Charting a Future with Confidence

Moving on with Confidence

Church of Ireland
**United Dioceses of
Cork, Cloyne & Ross**

Foreword

As a young person nurtured in faith, and growing up in these United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross I, and many others, used to canoe on the Owenabue River, from Drake's Pool to Crosshaven or Currabinny. We were brought up all those years ago on the folklore that Sir Francis Drake, the great Elizabethan sea captain, had, allegedly, sailed up that river to evade the Spanish Armada, and had hidden at the point in the river that now bears his name.

It was he who, in 1587, when Bishop William Lyon was the first Reformation Bishop of the Diocese, wrote to Queen Elizabeth I's Private Secretary, Sir Francis Walsingham, and said:

> *There must be a beginning of any great matter, but the continuing until it be thoroughly finished yields the true glory.*

All these centuries on, these words are true of many enterprises, and for us now here, in relation to Charting a Future with Confidence. When the idea was put forward it was always clear that it would not be an instant recipe or a magic wand, but rather, that it is a process. This report, completed after consultation, prayerful reflection, research and discussion, is now presented to you at this stage of this continuing process. The call to each of you in the Diocese is to engage with it now and to move forward with the process of charting, under God, a confident future here. We need everyone to do this in equal measure. Already new phases of this strategy are under way.

As this stage unfolds towards the next, I wish to thank very sincerely each and every person who has been involved in the journey so far, and in getting this first stage report and discussion document to you. In particular, I think the members of the steering group, the convenors and participants in the working groups, all who helped with our reflections at the opening conference, especially the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Reverend Dr Richard Clarke, and also, the Right Reverend Dr John Neill, who agreed to reflect on and write about, from outside, what we have been saying about ourselves.

To use the words of a familiar blessing, 'may Almighty God, stir up in us the gifts of his grace and sustain each one of us' as we strive in our day to be faithful to our Lord's call; and it is in that continuing, that faithfulness, and that discipleship where 'the true glory' lies.

+Paul Cork,
1st September, 2017

Table of Contents

Charting a
Future with
Confidence

Almighty God,

You have called us through baptism
to be your Church in this place.
Draw near to us in Cork, Cloyne and Ross
as we seek to renew our witness to your gospel;
enable us to hear your voice,
to know your way,
and to do your will,
so that, charting a future with confidence
under the guidance of your Holy Spirit,
we may truly and faithfully
be the body of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen

The Five Marks of Mission

The Five Marks of Mission are:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

- To respond to human need by loving service

- To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

(Bonds of Affection-1984 ACC-6 p49, Mission in a Broken World-1990 ACC-8 p101)

Steering Group

The Right Reverend Dr Paul Colton
Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross

The Very Reverend Christopher Peters
Dean of Ross, Convenor of Group I

Mrs Sandra Giles
Convenor of Group II

Mr Melvin Beamish
Convenor, Group III

The Very Reverend Nigel Dunne
Dean of Cork, Convenor of Group IV

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(Convenor)
Mr Gordon Coombes, Kilgariffe Union
Mr Richard Dring, Carrigaline Union
Dr Simon Elliott, Cloyne Union
Mr Michael Kenning, Carrigrohane Union
Mr Paul Knight, Youghal Union
Ms Ina Lillis, Mallow Union
The Very Reverend Alan Marley, Dean of Cloyne
The Reverend Denis MacCarthy, Bandon Union
The Reverend Canon Dr Daniel Nuzum, Hospital Chaplain
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Ms Viv Squire, Sector Ministry (Lay Pastoral Assistant)
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Mr Alec Bryan, Templebreedy Group (Crosshaven)
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Dr Edward Gash, Douglas Union
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The Reverend John Ardis
Mr Gordon Benn, Abbeystrewry Union
Ms Olive Burns, Frankfield
Mr John Buttimer, Ross Union
The Reverend Eileen Cremin, Fermoy Union
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Ms Mary Evans, Cork – St Fin Barre's
Ms Síle Hunt, Moviddy Union
The Reverend Stella Jones, Kinneigh Union
The Rev. Canon Trevor Lester, Kilmoe Union
Patrick Mahony, Cobh and Glanmire Union
Ms Susan Perrott, Assistant Secretary, Diocesan Office, Administration Support
The Reverend Bruce Pierce, Sector Ministry
Mr Stephen Spillane, Cork – St Anne's Union, Shandon
Mr Jim Swanton, Ballydehob Union
Mr Sam Wynn, Diocesan Media Officer, Administration Support

Chapter I

Setting the Scene

The Right Reverend Dr Paul Colton

Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

I. Introduction

The idea and motivation for **Charting a Future with Confidence** began to brew and simmer in my mind and prayerful reflections as Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross not long after my arrival as bishop in March, 1999. I often say that, in order to exercise oversight, a bishop needs to have an overview; an overview discovered and honed by knowing the Diocese and its people, as well as the opportunities and challenges it encounters in its particular time and place, in partnership with others of diverse outlooks and experiences.

The Name

The concept of the name - **Charting a Future with Confidence** - emerged in 2013. After five years of recession in Ireland I was keen to instil throughout the Diocese, a renewed sense of confidence under God, in our faith, as well as in our strengths and in our capacity to deal with any challenges we were facing. That year we had secured a visit from Mark Russell, CEO of the Church Army, to speak at the annual clergy conference, at a meeting to help me identify new lay leadership, and to address at a Celebration in St Fin Barre's Cathedral the current lay workers of the Diocese. The theme I gave him was A Time for Confidence.

Explaining the name and concept at Diocesan Synod in 2014, I said:

> I have called it 'Charting a Future with Confidence.' Inherent in the idea of 'charting' are a number of elements:

> - the gathering of information;

> - learning from the journey so far;

> - outlining a route, and drawing a way forward.

> I have been careful to call it 'A Future'. None of us can know 'the future'. To decide now inflexibly what we will do in 'the' future delimits our readiness to respond to what we do not yet know about what lies ahead. 'A future' embraces the idea of openness to what is to come and to what we do not yet know.

> We do so with confidence. As Christians, under God and because of our faith, we refuse resolutely to succumb to the narrative of despair, cynicism, negativity and helplessness that characterises much around us today. Long before Barack Obama's campaign trail made the slogan 'Yes we can!' popular, staff in hotels I often stay in for work, were wearing a badge, with the words 'Yes, I can.' Even before them, fans of Bob the Builder had been used to the call 'Can we fix it? Yes we can!'

> Intelligence, reason, pragmatism and senses attuned prayerfully to all that is around us we have confidence in what we are and in what we shall become. Why confidence? Because we are the people of God, a people of faith and of hope, guided by the Spirit, nourished by Jesus, the living Word of God, and by the sacraments of his presence. Strengthened by each other, the community of the baptised, we are on a pilgrimage of discipleship together.

Background

Earlier that year, in February 2014, I suggested to the Diocesan Council that a number of factors made it necessary, once again in our Diocese, to look afresh at our priorities in Cork, Cloyne and Ross, and, in particular, at the pattern of parochial ministry, other ministries and activities being resourced by voluntary subscription from within the Diocese, including:

- wider discussions within the Church of Ireland about models of Church and patterns of ministry including from within:

  > the Commission on Ministry

  > the Commission on Episcopal Needs

  > the Council for Mission

  > the House of Bishops

  > the RCB

- the changed social and economic climate in which we live, including factors, for example, such as the economy, emigration, immigration, altered perspectives on and changed patterns of allegiance to the institutions of society, including churches.

- our own recent financial deficits in the Diocese.

- the articulated fears and anxieties of a number of parishes about meeting their existing obligations within the current Diocesan structures.

- voices within and without the Diocesan Council suggesting that such a discussion is necessary.

Charting a Future with Confidence

To that end, the proposal was that a ***Charting a Future with Confidence*** Council be established to undertake the following:

- a summary and assessment of previous such reviews in the Diocese.

- to endeavour to assess what the current situation actually is in the Diocese, other than based on anecdote or the most vocal.

- to examine the sustainability of the current pattern of parochial ministry, including (again) numbers of incumbencies and church buildings.

- to consider what 'model of the Church' or 'models of Church' work, may work and are sustainable into the future in the Diocese.

- to keep abreast of proposals and discussions emerging from the national bodies of the Church of Ireland.

- to work with and advise the people and parishes of the Diocese, through the Diocesan Council and Diocesan Synod in relation to charting a future for these things in the Diocese.

2. Identifying the Key Concerns

What brought me to this point as Bishop, and prompted me to lead the Diocese into that process of introspection and analysis? How is the unfolding mind and leadership of a bishop anywhere to be discovered and set out? One way is to look at the things a bishop says: for example, sermons, letters in the Diocesan Magazine, the outcomes of Episcopal Visitations (to date there have been 4 - in 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016), or speeches in the church and community. Another option, which focuses on the themes identified by the bishop as important enough to engage with at the annual meetings of diocesan synod, are the presidential addresses to those synods.

A retrospect of my addresses to Diocesan Synods of Cork, Cloyne and Ross since 1999 identifies a number of persistent concerns and sub-headings. As an ordinand in 1983, I recall hearing the evangelist and author, the late David Watson, speaking in Dublin shortly before his death. As an aside he said that when he arrived first in any parish or Christian community he would dedicate his preaching in the first year to the nature, role and function of the Church. This left a deep impression on me. So much else stems from that: who we are, what we believe, the God we believe in, our worship, ministry and engagement with the world around us.

The enduring themes which have emerged, and which have, I hope, energised us all to reflect carefully, thoughtfully and prayerfully about ourselves and our calling as Christians here in Cork, Cloyne and Ross, are these (in the footnotes the years in which the topics were addressed).

An overriding theme has been a call to confidence:

- confident in our Christianity.

- confident in our Christian discipleship.

- confident in articulating and explaining the Christian faith.

- confident in our Irish Anglicanism.

- confident in ecumenism and interfaith dialogue.

- confident in our engagement with the world around us.

As the years have unfolded these are among the principal themes addressed:

- Christian discipleship and pilgrimage, arising from our Baptism[1]

- Worship, liturgy and music.[2]

- Our calling to be outward looking Christians engaging openly with the world, communities and issues around us.[3]

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1   Most years
2   In 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2013 and 2017.
3   In 1999, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2016, and 2017.

- Our beliefs:

  > Understanding the Scriptures [4]

  > Children and Holy Communion [5]

  > Our mission and goals [6]

  > The nature of Anglicanism [7]

- The place of the Church and the churches in Irish society and in Europe [8]

- The sort of Church we are called by God to be:

  > A church inspired by the incarnation: being in the neighbourhood [9]

  > An Anglican understanding of 'the diocese' [10]

  > An urban church [11]

  > A rural church [12]

  > An ecumenical church [13]

- Interfaith dialogue [14]

- Support for ministry ordained and lay [15]

- Looking for new ways to minister in our area [16]

- 'Clustering' of parishes, people and resources [17]

- Setting up a Parish Organisation Working Group (later the Ministry Advisory Group) [18]

- Nurturing and equipping lay ministry [19]

- Volunteerism [20]

- Leadership [21]

- Our children's and youth work, and millennials [22]

- Our pastoral work generally[23] including also:

  > Interchurch marriages[24]

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4   In 2006 and 2017.
5   In 2000.
6   In 2006, 2007, 2008, 2013, and 2017.
7   In 2001, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2017.
8   In 1999, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2012, and 2017.
9   In 1999, 2004, 2006, 2015, 2016, and 2017.
10   In 2000, 2004, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2017.
11   In 2000 and 2016.
12   In 2000 and 2016.
13   In 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2015, and 2016.
14   In 2002 and 2009.
15   In 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, and 2012.
16   In 1999, 2002, 2008, 2011, and 2012.
17   In 2000.
18   In 2000.
19   In 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008, and 2010.
20   In 2000.
21   In 2010.
22   In 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2008, and 2016.
23   In 2008 and 2011.
24   In 2000.

> Refugees and asylum seekers [25]

> Older persons[26]

> LGBT issues[27]

- Diocesan structures, sustainability and strategic planning.[28]

- Our charitable work and work with the Church overseas, and Bishops' Appeal.[29]

- Parallels with earlier times in our history.[30]

- Financing the work of the Church, generosity and Christian Stewardship.[31]

- Controversies within Anglicanism.[32]

- The future of the Church in our place.[33]

Over the years, particular challenges in society have also been addressed:

- Living in a pluralist Ireland.[34]

- The times in which we live.[35]

- Religion in Ireland.[36]

- Our membership of the European Union and living in Europe.[37]

- National Census.[38]

- Refugees, asylum seekers and global displacement.[39]

- Ecology and climate change.[40]

- 9/11 terrorist attacks.[41]

- The economy.[42]

- BREXIT.[43]

- Terrorism.[44]

- Child abuse.[45]

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25   In 2000, 2001, and 2016.
26   In 2001 and 2011.
27   In 2011, 2012, 2015, and 2017.
28   In 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017.
29   In 2001, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2016.
30   In 2000, 2001, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2017.
31   In 2002, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2014.
32   In 2001, 2004, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015, and 2017.
33   In 2002, 2006, 2009, 2010, and 2013.
34   In 2000, 2001, 2007, 2011, 2012, 2015, and 2016.
35   In 2004, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2017.
36   In 2005, 2011, and 2017.
37   In 2001, 2004, and 2017.
38   In 2004, 2011, and 2017.
39   In 2000, 2001, 2016, and 2017.
40   In 2016 and 2017.
41   In 2002.
42   In 2002 and 2017.
43   In 2017.
44   In 2017.
45   In 2009.

- Disability.[46]

- Racism.[47]

- Rural Ireland.[48]

- Northern Ireland and the peace process in Ireland.[49]

- Education.[50]

- The Health Service.[51]

- The introduction of the Euro.[52]

- The death penalty.[53]

- Foot and Mouth Disease.[54]

- The Marriage Equality Referendum.[55]

The Being and Becoming of the Church

Underlying all of this, has been the challenge and question: what sort of Church are we called to be and to become?

Already in 2002, I set out some core principles that I believe we need to espouse:

- continuing to do faithfully the things we are already doing.

- a careful and consistent focus on theology – what we believe and how that applies to our situation today.

