

## Update – June/July 2017 Bumper Final Edition!

FORWARD TOGETHER  
IN  
**HOPE**



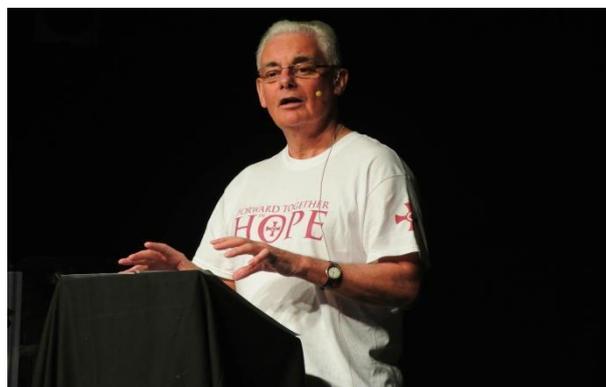
In years to come you might well be able to buy this particular edition of our Update on eBay - it is the last one from the *Forward Together in Hope* team. It is also the 16<sup>th</sup> edition - the first one was published in February 2015 and was two sides of A4 with *The Forward Together in Hope* prayer and a list of things we had done to get things going, including the appointment of Tony and Nancy, and a 'warning' that there would be a Parish Questionnaire to be completed by Advent 2015. It all seems quite a long time ago now. It was interesting to glance again at the couple of pages of proposed logos for the programme - I reckon we chose the right one but, after this particular edition of the Update, we will no longer use the *Forward Together in Hope* logo on any documents, leaflets, or on the website – it is now time to focus our energy on exploring new thinking regarding Partnerships and their development.

It has been a quite remarkable journey over the last 3 years and pretty well nothing would have been achieved without the extraordinary commitment, dedication, persuasive powers and sheer grit of our Parish Representatives. You have done a remarkable job. To be honest, we didn't really know everything that would be involved when we first asked for volunteers at the end of 2014. We didn't know at that time that the Parish

Questionnaire would be as substantial as it turned out to be, and certainly didn't even think that there would be such a thorough process which would bring us to the point we are now with 18 Partnerships and a very different understanding of how we might manage ourselves in the future.

During our journey together we have produced 4 separate leaflets for every Catholic in the Diocese and 4 DVDs for use in church and for group meetings. If you're someone who received a *Forward Together in Hope* folder at the beginning of the programme and have managed to keep it up to date, it will be pretty full by now. It will contain 18 substantial documents, going back to ***Preparing the Way, Diocesan Facts and Figures*** and ***Our Story so Far***. Each one of our three stages (*Preparing the Way, Exploring the Way and Pointing the Way*) has been accompanied by a wide variety of Liturgical and Spiritual resources. Everything made available to parish priests, parish representatives and deacons has been offered to schools either in hard copy or electronically.

Thousands of people have attended meetings at parish, deanery, vicariate and diocesan level. We had well over 15,000 pages of documentation to look through - no exaggeration at all when you think of 150 completed Parish Questionnaires of at least 47 pages in length and almost 5,500 survey replies from young people, 1,720 individuals and almost 25% of our clergy.



The man who has indeed 'been there and done that' wearing the T-shirt and wondering 'Where next?'



More boxes, more leaflets – and more volunteers!

Over 100 volunteers helped us with the analysis and reviewing of all the questionnaires and surveys. Colleagues from Durham University (Catholics, Quakers, Methodists and Anglicans) helped us with some of our documents, and their support and advice has been invaluable. Other volunteers have loyally supported us in fulfilling the various mailings over the three years – happily counting leaflets and packing envelopes!

The *Forward Together in Hope* team has been extremely well supported by the Diocesan Development Group. The group, appointed by Bishop Séamus in January 2014, comprised Fr Martin Stempczyk as Chair, Jim O’Keefe as secretary, Bill Dryden and Kathleen Smith our then Chief Operating Officer. Kathleen has recently retired, but during her time with us did a great deal of work and enabled others within the Diocesan Services to support us in all our research and preparation of background documents. This group worked really hard to get things going.

