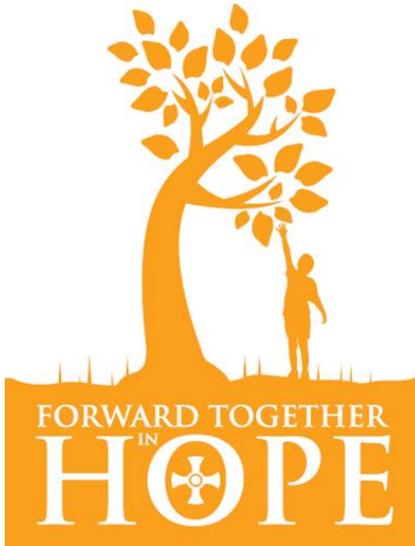


# FORWARD TOGETHER IN HOPE

## Forward Together in Hope Update: April/May 2016



### Moving Forward Together

We hope you have all had a very peaceful and reflective Easter. We are having very busy time looking carefully at all the information that has been offered to us, all parish questionnaires, the thousands from young people and the responses from priests and deacons. We are all aware of the rapidly changing circumstances our Church is in at the present time, so it was reassuring to hear in the recent Pastoral Letter from Bishop Seamus (2/3 April) that the Lord trusts us in the same way as he trusted Thomas, despite Thomas' doubting and uncertainty. It is fascinating how all the Gospels tell us that the Risen Lord first appeared to Mary Magdalene and other women, then to Peter, the eleven Apostles, those two Apostles running away to Emmaus,

to those who had gone back fishing and to all those who assembled in Bethany to witness to the Ascension. Jesus went out of his way to meet them all where they were: Mary weeping in the garden, those running away to Emmaus, those shivering with fear in the upper room, those back on the Sea of Galilee doing what they knew best – fishing. This must be reassuring for all of us facing a time of real change and uncertainty, the Lord will always be with us.

For all those disciples, the change happened very quickly, all triggered by the arrest, death and resurrection of Jesus. The change happened over a few days. What takes much longer and needs much more patience is the gradual transition from one way of life to another. The Risen Lord showed his patience by meeting them time and again, then leaving them with the Holy Spirit to guide them. We too will need great patience and care and mutual concern to work out what our diocese will look like in the months and years to come. It will certainly not look like what it looks like now, there will be fewer priests and people, communities will have to move more closely together and we will have to make new relationships. But in the midst of it all the Risen Lord will be with us and the Holy Spirit will inspire us and move us.

### More words of wisdom

A key part of *Forward Together in Hope* is to discover and learn from the wide range of views and aspirations of people in our Diocese – whether they attend church regularly or not. A whole team of volunteers from around the Diocese is currently reviewing 7,389 Questionnaires and surveys! There are 5484 from Young People, 1720 from Individuals, 148 from parishes and 37 responses from clergy. These volunteers are burning midnight oil and putting their active social lives



on hold to listen very carefully and respectfully to the voices of all the people talking to us about our Diocese. All of this will provide the background to responses that will be made to every parish by the end of June; as you might imagine it is a huge task so please do keep us all in your prayers. In the last *Update* we provided a random selection of comments from adults and young people from the on-line surveys. Here we present some further insights from our young people:

- I feel like the church does a good job and has a great group of youth and the priest supports us
- Speak to each other after Mass
- Be genuine and friendly
- More songs, and perhaps more funny jokes to lighten the spirituality
- Have a place where young people can bond and talk about their faith together
- More church services that are relevant to the current world and younger people
- It makes people feel welcome – no matter who they are
- As a young person I feel valued but would like to be given more responsibility, more feeling that I am valued in a wider respect, in the journey of our Church as a whole.

...and there are many more rich insights where these came from.

### New faces

Joe Ronan is supporting the team with data analysis work for 3 months. Joe has a Chemistry degree from Imperial College and has worked in science, industry and business for over 30 years, with extensive management experience across the world. He has a particular interest in understanding and analysing information of all types. He says of this particular task: *'It is providing us with a great deal of information about how people see our Church, which will add something very useful for our parishes to explore in the weeks and months to come'*. Joe has an enormous amount of work to do in the short time he is with us.

