakes and, perhaps, a short entertainment from the local school.



Gem Churches

Many people remember when most churches could be left open during the day. They offered a place for people to pop in for a quiet prayer—to light a candle—or simply to get their breath back before heading off to work or home responsibilities.



When thinking about how we might support the spiritual life of our communities, considering how we might have some of our churches open for at least part of the time might be one idea to ponder. This can also be a way of reaching out to people in our local areas—reminding them that we are there and that there is a praying community in their midst which can offer sanctuary and space.

It may not be possible for every church in a deanery or cluster to be open but it would be worth thinking about one or two that could be—supported by parishioners from other places. Particularly suitable sites might be those close to shopping centres, offices or other work-places. This could be a time to think about how this might be possible in your locality.

A Parish Pilgrimage or Awayday

A pilgrimage can be a good way to bring people together and there are many sites within the Diocese which would lend themselves to a day or weekend pilgrimage. This might be the time to plan a parish pilgrimage – to book coaches and places to celebrate Mass or other liturgies or prayers. Here are a few thoughts to get you started.

Holy Island is an obvious candidate with St Aidan's offering a venue for Mass, walks on the holy ground and places to visit. There is a selection of Prayer Walks around the Island – ranging from about a mile to 5 miles. For those unable to travel – or to have available in case of bad weather – there is a 'virtual pilgrimage'. This is a PowerPoint presentation using photographs,

prompts for reflection and extracts from scripture. It is available on request from the Department for Spirituality.

Other places to consider might include:

Durham offering the opportunity to pray at the shrines of St Bede and St Cuthbert in the Cathedral as well as remembering the Durham Martyrs.

Newcastle and **Jesmond** give people a chance to visit the mother-church of the Diocese and the ancient shrine of Our Lady of Jesmond.

Hexham Abbey was founded by St Wilfrid and the town, of course, gives its name to the Diocese.

Chester-le-Street where Cuthbert's body lay for 110 years.

Jarrow with its ancient church of St Paul's and Bede's World is a good place to visit.

Hartlepool has associations with St Hilda and the Anglican church on the Headland is welcoming of visitors (though has limited opening so check before setting off).

Esh Winning has links with St John Boste, a Reformation martyr – as has **Gateshead** with Blessed John Ingram and **Darlington** with Blessed George Swallowell.

Other possibilities might be inspired by a visit to the **Prayer Walks** section of the diocesan website.

Alternatively, think about an Awayday at Minsteracres where the Team will help to facilitate a day of prayer and reflection.