Once Tony and Nancy were appointed, Kathryn Turner joined us to assist with all the Spiritual resources we needed and we have lately been joined by Amy Cameron and Jon Melson. We have been extremely well served by both the Development Group and the Bishop and Board of Trustees who accepted our 180 page report entitled *Pointing the Way* in January this year.

Overall, you have done a fantastic job and can feel really proud of the way you’ve organised prayer vigils, attended Bishop Séamus’ talks and prayer evenings, and played a full part in enabling our

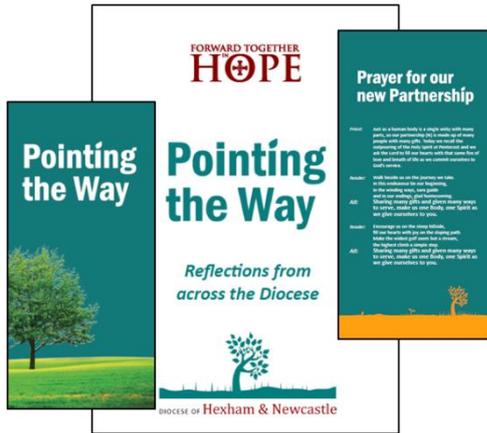
worshipping communities to look realistically at themselves, and to imagine how things can be in the future. One of the headings in the leaflet distributed on the Feast of Pentecost was ‘*Beyond Hope*’, acknowledging that, as our programme comes to an end on 7<sup>th</sup> July (Bishop Séamus’ 75<sup>th</sup> birthday), we look to the future. The energy you have put into *Forward Together in Hope* can now be focussed on helping your local Partnership to become well established.

We must also extend a most sincere word of thanks to our priests and deacons. One priest is quoted as saying: ‘I wasn’t ordained for this...but actually I was!’ Change is not easy for any of us but so many of our clergy have grasped the opportunity provided by *Forward Together in Hope* to pray about how they are ordained into changing times and how everyone has to respond to that change. Bishop Séamus has occasionally quoted Cardinal Basil Hume saying: ‘When I hear that things must change around here, I get scared, because it means that I have to change’. I know that many Parish Representatives have been really well supported by the local clergy – and vice versa. Very many thanks to them all.



Boxing clever – Our clergy lead the way!

Bishop Séamus and the Episcopal Vicars will be meeting with the Partnership Deans for the second time on the 14<sup>th</sup> July. They will all look at how the Partnership Development Groups (PDGs) are taking shape and look towards meeting jointly with Partnership Deans and the Lay Chairs of PDGs in the early Autumn.



Also by 14<sup>th</sup> July we will know the make-up of the new Implementation Group which will put in place ways of responding to everything referred to in the document ***Pointing the Way – Reflections from across the Diocese***. This document is now available online ([hope.rcdhn.org.uk](http://hope.rcdhn.org.uk)) and hard copies are with Parish Representatives and clergy. It attempts to capture the rich tapestry of ideas, thoughts, hopes and concerns expressed over the last three years.



Sharing ideas at one of the many meetings

It may well be that at Mass on Pentecost Sunday you picked up a ***Pointing the Way*** leaflet which tells you something about the ***Reflections*** document and acknowledges that this is a new chapter in the history of our diocese.

When Bishop Séamus launched *Forward Together in Hope* on 16 July 2014 he said:

*'I am very aware of what is happening in our Diocese. I'm also aware that parish communities might indeed flourish if we become less 'parochial', if we become more aware of our neighbours, more willing to work together.'*

The Bishop didn't actually use the word 'Partnership' back then, but this is surely what he had in mind. Here we are three years on and our Diocese has come a long way. We now begin a new stage on the journey of ensuring that we all reflect on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in the world we live in.

What Bishop Séamus did say on 9 February this year was: *'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.'*

This is our mission in the coming years, working together ever more closely, discovering again what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, contributing to our local worshipping community and witnessing to the Kingdom of God in our world.