- providing adequate administrative backup and infrastructure so that clergy can fulfil the vocation to which they were actually called.

- channelling the preponderance of our resources into ministry, especially new forms of ministry outside the parochial system; and training for those already in ministry.

- mobilising more and more lay people in ministry.

- a shift from our energy and spirit sapping focus on buildings as if they are our core activity, when they are not.

- doing more and more of our work ecumenically.

Reflecting most years on what it means to be baptised and, therefore, to be disciples of Christ, journeying with him, on pilgrimage, in 2006 (and again in 2013) I rooted our Christian charter in the Commission in the Book of Common Prayer (within the Renewal of Baptismal Promises and the rite of Confirmation):

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46   In 2003.
47   In 2001.
48   In 2000 and 2016.
49   In 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2007.
50   In 1999, 2000, 2001, 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2012.
51   In 1999.
52   In 2001.
53   In 2001.
54   In 2001.
55   In 2015.

A Christian Charter

Those who are baptised are called to worship and serve God. With the help of God:

- We will continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers.

- We will persevere in resisting evil, and whenever we fall into sin, we will repent and return to the Lord.

- We will proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ.

- We will seek and serve Christ in all people, loving our neighbour as ourselves.

- We will acknowledge Christ's authority over human society, by prayer for the world and its leaders, by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice.

In 2009, this was fleshed out by highlighting the fundamental calling that we share through our Baptism. I said:

This is a time for pulling together: for discovering the richness the relationship we have with each other, our interdependence and mutual obligation as those who are baptised. And because this relationship of brother and sister in Christ is sealed on us in our baptism, we are reminded that we are God's children and have obligations beyond ourselves also in his world.

Remember for a moment your baptism. At that moment of pouring of cleansing water in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, we were - to use the words of the people of God in the liturgy - made members of the body of Christ; children of the one heavenly Father and inheritors of the kingdom of God. Strengthened by God, united to and mutually obligated to each other, all pull together!

The words of Scripture found in the baptismal liturgy call us to a life of pilgrimage, commitment, tenacity and determination:

Live as a disciple of Christ,
fight the good fight, finish the race, keep the faith.
Confess Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection,
look for his coming in glory.

In the words of that liturgy also we are called to unity and to the pulling together of common purpose:

We are the body of Christ.
By one spirit we were all baptised into one body.
Let us then pursue all that makes for peace
and builds up our common life together.

This is what synods are for - to pursue all that makes for peace and to build up our common life together. My hope and prayer is that these are the things which will, above all else, energise and mould our response as individual Christians and as parishes and ministries together in this Diocese to the current time.

All of this has been developed also in the context of ***The Five Marks of Mission (Bonds of Affection-1984 ACC-6 p49, Mission in a Broken World-1990 ACC-8 p101),*** which are:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.

- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

- To respond to human need by loving service.

- To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.

- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The Role of the Bishop

The role of the bishop in all of this has also been a recurring theme.[56] In 2013, and again in the following years, I favoured the description set out by the Lambeth Conference 1998 as one that appealed to me. It states that the bishop is:

a   a symbol of the Unity of the Church in its mission;

b   a teacher and defender of the faith;

c   a pastor of the pastors and of the laity;

d   an enabler in the preaching of the Word, and in the administration of the Sacraments;

e.   a leader in mission and an initiator of outreach to the world surrounding the community of the faithful;

f.   a shepherd who nurtures and cares for the flock of God;

g.   a physician to whom are brought the wounds of society;

h.   a voice of conscience with the society in which the local church is placed;

i.   a prophet who proclaims the Justice of God in the context of the Gospel of loving redemption;

j.   a head to the family in its wholeness, its misery and its joy. The bishop is the family's centre of life and love.

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56   In 1999, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2014, and 2015.

3. Timeline

Charting a Future with Confidence was conceived in February 2014, presented to and adopted by the Diocesan Council, and reported by it to the Diocesan Synod in 2014. The idea was welcomed and the report of the Diocesan Council was adopted.

Parishes and constituent groups elected and appointed their members to the Council of ***Charting A Future with Confidence*** in the summer and autumn of 2014. At a residential meeting in Charleville, County Cork held on Friday, 21st and Saturday 22nd November 2014 the process was inaugurated by the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Reverend Dr Richard Clarke, himself a former incumbent in the Diocese and onetime Dean of Cork. Dr Alicia St Leger presented a history of the Diocese in terms of crises of opportunity. I, as Bishop, set out a vision of the Church: an ecclesiology. Four people with long experience of the Diocese set out their understanding of previous reviews and exercises of this kind: the Right Reverend Michael Mayes (a former Archdeacon of Cork, Cloyne and Ross), the Venerable Robin Bantry White (also a former Archdeacon of Cork, Cloyne and Ross), Mr Wilfred Baker (Diocesan Secretary at the time), and Mr David Bird (Diocesan Trustee). By the conclusion of the inaugural residential the convenors of four working groups were elected, as were the working groups themselves, and the briefs of the working groups were adopted.

The groups set about their appointed tasks between November 2014 and April 2016. A prayer for use throughout the Diocese was written by the Dean of Cork and it, together with the Five Marks of Mission, was incorporated in a bookmark for distribution to parishioners throughout the Diocese. The Steering Group met from time to time, and a plenary meeting of the Council of Charting a Future with Confidence was held on 23rd April 2016. Draft reports were presented from the working groups and additional work was identified from the discussions.

By May 2017 the final reports were considered by the Steering Group and it was resolved to edit them for initial publication, but also to include clear recommendations and questions for discussion. In addition, it was decided to ask a respected objective theologian and practitioner to read the final document and, by way of concluding chapter, to extrapolate insights, challenges and reflections.

4. Conclusion & Encouragement

None of our reflection, analysis, research, planning, strategising and hoping will come to anything, however, unless they are all firmly rooted confidently in our Christian faith, and in our confidence to be and to become disciples of Jesus Christ in our time and place.

Faced with changing times, our faith gives us confidence. This continues to be 'A Time for Confidence', to use the phrase I have been relying on since 2013, and earlier, in fact, since the economic crash in Ireland. Our confidence, rooted in pragmatic strategies, has served us well.

Under God, and because of the promises of God, we need to manifest a confident and positive determination in our mission and ministry, rooted, as I say, in pragmatism and realism, but ready to go where the Lord is leading us on our journey. In Proverbs (3.26) we read that '...the Lord will be your confidence…' Saint Paul talks about 'the confidence that we have through Christ towards God.' (2 Corinthians 2.4).

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews says that 'we have become partners of Christ, but only if we hold our first confidence firm to the end.' (Hebrews 3.14), and later the writer (in Hebrews 13.6) says:

> *'… we can say with confidence,*
> *'The Lord is my helper;*
> *I will not be afraid.*
> *What can anyone do to me?'*

The demands and opportunities of these times call out for precisely such confidence. Let us encourage one another, build one another up, with confidence and hope.

Herein lies, in part, the importance of Charting a Future with Confidence. I know some might wish that the report will provide an instant recipe for a future, or be a panacea for all our anxieties. It won't. It is a toolkit to help us develop our confidence; to assist us in engaging with our task of being the Church today and in the days and years to come. It may help to lead us in each place, within the Diocese, to translate our reflection into action. Rather than a manifesto, it is a process, to facilitate what we are and will become, under God.

And that's the nub. It must always be about what we are and what we are becoming: the life and journey of faith. Charting a Future with Confidence is part of a journey; it is not an end in itself, and it is certainly not a box of instant solutions to all the challenges of our time and place. It is a process which, as we engage with it, will assist us in seeking, together with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the path that lies ahead.

Charting a
Future with
Confidence

The Reports of Working Groups

Groups I, II, III and IV

Chapter 2

Report of Group I

Models of the Church

Executive Summary

This is the final report of the working group on Models of Church as part of *Charting a Future with Confidence*, a review of ministry and priorities in the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

Our role was to consider what 'model of Church' or 'models of Church' work, may work and are sustainable into the future in the Diocese. In other words, what are we called to be as a church? To explore this, the group assessed our current situation in the Diocese and discussed models of Church that are being pursued elsewhere. We were especially interested in initiatives to address decline and stimulate growth and how they could be applied in our Diocese.

The recurrent themes in our discussions were relationships, discipleship, engagement and diversity. In fact, what we want to achieve can be summarised in two words: "Follow me". We need to listen to the call to follow Christ and develop our relationship with Christ, a relationship that differs from individual to individual. This can happen if everyone participates in the life and worship of the Church, according to their gifts. We therefore need to move from a predominantly clergy-led church to one where leadership is genuinely shared and participation in ministry is the expectation for the whole People of God. The norm must be continual change, rather than periodic upheavals, and the structures of the church should support such change.

Based on these discussions, the model that we propose is an inclusive, all-age church

- that is a community of disciples following Jesus

- where all people by virtue of baptism have the opportunity to engage in ministry in various forms

- that listens

- that is based on relationships, ultimately the relationship with Christ

- that celebrates diversity

- that is rooted in the community and reaches out to the marginalised

- that reforms continually according to the word of God

- that is sharing faith and growing

We propose that each individual, each parish and each chaplaincy should map out their own distinctive path towards growth and renewal. We propose that four inter-related topics should be considered and translated into the local context: diversity in worship styles, spiritual formation, engagement in ministry and clusters of parishes. Rather than providing a blueprint on these and other issues, we see the Diocese as asking questions, listening, laying out options (a 'toolkit') and helping parishes and chaplaincies explore the way forward.

This will require a leap of faith. We need to trust God and trust people.

I. Introduction

(a) The Role of this Group

Charting a Future with Confidence is a strategic review of ministry and priorities in the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross that was initiated by the Bishop in 2014. Four working groups are undertaking the review and the role of this working group is:

'to consider what 'Model of Church' or 'Models of Church' work, may work and are sustainable into the future in the Diocese.'

This group will not produce a blueprint for parishes, and will not dictate to parishes what the solution should be. Instead, our role as a Diocesan body may be to lay out options (a 'toolkit' or a 'menu') and enable parishes to explore them. We should ask questions, not provide answers.

Part of the role of this group is to explain to people in our parishes what the entire *Charting a Future with Confidence* venture is driving towards, namely, that we are seeking a better model of Church and not just reorganising the business of clergy, finances and buildings. In this context, we summarised the group's work to date via a statement in the Diocesan magazine in June 2015.

(b) Meetings

21-22 November 2014 (opening conference)	18 January 2016
31 January 2015	22 February 2016
18 April 2015	23 April 2016 (presentation to plenary session)
13 June 2015	30 May 2016
31 August 2015	26 September 2016
2 November 2015	

(c) Approach

1. The group started with the Five Marks of Mission, which are:

2. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.

3. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

4. To respond to human need by loving service.

5. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.

6. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

We considered what is meant by a 'model of Church'. We then looked at our church (i.e. the Church of Ireland in Cork, Cloyne and Ross) and tried to answer the three questions that the Archbishop of Armagh posed at our opening conference, namely:

- What were we once that we are no longer?

- What in truth are we now?

- What are we called to be that we are not yet?

The third question opened up into the main body of the group's work. Members of the group undertook research to find useful external sources, presented them to the group and used them as the basis for discussion. The findings are presented in section 2. Finally, we considered what sort of church we are aiming towards and what concrete steps can be made towards achieving that (section 3).

(d) Findings
In section 2. which follows we present the main topics that were discussed at our meetings.

2. Models of Church

(a) What is a model?

A model is:

- An ideal or exemplar.

- An image, pattern, shape or structure.

- A simplified or schematic description (e.g. scientific model).

- An effort at explanation and a route towards further exploration.

- A model accounts for known properties and represents underlying values.

- A model is incomplete and evolving.

We obtained a good introduction to the concept of 'Models of Church' from the book of the same name by Jesuit theologian Cardinal Avery Dulles. As outlined below, he proposes different models, each with strengths and weaknesses, and with considerable overlap between them. We agreed with Dulles that most desirable features of the Church could be described by one over-arching model, namely the Church as the community of disciples of Christ.

Church as Institution
- Hierarchical constitution of the Church.

- Relative clarity and simplicity.

- Does not enjoy extensive New Testament support.

Church as Communion
- Invisible reality of the life of the Church—family.

- Firm New Testament base.

- Neglect the visible aspects of Church—amorphous "good fellowship".

- Fellowship with God and with one another.

Church as Sacrament

- Embodiment of God in the world; a symbol but also the actual means of grace.

- The visible sign of God's loving presence in the world.

- Shows both the invisible and the visible reality of Church.

- Presupposes a certain theological sophistication.

Church as Herald/Messenger

- Proclamation and preaching of the Gospel.

- Protestant communities have long given central importance to this model of Church.

- Emphasis on word does not match emphasis on sacrament.

- Counter-cultural; being authentic to the message.

Church as Servant

- Work for social justice, which is at the heart of the Church's mission.

- Stresses the active participation of lay people.

- Exclusive use can compromise what is distinctive to the Church of Christ.

Church as Disciple

- This is a synthesis of the other five models, since being a follower of Christ is the aim (or "mission") of all models of Church.

- Follow completely in the footprints of Jesus, as he called disciples in his own time.

- People whose lifestyle stands in contrast with the rest of society.

- Jesus never imagined that his disciples would have an easy life.

(b) What were we once that we are no longer?

In the past, the Church of Ireland in Cork, Cloyne and Ross may be characterised as having been:

- Male.

- Hierarchical.

- Established and unionist.

- Monocultural and composed of "our own".

- Non-ecumenical and reactionary (i.e. defined in terms of difference from other churches).

- Isolated and under threat.

- Numerically more clergy with less lay contribution.

- Strong role for upper and professional classes.

Many of these characteristics were key to the identity of the Church of Ireland. Externally, the Church of Ireland is often still seen as having many of these characteristics. Internally, there is a perception that the Church of Ireland was stronger and more numerous at some time in the past, but it is unclear whether there is evidence to back this up. Key events in Irish society were disestablishment, independence/partition, the Troubles and secularisation.

(c) What in truth are we now?

Based solely on our personal impressions and anecdotal evidence, the group felt that today our church can be described as:

- More open, diverse and inclusive.

