



Update – December 2016/January 2017



Absolutely Fabulous!

We must offer huge thanks and congratulations to everyone involved in preparing, producing and sending the local 'Our Partnership Proposals'. By 12:00 noon on Sunday 27th November, every single parish in the diocese was included - a 100% success rate. That is a truly fantastic response and is a great credit to all our parishioners and clergy. I doubt if there has ever been such a thorough reply to a request in the history of the diocese! It is humbling to read how so many of our parishes are looking ahead to the future. Many fully appreciate that there will be changes, that there will be fewer celebrations on Sundays. But many are really open and looking beyond their own parish to explore new ways of serving others, worshipping and witnessing to Jesus in the future.



One particular family in the diocese sent a 'Secret Weapon' to the *Forward Together in Hope* team. The parcel was not to be opened until Sunday 27th 'unless there was great need'. It contained a variety of packets of biscuits, some chocolate (70% cocoa – very healthy) and a stress ball. This was to help the team and other colleagues to cope with all the stress of checking and collating all the responses. Needless to say, everything has now been consumed - well, apart from the stress ball!

The team are now preparing the presentation to be made available to Bishop Séamus and the Diocesan Directors for their meeting in January. This meeting will give everyone present the opportunity to reflect on many of the points raised in all the surveys, meetings and gatherings over the last couple of years. Please keep them all (and us) in your prayers at the beginning of this New Year. An outline timeline for the next stages of *Forward Together in Hope* is included as an annex to this Update.



Some Thoughts about Leadership

Amy Cameron recently joined the *Forward Together in Hope* team to help coordinate the development of lay people in the diocese. Here she looks back over the past four months and ahead to 2017.

"The last few months have been an inspiring, challenging and blessed time looking at the possibilities for our worshipping communities in the future. I must begin by thanking all of you who have been praying for this process. I have truly felt the hand of God shaping this work, there have been many times when a way forward has emerged and this has then been confirmed in numerous ways within that day by timely meetings, emails and fortuitous conversations. It has felt like the Holy Spirit at work.

Clear priorities have arisen and, having listened to many people, a plan has been developed. It is important when making changes for the long term to ensure that we are laying firm foundations. We are starting from a place of great strength. We are a diocese full of amazing and inspiring people. We already have many great opportunities to come together and celebrate our faith; we have a rich spirituality and a plethora of examples of good practice and ideas to share.

We are also in a position of great strength as lay people by the commissioning and the authority of the Church. The Church has taught us that through our baptism we have been called to be priest, prophet and king. The need for a new way of coming together as Church is a reminder that we have already been anointed for this service. The beautiful teachings of the second Vatican Council with *'The Call of the Laity'* gives us any authority we may be waiting to hear. There has also been much written within the official teaching of the Church on how we can work collaboratively and develop collaborative ministry. The way forward has many possibilities and the potential is vast.

We are gifted by the people in our communities and much would be gained if we were to further discover the gift that we are to others and how our gifts that are God given can be developed and nurtured. Every member of our church has an influence on the overall community and everyone has something to give. It may be that the gift that you can offer at this time is prayer; it may be you feel you can only give a small offering of your time and talent or it may be that you know God is asking for much more. What is important is that we journey together to discern this and to make a conscious effort to draw new people into the ministries in our communities.

This has been a time of waiting and over the next couple of months the waiting may continue. However there are concrete ways we can act now in order to prepare for the future. New partnerships will require the making of new relationships and building bridges between communities. Within our churches there is still much scope for development regarding how well we know our current community. Perhaps this is a time to look with fresh eyes at the gift of people you have around you. Who are the people on the fringes of your community? How could they be further welcomed? How do we develop as welcoming meaningful communities? The stronger our foundations the stronger our new

connections will be when we move forward into partnerships.



As we move into 2017 our communities will require leaders at every level. There will be many opportunities over the coming year for people to step forward and be involved and you will be hearing from me regularly! I am looking at this stage for people who feel they 'know people', who feel they have experience of being able to see potential in others. If you feel this is something that God has gifted you with be it naturally or through your life experiences then please get in touch."

Amy can be contacted using the details on page 3.



A Reflection from Fr Jim O'Keefe

On Christmas Day 1977, not long before he was murdered while celebrating Mass on March 24 1980, Blessed Oscar Romero invited the people of El Salvador to not just remember that God took a huge risk in becoming a frail and fragile baby, but that we profess that needy child to be God. He said that it is one thing to profess that God became human, but another to live in a way that shows we believe it. We are called to live in a way that proves God became human. Our lifestyle, willingness to forgive, commitment to include all sorts of people in our circle of friends and worshipping communities are all ways of witnessing to what Christmas truly means.

The Christian Church is not a finished product. It is always struggling to be reborn. *Forward Together in Hope* gives us all a moment to reflect once again on what it means for us to be Church in our part of the world today. We have the opportunity

to wonder about what sort of person our Church wants to grow up to be. Do we want to be cosy or prophetic, comfortable or fully engaged in the world we live in? As the prayer attributed to Blessed Oscar Romero reminds us:

This is what we are about:
We plant seeds that one day will grow
We water seeds already planted,
Knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further
development
We provide yeast that produces effects
Beyond our capabilities

We cannot do everything
And there is a sense of liberation in realising that
This enables us to do something
And do it very well.
It may be incomplete
But it is a step along the way,
An opportunity for God's grace to enter
And do the rest.

