

## Pointing the Way

It is Holy Week. The whole of Jesus' earthly life was pointing the way to this climactic few days when he arrived in Jerusalem. As he journeyed into the city, the crowds adored him, the same crowds who condemned him a few days later. There is a great deal of 'journeying' in Holy Week. The disciples flee from Jesus leaving him totally abandoned in the Garden. Jesus is passed from soldiers to the High Priest to Herod to Pilate to the executioners. As we follow the Lord through this week, through Easter Sunday and through his visits to reassure the disciples that he was still with them, we can be profoundly assured that as we continue our journeying from parishes to partnership the Lord is with us, encouraging us and leading us.

The report made available to Bishop Séamus and the Diocesan Board of Trustees for their residential meeting in January weighed in at 189 pages. A hundred and sixty pages were the various 'options' and possible combinations of parishes which eventually became our 18 Partnerships. Everyone is now aware of which partnership they are in, but that is only one small part of the story. The first 28 pages set out the very wide range of topics raised in Parish Questionnaire and online surveys as well as the Deanery and Vicariate meetings, many phone calls, emails and letters. At the meeting of the Board of Trustees on 29 March the task of drafting a remit for an Implementation Group to take forward many of these topics was given to Frs. Martin Stempczyk, Colm Hayden, Simon Lerche, and Tony Sacco.

The range of topics includes: a Review of Diocesan Services; Diocesan Finance; a greater emphasis on lay leadership in our worship; the vitally important question of how to engage with Young

People, including links with our schools; Clergy Welfare and Support; the need for radical hospitality and inclusion in all our worshipping communities. Fr Ian Hoskins will look at how best to use the resource we have on Holy Island and Fr Simon Lerche, as Episcopal Vicar for Newcastle and North Tyneside, will oversee the development of the City Centre Mission project including St Mary's Cathedral, St Andrew's, St Dominic's the University Chaplaincy and St Joseph's in Gateshead. Mgr. Andrew Faley will keep a close eye on a project looking towards a fully integrated and comprehensive communications strategy for the diocese. Fr Colm Hayden will have a particular responsibility for exploring issues around the physical and mental health of clergy. Amy Cameron will have a more focussed responsibility in relation to initiatives exploring what it means to be disciples of Jesus.

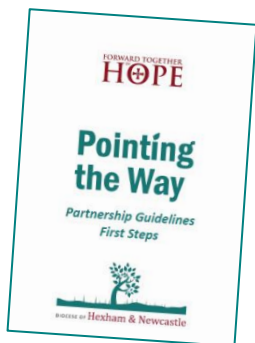
This is a huge programme, so once the Implementation Group is named, it will need all our prayer and support. It will have its work cut out for some years to come and part of its brief will be to undertake strategic planning for the Diocese to ensure that all developments fit together and work well into the future.

It may seem almost overwhelming but, if you think it's tough for us, perhaps we can take some comfort from the Diocese of Trier in Germany. After a Diocesan Synod in 2016 the decision was made to reduce the 887 parishes to 35 'mega-parishes'. By 2020 some of these parishes may have over 70,000 members – imagine a parish with twice the number of parishioners we have in our whole diocese. Perhaps in the light of what is happening in Germany, we're having it easy!



## Partnership Guidelines – First Steps

As mentioned in the last Update we are committed to providing advice and support to partnerships as they get up and running. 'First Steps' guidelines are being issued at Easter both in hardcopy form and through the website [www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk](http://www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk)



The document explains the new structures for the diocese and provides a 'template' for setting up a *Partnership Development Group* for each partnership area. In addition it offers partnerships some food for thought on Team Building, Communications, Planning, Spirituality and Outreach. Preliminary information about Finances and Property is also included. While, as the title implies, this document deals very much with 'first steps' we hope that it will be a helpful 'starter for 10' for those partnerships that are raring to get started.

It will be followed by regular 'chunks' of more detailed information covering the same topic areas. This will be provided in an electronic format only. Once contact people are in place in each partnership we will look at running information sessions to 'bring the guidance to life'.

## A warm welcome to Jon Melson



We are delighted to welcome Jonathan (Jon) Melson to the *Forward Together in Hope* Team as Parish Property Outreach Adviser. This is a new role with the purpose of assisting parish communities within their partnerships to explore the future use

of Church property to benefit not only the local Church but importantly, the local community.

Jon has twenty years of both academic and professional experience within housing, the built environment and looking at the strategic provision of support services for vulnerable people. Over this period he has worked for Local Government, the National Health Service and several large Housing Associations.

He explains his aspirations for his new role:

*'I aim to look at linking the Church into public service partnerships where appropriate and exploring how strategic plans can be used to identify key areas of need within our diocese.'*

*'On our own doorsteps, public buildings and services are disappearing from our communities - Sure Start Centres, Post Offices and day centres among many others. Church buildings remain prominent structures within the centre of our cities, towns and villages. While some Church buildings remain empty or are under-utilised, there are many fine examples within our diocese where parishioners have seen the opportunity for the Church to reconnect with the community through a variety of uses and activities, both small and large scale.'*

*'I am looking forward to meeting with those already involved in addressing the needs of their community through the use of their buildings and capturing their methods and knowledge to empower groups of enthusiastic parishioners who are beginning to explore the possibilities of utilising their Churches, halls and presbyteries. We have a wonderful opportunity to show how our property, as well as our parishioners, can witness to the Gospel.'*

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## Lay Development Update



We have arrived at a very exciting time in the lay development process. The first part of this work was very much steeped in listening, researching, asking the right questions

and discovering the landscape of our diocese in relation to its laity. The results of this research are now collated and a clear and concise way forward has been proposed and agreed.