- More self-confident.

- More lay involvement.

- Restricted by heritage/history/buildings.

- Poorly financed.

- Living in a different society (different problems, different families, different priorities) that is more secular.

- Lower frequency of attendance at worship.

- Older age profile.

Looking forward, our challenge is to build on the positive characteristics and overcome the negative ones. In this spirit, the following sections attempt to answer the third of the Archbishop's questions: "What are we called to be that we are not yet?"

(d) Institutions of the Church

Institutional structures are needed for managing finances, buildings, trusts etc. in a fair (and legal) way. They can mitigate undue dependence on or dominance by individuals. Structures are a way to build on the wisdom of past generations (i.e. institutional memory). The Church of Ireland has a fairly democratic system that balances clerical leadership and lay participation. The institutions of the church are also a way by which its traditions and culture are preserved. Even so, there is a perception that today we are failing to pass the faith on to the next generation.

We discussed the minimal institutionality of new churches. This is possible in some cases because of their novelty, small scale and through the drive of one individual.

The identity of a church (e.g. 'Protestant') can become a label, with a lot of historical baggage associated with it. Hence there is a trend towards label-free religion (e.g. 'Christian', 'spiritual').

The ***Diocese*** is a large unit that can accommodate a diversity of parishes, while also ensuring uniform standards across parishes. It is of sufficient scale to allow specialised functions to be delivered (e.g. chaplaincies) and to permit mutual support and solidarity between parishes (e.g. Fair Share). Changes in our diocesan structures& boundaries are currently being discussed at national level.

The ***parishes*** of the Church of Ireland cover the entire island. The policy of the 19th century established church was that no part of the country should be more than 30 minutes' walk (3 km) from one of its churches, and this led to a programme of church building. It is interesting to ask if 30 minutes' drive (30 km) would be the modern equivalent. Today, technology has given us greater opportunities for connecting with people remotely, without diminishing the value of face-to-face contact.

This mission to the entire geographical extent of the country may be contrasted with a mission to a particular group or stratum of society. In fact of course, the Church of Ireland is a minority church, co-existing with other churches that cover the same geography. In some areas it is not present at all.

We looked at other cases around the world where disperse populations are being served. For example, the Diocese of Bunbury in Western Australia consists of 34 parishes spread over an area greater than Ireland, with full time ministers in half of the parishes and part time in the other half. Annual residential retreats and clergy conferences foster a sense of unity amongst ministers who work so far apart.

The parochial model reinforces the church as an integral part of the local community, especially in rural areas. Connection with the local community remains a strong (and generally positive) part of Irish identity, echoing Dulles' models of the 'Church as Communion, Sacrament and Servant'.

This raises the question of whom the parish structure of the church exists to serve (Dulles' model of the 'Church as Servant'): does it solely serve its existing Church of Ireland members or does it serve the entire local community? The former leads to decline and the latter leads to growth.

While nominally covering all urban and rural areas with parishes, the Church of Ireland is not adequately reaching out to many communities.

One example is urban areas of Cork city; another is Ballincollig, a town that has grown rapidly rather far from the nearest church, historic Carrigrohane.

Is the parochial structure too rigid to respond to changes like this, or is the church simply under-resourced?

So how do we minister to the whole community? What level of resources would that require? Is that a realistic ambition for a minority church? Our resources are barely sufficient to sustain current ministry.

The model of church should be inclusive of all socio-economic classes. The present cost of running the church places demands on its members that may be preventing the poor from joining. In other words, by spreading the church too thinly, sections of society may be excluded.

Covering the entire geographic area thus does not necessarily mean reaching all parts of society. Different models of worship appeal to different people, but a small parish may not be able to offer much variety.

- Larger units ('clusters' of parishes or team ministry) may allow more choice to be offered, thus appealing to the diversity of people living in the area. One example is youth ministry. (At a larger scale, this is one benefit of the Diocesan structure). But larger units may suffer from looser connections with the local community.

- Smaller units – a handful of individuals in a particular sector or locality – may facilitate deeper exploration of faith and/or community outreach.

(e) Sector Ministry

While the parochial model is dominant in the Church of Ireland, significant ministry is carried out by chaplains and their teams in hospitals, nursing homes, schools and universities. The ministry of chaplains is person-centred, mostly one-to-one, face-to-face, i.e. it is relational.

Example of hospital chaplaincy:

Hospital ministry leads to significant contact with people who are disconnected from regular church-going and with people who would not be identified as members of the Church of Ireland. Many do not fit our stereotypical picture of members of the church. Many will have no further connection with the Church after they leave hospital.

People are vulnerable in hospital. They are not wearing their 'Sunday best' or the social mask that they might have on in the parish church. The messiness of life is exposed. The aim is to *journey with people* and accompany them when they are searching.

The chaplain's role is therefore to listen, make the person feel safe and allow them to flourish. The approach is less formal than for typical parish activities. Everyone can become more involved in sector ministry, but significant specialised training is often needed. We need to free up people (ordained or lay) who have the gifts for working with people. This may involve other people taking on administrative or support roles, again according to their talents.

Clergy and lay ministers in sector ministry may feel isolated from diocesan structures. It is common that professionals who support people themselves feel lonely and unable to turn to anyone, and therefore parish-based clergy may also feel isolated. Professional and pastoral supervision is an important lifeline for those in ministry.

Society increasingly consists of communities (or sectors) that are not defined by geography. The parish system alone is therefore not enough to fulfil the mission of the Church. Beyond healthcare and education, are there other examples of sectors that need specialised ministry?

- Online ministry: not just a website or Facebook/Twitter to publicise parish/diocesan events, but actually connecting with people and delivering ministry through this medium.

- Ministry to the farming community: the church has a role in addressing concerns like mental health and isolation. It may be possible to form partnerships with (and get sponsorship from?) bodies like the IFA, Macra na Feirme or agricultural cooperatives.

- Third-level: UCC, CIT, College of Commerce and other colleges.

- Street pastors: This exists as an ecumenical venture in Cork city. There may be a need to extend it, e.g. to seaside villages in the summer months.

However, there should not be an 'either-or' choice between parish and sector. Every parish can engage in sector ministry in their own locality. We should all be reaching out and caring for one another.

(f) Relationships

The report **Church Without Walls** by the Special Commission Anent Review and Reform of the Church of Scotland points out that relationships are the key to mission and proposes a church shaped by friendship. This applies at many levels: relationships between individuals, within a parish, between the parish and local community and between parish and diocese. Indeed the Church is called to live out its relationship with Christ (Ephesians 5).

Relationships between people: Young people value the social element of attending church just as much as anyone else, but this only happens if sufficient numbers of their peers are present (a 'critical mass'). Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that Church is not just a club for socialising.

The Cork Diocesan Youth Council has been successful in bringing young people together from different parishes for events and training. The example of large youth attendance at an annual carol service was noted. Another case was the enthusiasm for singing with friends in a cathedral choir, despite the apparently un-child-friendly formality of a sung service.

Our model of church may increasingly be based on individuals coming together in small groups for discussion – such as bible study or Alpha groups, midweek meetings in a locality, or break-out groups discussing the sermon in church.

Are we friendly? Irish society can be outwardly welcoming, but people can still be lonely at a deeper level. The welcome in a parish church can be conditional ("you are welcome to join as long as you accept our way of doing things") and we may not be accepting that gifts from outside will enrich the church.

Inter-related church structures: An inverted hierarchy of relations is proposed in the report by the Church of Scotland. Rather than the traditional top-down picture (national > regional > local > personal), it is proposed that the primary and topmost level is composed of all the people of the church, supported from below by ordained ministers, and by local, regional and national structures (Figure 1).

Such an inverted hierarchy reinforces the idea that delivering ministry depends on the involvement of all the people, with regional structures such as the Diocese facilitating and providing support.
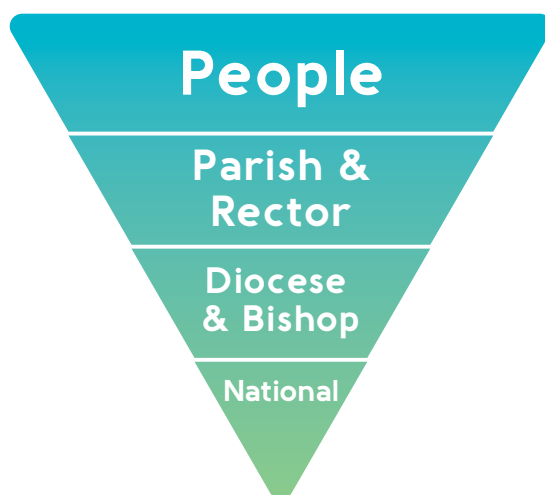

Figure 1: Inverted hierarchy of church structures.

An alternative picture of the relations within the church is one where there is mutual inter-dependence between the structures of the church at parochial, Diocesan and national levels (Figure 2).
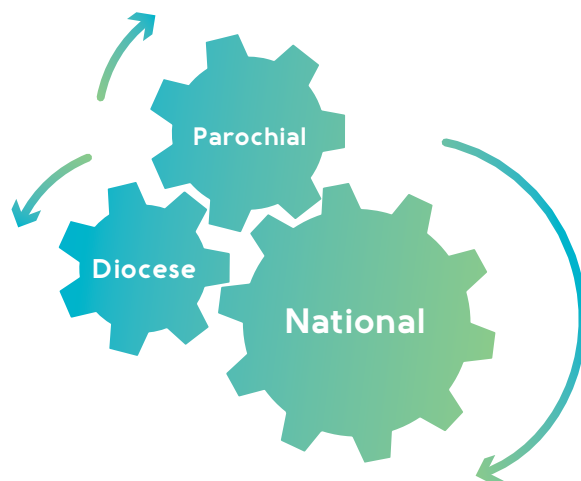
Figure 2: A model of mutual interdependence for relations within the Church.

Each level has roles in ministry, worship, community, discipleship, pastoral care, administration, resources, training and oversight, but with different emphases and operating on different scales. Since the three scales are connected, they must change together: we need the same culture of change at all levels. That said, we must have the courage to move forward anyway in Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Facilitating change and diversity at each level brings with it the risk of fragmentation (one parish vis a vis other parishes, or one diocese vis a vis the rest of the Church of Ireland). However, if we wait for others to lead, nothing will change.

Relationships between parishes: Fragmenting the Diocese into individual parishes going 'their own way' is not desirable. On the contrary, our aim is to gather together and form closer connections between parishes. We have a lot to gain in learning from one another. The Diocese should be a family, whose different members contribute in different ways. Natural clusters of parishes may emerge. This has happened with a number of South Dublin parishes on an ad hoc basis, in the diocese of Connor and more formally on the Isle of Wight.

The experience in the Isle of Wight is that a cluster should:

- Make reasonable sense geographically.

- Be not too large or too small.

- Find ways to meet appropriate to their context and in a way that promotes growth.

- Be a place where ministry teams and other officers of churches know each other, where they are comfortable to meet, pray and train together.

- Be a place where on Sundays there isn't excessive repetition of service patterns.

- Be a place where there is collaboration and sharing of resources.

- Have a good reason to come together for special occasions and events

- Be a place where there are developing ecumenical relationships.

- Be a place where there is at least one Fresh Expression.

- Be an environment where there is a common mind between churches on priorities for mission.

- Have someone (lay or ordained) who will act as coordinator.

For Cork, Cloyne and Ross, would 'clusters' just be Rural Deaneries by another name? Rural Deaneries are in practice administrative units, which come into their own for the annual inspection of buildings. Their geographical make-up does not reflect the present reality of connections and relationships between unions of parishes. Clusters need to have administration very much as a secondary reason for their existence, with their main focus on facilitating mission, worship, discipleship and support.

The impetus for change is both negative and positive. The negative is the question of the sustainability of small unions of parishes as isolated units. (This can often be true in the case of individual parishes within unions.) The positive is that the sharing of resources can provide greater opportunities for ministry and mission. The question becomes: 'What can we do better together rather than singly?' This includes everything from administration resources to joint celebrations, discipleship courses, Lent/Advent services, mission and community initiatives and youth work. This can be delivered by a team of ministers, stipendiary and non-stipendiary, ordained and lay, each playing to their particular strengths.

At present Rural Deaneries do not provide peer support for clergy who often suffer isolation. The teamwork that a cluster demands should provide greater interaction and support. They could quite possibly also create challenging relationships for those more used to 'going it alone'.

Relationship with diocese: There is a perception of disconnect between parishes and the Diocese and a perception that parish problems are not listened to at Diocesan level. However, it was stressed that this group is not criticising any specific person or body, at parochial, Diocesan or national level. The Church of Scotland report proposes that one role for the regional church (i.e. the diocese) is that of ***celebration***. Is that how we see our Diocese right now? Previous initiatives to bring people together in worship at diocesan level have not continued. Some ideas:

- There was an old tradition of travelling to neighbouring parishes for Harvest Thanksgiving services, but this has sadly died out.

- Regional services celebrating, for instance, some of the major Church festivals.

- Inter-union celebrations exploring alternative forms of worship.

- Should the Diocese engage in a "strategic retreat"?

- Much of the work of the Diocese is carried out by diocesan committees. Do they work? Are they effective as resources for the parishes? Do they communicate effectively with other dioceses and with the national church?

- There is an argument for smaller (not larger) dioceses and more (not fewer) bishops, so that the bishop can have a lower administrative load and be closer to the parishes.

Relations with the community: There has been a tendency in the Church of Ireland towards isolation and so involvement with the wider community should be a key objective. Reaching out to the marginalised should be a core activity of the Church.

Ecumenical relationships: In Ireland, 'growth' inevitably includes engaging with those who were baptised Roman Catholic. However, any perception of being in competition with other denominations or 'poaching' from them would be harmful. It may be less threatening if the initiative is taken by lay people in each church.

In this context, it may be worth emphasising the distinction between growth of the Church of Ireland and growth of the wider Church; while we are naturally (but somewhat selfishly) concerned about the former, our true aim should be the latter, which motivates us to cooperate with other denominations.