We may never see the end results,
But that is the difference between the master
builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders,
Ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.
(Bishop Kenneth Untener, 1979)

Many of you will remember that this Prayer was the introduction to each of our Vicariate meetings in October. You may also remember that Bishop Seamus used it when he launched *Forward Together in Hope* in July 2014. It is a message of hope. It may be something to guide us through everything we will explore together in 2017.



Finding out More

For the latest information about *Forward Together in Hope* and for access to the range of resources, please visit www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk.

To contact one of the *Forward Together in Hope* team (Jim O'Keefe, Nancy Gash, Amy Cameron and Tony Sacco) e-mail: hope@diocesehn.org.uk phone: 0191 243 3304



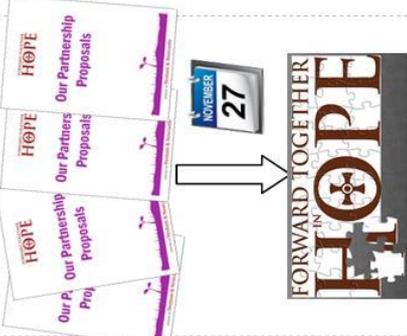
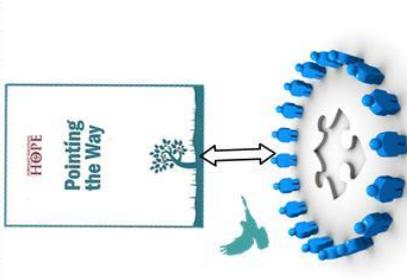
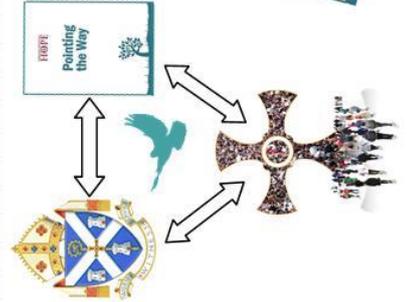
At this time when we celebrate Our Lord's birth we would like to take the opportunity to say thank you to everyone who has worked so hard to help us on the journey so far and to wish you a very happy Christmas.

May you have the spirit of Christmas
which is Peace
the gladness of Christmas
which is Hope,
and the heart of Christmas
which is Love.

God Bless
Fr Jim, Tony, Amy and Nancy

FORWARD TOGETHER
HOPE

Forward Together in Hope - Outline Timeline October 2016 – September 2017

October/November	December/January	February/March	April/May	June/July	August/September
 <p>Partnership Proposals</p>	 <p>Board Recommendations</p>	 <p>Finalising Partnerships</p>	 <p>Communicating Decisions</p>	 <p>Nurturing Partnerships</p>	 <p>Nurturing Partnerships</p>
<p>Key Activity/Milestones</p> <p>Analysis and review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial review of Partnership Proposals Clarification and requesting additional information Presentation of initial findings internally <p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bi-monthly update <p>Meetings/Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vicariate Meetings and 16 Nov Deanery Conferences: 2 Nov Council of Priests: 10 Nov Briefing meeting for Deans/EVs: 24 Nov Joint Council: 26 Nov Curia Meetings: 9, 18 Nov Dev. Gp. - 6, 27 Oct. 17 Nov 	<p>Key Activity/Milestones</p> <p>Analysis and review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Modelling' the proposed partnership arrangements Development of a diocesan wide picture Drafting of 'Pointing the Way' report for Diocesan Board Exploration of lay leadership processes and programmes <p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bi-monthly update Initial communication from Bishop after the Board meeting <p>Meetings/Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diocesan Board: 8 Dec, 17-20 Jan Dev. Gp. 14 Dec, 4, 25 Jan 	<p>Key Activity/Milestones</p> <p>Analysis and review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further communication with partnerships as a result of Board discussions. Drafting external version of 'Pointing the Way' report for sign-off by Board Drafting 'Developing Partnerships—A Practical Guide' <p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bi-monthly update <p>Meetings/Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deans/EVs: 9 Feb. Diocesan Board: 7 March Deanery Conferences: 22 Feb, 29 March Council of Priests: 16 Mar. Council of Laity: 18 March Dev. Gp. - 15 Feb, 2, 30 Mar 	<p>Key Activity/Milestones</p> <p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication of external version of 'Pointing the Way' report for wide audience Publication of 'Developing Partnerships—A Practical Guide' Bi-monthly update including lay leadership developments <p>Meetings/Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Conference 13 May Clergy Retreat 9-12 May Diocesan Board 24 May Events to support and encourage partnership development Dev Gp. 19 April, 10 May 	<p>Key Activity/Milestones</p> <p>Partnership Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in new partnerships to develop co-ordination and leadership and undertake more detailed planning Support from Curia to develop and consolidate the new arrangements <p>Legacy arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish the necessary arrangements to manage change into the future Put in place arrangements to ensure that Board decisions are implemented 	<p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bi-monthly update Lay Leadership information <p>Meetings/Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events to support and encourage partnership development Prayer/Liturgy activities

