

EMBRACING CHANGE

A process of preparation for the future of the Catholic Community in this part of the Diocese of Galloway

Priests serving some of the parishes in Saint Mary's Deanery met with two professional facilitators to enable us to map a way forward.

The process is now moving to a new level and we wish to share the notes of our meetings which took place between January and March 2014.

- January to March 2014
meetings of the Deanery priests to enable us to give good leadership to the process
- Lent 2014
a time of prayer and reflection - Sunday afternoon periods of prayer in the participating parishes on a rotational basis
- Easter to Pentecost 2014
Sharing the outcome with parishioners - hand-out; at Sunday Mass; Sunday Bulletin; at parish meetings and so on
- Pentecost Sunday - 8 June 2014
A Pentecost Prayer Service in Saint John's, Stevenston to celebrate our shared gifts and responsibilities
- Feast of Saints Peter and Paul - Sunday, 29th June 2014
an afternoon open discussion led by the facilitators the priests used to assist our discussions. The venue, time and so on will be announced soon.

So here are the notes – and they are only notes – of our discussions.

From our and your reflections on the way forward we will produce a document for our parishioners on the way in which we can 'embrace change.' Please feel free to pass your reactions on to your parish priest.

DIOCESE OF GALLOWAY – EMBRACING CHANGE

Background

The Diocese has initiated a process of consultation with the parishes and parishioners about the future. It has published a small paper entitled 'Embracing Change' which presents a snapshot of dwindling human resources in terms of the number of priests and the number of church buildings across a twenty-three year period from 1990 to 2013.

- There has been a 20% reduction in parishes during that time and a 53% reduction in priests.
- There has also been a 43% reduction in the number of people attending mass during the period.

The paper ends with three questions for discussion.

- 1 What conclusions do you draw from this paper?
- 2 In light of this paper what are our priorities?
- 3 What practical steps are necessary to achieve these priorities?

A group of priests in the Deanery wish to explore options for developing a process to respond to the Diocesan paper but also to go beyond it. There is a desire among these priests to have a process which listens to the people and creates space for discernment of God's plan for the Diocese and Deanery in a way which is deeper than just responding to the operational questions regarding parish closures and mergers.

This group has engaged the support of two organisational development consultants, David Ramsay and Paul McColgan to help facilitate the design and delivery of such a process.

Two initial meetings have taken place, the first of which was intended to be a 'get to know you' session and the second to begin to explore options for developing a Deanery wide discernment process that will answer the Diocesan questions but also go beyond them to have a conversation with parishioners which goes deeper and has the potential to bring in new ideas.

First Meeting - Sunday 8 December 2013

The initial meeting took place on 8 December 2013.

Notes

The process of engagement with lay people should include/take account of the following:

- It should be purposeful and time-bound.
- Discernment: It should be rooted in prayer and reflection which in turn will lead to decision making at Deanery/Parish level: What is God's plan for the Deanery?
- It should include a process of prayer and reflection.
- It will involve an openness to change which means identifying risks and what needs to be let go of.
- It will involve culture change.

Considerations

- The Diocesan Paper 'Embracing Change'
- Evangelii Gaudium could be a positive/inspirational resource to inform the process with laity
- Sequence of 'visioning' the future
- Priests then laity
- Priests and laity
- How does the Deanery process connect with the Diocesan process? While planning a Deanery process which will be outwith the Diocesan timescale?

Second Meeting - Sunday 15 December 2013

The aim of the meeting was to discuss the options for developing a process that will engage lay people and priests in a dialogue about the future for the Deanery and the Diocese. The discussions on the day centred on four questions:

- 1 Who is the process for?
- 2 What difference will this process make?
- 3 How are we going to go about it?
- 4 Why does this matter?

1 Who is this process for?

There were different themes emerging in the answers to this question:

Selection of people

- It is for people open to the process of discernment
- It is for discerning individuals on behalf of the community for the world
- We could choose people who are already involved in ministries within each parish
- Priests need to provide leadership in the process – we need to present a vision

Open to all

- It is for everyone who wants to participate.
- It needs to have something for everyone.
- We shouldn't narrow it down too much – we are already a small number of people.
- It is for the Church to be the people of God.

Summary

There are different perspectives within the group – one is that there should be a small number of discerning individuals who will participate in the process on behalf of their Parish community and another perspective is that the process should be open to anyone who wants to participate and involve a larger group of lay people. A third perspective is that the priests should begin the process and present a shared vision to the laity where a fourth perspective is that the vision be created by all participants at the same time.