Working ***together with*** our Roman Catholic neighbours (as well of course with those from other Christian denominations and possibly non-Christian faiths) to achieve our joint goals will be a key part of reaching out and growing. Many things can be done together without overstepping boundaries or causing offence.

(g) Discipleship

All the 'models of Church' outlined by Avery Dulles can be encompassed in the idea of the Church as a community of disciples. If we can grasp discipleship, then we can become a generous community, worshipping and growing together. Two of the key elements of discipleship are to grow in our own faith and to share it with others ("go and make disciples"). As stated in the Five Marks of Mission, this is the calling of the whole Church.

> *'For all your people, growing in the faith of Christ and passing it on to generations yet to come…'*
> *(Book of Common Prayer, first form of intercessions, page 237).*

How are we to become better disciples of the living Christ? Our ambition is to live up to Jesus' command to "Follow me". We need to listen to this call. This in turn leads to Jesus' question: "Who do you say that I am?", i.e. what is your relationship with Christ? The purpose of the Church should be to listen to people and help them have that personal relationship. But the nature of that relationship will differ from individual to individual.

Is the current model of church suited to exploring this with each individual? No; much of today's ministry is passive, assuming that one size fits all, rather than engaging each individual. For example, in the current model the same 10-minute sermon is delivered by the priest to everyone in the passively-listening congregation, many of whom attend church once a month (which means a total of just two hours' sermon-time per year). The internal architecture of many of our churches reinforces this model. Clearly, this is not adequate for multiple, individual explorations of faith.

Our aim should be to move to a model of Church where the people are not passive, but rather where we all participate in the life and worship of the Church, relating to each other and thus developing our own relationship with Christ.

(h) Engagement in leading ministry

Who is the minister? In its broadest sense, 'ministry' includes all activities that advance the Kingdom of God and in this sense, lay ministry is the lifeblood of the Church today. One of the key ingredients identified for the ministry of the Church of Scotland was that the primary ministers of the Church are the people. At our opening conference, Bishop Mayes spoke about a 'ministering community' (rather than a community around a minister) that contains within it all the gifts needed for ministry.

More specifically, here we ask to what extent lay people are leading the ministry of the Church? The Church of England found that lay involvement in leadership was one of the eight factors for growth. For example, are lay people leading worship, leading parish organisations, pastoral care, overseeing parish administration, coordinating social events, initiating contact with community groups etc.? In many cases the answer is yes. But in many cases the ordained minister also plays a leading role in these activities. We need to move from a predominantly clergy-led church to a church where leadership is genuinely shared and ministry is the business of all God's people.

This makes sense financially as well as theologically: our major cost at present is stipendiary ministry and the more the load is shared with lay people, the more that can be achieved. When ministry becomes the business of all people, the role of the clergy is then to equip the people for leading ministry. Lay ministry and leadership can take different forms, according to people's various talents. The Church of Ireland has strong institutional structures for democratic participation in administration (vestries, synods etc.), but less so in worship, mission and faith formation.

This should not mean increasing the burden on those lay people who already contribute so much. Rather, this means that more lay people need to become involved and take on leadership roles. But it is currently hard to find volunteers for parish activities. In large churches, how can more people be stimulated to engage and give up their time for the church? In small rural churches, a high proportion may already be active – who are to become the new leaders when perhaps the entire regular congregation is the select vestry?

Charting a
Future with
Confidence

There is scope for exploring more options in lay versus ordained and stipendiary versus non-stipendiary ministry. Have we considered all options and evaluated the pros and cons of each?

For example, a team of part-time non-stipendiary ordained ministers in some area could be coordinated by a full-time stipendiary administrator. As another example, there are churches in the Diocese where 'parish readers' officiate at services, reading out the sermon that the rector has written.

Of course, other models of ministry could be envisaged and tailored to local needs. These ministries could be developed through appropriate training.

Possible obstacles to engagement:

- Lay people may justifiably be reluctant because they do not feel qualified to lead ministry. We all have a ministry, based on our own particular gifts, but we may need some help in realising it. Training and education will therefore be important.

- We expect 'somebody else' to look after things, and in particular we expect the clergy to lead ministry (as well as doing much of the administration). The clergy are perceived as more qualified and competent. In this way, the traditional top-down hierarchical picture of the church may be suppressing people's gifts.

- Newcomers feel unable to contribute because they don't know the ins and outs of the system. The archaic terminology of the church can be an obstacle towards people – especially newcomers – getting involved. (What is the "RB"? What is the "Vestry"? etc.). There is a need to be more open at all levels.

- In many 'new churches' it is the norm (not the exception) that everyone has a role in the church from the day that they join. The volunteer system is structured into teams and supported by mentors. The sheer volume of volunteer activity means that these churches have a big impact in their communities, which in turn attracts new members. Such active discipleship seems to be the key to the phenomenal growth of these churches.

- On the other hand, we need to welcome people to come to church without fearing that they will be given a job to do.

- Small groups (e.g. small parishes) may lead to isolation if one feels there are no like-minded people or people of the same age-group. On the other hand, large groups may lead to isolation if one feels that one cannot speak and cannot approach others.

- How good are we at listening? Can we take criticism? How will we react when people explain why they are not coming to church?

- How can we listen and engage?

- To engage the congregation, we need to move from didactic style to discursive style. One reason is that this is the way that young people are educated nowadays.

- Participation is good, but we cannot have a descent into chaos, with inappropriate acts of worship or offensive words from the pulpit.

- Example of the Taizé Community: Thousands of 18-30 year olds are divided into small groups to talk with one another. This means that everyone gets the chance to be listened to, but without being given the authority of the pulpit.

- A vacancy in a parish can be an opportunity for people to step up and take responsibility for ministry. But conversely, the opposite sometimes happens, producing a harmful gap in ministry. Radically: should every parish be deliberately vacant for a short spell every few years?

- Specific audiences can be reached through structured courses, e.g. on marriage or parenting.

- A meeting of attendees in the church after Sunday service can be a way to encourage participation – not just when there is a crisis.

This will require a leap of faith. We need to trust God and trust people.

(i) Growth

The focus must be on growth, not just survival. Growth refers to spiritual growth (deepening of faith) and growth of our contribution to the wider community. But equally, 'growth' means 'numerical growth'; numbers are vital to our mission to bring the Good News to all people.

Research in the Church of England found that ***no single factor*** or recipe could guarantee growth, but at the same time found ***many factors in common*** in churches that are growing, regardless of their size, geography or history. Those common factors are:

1   Clear mission and purpose.

2   Actively engaging with local context.

3   Willing to change and adapt.

4   A welcoming culture, ongoing relationships.

5   Leaders who innovate, envision and motivate.

6   Lay people active in leadership.

7   Engaging children and young adults.

8   Nurturing disciples.

One interesting suggestion is to express the 'mission statement' of a parish in a prayer.

What forms of ministry will enable us to flourish in faith and to grow in number? Recognising the external perception of the church is important as a first step towards connecting with potential new members and achieving growth. Who are we and why do people come in the door? What do we have that makes us different and unique (our 'niche' in the market)? People are attracted to tradition and fellowship, but this is true of any club. What makes the Church unique is the spiritual aspect, the relationship with Jesus and the grounding in the Gospel. The key is to focus on who we are.

Some questions:
- How can the sacraments be made relevant, especially so that the unchurched understand them?

- Can we use our buildings to connect? Can church buildings be opened seven days a week and for the wider community?

(j) Diversity

One of the most positive recent changes in the Church of Ireland is that we explicitly recognise our diversity. We are not a homogeneous section of society that grudgingly tolerates misfits, but rather a welcoming place for people of all backgrounds. As well as celebrating the diversity of individuals, the church should celebrate the diverse models of Church that go into its make-up. Patterns of ministry are naturally different in each locality, responding to the different local needs and traditions. Sector ministry likewise requires a tailored response to the needs of each sector. Celebrating such diversity was one of the key ingredients identified by the Church of Scotland for its ministry and the Church of England found that churches engaging actively with their local context were more likely to grow.

It is therefore crucial that we do not prescribe one model of Church and try to impose it. It will not be a case of 'one size fits all' as every parish and congregation is different in both needs and abilities to meet those needs. Instead, our aim should be to work with the diversity that exists and make the most of it. The church's structures and resource allocation must be flexible enough to accommodate this.

The Church community, being diverse, requires that it offers a variety of worship styles. This principle is often referred to by a phrase attributed to Archbishop Rowan Williams: 'The church is a mixed economy.' However, this is difficult, if not impossible, if the congregation is too small. To accommodate diversity properly may therefore mean clustering parishes and deploying clergy in teams.

(k) Young people

Faith Communities Today studied young adult involvement in over 40 U.S. Christian denominations by surveying 11,000 congregations. Participation by 18-34 year-olds is declining faster than amongst other age-groups, probably due to this age-group starting a family later in life and to a degree of anti-institutionalism. Nevertheless, 16% of congregations manage to have at least 1 in 5 participants from this age bracket. The following reasons for this success were identified:

- Intentionally involving young adults in leadership.

- Young-adult-only communities within congregations.

- Worship that is informal and/or innovative and/or high quality; for example, familiar hymns performed beautifully.

- Use of text messages, apps, social media.

- Mixed secular/religious events, e.g. bars, restaurants, sports, student housing, providing food.

- Welcoming, accepting, not judging, accommodating short-term commitments.

- Prioritising young adult ministry, investing in it for its own sake and not expecting financial or numerical gain; link to parent denomination may be de-emphasised.

- Located in urban and suburban areas; also in those with high student concentration.

Cork Diocesan Youth Council has recently commenced a discussion process with 18-30 year olds. This has taken the form of supper evenings with a speaker led discussion on issues surrounding church identity, church membership, structures, belonging etc. Four such evenings have taken place and have proved very successful. The events will continue to be run approximately four times a year. This will lead to events being structured around the needs identified. CDYC seeks to encourage those in the age group to become involved in decision making at parish, Diocesan and all Ireland level. It is essential that those in their 20s and 30s gain a sense of empowerment in relation to the church and the confidence to put their ideas into practice. Do, for instance, Diocesan Synod regulations need to be changed to encourage greater representation from this age group?

Youth Ministry, an example of sector ministry in the Diocese, has witnessed significant development in recent years and the Diocese must continue to invest in it both in terms of finance but most especially through personnel.

(l) Change as a journey

Being forced to change can be positive, despite everyone's tendency to cling to the familiar. A crisis can lead to renewal. A useful model is that of the 'Church in exile', pointing to the example of how Judaism was forged in the crisis of the exile in Babylon.

On the other hand, change can be seen as a threat to our identity. The structures, heritage, culture and treasures of the church can be perceived negatively by younger members and by non-members, and tend to be cherished by and perpetuated by the older age group. For many people, customs and traditions are part of the appeal of the church and no one wants to throw out precisely those things that they perceive to be making the church valuable and distinctive. Members tend to identify personally with the structures in their locality ("my church"), rather than recognising that the structures exist to further the mission of the church ("God's Church"). The allegiance to one parish and to one church building may be strong and not easily transferred, so that there is the danger that change leads to decline.

However, *reform should be a continual process*. Jodocus van Lodenstein of the Dutch Reformed tradition stated in 1674 that: 'The Church is reformed and always [in need of] being reformed according to the Word of God'. Constant change must be the norm, rather than periodic upheavals.

It will be helpful if this group can put in place a framework that can be followed by parishes and the Diocese on our journey to achieve change.

As an example, we looked at *Vision 2015-2018* that Carrigrohane Union has been developing. The sequence of actions was as follows. A vision group of eleven people was established, including the ministry team. The group participated in a workshop with an external facilitator. As the first step, core values were defined. The group listened to the congregation – indeed, consultation was repeated throughout the process. A questionnaire was circulated and the results were organised into the triangular framework of "In – Out – Up". This led to a more detailed vision document. The proposals were implemented for a trial period, with experiments on new formats of church service for six months. Based on feedback, a more stable pattern has now been adopted, along with some tweaking and merging of the formats. The next step is for each church in the parish to develop a mission action plan that builds on their particular strengths and needs.

Clearly, we are not suggesting that the particular direction chosen by Carrigrohane is suitable for all parishes. However, we can learn from that process of change. The key elements are:

- Culture of continual change.

- Sensitivity – listening – participation – ownership.

- Reflection and feedback.

- Core values/mission statement.

- People over buildings.

- Growing leaders.

- Mixed economy of worship.

To be effective, *change must come from within,* and not be imposed from 'above' or from 'outside'. This principle has guided how we suggest that our proposals be implemented (section 3). First and foremost, we need to listen to people. We must reflect back to them how their views have influenced the process of change. We then need to empower people to achieve change *themselves.*

Change can be gradual and reversible, but should be deliberate. It was felt that many clergy would welcome discussion with the Bishop or other colleagues, reviewing progress in the parish and looking forward.

In the diocese of Liverpool, growth is being achieved stepwise, through a series of 'Going for Growth' frameworks, each with a fixed duration. As part of this, each parish must fill out a plan for their parish and return it to the Archdeacon, who visits the parish and discusses the plan with them. The framework is taken seriously; parishes follow through on their plans and progress is monitored.

This illustrates that the *structures of the church should support change,* rather than hinder it. The inflexibility of our institutions is felt to be a problem. There is a danger that new ideas are stifled at the lowest level, rather than being promoted across the organisation. All change is painful, but the structures of the church should not stand in the way of change, and rather should support it. We should bear in mind that it may be easier to change structures than mind-sets, but what is needed is a change in mind-sets. This, however, takes time.

Rules should be buried in the foundations, not obstructing the way forward. The Constitution of the Church of Ireland should be a signpost, not a straitjacket. Committees and other decision-makers must be aligned to the true mission of the Church. For instance, the General Synod is seen as unwieldy, as it tries to combine a range of functions (legislative, communications, social, oversight, strategy) with mixed success.

3. Proposals

Underpinned by the Five Marks of Mission, our vision is an inclusive, all-age church

- that is a community of disciples following Jesus.

- where all people, by virtue of baptism, have the opportunity to engage in ministry in various forms.

- that listens.

- that is based on relationships, ultimately the relationship with Christ.

- that celebrates diversity.

- that is rooted in the community and reaches out to the marginalised.

- that reforms continually according to the word of God.

