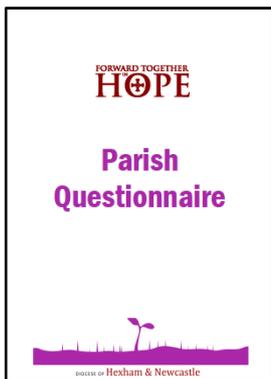




Forward Together in Hope Update: December 2015 / January 2016

Parish Questionnaires – A very big thank you



Advent seemed a long way off when we launched the *Exploring the Way* stage of *Forward Together in Hope* at Pentecost - some six months ago. Yet, here we are on the run up to Christmas, and the deadline has passed for returning completed Parish Questionnaires. The good news is that we've actually received some! By midnight on 29th November around 55% of Parishes had sent in their carefully crafted responses. At the time of writing this article this had risen to 75%. If your parish is one of those in the other 25% please let us know how we can support you in getting your questionnaire submitted.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all our parish representatives for the immense amount of work they have done over recent months. We simply did not know at the beginning of *Forward Together in Hope* how much work there would be in ensuring that the Questionnaire would be successfully completed. Much midnight oil has been burnt and, insofar as we can arrange it, all those involved are guaranteed a place in heaven! We are now about to begin the lengthy process of analysis after which we will return thoughts and observations back to each community, but it is certain that all the work that has been done will be of great benefit to communities, various departments in the Diocese and Bishop Séamus.

Thank you also for the positive and supportive words that have accompanied your responses – just a few examples include: 'Everyone wishes you well in your task'; 'We wish you good luck and assure you of the prayers of the parish for the no doubt daunting prospect of compiling and reviewing all of the parish responses'; 'It's been hard work but a really worthwhile process.' As well as such comments we are fairly sure we heard some rather loud 'virtual sighs of relief' as the questionnaires dropped into the *Forward Together in Hope* inbox! **Thanks again.**

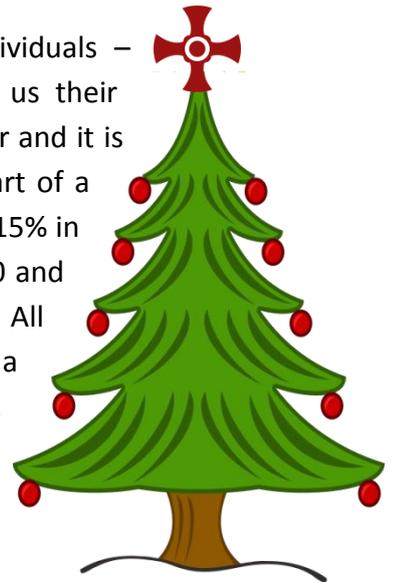


Deanery Meetings - Feedback

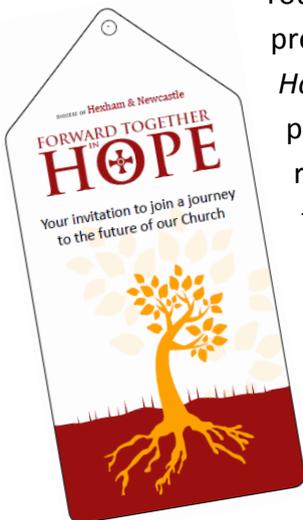
September and October saw the *Forward Together in Hope* Team 'on the road' with meetings taking place in each of our 18 Deaneries. Over 650 people were present at these and not only did we feel welcomed in each area, we learned a lot from you all. It was particularly encouraging to see the strong involvement of schools as well as parishes. Responses to the questions posed at the sessions have been summarised and are available on the *Forward Together in Hope* website (www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk).

Almost 1700 responses to Online Questionnaire

Back in August we launched a short online questionnaire to allow individuals – whether Catholic or not – and whether church-goers or not – to give us their thoughts about the Catholic Church. Almost 1700 people have replied so far and it is particularly encouraging to see that responses from those who are not part of a ‘Catholic Worshipping Community’ have gradually increased – with around 15% in this category. The highest number of returns from any one parish is over 80 and there are around 20 parishes where no responses have yet been made. All responses will be summarised and a report provided to each parish giving a Diocese-wide picture as well as a parish summary where this is possible. The questionnaire remains ‘live’ until the end of December and could serve as a welcome diversion from leftover turkey on Boxing Day! It is available at www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk



Young People – the ‘now’ of the Church



Young People across the Diocese are being asked for their views about the present and future of the Catholic Church. As part of the *Forward Together in Hope* programme, an online survey has been designed specifically for young people aged 11 to 19. The survey is a direct response to initial feedback received from parishes and individuals about the priorities for the Diocese. A frequent comment is that we need to listen to and learn from young people if we are serious about engaging them more fully within our worshipping communities. The survey is a way of systematically collecting the thoughts and ideas of a large number of young people – whether they go to church or not. It will remain live until February 2016 and all responses received will be summarised and made available to parishes and schools.