At the heart of this is the understanding that we are about developing disciples. This involves individuals having confidence and training in their own giftedness. It also involves communities being enabled to take responsibility and make choices for their own development.

The next stage of lay development is very much about preparing the teams of people who will be able to deliver the formation on as local a level as possible. It will be launched with partnerships in September 2017.

In the last Update we featured an advert for volunteers with education and facilitation experience; we had a great response and this group has been invited to assist in the preparation stage. This time we are asking for people with experience and skills in Communication and Advertising to get in touch. Don't worry - if this isn't your particular forte – there will be lots of other opportunities in the near future!

## Safeguarding in Partnerships

*'I'm a Eucharistic Minister in St Bede's parish and may be asked to help occasionally at St Mary's – am I covered with my St Bede's DBS?' 'I'm a Baptismal Catechist; can I work in other parishes in our new partnership?'*

These are two of the questions we've been asked over recent weeks as parishioners begin to look to

becoming active in their partnership. They prompted us to begin a conversation with Angie Richardson and David Brickland in our Safeguarding Department to explore the implications for new partnerships. The answer to both questions is YES – it is perfectly legal to do exactly what you do in your own parish in another community. However, it is important to let our Safeguarding Team know the names of the other parish or parishes in which you will be working in order to update diocesan records and inform the Safeguarding Rep. at the other parishes. It is also very important to advise of any additional or different role you may undertake within the partnership, as this may require a different type of DBS clearance.

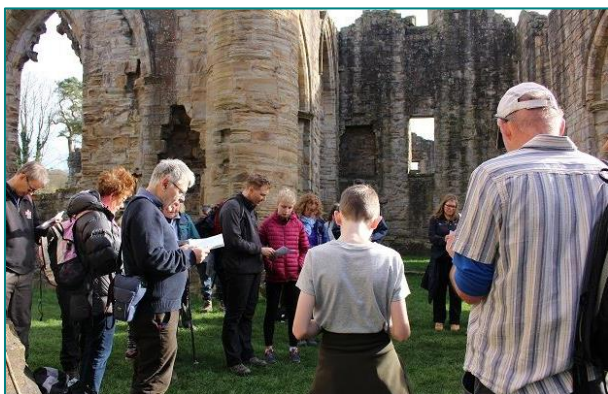
In the weeks to come we will be working with our Safeguarding colleagues to prepare more thorough guidelines for everyone to work to. If you have any Safeguarding queries at all, please don't hesitate to call the office on 0191 243 3305 or email on [safeguarding@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@diocesehn.org.uk)

## Walk in the Light!



Well – we did it! On Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March, the day before St Cuthbert's feast day, 30 intrepid explorers (aged 7 to over 70) - and one dog called Bonnie - left the Church of St Mary and St Cuthbert in Chester-Le-Street to start our 8-mile Cuddy's Corse pilgrimage to Durham Cathedral. The forecast wasn't brilliant – rain and high winds were predicted – but clearly the sun was 'shining on the righteous' and it turned out to be a perfect spring day. In the words of one of the walkers:

*'Thank you for all the effort you put in to organising such an enjoyable walk, it was a joy to walk in such good company and we were blessed with great weather too.'*



Pausing at Finchale Priory for refreshment – both physical and spiritual - it was clear that new friendships had already started to develop and stories were being shared. As we left, the echoes of *'One More Step Along the World I Go'* were still resounding round the walls of this hallowed place!

And so – on to Durham – and our weary, but still enthusiastic, travellers managed to make a prayerful visit to St Cuthbert's tomb and, just in case he might be feeling left out, we popped along to St Bede too. Thanks go to Kathryn Turner for providing our reflections along the way – and to everyone who participated in making this a thoroughly enjoyable day.

If you missed out and walking is 'your thing' you might wish to consider joining the Interfaith Peace Pilgrimage to Flodden Field and Crookham Peace Centre on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October. To register your interest or receive further details please email: [spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk)

### **Think Partnership – and share ideas**

Even before the new partnerships are officially launched it is good to see that initial joint activity is starting to happen. For example, one area has been in touch to say that a 24 Hour Prayer for Pentecost, originally planned for two of their parishes, has now been extended to include all of the worshipping communities across the

partnership. This has generated a lot of enthusiasm and offers of help and has all the makings of being a great success. Other areas are reporting that the initial planning for joint social activities or 'getting to know you sessions' is now underway.

It would be great to hear about any partnership-wide ideas and activities that are starting to take shape in your area. Please feel free to get in touch with information that we can share around the diocese.

Partnership arrangements are also starting to impact upon how the diocesan departments and services are focusing their activity. For example things are developing for the Spirituality Network. This was started a few years ago and offered a great sounding board for ideas during *Forward Together in Hope*. At a recent overnight meeting at Minsteracres, the Network 'seemed to come of age'. One outcome was the decision that each Partnership would have at least one representative on the "central" Network and that those reps. would establish a network with the parishes in their partnership. A meeting is planned for 20 May to look at this further. If you are interested, contact the Spirituality Department or your parish priest/ Episcopal Vicar.

### **Keeping in touch**

For the latest information about *Forward Together in Hope* and for access to the range of resources, please visit [www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk](http://www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk).

To contact one of the *Forward Together in Hope* team (Jim O'Keefe, Nancy Gash, Amy Cameron, Jon Melson and Tony Sacco) e-mail: [hope@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:hope@diocesehn.org.uk) phone: 0191 243 3304. We'd love to hear your comments and suggestions.