2 What difference do we seek to make?

Again there were different perspectives emerging in the way this question was being understood. One perspective seemed to focus on the process itself and the importance of engaging and listening to people whereas the other perspective was more about vision for the future of the Church and a third perspective was about how to bring new ideas into current structures. There was discussion about where the focus of the process should be – that is, on addressing the current situation with regard to priest shortages and parish closures (the current paradigm) or should it focus on imagining a new vision of Church which is less dependent upon priests (a future paradigm)?

Engaging and Empowering People

- The process is about empowering people – enabling the voice of the Spirit to be heard.
- We must seek to engage people to help them see what the Church reality is (from the Diocesan Factsheet).
- We need a process where people feel heard and listened to.

Future vision of Church

- The process is about changing the vision of the Church and developing a spirituality fit for our age.
- It's about changing the concept of Church.

Blending future with current reality

- Bring some of the new stuff (ideas) into the current structures.
- Find a way to move forward from reality to vision.

3 How are we going to go about it?

This question did not have a lot of time to discuss it but there were different perspectives again emerging in the short discussion.

One perspective was that the process should be one of discernment over a reasonable period of time with people led through a set of questions, reflections and conversations about the future. This may take months or even years to complete. The second perspective was that there should be a kind of assembly where a large group of people come to reflect on the Apostolic Exhortation 'Evangelii Gaudium'.

There was a suggestion that the Deanery follow the lead of another Deanery in the south of the Diocese who had taken this approach. It was agreed that more information was needed about this process as most of the participants did not know much about it.

The session ended after the discussion of the third question with no time to dedicate specifically to the fourth question, Why does it matter?.

Observations from the facilitators

There are a range of different perspectives emerging in this discussion which are understandable and to be expected and after the first session to design the process there are several key questions beginning to emerge:

- Is the process going to be done in phases or altogether? That is, is there an initial phase where the priests go through a process to come up with their shared vision before engaging the laity and in order to provide leadership or should the process start with priests and laity together?
- In terms of the lay involvement in the process should this be open to anyone who wants to participate or should it involve a selection of parishioners - perhaps those already exercising ministries?
- How does the process ensure that people are engaged and feel listened to?
- Does the process start with the current reality and discern from that paradigm and base discussions and decisions on the current paradigm (Diocesan factsheet on shortage of priests – a deficit model) or does the process start with exploring the current paradigm and future paradigm (an asset model) and focus on how to get from the current paradigm to the future paradigm?
- How long should the process take and what level of involvement and commitment is required from the priests, the laity and the facilitators?

Practical Considerations

There needs to be formal contracting process from the group to the facilitators. The venue for the meetings has to be more appropriate to the task.

Third Meeting - Sunday 31 January 2014

Paul gave a recap of the previous session and highlighted some of the themes that had begun to emerge from the discussion. See previous pages. The session then continued with a discussion of what the participants wanted to get from this day.

There was agreement on the following aims:

- Leave with optimism and hope.
- Agree clarity between two processes.
- Bring lay people up to speed with reality – how?
- Agree priests role and responsibility in process(es).
- Agree short-medium-long term perspectives.
- Agree next steps.

Agree Clarity Between the Two Processes

Until now in our discussions there has been much overlap between the two processes :

- 1 The Diocesan Paper 'Embracing Change'
- 2 The Deanery Process for Visioning for the Future

In reflecting on the previous session it was obvious that some viewpoints were being expressed in relation to the first process and others in relation to the second process. It was agreed that from this point onwards we would be concentrating on the Deanery process as the Parishes had already started to have consultations on the Diocesan paper and these would run their course in parallel. It was agreed that whatever came out of the Diocesan paper discussions could feed into the Deanery Visioning Process once it gets under way.

Bring Lay People up to speed with the realities facing the Deanery

The need for some kind of paper or document written by the priests of the Deanery and distributed at or near the start of the discernment/visioning process was agreed. This should be slightly more detailed and broader than the Diocesan Paper but not too long to put people off reading it. One priest may take the initiative to draft a paper that could be circulated for comments by all.

Agree Priests' Leadership Role in the Visioning Process

One of the key themes that emerged from the second meeting of this group was the question of whether the visioning process should be done in one phase with everyone or in two phases with the priests going through a process first and then opening that up to lay people. There was unanimous agreement that for the priests to provide proper leadership to the process they should first go through their own process and present a unified view.