The link to the survey, along with a short video and ‘luggage tag’ leaflet, is being provided to all Catholic Secondary schools and parishes in the Diocese and can be found on the *Forward Together in Hope* website www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk. Young People featuring in the video describe themselves not only as the future of the Church but as the ‘now’ of the Church. Please help to promote the survey to young people in your school or parish.

The views of Priests and Permanent Deacons

We are very much aware that to date we have focussed on the views of worshipping communities, individuals and young people. Our active parish priests and deacons have been involved with their parish communities in completing the parish questionnaire, but their own unique views and hopes, anxieties and aspirations haven’t yet been explored. All of our clergy, including those who are retired, will be invited to offer their thoughts on what has sustained them in their ministry, what has frustrated them, what they have enjoyed and what will be needed to sustain priests in the future. They will be able to reply on paper or online. There is huge imagination and experience within the body of clergy in our diocese and their contribution will be extremely important in helping us move into the future.

Forward Together in Hope - Confirmation Supplement

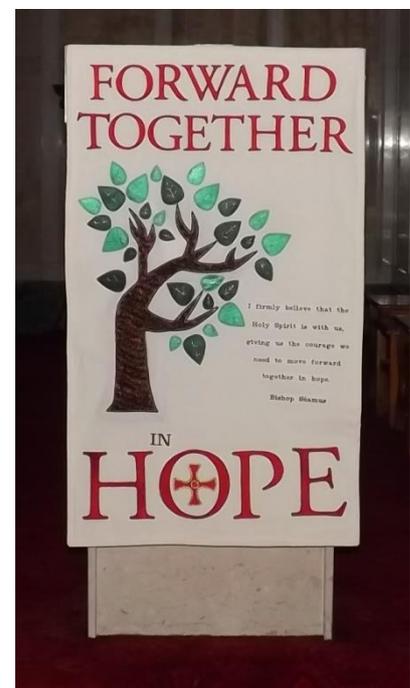
An excellent document, *Come Kindle in us the Fire of Your Love*, was produced in 2014 to provide guidelines for parishes and schools on the preparation of young people for the celebration of Confirmation. Bishop Séamus requested that the guidelines were produced so that there can be a consistent approach to preparation for Confirmation across the Diocese.



Mary Hughes from the Youth Ministry Team has recently produced a short supplement to the document focussing on *Forward Together in Hope*. This extra session invites young people to continue their journey in being courageous witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus. It offers young people and adults together the opportunity to explore 'What the Church is For' and 'What a Missionary Disciple does'. We hope that this will be of real value to Catechists and young people preparing to celebrate Confirmation, or as a way of helping the group to stay together after the celebration itself. The supplement is being sent out to all parishes and is available from the *Resources* section of the *Forward Together in Hope* website www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk. The original *Come Kindle in us the Fire of Your Love* publication is still available (at £12.50 plus postage) from the Diocesan Department for Education, St Cuthbert's House, West Road, Newcastle, NE15 7PY - or e-mail on education@diocesehn.org.uk

News and ideas from around the Diocese

In each *Forward Together in Hope* Update we are aiming to share ideas and approaches being adopted in different parts of the Diocese - so please keep sending these in. We have also developed a 'Good Practice and Feedback' section of the website that includes additional material.



The picture on the right shows the work of a talented parishioner at St Patrick's in Consett who has made a *Forward Together in Hope* hanging for the front of the lectern. The picture on the left is the result of work at St Philip Neri Primary School in Dunston. The school held a *Forward Together in Hope* Day where each class discussed their hopes and dreams for themselves, for the world and for the church. 'It was a really interesting day with lots of discussion.'

Anchors away!

Kathleen Murray shares information about how 'Anchors' have been commissioned in her Parish. Leaflets explaining about 'Anchors' and an Anchors' Commissioning Service are available from the website or from the Spirituality Team. – email: spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk



On Thursday, December 3rd our parish of the Durham Martyrs celebrated a commissioning service for those sick and housebound who had volunteered to become 'Anchors', praying for us and the success of *Forward Together in Hope* in the Diocese.

We adapted the Service of Commissioning to suit our circumstances, we sourced holding crosses, electric flickering candles and large print prayer cards. We organised bakers and tea-makers, we advertised through the Parish Bulletin and on the notice boards - and then we realised that many of our volunteer "Anchors", because of age or infirmity would not be able to be physically present! Undaunted, the seating was re-organised to create a more intimate atmosphere and we waited in hope. The "active" aspect of Anchors received an unexpected boost as, despite the weather, our volunteers were joined by a variety of friends and parish visitors who came to collect the goods for distribution. Fr Colm welcomed

everyone and blessed the gifts, a roll call of the volunteers was read, the congregation contributed prayers from their seats and the items were distributed. We finished by enjoying tea, mince-pies and each other's company.

The true meaning and blessing of the Anchors came when the candles, crosses and prayers were delivered. 'It is wonderful to know I'm still able to take part in the parish' said one lady. 'I never expected to be needed' said another. As the Diocesan prayer says, '*Glory be to the Holy Spirit – pouring out grace and guidance, forming us and renewing us.*'



Finding out more For the latest information about *Forward Together in Hope* and for access to the wide range of resources, please visit 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 or phone 0191 243 3304.