- that is sharing faith and growing.

Our church is called to be connected, relevant, sincere, flexible and renewed. How can we achieve this? There is no single answer and no quick solution. Instead, we strongly believe that it is right for each individual, each parish and each chaplaincy – and indeed for the Diocese as a whole – to find their own distinctive path towards growth and renewal.

> **We suggest that the role of the Diocese is to guide the process of questioning, to listen to the responses and to facilitate in exploring solutions.**

To this end we have identified some inter-related themes where we propose that action can be concentrated. In outlining these proposals (below), we stress that each one moves forward through ideas and initiative at local level and that change is not imposed from 'above'.


Clustering

Spiritual Formation

Styles of Worship

Ministry

Planning for Growth

Proposal #1	*1: Planning for growth*
Description	We suggest that the CFC produce a framework to manage the process of change over a fixed duration (perhaps 3 years) and that individual bodies produce their own action plans. These plans should address the themes listed below, along with any others of local importance. The process itself is valuable: asking questions, listening to answers, defining the way forward, experimenting and reviewing progress.
Actions by CFC	Develop toolkit to help parishes ask the important questions. Make use of existing material from other churches nationally/internationally.
Actions by parishes & chaplaincies	Consult with members, listen, develop action plan suited to local needs, implement, review and feedback.
Actions by Diocese	Identifying gaps in current structures and identifying new patterns that need to be addressed creatively, perhaps not focussing exclusively on the parochial model; e.g. church plants, sector ministry. Long-term projection, risk assessment and planning (e.g. 10 years out) of staff and finances at Diocesan level. Allocate funding for implementing CFC proposals.
Sustainability	Start with achievable steps. Guard against 'change fatigue'. Each framework should build on the last, learning from it so as to become more effective and more ambitious.
Open questions	An 'owner' must be defined at each level. Community, environmental and social justice initiatives should be included in the growth framework.

Each chaplaincy, union and group of parishes should be encouraged to develop its own vision for growth and change. In embarking on such a process, people in parishes will justifiably look to the Diocese for guidance and support. For this reason, the CFC framework should have tools and resources to equip parishes and chaplaincies to develop their own action plan.

The Church of England programme From Evidence to Action is a toolkit for parishes, subdivided into eight factors for growth, consisting of (i) a short leaders' guide, (ii) a clear, modern, attractive website, (iii) material such as worksheets, PowerPoint slides, interactive exercises, scorecards, and sermon notes, (iv) links for more information, requests for feedback and forums for further discussion. The call to action is supported by concrete statistics from the research, but also by case studies, with photos and names of real people in real churches. It is confident, convincing and inspirational. Everyone is free to download and make use of the material.

The experience of Carrigrohane Union in their vision development process could be a useful resource for other unions.

The approach is to stimulate action through asking questions, not supplying answers. Parishes should choose what suits their situation, and later review and refine their plan (see arrow diagram below).
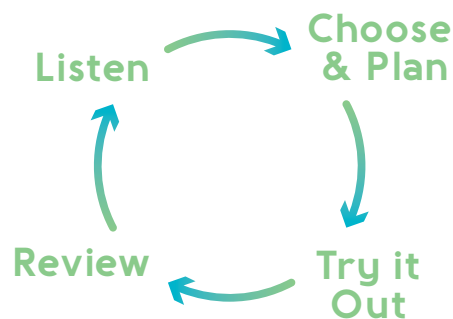
When following a growth agenda, there may be a danger that attention focusses on the large innovative churches that are 'successful', to the detriment of smaller churches with limited capacity for change. Collegiality needs to be preserved. We are a church family. Deliberate planning for the future can help a parish that is facing change. Parishes might find it useful to envisage 'what-if' scenarios for their future. Some changes can be anticipated, such as the retirement of the incumbent, and a parish can choose to deliberately define a long-term strategy that accommodates such changes.

Delivering this programme will require expertise in such areas as (i) change management, (ii) volunteering, (iii) training and (iv) marketing.

Every proposal for change should be checked for whether it can be better delivered in partnership with (i) other churches, (ii) other voluntary/community/charitable groups, (iii) public or civic bodies (e.g. HSE).

We are aware that the discussions in our group have not been exhaustive and that these proposals are not definitive or final. We expect that other important themes will arise during the process and so the CFC Framework should be flexible enough to incorporate them.

There is an impression that parishes and the Diocese can continue to limp onwards. Instead, we should recognise honestly the crises that we face and not just talk about the required changes, but actually carry them out.

Questions for Discussion – Planning for Growth

'Underpinned by the Five Marks of Mission, our vision is an inclusive, all-age church.'

- What do we understand that to mean in our context? (Think about the 8 bullet points)
- Is structural change in parish and diocese a pre-requisite for growth?
- What changes might we need to plan for and work towards to facilitate growth?

Proposal #2	*2: Diversity in worship*
Description	The aim is a mixed economy, a combination of new and old, a greater richness of styles of worship and discipleship that can speak to a greater range of people.
Actions by CFC	Outline options for styles of worship and exchange information on best practices.
Actions by parishes & chaplaincies	Develop ideas that are suited to own locality or sector.
Actions by Diocese	Support innovation and facilitate change, e.g. in the ordering of churches. Provide free training for musicians to help them contribute to church worship. Facilitate access to resources and new ideas through a Director of Music.
Sustainability	To deliver some modes of worship it may be necessary to work together with neighbouring parishes (proposal #5 on clustering). More lay involvement in leading ministry (proposal #3) may also allow more options to be offered, rather than less.
Open questions	This category should possibly also include community, outreach, environmental and social justice initiatives.

The words, music and actions of the liturgy should be an expression of people's faith. This is true for all ages, but young people may feel a more acute disconnect with the form of expression. High quality music is consistently identified as something that attracts people to church (regardless of whether the style of music is contemporary or traditional). Some may feel constrained in their style of worship by the architecture and ordering of their church. If change is needed, the Diocese should make it a painless process.

There are many new ideas and resources for innovations in worship, some already taking place in the Diocese. The main obstacles may be information, training and confidence-building. Parishes and clergy can therefore learn from one another. There may also be a need for central provision of resources, such as a 'Director of Music' at Diocesan or cluster level, who stays abreast of a wide variety of musical styles, of useful resources and of local musicians, and who can share this information with clergy. Some might find it useful to undertake 'field trips' to nearby churches to see how these innovations work in practice. For example, 'Messy Church' is being used by various parishes as an effective way to reach out to those not currently involved in other forms of church. It includes worship, prayer, creativity and a meal. It is an all-age form of church, where all including young people can be involved in welcome, worship, leadership and providing hospitality. Some parishes are experimenting with breakfast before the service or lunch afterwards.

We also considered the model pioneered by Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) in London, which has seen marked growth and has been replicated internationally. The essentials of Anglicanism have been retained – the authority of the bible and traditional ethical values – but are presented in a creative, relevant and contemporary way. The emphasis is on relational Christianity. Rather than just preaching to the congregation, leaders seek participation through discussion groups and feedback sessions. There are midweek house groups to foster relationships and spiritual growth and there is an active church planting ministry.

A summer camp is held in Kerry that is a good introduction to contemporary music for worship.

Charting a
Future with
Confidence

Questions for Discussion ~ Diversity in Worship

- What factors contribute to meaningful worship?

- What factors inhibit the development of worship?

- What are the possibilities and challenges for us as a parish as we seek to enrich our worship?

- What could be done at a diocesan level to help parishes?

Proposal #3	*3: Ministry*
Description	Greater involvement of lay people in leading ministry, through a wider range of options, whether stipendiary or non, and whether ordained or lay.
Actions by CFC	Map out the range of options for leading and enabling ministry, broadening the idea of vocation.
Actions by parishes & chaplaincies	Examine what types of ministry are suited to own locality or sector. Different competencies may be available at different scales (prayer group, youth organisation, local church, union, cluster, chaplaincy).
Actions by Diocese	Develop appropriate training and education programmes to nurture vocations and equip lay and ordained ministers. Engage with the national process on Self-Supporting Ministry and Ordained Local Ministry.
Sustainability	Need to ensure that flexibility does not mean uncertainty for those making a career in the church.
Open questions	How can more people be encouraged to engage with and devote time to the church?

Training and education is appropriate for a community of disciples: the disciple is learning how to follow.

The Diocese can be used as a bank of skills, both lay and ordained. To implement their plans, parishes could avail of training from those with the right skills and experience from across the Diocese. Short, flexible courses are needed for people with busy lives. This could also take the form of internships, exchanges, or weekend courses. Delivery of material online may have its place, but the value of the relational contact with the trainer should not be forgotten. There can be step-by-step progression as people explore their role in ministry. This could be a way for ordained ministers to stimulate more lay ministry. Training and support might be best delivered at 'cluster' level (see proposal #5 below). This has the side-effect of building the church family between parishes.

Experiments, successes and failures should be shared at Diocesan level, so that different parishes can pick out and adopt what suits them (see also 'Diversity in Worship', #2 above).

An annual Diocesan Conference could be one way for those active in parochial vision development to exchange ideas, avail of training and raise the level of the activity. It would draw in a wider audience than Diocesan Synod, which, anyway, has a necessary 'business' focus.

Maybe parishes need to be challenged on how many people are being confirmed and how many are pursuing a vocation. Do we put sufficient emphasis on nurturing and encouraging vocations (ordained and lay) in every parish?

Is our training system over-institutionalised, unattractive and unwieldy? The training time for ordination is long. The academic bar for ministry should not be set too high, as other character traits are also needed. More diverse routes are needed towards becoming a leader in ministry. But is there the danger of a two-tier system?

Questions for Discussion ~ Ministry

- What opportunities for lay ministry exist already?

- Is our parish ready to accept a greater level of 'lay ministry?'

- What areas of ministry in the local church would benefit from training programmes?

Proposal #4	4: Spiritual Formation
Description	Journey of faith, discipleship, spiritual growth, sharing faith, nurturing vocation in its broadest sense.
Actions by parishes & chaplaincies	Delivering courses in Christian faith and nurture such as: Alpha, Emmaus, Pilgrim. Activities reaching out to the unchurched. Lenten programmes, perhaps coordinated across clusters or the Diocese.
Sustainability	Ministry teams in clusters may be able to offer a variety of programmes.

If discipleship, with the call to follow Christ, is at the heart of the Christian life, spiritual formation must be a central concern and activity for the church. However, this has not always been prioritised in the past. Spiritual formation can, and must, take a variety of forms as we journey together towards wholeness in Christ. There can be no single, prescribed route for a parish (cluster?) to take. Growth in understanding is one aspect of spiritual formation, as delivered through the programmes mentioned above. But more than this: spiritual formation is a journey that we undertake in the fellowship of others.

Behind our concerns about ministry, worship and reaching others, could it be that spiritual formation holds the key?

Questions for Discussion ~ Spiritual Formation

- What/ who have been the most significant influences in our own spiritual formation and journey?

- How can we encourage people to participate in courses in Christian faith and nurture?

- How can we, in the parish and diocese, be more effective in passing on the faith to others?

Proposal #5	5: Clustering
Description	Adapt the structures of the church so that they are flexible and responsive to ministry. We see a particular need in the Diocese for teamwork by clusters of parishes, perhaps as modified Rural Deaneries.
Actions by CFC	Initiate discussion on what can be gained (not lost) by gathering parishes and ministers together into teams.
Actions by parishes & chaplaincies	Identify what can be gained by working together with neighbouring parishes. With which parishes do we have natural connections? What first steps can easily be taken?
Actions by Diocese	An enabling/expert group to determine procedures for managing finance, governance and staffing in clusters, and how to implement them over a transition period.
Sustainability	Delivery by a team of ministers to a cluster of parishes should be more efficient and should accommodate diversity better.
Open questions	Danger of introducing extra layer of bureaucracy and cost.

Each parish, ministry and chaplaincy has local responsibilities (such as buildings) and has developed local structures to manage those responsibilities. However, it is beneficial for parishes to feel supported by the Diocese and by one another, to feel they are part of a bigger movement and to share experiences with one another.

What scale of structure can give the best support to parishes? We may need more activity at the intermediate level between diocese and parish/union. Groupings within the Diocese (such as Rural Deaneries) should take cognisance of contexts and natural connections between parishes and unions. At present, Rural Deaneries do not reflect these connections and fulfil little purpose beyond annual inspections of buildings. A review of Rural Deaneries should consider how best to support parishes, share resources and provide a context for parishes combining to develop worship, share ministers and celebrate together. We will look for parishes to indicate what natural 'clusters' are emerging.

Our attention is not solely on changing the Rural Deanery model. We must examine other church structures at parochial, chaplaincy and Diocesan level and make sure that they support discipleship and are able to respond to changes in ministry. For instance, small clusters of individuals from special sectors or, in particular, localities should be supported. We see clusters of parishes/unions as a practical and flexible vehicle for providing ministry and enabling growth in a world much changed from the past model where 'one size fitted all'. Perhaps the defining characteristic of a cluster is that 'one minister does not fit all' and that a team approach is more beneficial. The parishes in a cluster should benefit from access to new forms of ministry, while still having ministry continue in some form in all localities. Indeed, a cluster may be thought to have failed if it evolves into one incumbent looking after an even larger union of parishes.

Questions for Discussion ~ Clustering

- The parish system has served the church well. What are its strengths?

- What could be gained in terms of worship, ministry and spiritual formation by the creation of clusters?

- How might sector ministries be developed to enhance the life and witness of the church?

Developing a mission action plan

In the light of your discussions on the above proposals:

- Draw up a brief profile of your own Union, its strengths and what makes it distinctive.

- If you had unlimited funds, what one thing would you like to be different in your Union/Group five years from now?

- Without any extra funds, what one thing do you think could be changed over the next 12 months?

In all three questions, the focus should be on ministry, people, worship, growth etc, not on buildings, insurance, fire safety, fundraising and the other usual business of the select vestry. Our four categories may help give you ideas on what to change: diversity in worship, lay ministry, spiritual formation, clustering.

- Is there any input or support you feel you need from the Diocese to help you take the process forward?