Forms of Leadership and Organisation

David presented for discussion different models of organisation and leadership which have been evolving over the last 50 to 100 years - the hierarchical model, the participative model, the circle model and the integrated or corporate model. The purpose of this session was to begin to explore how we might arrive at a mental model of local Church systems and leadership which would be mature and enabling while still holding in place what is essential. Hence while the hierarchical model can be the most appropriate model in certain circumstances, for example, the armed forces, police or fire service, it can be disempowering and foster dependency in other circumstance. The relationship between leader and member is adult-child. The democratic or therapeutic model, sometimes called the swamp model, is adolescent with the image of leader as a nurturing mother. But there is no clarity about mission or purpose. The circle model does have a more adult-adult relationship between leader and member but the leader still does not own and lead the vision and purpose of the organisation. The integrated or corporate model describes the best of contemporary organisations. It is flexible and leadership and the purpose or mission is

clear and members are able to take action to further the mission. This is a mature model. There was some reflection on the implication of these models for an initiative at Deanery level and in the context of the current relationships between priests of the Deanery and the Diocese and with their respective parishes. There would be a need to consider some further work with the priests around mental models and the connection between different parts of the local church. For example, it is important that the Diocese is aware of this initiative at Deanery level. It is also important to consider the level of commitment to the initiative from parish priests and parishes across the Deanery. Although not all of the priests are involved at this stage, it is a recognisable Deanery process, and there may be opportunities to bring them in later. In this session this morning it was very significant that there were two discernable shifts in energy which released new energy and allowed the priests to move on with their agenda. The first came when the priests decided that this process is not part of the Diocesan process outlined in the paper 'Embracing Change', even although it may take forward some of the objectives of that process. The second came in the following session when the priests did the exercise where adjectives describing Pope Francis' leadership style were proposed. These shifts had the quality of the shift towards a more integrated model of organisation at Deanery level.

What can we learn from Pope Francis' Leadership

We looked at the adjectives that could be used to describe his leadership. These included:

- Leading by example
- Surprising
- Charismatic
- Enlightening
- Compassionate
- Challenging
- Personal
- Humble
- Decisive
- Consultative
- Fearless
- Normal
- Diplomatic
- Fairness
- Authentic

Agree Short-Medium-Long Term Perspectives

We agreed that it would be helpful to think of what we wanted to achieve in:

- short term – January to summer 2014
- medium term – end of 2014
- long term? How long should the discernment/visioning process continue?

Next Steps

One of the aims of the session was to have a plan of action to give a sense of structure to the short-term perspective - January to summer. The aim for the next six months was suggested as follows:

- 1 Formally begin a period of prayerful discernment of how to encourage real participation - individual and collectively in looking at the church from an asset rather than a deficit perspective.
- 2 To have an hour of silent prayer revolving around each parish during Lent to encourage people to pray for the process.
- 3 Priests to go through visioning process initially.

- 4 Then write a shared paper on the current reality bringing out hopes and fears, strengths and possibilities.
- 5 Develop a programme for involving laity in the visioning process
- 6 Work towards a launch liturgy of the visioning process with laity on Pentecost Sunday.

Introduction to the Three Horizons Process as a model for visioning the future.

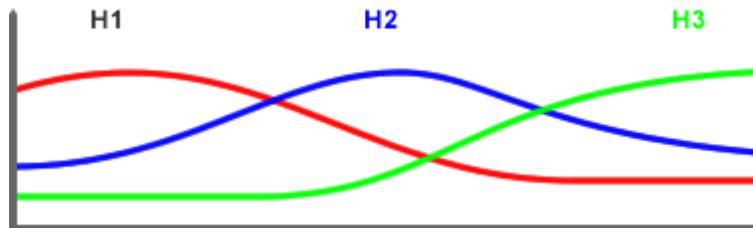
Paul gave a brief introduction to the Three Horizons model of future visioning to ascertain whether this might be a model that could be utilised. Everyone agreed that this would be a good model to try out and it was agreed that the priests would meet again on 24 February to work through this model. Suggested timeframe 12.00 to 5.00 pm.

Notes from Three Horizons Session on Friday 7 March 2014

The session began with a short presentation of the Three Horizons Model.

Overview of the Three Horizons Model

The three horizons model itself is simple and familiar. The first horizon - H1 - is the dominant system at present. It represents 'business as usual'. As the world changes, so aspects of business as usual begin to feel out of place or no longer fit for purpose. In the end 'business as usual' is superseded by new ways of doing things.