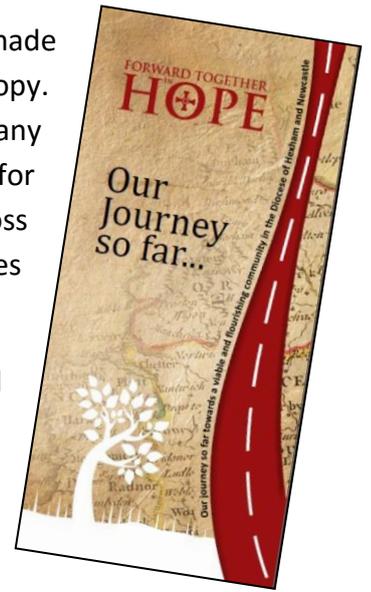


Another piece of good news is that Amy Cameron has just been appointed as the first Diocesan Lay Coordinator Development Officer on a three year contract which will start later in the summer. Amy will help us all to explore how more lay people can develop responsibility in the Church, helping us in turn to discover what it means to be Disciples of Jesus. Amy comes originally from Norton in Stockton, studied Theology and Music in Canterbury, worked as a volunteer with the Youth Ministry Team and is currently Head of Religious Education at St Joseph's Catholic Academy in Hebburn. Amy has wide experience of working with adults and is a key member of the team organising the Diocesan Festival. Amy says that she is *'honoured and excited about this new role and I know it is an absolute privilege to be part of the process of moving our Diocese forward'*.

## Our Journey So Far ... and what happens next.

Over the weekend of 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> April a short leaflet 'Our Journey so far' was made available to parishes in sufficient numbers for everyone to receive a copy. Thanks go to Xavier Javier at YMT for the excellent design work and to the many volunteers who worked so hard to count and pack the leaflets into batches for each parish. Our Deans once again played a key role in the distribution across the Diocese - leaving a Council of Priests meeting with large heavy boxes weighing down their car suspensions - yet still smiling. A real team effort!

The leaflet explains where we are currently on our journey of renewal and what will be happening over the next few months. As Bishop Séamus says in his introduction: *'I hope everyone will work closely with their neighbouring communities, clergy, deans and episcopal vicars as we look to the future to create helpful partnerships and explore how to develop new lay leaders in your area.'*



The leaflet sets out the key milestones for the journey ahead including: the detailed analysis of the various questionnaires; the provision of feedback to parishes; the discussions within parishes and then the work of consulting with neighbouring communities to explore partnership arrangements. Please help to ensure that the leaflet is distributed as widely as possible, including to the housebound. Should you require further copies, please just get in touch and we'll be happy to supply them.

## Valuable Feedback

During March we were able to work with 3 key representative groups in the Diocese to bring them up to date and to seek their ideas and feedback on our *Forward Together in Hope* journey.

There was a brief opportunity at the *Council of Priests* meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March to update them about future developments. This was followed by a very good gathering with Bishop Séamus, the Episcopal Vicars and all Deans looking in more detail at what will happen later in the year. We worked through the Project Timeline (see annex) and considered the meeting planned with Deans on 12<sup>th</sup> May when we begin to explore which parishes will need to begin to talk to each other later in the year. They will also consider what kind of Leadership Teams might be possible to enable lay men and women to play a fuller part in the work of the Church and to enable priests to share their responsibility with others. This is all to help us face the future with some confidence.

At the *Youth Council* meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March we shared some of the initial findings from the Young People's Survey with a very enthusiastic and engaged group of young people from across the Diocese. They were interested to learn that the top two reasons given for why young people attend church were *'I feel welcome there'* and *'I like being part of a Catholic Community'*. They weren't particularly surprised that the top reason given by respondents for no longer attending Church was

'I found it boring'. The group provided some very helpful suggestions about how we might present the full findings of the survey to various audiences. Another really uplifting meeting.