Thank you all so much for everything you have done over the last three years, it really would have been quite impossible without you. You are a blessing in our diocese and your gifts and energy will undoubtedly be of real service in your community and partnership in the years to come.



*Jim O'Keefe*

## Time to get out of the Boat

Throughout *Forward Together in Hope* two questions have remained at the heart: 'What does it mean to be a Disciple in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?' and 'How do we ensure our worshipping communities flourish in 2030?'

As we move into new partnerships it is essential that we keep these questions at the heart of our development. We have a great opportunity to be reminded of the root of what it means to be Church and to set out with our Mission - The Great Commission. With this in mind I have been really privileged that my role in lay development has been given an added focus of exploring and ensuring Discipleship is a thread that runs through all aspects of our diocesan development as Church.



The introduction of Lay Chairs of Partnership Development Groups is a fresh and innovative move to give real responsibility to the Laity. I am excited at the prospect of journeying alongside our Clergy and lay people and exploring ways of being rooted in faith whilst tackling the big questions that are at the heart of the way forward for our local Church; ensuring we remain focused on the 'Why we exist as Church.' One of the key development points is taking the responsibility to allow others to have responsibility. The move to Lay Chairs is a concrete example of how this

shared responsibility is emerging and developing in new ways.

Partnerships will involve new ways of working for us all and many discussions are taking place to review and to look with fresh eyes at how future formation and training will be delivered in this new structure. In preparing the ground for a new action plan for Formation and Evangelisation we have begun with the first information sharing meeting for people who may wish to volunteer to form core groups. On 16<sup>th</sup> May we had a very successful response with 67 people coming to hear more.

There is much work to be done and 'many hands make light work' so if you feel you have a heart for sharing your faith and developing faith in others then please get in touch. I am particularly interested in hearing from people aged 20-40 – a group described by some as being the 'missing generation' of the Church. I believe that this is not the full picture and I would love to hear from you if you are part of this age group.

Once partnership arrangements are in place and new means of communication are established there will be a menu of opportunities for formation and development. Much of this is designed to work through the partnerships but there are a number of exciting opportunities that can start even before these structures are fully in place. These include the launch of a monthly prayer event that provides an opportunity for praise and worship and short inputs of formation.

There will be a Diocesan Leadership Symposium - seeking to gather all involved in leading in a faith setting. There will be the launch of a new look Alpha course that takes a fresh look at faith in an informal and friendly manner with the view to developing local leaders with a heart for community and fellowship.

Later in the year will follow information on three very exciting strands for formation: A new Certificate in Pastoral Ministry, a Discipleship School and a programme in 'Being Called and

Gifted' looking at gift discernment. There are also plans to present a whole plethora of training and formation opportunities that work across the different diocesan departments and look to ensure that partnerships have access to excellent development that is relevant to their current needs.

In the more immediate future if you are looking to go deeper in your understanding of Discipleship then an excellent place to start is by attending this year's Diocesan festival that has the challenge of Discipleship as its theme. Bookings for the event on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June can be made through the Diocesan website.

These are exciting times and the way forward is in God's hands. It is an ideal time to be like Peter and get out of the boat and give new things a go! If you can offer your services please get in touch: Amy Cameron – amy.cameron@diocesehn.org.uk



### Using Property to fulfil our Mission

Just as each of us is called to bring our gifts to bear on fulfilling the Church's mission in our local area so too our property can help to fulfil that mission. While certainly not an initial focus for most areas, one of the medium term tasks for our partnerships is to undertake a full review of their property. The purpose of this prayerful and reflective review is to establish how the property that exists in the partnership area can be best used to further the mission of the Church.