Innovation has started already in light of the apparent short-comings of the first horizon system. This forms a second horizon - H2. At some point the innovations become more effective than the original system – this is a point of disruption. Clayton Christensen called it the 'innovator's dilemma' – should you protect your core business that is on the wane or invest (energy and resources) in the innovation that looks as if it might replace it?

Meanwhile, there are other innovations happening already that today look way off beam. This is fringe activity. It feels like it is a long way from H1, based on fundamentally different premises. This is the third horizon - H3. It is the long term successor to business as usual - the radical innovation that introduces a completely new way of doing things. The 3H model offers a simple way into a conversation about:

- the dominant system and the challenges to its sustainability into the future, i.e. the case for change (Horizon 1)
- the desirable future state, the ideal system we desire and of which we can identify elements in the present that give us encouragement (Horizon 3)
- the nature of the tensions and dilemmas between vision and reality
- and the distinction between innovations that serve to prolong the status quo and those that serve to bring the third horizon vision closer to reality (Horizon 2)

Sometimes the three voices can be negative towards each other:

- The H3 people see H1 as dinosaurs.
- H1 see H2 as troublemakers and see H3 as off the wall.
- H2 people like the vision of H3 people and respect their views.

So what the Three Horizons process offers us is a mature perspective that accepts the need both to address the challenges in the first horizon and foster the seeds of the third. This is not an either/or, good/bad discussion.

We need to 'keep the lights on' today, and think about how to keep them on a generation from now in very different circumstances. IFF calls this the gentle art of 'redesigning the plane whilst flying it'.

Different ways of moving between horizons

The shape of the curves can be very different from the shapes in the diagram. Sometimes H1 can plummet to the floor like falling off the edge of a cliff. Sometimes H2 can be swallowed up by H1 in an effort to protect the status quo and the power that goes with it.

In 2008 the banking system went into meltdown - this presented a crisis but a great opportunity for change. What did they do with the government bailout? They used the money to crawl back up the H1 curve.

H2 and H3 can lead to greater diversity and greater abundance. They are not operating in a mind-set of deficits or scarcity. H1 does not disappear altogether ...

This leads us to look at the present system (H1) and ask the question - What is the helpful stuff in the present system that can lead to innovation and also what is the stuff that we are going to let go of.

With H2 we need to ask what are the best innovations?. In the middle segment of the diagram - How do you handle the turbulence of the change process?

In any situation like this there will be three recognisable voices:

- pessimistic and fearful
- the voice of possibilities
- the voice of delivering the future aspirations

So to summarise:

With H1 we are working with the question

- 1 Can you describe your concerns – what is no longer ‘fit for purpose’ in the current paradigm?

With H3 we are working with the question

- 2 Can you describe your aspirations for Church of the future ?

With H2 we are working with the question

- 3 What new innovations can be developed to lead us from the current system towards the third horizon?

H3 seeds in the present

What are the seeds of hope in the current paradigm that may grow into third horizon?

After this presentation of the Model the group then went on the four questions just outlined.

What are the concerns with the current paradigm of Church? H1

Each participant took some time to reflect on the question and was invited to write his answers down on cards – we then looked for the common themes that were emerging across the group. Three themes emerged that were a concern with the current paradigm:

- 1 Engagement
- 2 Structures
- 3 Spirituality

Engagement

- Failure to engage – there is a disconnect between the communicator and those he is trying to communicate with
- The way we read or fail to read the signs of the times
- Language no-one understands – ‘This has gone backwards in the past two years.’
- Recognising that lifestyles have changed
- Church v Gospel – ‘We sell the Church to people rather than selling the Gospel – some of the things we say and do are no longer fit for purpose’
- Dictatorial Teaching and Management – Putting MANDATORY on the top of letters to priests
- We don’t have a Church for the poor – too much concern for property and so on
- Distance between engagers and those we wish to engage

Structures

- How Bishops are chosen - priests totally disconnected from this process, Bishop expected to respond immediately
- False expectations of what the next Bishops will be like, of what a priest can offer, of what the laity can offer
- Expectations of the priest - his role as member of faith community
- Clericalism
- Feudalism
- Excluding people from sacraments
- Vocations, manpower, role of laity
- Constant availability

Spirituality

- Catholic Education
- False concept of support - there is no support for newly ordained priests - you have to find your own.
- Shallowness - Patriarchal Spirituality - giving up chocolate for Lent so that God will be nice to me.
- People in need of evangelisation - see young people for the sacraments then never again.
- Ignorance
- Practical atheism - “We say we believe in God but act as if we didn’t.”