4. References

Name of book or report	Source or author	Reference or website
Models of the Church	Avery Dulles	Image; Exp Rei edition, 1991, ISBN 978-0385133685
The Five Marks of Mission	Anglican Communion	www.anglicancommunion.org/identity/marks-of-mission.aspx
The Anglican Understanding of the Church	Paul Avis	SPCK, 2nd edition, 2013, ISBN 978-0-281-06814-2
Living Together	Deanery of Isle of Wight, Church of England	www.portsmouth.anglican.org/fileadmin/images/news/2015/LIVING_TOGETHER__1_.docx
Church without walls – The Report of the Special Commission anent Review and Reform	Church of Scotland (Presbyterian)	www.churchofscotland.org.uk/connect/church_without_walls
Growth Planning Framework	Diocese of Liverpool, Church of England	www.liverpool.anglican.org/GPF
From Evidence to Action	Archbishops of Church of England	www.fromevidencetoaction.org
Fresh Expressions	Church of England and Methodist Church	www.freshexpressions.org.uk/
Case studies of congregations engaging young adults	Perry Chang, Faith Communities Today (FACT)	www.faithcommunitiestoday.org/
American Congregations 2015: Thriving and Surviving	David A. Roozen, Faith Communities Today (FACT)	www.faithcommunitiestoday.org/
Ordained Local Ministry Guidelines	Church of England	
Vision 2015 – 2018	Carrigrohane Union of Parishes	www.cupcork.ie/vision2015-18/
Vision statement	Maynooth Community Church (Presbyterian)	www.maynoothcc.org
	Diocese of Bunbury, Western Australia	www.bunbury.org.au/index.html
	Lakewood Church, Houston, USA	www.lakewood.cc/
	Holy Trinity Brompton	www.htb.org
	The Filling Station	www.thefillingstation.org.uk/

Chapter 3

Report of Group II

Summary and assessment of previous Diocesan reviews & proposals emerging from the national bodies of the Church of Ireland

Executive Summary

Diocesan and parochial restructuring is a constant necessity in the life of the church if it is to meet the needs of each generation in a particular locale. This group focused its attention on the period of the last fifty years and the work that was done internally in Cork, Cloyne and Ross, as well as discussion at a national level that had an impact on the Diocese.

The main findings were that:

- This Diocese has always been proactive in managing the structural and pastoral needs of its clergy and people. This was done, not only to address the concerns of the Church of Ireland population, but also to be a witness to the wider community.

- As far back as the 1966 Report on Parochial Reorganisation, radical proposals were considered and creative solutions sought. However, not all of these were acted upon and often the status quo prevailed with minor adaptation.

- The Commission on Church Buildings 1989 was a well-intentioned but clumsy attempt to rationalise the built infrastructure of the Diocese. It left a legacy of hurt and resentment in some areas and subsequent reports were coloured by this.

- At a national level, recent discussion on Episcopal needs and structures has opened up debate but as yet no clear consensus as to the way forward has emerged.

- In the area of ordained ministry, in recent years changes to the programme of training clergy have resulted in a huge decline in those seeking to serve in the non-stipendiary ministry. However, legislation permitting part time ministry has allowed this Diocese to come up with creative solutions in partnership with other institutions. The statement from the House of Bishops in relation to Ordained Local Ministry at the General Synod 2017 has also opened up new possibilities in this area.

I. Background

(a) Change

'We are products of our past, but we don't have to be prisoners of it.'

Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here for?*

'It is quite clear that a rapidly changing society requires constant reflection on the part of all - bishop, priests and followers of Jesus - about how our ministries and roles fit in today. The paradoxical challenge of taking what we have traditionally inherited and tailoring that in a new set of prevailing dynamics, is one that no one, no church organisation and no parish can avoid.

I cannot simply do the things my predecessor did, any more than he could perpetuate the ministry of his predecessor and so on. That repetitive strategy would simply be a thoughtless mirroring of what was considered appropriate in another time.'

The Bishop's first presidential address at the Diocesan Synod, 1999.

Change is inevitable, whether at the level of the individual, the community or the nation. When it comes to 'Charting a Future', it is important to have an awareness of the past and of how previous generations met the challenges of their day, so that we understand the forces that have shaped our present. This gives us the context into which we can survey the future options that lie before us. The role of this sub-group was to examine previous reports and reviews on the nature, structure and provision of ministry within the Diocese as well as to highlight some of the proposals and discussions which have emerged from national bodies in the Church of Ireland.

The material under review was considerable and of necessity our discussion here has to be selective. However, we have strived in this chapter to give some insight into the main themes and insights of the various reports into the life and witness of the Church of Ireland in Cork, Cloyne and Ross over a period of fifty years.

(b) Meetings and Reports

The Group met as follows:

21-22 November 2014 (Opening Conference)

02 March 2015

18 March 2015

14 April 2015

01 December 2015

12 January 2016

09 February 2016

02 March 2016

23 April 2016 (Interim Report to Plenary Meeting)

In the course of our work the following reports were reviewed:

1. The Commission on Ministry (CoM)

2. The Commission on Episcopal Ministry and Structures 2012 (CEMS 2012)

3. The Council for Mission (CforM)

4. General Synod Reports 2001 – 2014 (GS year)

5. Parochial Reorganisation 1966 (PR 1966)

6. Diocesan Working Party 1974 (DWP 1974)

7. Commission on Church Buildings 1989 (CCB 1989)

8. Cork, Cloyne & Ross Diocesan Church Buildings Review 1990 (CCRDBR 1990)

9. Diocesan Strategy Group 1994 (DSG 1994)

Other documentation:

10. Statements from The House of Bishops' (HB)

11. Archbishop of Armagh – The Most Reverend Dr Richard Clarke's vision – 2034 Themes (AA 2034 Themes)

Naturally there was much overlap in this material and certain common themes emerged. These included:

- The nature of ministry.

- Ordained, lay and part-time ministry.

- Worship.

- Episcopal ministry and structures.

- Groups, unions and boundaries.

- Buildings.

- Finance.

From within these themes we looked at what was implemented and what was not. This then led us to look at whether some of the recommendations would be relevant and would work in the current climate.

Emerging proposals were reviewed and how they would impact not only within our own Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross but the Church of Ireland as a whole, including representation at General Synod, diocesan boundaries and the role of the bishop.

2. The Nature of Ministry

(a) Ministry: What is Ministry?

Bonds of Affection-1984 (ACC-6 p49) and Mission in a Broken World-1990 (ACC-8 p101) sets out what the 5 Marks of Mission are:

1 The Mission of the Church is the mission of Christ.

2 To proclaim the Good news of the Kingdom.

3 To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

4 To respond to human need by loving service.

5 To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation.

6 To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The House of Bishops' (HB) Mission Statement states:

The Church of Ireland, as an authentic part of the universal Church of God, is called to develop communities of faith, in and through which the Kingdom of God is made known, in which the whole people serve together as followers of Jesus Christ for the good of the world to the Glory of God.

Growth – Unity- Service

In the power of the Spirit, our mission requires us to order our contemporary worship and life in a manner that nurtures growth, promotes unity and liberates us for service in the world that is God's.

The first major report that was commissioned within the Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross that addressed the challenges of materialism and changing values was produced in 1966 under the title of 'Parochial Reorganisation' (PR 1966). It was a complete review of the Diocese with its core areas being the changing social environment, decreasing population (particularly in the south of the Diocese), the shortage of clergy and financial resources. It focused mainly on the restructuring of the parishes/unions and 50 years on we are still looking at many of these areas today.

It made 3 points with regard to ministry:

1 The work of the Church is to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a way which will be clearly understood by each generation. The religion of the sanctuary and of the pew must be shown to have a relevance to life with the presence of Jesus Christ transforming and enriching all activity.

2 To achieve this, the Church (i.e. the clergy and laity) must be well informed in matters spiritual and material and be, in every sense a worshipping community, but the Church must also be so organized that all her material resources and man-power are used to the best advantage.

3 Parishes should provide adequate work of a rewarding and satisfying nature for the priests in charge of them but still should not be of such great extent that it is to the detriment of their prayer, reading and study. The laity must benefit fully from the ministrations of the clergyman in whose spiritual care they are.

A further report was commissioned in 1994 'Diocesan Strategy Group' (DSG 1994). This again covered many of the themes covered in the 1966 review with regard to ministry and made the following additional recommendations:

- That there should be a renewed emphasis on Christian Unity Week with a preference for attending each other's normal services.

- Local inter-church prayer and Bible study groups should be supported.

- The Woman's day of Prayer should be supported as an occasion for joint worship, for men as well as women.

- In mixed denominational schools, the whole class should be taught together on occasions i.e. bringing in the local rector, parish priest etc. to speak.

- Occasional services, such as baptisms, weddings and funerals, should be fully organised for the part they play in promoting spiritual unity.

(b) Ministry: The Role of the Church in Society

'A Circle of People Holding Hands – Looking Outwards'. This was the vision for the Church's unity and outlook that was stated at the beginning of the Diocesan Strategy Group Report 1994 (DSG 1994). It goes on to say:

> 'Our unity is significant by our holding of hands as we enjoy Christ in our midst. Our "outlook" is just that: looking out for Christ in others and welcoming them into our fellowship which exists for them. How easy is it to part hands and welcome the newcomer when we face outwards? Our growth – the reverse of our decline – will be given by God when we scan the horizon for the coming home of his children.'

> Conversely, 'Our security does not lie in closing ranks and pressing our backs to the world. Neither does the strength of our fellowship nor even our identity today lie in labouring to protect what we know best. If we cannot risk the breaking of our circle, then Christ will continue to stand outside and knock'.

> The Commission on Ministry (GS 2001) put forward proposals for a summit for the Church of Ireland in 2002 to look at needs of ministry in Church taking into account changes in society. The Commission stated that 'Christian Ministry is the ministry of the whole Church, the Body of Christ, not the sole responsibility and prerogative of those entering Holy Orders'.

At the Summit on Ministry (GS 2003) it was felt that the following areas should be prioritised:

- Training of clergy and laity.

- The recognising of the gifts and talents of laity.

- Strategic planning for the future.

In 2001, the Council for Mission (GS 2001) carried out a study of growing and innovative churches of different traditions with a view to presenting material on 'Patterns of Mission' to a future Synod. The Council believed that every parish in Ireland should have in place a method of presenting the gospel to, and catechising interested people. While the different forms of service in the Book of Common Prayer and the Sacraments fulfil this in part, the Council for Mission (GS2001) maintained that an increasing number of people in our society now have little or no first-hand hand experience or knowledge of the basics of the Christian Message. With this in mind, the Council urged Synod members of the church as a whole to take into consideration suitable resources for presenting the message. Much good work was being done through various courses presented to people as an introduction to the basics of the Christian faith.

Members of the Council for Mission had looked at the Alpha, Christianity Explored and Emmaus courses. They maintained that every outward looking organisation has documents to present their mission to the world. The Church, which invented the word mission, needed to fine tune its programmes to invite people to faith in Jesus Christ. It was envisaged that 'Patterns of Mission' would be available for distribution and discussion at a future synod, ideally in 2003.

The second part of the study concentrated on discovering and identifying patterns of church life which encouraged growth. When completing a study of an equal number of Church of Ireland parishes and other churches that were growing, the Council looked for identifiable characteristics in leadership, style, vision and methodology that promoted growth spiritually and numerically. They also did a review of other (new) churches to identify growth.

Their findings were categorised as follows:

Facilities: Buildings etc.

Fellowship: Good relationships – value members.

Focus: They knew what was important in their theological outlook and 'where they were going'.

Freedom: There was very little evidence of historical hierarchical structure.

Front Runners: Leadership was largely shared and visionary.

Family Concerns: The needs of the whole person were taken into account – educational, spiritual and social.

Underlying all the models studied and the council's analysis of them, there was the awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit giving life to people, communities and church structures.

As regards the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the CCR Report 2002 (GS 2002) highlighted that the ALPHA and other programmes were being used in many churches as significant tools for outreach and renewal. They also noted Outreach for Children. During 2001/2002, the work amongst children in the Church of Ireland Primary Schools flourished. The 'WHEELS' ministry toured with a travelling Road Show entitled 'Easter Extravaganza', which proved to be very popular. Holiday clubs abounded throughout the Diocese. There was a visit from Rev. Charles Irwin, the Mission Resource Person, who spoke in a challenging and thought provoking way to various groups throughout the Diocese.

A "Body, Mind and Spirit Festival' took place, where a Christian presence was established in conjunction with Christians of all backgrounds. Many people enjoyed the festival and returned the following year. Over the Christmas period that year, the ship LOGOS ll visited Cork. This ship brings the Good News of Jesus Christ, enabling churches to make use of the resources available on-board; including material from what they termed 'the largest floating book shop in the world.'

The Commission on Ministry (CoM/GS 2004), following on with the 'Patterns of Ministry' theme had done some follow up meetings and planned to do further ones in 2004. These were collaborative meetings and included lay people at different parishes.

Charles Irwin (Mission Resource Person) through the Council of Mission Report (CoM/GS 2004) commented that there were some good things in the life of the church. However, he also concluded that there were people who were spiritually hungry and looking for teaching. He challenged the Church of Ireland where he saw that it was confronted with dwindling congregations, aging profiles, joyless worship and members expressing no desire for growth. There were some areas lacking encouragement and

Charting a
Future with
Confidence

motivation for lay participation in ministry. He found that Mission was at the bottom of the agenda in parish, synod and central church meetings. His closing comments posed a vital question, "are we really serious about mission and learning from outsiders?"

The Most Reverend Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh, in his initiative for the future of the Church of Ireland called Long Term Church - 2034 Themes (AA 2034) has made the following points which he feels should be the priorities of the Church of Ireland in the areas of mission and ministry:

- To continue to be Anglican in worship and practice and to be a clearly identifiable and vibrant part of the worldwide Christian Church, involved energetically in mission.

- To be a coherent and meaningful structure that is well understood by those within and outside the Church.

- To be relevant to and visible in the community in all parts of Ireland, making a positive contribution that gives witness to the work of the church and its people.

- To be an obvious home for those who are seeking faith in an increasingly secular world.

- To have a specialist central support available for critical and innovative aspects of church mission and administrative work.