We see this work being coordinated by a Property Review Team which each partnership will be asked to form. Adopting a consistent approach to the review will be very important to the success of

the process and, to assist with this consistency, the Property Department are working with the *Forward Together in Hope* Team to develop a property strategy and associated principles that partnerships will be asked to consider when undertaking their review. The Property Strategy and Principles will be issued during the summer together with guidance on forming the Property Review Team. These will be followed by a 'Property Review Toolkit' designed to support and guide people through a clearly defined process resulting in their partnership proposals being submitted to the diocese. Representatives from each Property Review Team will be invited to attend a briefing seminar in the Autumn where the toolkit will be launched. Throughout this process our Parish Property Outreach Advisor, Jon Melson, will be available to offer assistance.

### A Partnership at Prayer

About a year ago, the parishes of St Robert's and English Martyrs came up with the plan to have a 24 Hour Prayer for Pentecost 2017. All good so far – two parishes – two churches and keen parishioners led by *Forward Together in Hope* rep, Susan Picola, and parish priest, Fr Shaun O'Neill.

When the Partnership Proposal went in, the small planning team decided to work with the other churches they thought they would be partnered with... still all good.

And then the Partnership was announced... 15 churches! What to do?



After a fair few deep breaths and conversations, it was decided to open up the Prayer Vigil for Pentecost to as wide a range of parishes as possible. This was going to be tricky as much was already in place but with enthusiasm and a willingness to work together, an amazing thing happened. People from across the Partnership came together and had a fabulous time!

When you say '24 Hour Prayer', people sometimes think it is about being on your knees for 24 Hours. This could not really be further from the truth! Obviously prayer does happen – a different one on the hour every hour. Some forms of prayer will fill the hour – others will be a short introduction and the invitation to take the rest of the Hour for personal reflection on a theme.

It often felt like planning a military campaign – bringing to fruition the vision of different church communities leading different kinds of prayer over a period of 24 Hours – ensuring that people from those churches and visitors from others (as well as people who just happened to drop in) all enjoyed a warm welcome. All of this needed a huge amount of organisation.

The result was amazing! Virtually all the churches were involved in some way –leading one of the prayer hours – welcoming – preparing and serving refreshments. As a way of bringing a new Partnership together it was brilliant. People prayed together – and enjoyed conversations over tea and biscuits and, if you were there at the right time, pizza or a bacon butty! Someone even making over 100 cupcakes with rice-paper toppings printed with the Prayer Vigil logo!



It was great to come out of a time of prayer into the narthex and be made a cup of tea by someone who had the same warm smile and welcome at 3am as they had at 3pm!

The prayers varied in style from reflection on the Holy Spirit led by Sisters of the Sacred Heart – and the Rosary led by Missionaries of Charity – prayers for peace – reflections on the story of Pentecost – a Taizé prayer – a talk by Fr Aloyse from Tanzania (now living in Minsteracres) with songs to follow from an African Choir – guided meditations – a healing service – and a memorable hour of drama, dance and music from young Indian members of the community.



At around midnight, news had started to come through about the attack in London and this made the 2am Prayer particularly poignant. This Hour is usually set aside for prayer for those in hospital and particularly those who are dying and those who care for them and so it was a blessing to be able to bring into our prayer those caught up in what was happening in the south of the country.

At 4am, around 20 people gathered outside for a sunrise service (although we had noticed that it was already getting light at 2.30!) and, again, we remembered those waking up to a very difficult day.

One piece of inspiration was to make a note of how many people came to each session. Obviously, some people would be counted twice – and around half a dozen who did the whole 24 Hours were counted rather more often! As the total increased so did people's disbelief... the final tally was 750! It was never intended to be about

numbers but the figure was seen as a huge affirmation. People who had never met found themselves praying and socialising – and both seem to have set the scene for future working together.



Parishioners from St Matthew's Ponteland who led the first Hour

A lot of hard work – but always open to the Holy Spirit who clearly inspired both the planning and preparation and set the prayer alight as the community, like the disciples at the first Pentecost, gathered and kept vigil and prayed for its coming on the future of the Partnership.

### Together in Hope



As we were putting this update together, plans were underway for a **Ministry of Consolation** day at Ushaw College. This was organised in response to comments from parish questionnaires about the need for training in bereavement support.