What are our aspirations for the church of the future? H3

Again each participant took some time to reflect on the question and was invited to write his answers down on cards – we then looked for the common themes that were emerging across the group. Six themes emerged that would describe our aspirational Church:

- 1 Liberation
- 2 Authenticity
- 3 Education
- 4 Mature Spirituality
- 5 Incarnation
- 6 Structures

Liberation

- Filled with hope
- Confident in the Spirit
- Love replacing fear
- Freedom to be
- Openness

Authenticity

- Authentic voice of Christ in the World
- Christ Like
- Doing as Jesus does

Education

- Better Adult Education

Mature Spirituality

- Mystical
- Uncluttered
- Mature Spirituality
- People in deep prayerful relationship with God

Incarnation

- Committed to the world
- Engaged with the world
- A Church embracing all people
- Spirit of service
- People who serve each other and proclaim the gospel
- Intellectual credibility
- Spirit of motherhood

Structure

- Less top down Church – more bottom up
- Less centralised – more devolved – younger
- Less Churches – bigger parishes
- 'This' (a reflection process) for the whole Diocese
- Dialogue
- Small groups of committed people

What are the seeds of H3 in the present?

Structure

- The fact that the current structures are falling apart
- Permanent Diaconate

Liberation

- Pope Francis
- People are exercising their consciences
- Disintegration of structure and fear
- Better preaching – a gospel of hope

Incarnation

- Dialogue with other disciplines e.g. Spiritual Care in health, Psychiatrist doing Spiritual Exercises, re-emergence of spirituality in other disciplines e.g. healthcare

Education

- High numbers attending quality events
- Lots of good resources available - books, Youtube internet – Pray as You Go etc.
- Good sacramental preparation programmes

Mature Spirituality

- People witnessing to the gospel in everyday situations
- Domestic Church
- Faith sharing groups
- People who pray in a disciplined way

Authenticity

- Growing hunger and thirst for authenticity

What new innovations can be developed to lead us from the current paradigm towards the third horizon?

There were six themes of types of innovation that would help us develop into the church of our aspirations. These were:

- 1 Pooling and Unearthing Resources
- 2 The Truth
- 3 Become a Church of and for the Poor
- 4 Spirituality
- 5 Formation for Ministry
- 6 Enhanced Leadership

Resources

- Pooling of resources
- Unearthing new resources

The Truth

- Admit the truth (to yourself)
- Don't be afraid
- Tell the truth
- Demystifying the language
- Challenge untruth
- Build on the truth
- Open dialogue

Become a Church for the Poor

- Attitude towards the poor

Spirituality

- Serenity
- Practice mindfulness

Formation for Ministry

- Challenge broken structures
- Balance male/female influences
- Ministry/service
- Call people to ministry
- More invitational
- A recognition of vulnerability
- Adult education

Leadership

- Recognise the prophetic
- Good leadership

Next Steps in the process - 7 March 2014

- Paul and David to write up today's session
- The group of priests to take write up of session and turn into a paper to share with the Diocese/Bishop
- Invite people in our parishes to pray for the process through a series of Lenten prayer hours in six parishes, one for each Sunday of Lent
- Begin to prepare the liturgy for 29th June to launch phase 2 of the discernment process – 'Involving the Laity'
- Priests to discuss options for Phase 2
 - How to involve the laity? At individual parish level do 3 Horizons then come together to share in larger group (around 20 people per parish?)
 - Start at Deanery level and hold event(s) with everyone together to work through process simultaneously (potentially upwards of 140 people – would need a big venue)
 - What facilitation support you require from Paul and David going forward.

Facilitators' Reflection

- At this stage in the process we feel that very good progress has been made.
- We have consensus - at least among the seven participating priests - on what is no longer fit for purpose in the current paradigm of Church (H1).
- We have consensus on what our aspiration for the Church of the future could look like (H3).
- We have a set of themes of H3 in the present which are current signs of hope that can be built upon.
- We have a set of themes around innovations that would enable us to move towards our aspirations (H2) – these could be worked up into developments.
- The next stage is to gather the views of lay people to add to these themes.
- It would be possible then to begin to merge the two processes – The Embracing Change Diocesan Process and this process
- Then the focus will move from discussing the future to getting on and developing some of the innovations listed above