- To spend less on conservation and more on growth.

Many discussions, reports and committees over the years have looked at outreach and even today discussions are continuing on this subject to find ways that the church can fit into society in today's social and economic climate.

Standing Committee – RB Report (RB/GS 2001) was requested to study the positive role of the church in all aspects of the political, social and economic life of Ireland.

This was later followed by a further report from the Standing Committee in the 2003 Report (RB/GS 2003) called 'Church in Society' which covered many social issues in working groups including:

- Ecological and Environmental European Affairs Legislation and Political (NI) (ROI).

- Medical Evidence, Science & Technology Social Justice & Theological (NI) (ROI).

The Archbishop of Armagh (AA 2034 Themes) also included comments on the 'Church in Society' in his forecast for the church in 2034:

- To be a hands-on church with involvement with the deprived areas of Ireland and the world. (This was also covered in the Diocesan Strategy Group of 1994 (DSR 1994)).

- To have processes in place to support ministry and ministers, including those encountering difficulties, and to enable speedy re-allocation of resource where ministry requires re-vision.

The Diocesan Group 1994 (DSG 1994) also covered areas such as:

1 Parishes should continue to look outwards to the needs of the communities in which they are set. This is true today when parishes were at the forefront of helping communities during the recent flooding.

2 It recommended maintaining and extending good social relationships, which already exist in areas such as charities, sports and meetings between various church groups.

3 There should be greater participation in local and national government, trade unions etc.

4 We should be looking at opening our heritage to tourism, including churches and graveyards.

The 1974 Report (DWP 1974) mentioned the possibility of co-operation with the Cork Methodist Circuit. This has recently progressed further with the introduction of a full working relationship with the Methodist Church in Ireland.

(c) Ministry: The Role of the Bishop

What is the role of a bishop?

The Right Rev. R.A. Warke in his Presidential Address at the 1991 Diocesan Synod (DSG 1994) stated that the following can be seen as the role of the bishop:

- A unifying force in the area of worship, to share in Holy Communion with parishioners of the diocese and to see that clergy are equipped to lead worship in an appropriate manner.

- A representative of the Church of Ireland in the wider community, indicating that the Church of Ireland wants to be, and is, part of that community.

- A link between the diocese and the wider Church.

- A 'Pastor of the Pastors' as part of a joint ministry, providing clergy with support and bringing them together as a cohesive diocesan unit.

- A teacher, who should encourage others to learn about the church's attitude to everyday issues in the modern world and to promote the highest standards of Christian morality.

- A focus of unity within the diocese, drawing together parochial standards to create diocesan strength.

At the 2009 Diocesan Synod, the Bishop - the Right Rev. Dr Paul Colton - highlighted a report submitted to the General Synod as far back as 1970 called The Office and Work of a Bishop. It identified two distinct strands to the essential nature of the office and work of a bishop. The first is Episcope or pastoral care and oversight and the second is unity. In relation to oversight, this report includes 'the administration of the diocese through synods and councils and the exercising of shepherding and discipline over clergy and people as father-in-God'. While administration is an inevitable part of the episcopate it is set alongside other roles.

In 2013, the Bishop developed this further in his address at the Diocesan Synod and said that the description set out by the Lambeth Conference 1998 is one that appealed to him.

'It states that the bishop is:

a. a symbol of the Unity of the Church in its mission;

b. a teacher and defender of the faith;

c. a pastor of the pastors and of the laity;

d. an enabler in the preaching of the Word, and in the administration of the Sacraments;

e. a leader in mission & an initiator of outreach to the world surrounding the community of the faithful;

f. a shepherd who nurtures and cares for the flock of God;

g. a physician to whom are brought the wounds of society;

h. a voice of conscience with the society in which the local church is placed;

i. a prophet who proclaims the Justice of God in the context of the Gospel of loving redemption;

j. a head to the family in its wholeness, its misery and its joy. The bishop is the family's centre of life & love.'

Is this what bishops are doing today? For some there is the perception that they are bogged down with administrative matters which could be handled by other clergy or lay people and that they need to be liberated to prioritise the description as set out by the Lambeth Conference of 1998.

It is to this end that the Commission of Episcopal Ministry and Structures 2012 (CEMS2012) was established by a Statute of the General Synod to review this and other wider matters concerning the future of the Church of Ireland. (see later section on CEMS report). Their vision on the role of the bishop is – 'to lead the church – clergy – in living the Christian life, furthering the mission of the Church and building the Kingdom of God'.

3. Ordained, Lay and Part-Time Ministry

(a) Different types of Ministry

e.g. Team Ministry, Pioneer Ministry, Ordained Local Ministry etc.

The nature of the ordained ministry and how ministry in general is best delivered has been the subject of review in this Diocese (as well as throughout the Church of Ireland) over the decades.

The 1966 Report of the Committee for Parochial Reorganisation (PR 1966) states:

> *In common with the rest of Christendom, the Church of Ireland faces this challenge and, in addition, she must contend with the problems arising from her own peculiar position. We are a very small minority group, our population in the South is decreasing, there is a shortage of clergy and our financial resources are stretched to the limit. A clear understanding of our position is essential if we are to plan with confidence for the future.*

It then went on to state that:

> *The Committee considers that the Christian Ministry must be seen as a partnership between clergy and laity and between parish and parish. As a result of its findings it recommends that there are four areas in the United Dioceses where an association of parishes should be put into effect.*

It listed these as Cork City, the Bandon Valley, and two associations of parishes in North Cork, one centred on Mallow and the other on Fermoy. While the role of the laity is acknowledged in this report, it primarily focused on the issue of clerical 'manpower' and having new structures in some areas akin to 'Team Ministry' but did not refer to them as such. Throughout the rest of the Diocese it was recommended that traditional incumbencies remain but that Groups of Parishes should be merged into Unions of Parishes.

The 1974 Diocesan Report (DWP 1974) again focused on parochial units but was less radical in its recommendations. Here a base of approximately 500 parishioners was set as the standard minimum for a parochial unit to exist. However, it was acknowledged that there would be exceptions to this in remote rural locations. Part 1 of this report outlines its rationale and principles. In a section on 'Parish and Pastor' it states:

There is always a danger of seeing our parishes only as efficient social services, operating solely to keep our people together. We have also concluded that all the members of our church, particularly our clergy, are probably spending too much time and energy looking after 'plant'. If the clergy did not have to devote so much time to finance and the organising social functions then perhaps the problems of education in the Faith would not exist, since the clergy would be fully available for the job for which there were trained and ordained.

The 1989 Commission on Church Buildings Report (CCBR 1989) limited itself to buildings and made no recommendations as regards ministry and so is not relevant to this presentation.

The 1994 Diocesan Strategy Group (DSG 1994) made a number of proposals in terms of ministry. Section 3 Page 14(ii) states:

The city area should be recognised as unique and needs to be addressed separately in the form of a team ministry involving specially commissioned lay people and stipendiary clergy. This would cover services, visiting, school and college chaplaincies, a new industrial chaplain etc. Urgent assessment is needed to find the right approach.

The report further recommended the following to cover the whole of the Diocese:

a. That a new system of Parish Readers be encouraged.

b. The Bishop commission trained lay people to assist in visiting hospitals, schools, teaching etc.

c. Involve more lay involvement in the distribution of Holy Communion, e.g. to the sick and to the housebound.

Since this report there has been an increase in the number of Diocesan Readers and seven people have been trained as Lay Pastoral Assistants who are visiting not only the sick but those within the Diocese that are in need of spiritual need and comfort. Ministers of the Eucharist who are licenced sometimes assist the rector with the distribution of the Holy Communion when applicable.

Given this historic background and that the situation we face in Cork, Cloyne and Ross is not unique; the Church of Ireland has addressed the issue of ministry in a variety of ways in recent years. The General Synod Book of Reports, and within it the annual reports of The Commission on Ministry, provide information on this issue.

There has been an attempt to offer more flexibility in terms of the provision of ordained ministry. The rigid distinction between stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry has been broken and now it is possible for clergy to be deployed as part-time stipendiary ministers, receiving remuneration for an agreed number of sessions per week (up to a maximum of six) where they work in a parish, while also maintaining income from secular employment or their pension. At present in the Diocese, Youghal, as well as Cobh and Glanmire, Unions are being served very successfully in this way by the deployment of non-stipendiary clergy on contracts for service.

However, a challenge is looming. Given that in recent years all candidates for ordination have to be educated to Master's degree level, fewer people from these parts are applying to be trained for ministry. One wonders if the pool of clergy available for exclusively non-stipendiary ministry or part time stipendiary ministry will be very small in the future.

In the diocese of Down and Dromore, and in the diocese of Dublin, in recent years some attempts at pioneer ministry have emerged. This involves clergy being allowed to operate outside the parochial system or be chaplains to institutions. They do not have charge of a particular church building or geographical parish area. Examples of this include the appointment of a chaplain to the new 'Titanic Quarter' in Belfast and the emergence of the 'Icon Community' in Dublin. Parallel to this, church plants have

been established in St. Catherine's Church Dublin (CORE) and Holy Trinity Church in Rathmines which cater for targeted age groups and those seeking a more flexible style of worship.

(b) Ordained Local Ministry (OLM)

Within the Church of England, this exists in a number of dioceses. Here clergy emerge from within the parish community. Following a shorter training period, much of which takes place within their local context, they are ordained as deacons and subsequently as priests to provide liturgical and sacramental ministry exclusively to their home parish or group or within a rural deanery. As it has developed within the Church of England, OLM is not a replacement for traditional ordained ministry but can successfully augment it. The New Testament speaks of varieties of ministry including those that are locally based. OLM offers another way.

OLM can only operate in the context of a parish where collaborative ministry is already developing. Before a candidate can go forward to selection the parish must be accredited for OLM ministry. This has many strengths but it must be acknowledged that there are potential weaknesses too, where the supporting structures for OLM are not in place.

Within the Church of Ireland, this option will now open to candidates to explore with their bishops and Diocesan Director of Ordinands. At the most recent General Synod the House of Bishops showed leadership by issuing the following statement:

Communication from the House of Bishops, May 2017 – Ordained Local Ministry

Since the last session of the General Synod, the House of Bishops has been extremely mindful of the desire of the Synod, expressed by means of formal Resolution, that an appropriate form of Ordained Local Ministry should be developed among us. Last year, in the context of the Report of the Commission on Ministry, the Synod had the opportunity to discuss something of what such ministry would look like, and how fit persons would be duly called and prepared to serve in it. The mood of the synod in its discussion of this possible development was overwhelmingly positive. We would wish to express our appreciation of the work done both by the Commission, and the Director and staff of CITI, in assisting the synod in its consideration of this issue.

The bishops are satisfied that Ordained Local Ministry, rightly understood and cherished within the overall life of the church, would be a source of enrichment and strength in today's circumstances. As we are responsible for the actual Ordination of duly trained persons to serve in the historic threefold ministry which the Church of Ireland has received, it is our duty to ensure that this development is properly placed within the framework of catholic order. Necessary emphasis on the local must not obscure our understanding of the relationship of all ordained ministry to the whole Church.

The bishops wish to inform the Synod that it is now our intention so to advance matters that it will be possible to begin a programme of training for ordained local ministry in the autumn of 2018, with selection processes for suitable candidates taking place earlier next year. It is envisaged that selection will be undertaken at diocesan or regional level, with the benefit of additional external wisdom and at the ultimate discretion of the bishop. Training, which will need to take some appropriate account of the previous experience and knowledge of candidates, will be essentially delivered locally but in a manner that ensures consistency of content and standard. While those called and ordained in the context of OLM will of course be deacons and priests in the fullest catholic sense, they will be serving in a manifestation of ministry which we will regard very much as a distinct and lifelong vocation with its own integrity and character, lived out in its fullness at local level. Hence we emphasise that we do not envisage transfer from this ministry to any form of stipendiary ministry: were such a thing to occur it would require a fresh and full selection process at all–Ireland level and consequent substantial further training and formation.

There has been much preparation to do to make all this possible, particularly in the area of training. We are confident at this stage that Ordained Local Ministry will strengthen the mission of the Church and its ministry of Word and Sacrament in a wide variety of contexts. It will be something new for us all, and we will have much to learn from the very manner of its implementation over the coming years. It is always a basic task of the Church to offer prayers for vocations to ordained ministry and for those in training. We now pray in a particular way that in this matter we may have the gift of a sound judgement as we make this response to authentic and discerned local need within the church. We remember too those who may feel moved by the promptings of the Holy Spirit to serve God and his people in this distinctive context which has rich potential for our time.

4. Worship

This section complements and at times overlaps with the ministry section as it is difficult to categorise certain aspects of ministry and worship.

(a) Partnership

The report of 1966 (PR 1966) recommended an 'Association of Parishes' as a partnership between clergy and laity and between parish and parish. Details of analysis of the 'Associations' are covered under the section headed 'Groups/Unions and Boundaries'.

The chief reasons for advocating such associations were:

1   To break away from narrow parochialism and to make parishioners aware of their allegiance to the whole Church and not merely to their own parish.

2   To help create a real feeling of fellowship among the parishioners, each parish helping and receiving help from its neighbours.

3   To help overcome the loneliness and frustrations of a rector in an outlying parish and the hopelessness and depression of one with too much or too little to do, by providing a variety of interesting and challenging work. Clergy in an association of parishes would work together having regular spiritual fellowship and discussion on the day to day administration and pastoral care of their area.

4   To use to the best advantage the abilities of each priest and layman in as wide an area as possible. Too often the talents available in a parish that has a Christian Stewardship Scheme are unused through lack of opportunity.

5   To have variety in the taking of Services and preachers.

6   To avoid duplication of work within a given area, where existing parish boundaries ignore the natural community, giving rise to unnecessary and wasteful competition by laity and Clergy.

7   To co-ordinate the finances of the area, ensuring that money is spent to best possible advantage.

8   To ensure that our young people, living in an increasingly mobile society, are adequately catered for both spiritually and socially, and to see that a live active church is presented to them.

There is a great need for a better understanding of worship; meditation can lead to a fuller and deeper understanding of the sacramental life. There also appears to be a new awareness of the value of Bible Study: this was stated within the 1974 Report (DWP 1974).