Dr Paul Paes and Dr Karen Groves MBE were the keynote speakers and explored the tricky subject of end-of-life care with deep compassion and an understanding of the importance of the spiritual journey the person and their family are on both in approaching death and beyond it.

Feedback was very positive and it is hoped that a pilot course will be available in the autumn.

# BEYOND HOPE

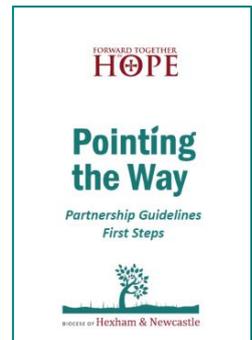
## Nurturing Partnerships

While the *Forward Together in Hope* journey is reaching its conclusion the work of our 18 new partnerships is only just beginning. So what can you expect to see by way of advice and support as we move ahead? From 7<sup>th</sup> July the current *Forward Together in Hope* website will be 'frozen' although all of the resources it contains will remain accessible for a few months longer at the same address ([www.hope@rcdhn.org.uk](mailto:www.hope@rcdhn.org.uk)).

On the same day a new Partnership area, integral to the main diocesan website ([www.rcdhn.org.uk](http://www.rcdhn.org.uk)) will be launched and this is where partnership guidelines and other key news and information will be located. In many respects this is quite symbolic of the 'switching off' of *Forward Together in Hope* as a 'project' and the 'switching on' of new partnership arrangements as a regular part of the day-to-day life of the diocese – 'embraced and owned' by local communities. Already the 'Directory' section of the main website has been restructured to reflect the new partnership arrangements.

While local areas have the responsibility for taking things forward from here, we are committed to providing advice and support to partnerships as they get up and running. 'First Steps' guidelines were published at Easter. More detailed guidelines on key aspects will be provided over the months ahead. We have already issued '*Some Thoughts about Producing a Partnership Development Plan*'. Information on Partnership Bank Accounts and Partnership Finance Committees will follow very soon.

But, of course, guidelines are only part of the story – there will still be human beings to talk to! From 7<sup>th</sup> July things will look a little different – Jim O'Keefe heads off to 'pastures new', Amy



Cameron will become part of the Adult Formation Team and Jon Melson will join the Property Department.

Tony Sacco and Nancy Gash will be available full-time until the end of December - supporting the new Implementation Group and assisting Episcopal Vicars and Partnership Deans in their task of helping partnerships to get up and running. From January 2018 Tony will continue this on a part-time basis for up to a year.

We can still be contacted in the same way (E-mail: [hope@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:hope@diocesehn.org.uk) or Tel: 0191 2433304) and, as always, we will try our best to respond quickly and with a smile!

### Now that's a good idea...

As partnerships start to get up and running it will be important to share your brilliant ideas with others across the diocese. 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 using the partnership area of the website.

### Rooted in Prayer

In our diocesan-wide *Forward Together in Hope* Prayer we asked that the Holy Spirit would come among us to form us, renew us and inspire us. Every stage of our three year journey has been rooted in prayer throughout the whole diocese. The **Prayer and Liturgy Resources** will continue to be a source of inspiration for groups of people who meet in the future to pray for the development of their Partnership. The leaflets on **Exodus, Praying at Meetings, One Night One Day**, and the invitation to those who are housebound, **Anchors**, will always be of use. We made a **Diocesan Vocations Prayer** available among our resources and provided the *Forward Together in Hope* prayer in Braille for those who required it.



Part of the prayer space at the Board's residential in January 2017

We also made use of the prayer attributed to Blessed Oscar Romero (soon to be canonised?) ***This is what we are about.*** Bishop Séamus used it at the 'launch' of our programme on 16 July 2014. This time last year we invited people to think about taking time during the Summer holidays to stop and think, slow down and re-create. We encouraged local pilgrimages and continue to suggest that partnership groups might like to take time away at one of our local pilgrimage and heritage sites.

We continue to pray that the Holy Spirit leads and inspires us:



***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 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.***