On 12 March we were present at a lively meeting of the *Council of Laity*. There was a great deal of support for the way we are working and comments such as 'you treat us like adults' and 'very professional' were both encouraging and energising. The Council asked us to keep going with these *Updates* and to try to find ways to ensure that everyone in the Diocese is informed about what is currently happening as some people felt that there was nothing happening regarding *Forward Together in Hope!* There is always a high level of energy and engagement when we meet the Council of Laity, which can only be a good sign of how the Spirit is at work throughout the Diocese.

### Sharing Together in Hope

Always on the lookout for stories about how parishes in the diocese are collaborating with each other to produce something that is 'bigger than the sum of its parts' we were delighted to hear recently from Anne Lawlor from Esh Winning. She writes: "A chance remark at the beginning of Lent by our parish priest, Fr David Coxon, expressed the hope that our family of parishes in the Deerness Valley



could perhaps organise a passion play sometime. Five weeks and four rehearsals later we did it! On Friday, 18th March the parishioners of Esh, Esh Winning, Langley Park and Ushaw Moor came together and performed 'Born for This' in Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Church, Esh Winning. The camaraderie with which rehearsals were conducted was truly wonderful. Everyone who volunteered (and a few who were 'persuaded') was prepared to 'do anything' and we surprised ourselves with the final production which was attended by between 80 and 100 people of all denominations in our area. Feedback was very positive including:

- Everybody left the church that night feeling moved and, hopefully, with a renewed appreciation of Christ's sacrifice for us.
- The overall experience was spiritually moving and placed many with Jesus.
- What is also wonderful is that a group of people have come together from all three parishes and in several weeks produced an amazing and moving experience for everyone. That is *Forward Together in Hope* in all its essence! Bishop Séamus will be so proud of us taking forward his vision in such a positive and deeply Christian way".

We'd welcome your own stories of collaboration and how *Forward Together in Hope* is become a reality in your area.

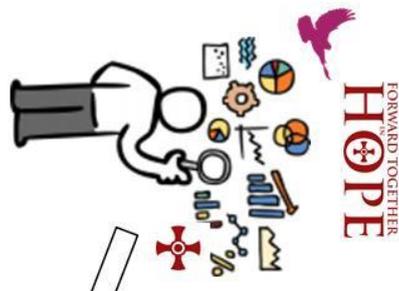
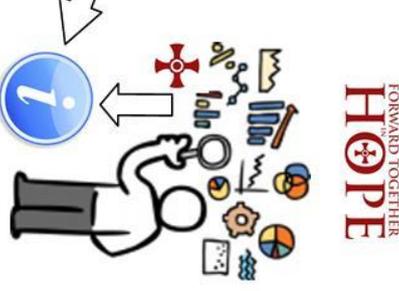
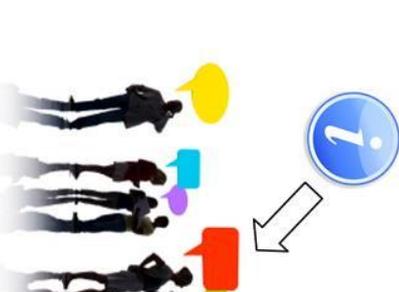
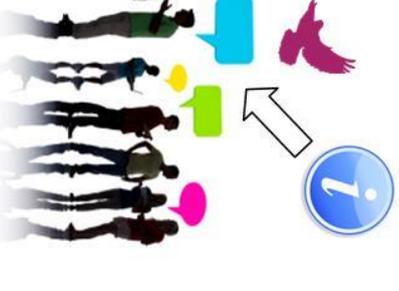
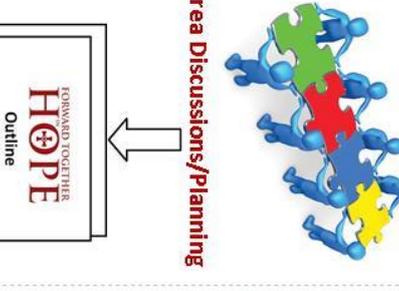
### Finding out more

For the latest information about *Forward Together in Hope* and for access to the range of resources, please visit [www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk](http://www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk). To contact one of the *Forward Together in Hope* team, (Jim O'Keefe, Tony Sacco and Nancy Gash) e-mail: [hope@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:hope@diocesehn.org.uk) or phone 0191 243 3304.

April 2016



# Forward Together in Hope - Outline Timeline 2016

<p><b>February/March</b></p>  <p><b>Analysis and Review</b></p>	<p><b>April/May</b></p>  <p><b>Analysis and Review</b></p>	<p><b>June/July</b></p>  <p><b>Parish Discussions</b></p>	<p><b>August/September</b></p>  <p><b>Area Discussions/Planning</b></p>	<p><b>October/November</b></p>  <p><b>Review and Recommendation</b></p>	<p><b>Key Activity/Milestones</b></p> <p><b>Analysis and review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parish Questionnaire</li> <li>Individual Questionnaire</li> <li>Young People's Survey</li> <li>Clergy Questionnaires</li> </ul> <p><b>Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Leaflet (Issued via Council of Priests on 3 March)</li> <li>Bi-monthly update</li> </ul> <p><b>Meetings/Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bishop's Call to Prayer: 23, 25 Feb. and 1, 2, 10 March</li> <li>Deanery Conferences: 24 Feb., 16 March</li> <li>Council of Priests: 3 March</li> <li>Youth Council: 4-6 March</li> <li>Diocesan Board: 8 March</li> <li>Council of Laity: 12 March</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Activity/Milestones</b></p> <p><b>Analysis and review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parish Questionnaire</li> <li>Individual Questionnaire</li> <li>Young People's Survey</li> <li>Clergy Questionnaires</li> <li>Development of Key Documents</li> </ul> <p><b>Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bi-monthly update</li> </ul> <p><b>Meetings/Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Briefing meeting for Deans/EVs: 12 May</li> <li>Diocesan Board: 31 May</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Activity/Milestones</b></p> <p><b>Feedback to Parishes in June</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prayer Resources</li> <li>'Observations' on Parish Questionnaire</li> <li>Comparative information</li> <li>Request to work with neighbours</li> <li>Overall 'guidance' document and template for Partnership Plan</li> <li>Good Practice summary</li> <li>Summary of YP Survey (Diocese and Parish)</li> <li>Summary of Individual Questionnaire (Diocese and Parish)</li> <li>Information disseminated to Parishes</li> <li>Parishes meet to discuss feedback</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Activity/Milestones</b></p> <p><b>Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bi-monthly updates</li> </ul> <p><b>Meetings/Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings (x2) with Lay Representatives and Clergy in June</li> <li>Open Deanery Meetings commence in September - jointly facilitated by FTH Team and Dean/EV</li> <li>Diocesan Board: 22 September</li> <li>Youth Council: 25 September</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Activity/Milestones</b></p> <p><b>Area Discussions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion and planning takes place between neighbouring parishes</li> <li>'Partnership of Parishes' presents an 'Outline Partnership Plan' to the Diocese by Advent</li> </ul> <p><b>Meetings/Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open Deanery Meetings continue into October - jointly facilitated by FTH Team and Dean/EV</li> <li>Deanery Conferences: 2, 16 November</li> <li>Council of Priests: 10 November</li> <li>Joint Councils Meeting: 26 November</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Activity/Milestones</b></p> <p><b>Review and Recommendation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of Partnership Plans</li> <li>Development of Recommendations</li> <li>Review of Recommendations by Bishop Séamus and Diocesan Board</li> </ul> <p><b>Meetings/Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diocesan Board: 8 Dec.</li> <li>Diocesan Board Residential: 17-20 January 2017</li> </ul>
---	--	--	---	---	---	--	---	---	--	---