The report also went on to state:

- Worship and prayers are closely inter-related. Ways must be found of involving the laity by devising patterns of worship so that all present may feel that they are fully participants.

- Opportunities should be offered to enable people to mature in their understanding and experience of prayer.

- When worship really means something, then the parish becomes an effective witness to the Church in the community.

The Group also composed and used the following prayer in their deliberations to assist them in formulating the full report:

'Grant, O Lord, through your Holy Spirit, a new vision of your glory, a new experience of your power, and a new consecration of your service; and enable us to be faithful to our Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ. AMEN.'

(b) Change

Growth means change. It is a principle of living, and it often disturbs us. The way in which we worship God and the way in which we talk about God are affected by the changing patterns of our lives and our thinking. Therefore, the church must also adapt to these changing patterns; and the doctrine of the church must be re-expressed to meet the requirements of these new situations.

It is very important in the church for the clergy and laity to keep up to date with developments in the practice and teaching of the Christian faith. To continue on the same old thing in the same old way is no longer good enough if they are to meet the needs of the day. This is a contentious issue with many parishes as many of the congregation are aging and are reluctant to change. The church has gone through many changes in its history and will have to constantly move with the times. The way in which Jesus Christ speaks of what he has done and does has to be expressed in a language and thought forms of the time in which we live. As in other living organisms; if there is no change there will be no growth, no renewal and no life. Therefore, a programme of continued education for all members of the church to keep them in touch with new thinking and to help them grow into mature Christians who can relate their faith to the problems of everyday life is necessary.

These points were also raised in the 1994 Report (DS 1994):

- The need to be flexible in worship. Several churches have informal evening services.

- Where possible serve coffee and tea after services. A warm welcome is always appreciated. (This is not always possible in the majority of the churches in the Diocese due to lack of services e.g. water, sanitation).

- The possibility of broadcast services not only for parishioners who are housebound but those who are/were unable to attend the service.

- The use of media presentations.

- Encouragement, advice and assistance in various aspects of worship.

- Restricting, where possible, services to two per Sunday, thus reducing the constraints of clergy having to restrict their services to get to the next church service.

- Arrange to have two elected parishioners who would be responsible for welcoming people, in particular visitors and making them welcome.

- The arrangement of Diocesan workshops on such aspects as welcoming, reading, voice projection, media presentations etc.

- The support and arranging of worship events within the Diocese.

- The Book of Common Prayer, the Commandments and traditional forms and practices must continue to play their part in the pattern of worship.

(c) Chaplaincies

The 1966 Report (PR 1966) made the following statements:

> *There are a large number of chaplaincies attached to hospitals, general, psychiatric nursing homes, old people homes, schools, etc. in the City and suburbs of Cork but very few in the country. In almost all cases the rights of appointment rest with the Bishop.*

> *Visiting the sick is a most important part of a clergyman's work and the committee considers that it is essential for as many clergymen as possible to have opportunity for this work as well as ensuring that ample time is available for each patient to benefit from these visits. This work is becoming more and more varied and consequently requires an ever greater degree of specialization.*

> *It has been customary for almost all chaplaincies to be held by the clergy of the City parishes. On the formation of one City parish the committee recommends that the chaplaincies be held by the rector of Cork or that he should apportion these chaplaincies among the other City clergy as well as the rectors of the surrounding country parishes. The committee is of the opinion that as many clergy as possible should have opportunities for acting as chaplains. Mention has been made in the reports on unions where it is considered feasible for the appointment as a chaplain to a City hospital.*

> *The committee is not satisfied with the existing arrangements for the care of seamen. It is realized that appointments as Honorary Chaplains to the Missions to Seamen are made by this Mission but the committee recommends that the Mission be consulted so that the rectors of all parishes to which merchant ships call should automatically be appointed 'Mission to Seamen' (now Mission to Seafarers) chaplains and that this work be definitely administered by the rector rather than in the present rather haphazard fashion. By experience, perseverance and assistance from the Mission, clergy who at present feel ill equipped for this work can be greatly helped to do this important work in an efficient manner. Where it is considered that a chaplain is required, mention is made in the reports on the unions.*

This is an area of worship that has grown since this report (PR 1966) was presented and today we have a full-time hospital chaplain in Cork City as well as two part-time chaplains as well as lay volunteer chaplains. There are full-time chaplains in Ashton School (lay) and in Bandon Grammar School (ordained). In addition, all hospitals and nursing homes in the Diocese have chaplaincy cover being provided by local clergy and specifically trained and commissioned lay chaplains.

(d) Children and Young People

In the 1966 report (PR 1966) very little mention is made as regards children and youth other than local clergy going into schools and the teaching in the schools under Church of Ireland patronage. However, today there is a strong youth council (Cork, Cloyne and Ross Youth Council – CDYC) set up by the Diocese to look after youth matters. There is a whole time youth officer in the Diocese.

Some parishes have Sunday schools, children's church, children's services, 'Messy Church', summer holiday bible clubs and uniformed organisations, all of which help to educate the children to understand and live a Christian life in today's world.

5. Episcopal Ministry and Structures

As mentioned previously, a Commission was established in 2012 by Statute. Its remit was to prepare proposals for the General Synod on appropriate arrangements for episcopal ministry and structures for the Church of Ireland. Amongst the many issues to be considered are Diocesan structures and geographical boundaries.

It followed on from previous reviews:

- 1970 Work and office of a bishop.

- 1970 Establishing episcopal needs.

- 1976 Changes recommended.

- 1998 Report on Episcopal Needs -this report included:

    > reviewing the episcopal colleges in Scotland and Wales.

    > governance of the Church of Ireland

The Commission decided that 'The Mission of the Church shall be the focus of its work, enabling the bishops of the Church of Ireland to lead the church in mission into the 21st Century'

On starting its work, it set out to find:

- A clear vision for the role and function of bishops.

- Structures that are suitable for the current situation.

- Resources and support that they require.

- A workable and effective selection of process.

The key areas under consideration were:

- Key functions and roles of bishops.

- Models of episcopacy.

- Desirable skills and appropriate training.

- Selection of bishops including the role of the electoral colleges.

- Resources needed to support episcopacy.

- Funding for episcopal ministry.

- Diocesan structures and boundaries.

- Provincial structures and roles of archbishops (Armagh and Dublin).

The Commission believed that any changes proposed should be visionary and principled and based on sound evidence. Each diocese within the Church of Ireland received a discussion document outlining some proposals regarding diocesan boundaries.

The vision was to provide an episcopacy that will allow the Church of Ireland to fulfil its mission in the 21st Century:

- By enabling bishops to lead the church – clergy and laity – in living the Christian life, furthering the mission of the Church and building the Kingdom of God.

- By learning from our history, the experience of other churches and the expertise of leaders and directors in other roles and adapting those lessons to benefit episcopal ministry.

- By providing episcopal structures that are authoritative, accountable, supportive and encouraging; and flexible enough to meet present needs and provide for evolution in our understanding of ministry and mission.

- By valuing the richness of our inheritance as a national and Anglican church and at the same time recognising current realities in our ecumenical, political, cultural, social and economic life.

It states that the arrangements in relation to diocesan structures and boundaries should:

- Provide flexibility for future shapes of mission and ministry.

- Recognise that different structures may be appropriate in different places.

- Acknowledge that a range of gifts, skills, expertise and experience and significant commitment of time and energy are required to support the worshipping and functioning life of a diocese.

- Aim towards providing appropriate representation for each diocese in decision-making by central church bodies.

- Give due regard to historic diocesan identities and their ecumenical significance.

- Reflect established, cohesive communities and current centres of worship, mission and population.

- Address the implications of a multiplicity of cathedrals.

- Present an overall sustainable financial model taking account of reasonable calls on parishioners, diocese and central church funds.

- Offer the incumbent bishop a sustainable context for their episcopal ministry.

- Examine and offer ways of resolving the consequences of any proposals for change.

In the working guidelines, a diocese should have a minimum of 15,000 Church of Ireland members in its area and a minimum of 30 cures.

Other points raised by the Commission with brief explanations were:

- Reducing bishops' responsibilities.

  > The reduction in administrative work.

  > The reallocation, delegation and sharing of tasks.

  > Changes to the patronage of schools

- Can a bishop exercise another role as well as an episcopal role?

- How bishops are to be elected.

  > Episcopal Electoral College

  > including setting up a Discernment Committee.

- Suffragan (or assistant or auxiliary or area) bishops.

This Commission met with representatives from each diocese within the Church of Ireland and met with members of the Diocesan Council of Cork, Cloyne and Ross in December 2015. Their proposals were circulated to all members of the General Synod for consideration at the Synod in May 2016.

While the Commission withdrew its report on diocesan boundaries at the General Synod in 2016, its work in the areas of training and ministerial development of bishops, funding and resourcing the episcopate as well as making modifications to the process of electing bishops were received favourably.

6. Groups/Unions and Boundaries

(a) Introduction

This is probably one of the areas that has caused the most volatile response from parishioners over the years and today is a very moot point. Very few people, the elderly in particular, want to be moved into a new union or see some of the churches in their union closed. This atmosphere is what all the committees have had to face and to try and make people aware that the Church is not the building.

(b) The 1960s

The first part of the 1966 report (PR 1966) deals with the reorganization of the parishes and the clergy who serve them. It was presented because the conditions prevailing throughout these United Dioceses at that time made it essential to deal with this aspect of the problem at the earliest possible moment.

A questionnaire was sent to each rector and members of the committee met every rector and not less than 5 selected representatives of every group and union. They also met on separate occasions, groups of people under the age of 26 and the senior forms of the four secondary schools in the Dioceses. A vast amount of information was obtained and it was possible to obtain a picture of the church in the Diocese, its condition at that time and its future prospects, as well as an insight into the way the people – old and young – were thinking. On this picture the committee based its recommendations.

The committee viewed the Diocese as a unit, but also considered each parish individually, and tried to understand the problems peculiar to each situation so that the recommendations for each particular parish would enable it to make its contribution to the life of the whole church. As a result of its findings it recommended that there were four areas in the United Dioceses where an association of parishes should be put into effect. The four areas chosen were different in their structure and requirements. In the city the existing boundaries were artificial and there was no reason why they should be kept:

> The natural community is the whole urban area. In the City parishes there is considerable duplication of work and therefore a waste of manpower. For example, every rector is expected to, and therefore does, attend almost every sale of work or bazaar held in the City. There is excessive provision of Sunday Services for the 2,343 parishioners of the area. There is 1 service on Sunday for every 104 parishioners with an average attendance of 51. There is an average of 22.5 Services per Sunday in the City.

This waste of manpower is preventing the church in the City from working effectively. The formation of an association of parishes would allow a far greater degree of specialization, especially in regard to hospital visiting, preparation for confirmation, marriage guidance, and youth work. Due to the pressures of present day living more and more people are undergoing treatment at Psychiatric Hospitals. The pastoral care of these persons is extremely important and requires specialized training for it has been found that the clergyman is complementary to the doctor in the rehabilitation of these patients.

It was envisaged that the participating clergy would meet on Monday of each week for the celebration of Holy Communion followed by a meeting to plan the week's work e.g. taking of Services, visiting hospitals and private houses, teaching in the schools, etc.

The three country areas chosen for the formation of an association of parishes differed chiefly in their population distribution, two being sparsely populated, but each proposed association had natural boundaries and a natural centre.

Each association of parishes would be formed in the following manner:

The clergy of the parishes concerned would firstly join together in voluntary association. Initially the rector of the parish from which the area derives its name e.g. in the case of Cork – the Dean – would automatically be appointed leader. As each parish, other than the centrally named parish became vacant, the leader of the association would be the instituted rector, until there was one rector for the whole area. The area would finally be staffed by one rector and the recommended number of clergy. In assessing the stipends to be paid in an association, the committee recommended that the clergy be regarded as rectors and paid accordingly, except in the case of the leader who should be paid a higher stipend and a figure of 10% in excess of the other clergy in the association was suggested. In the City of Cork Parish, where there was to be a curate assistant, he should be paid a stipend suitable to his position.

The committee was aware that there may be a number of constitutional difficulties in the formation of an Association of Parishes, particularly in regard to "rector's rights of freehold" but considered that the scheme was so worthwhile and necessary that these difficulties must be surmounted.

The ecclesiastical name would be used for the new union and the church selected would be a more natural ecclesiastical centre.

The four unions recommended were:

1   City of Cork Parish.

2   The Mid West.

3   Bandon Valley Association of Parishes.

4   North Cork.

A report was done on each of the associations covering church buildings, schools, halls and clergy on how the union would work. The committee also proposed that consideration should be given to replacing all groups to unions.

(c) The 1970s

Another report (DWP 1974) also looked at boundaries and under section 'General Principles (b) Centres' made the following remarks:

> *'Where possible, the work of the church should hinge on urban centres. There are two reasons for this:*
>
> *1   To meet in the best possible way, the needs of our people by concentrating on the commercial centre towards which people tend to move.*
>
> *2   To be the Church of Ireland for the whole community, by having a presence at the centre of the community.'*

At the same time, it recognised that certain rural communities were complete in themselves and should be re-inspected as such. This appears to contradict the main theme of the 1966 report in that the church should concentrate its main work in urban centres and not the whole Diocese.

The report also recognised that where any changes were proposed, particularly in the largest units/parishes they should have increased representation on the select vestry and to this end proposed that a Bill be brought to Synod to recommend that the number of elected members of a select vestry be increased to a possible maximum of 20, depending on the size of the unit concerned.

It also recommended that new parochial units should be called a 'Union' rather than a unit; and the movement of some parishes within the different Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

(d) More Recent Times

The 1994 Report (DSG 1994) made no mention of groups/unions of parishes or boundaries.

The Commission on Episcopal Ministry and Structures 2012 (CEMS 2012) covered the changing of boundaries within the Church of Ireland as a whole and, if adopted, would have had a significant effect on our existing parish boundaries. The proposed boundary changes and the reasons for these have been covered in an earlier section 'Episcopal Ministry and Structures'.

7. Church Buildings

(a) Introduction

To many people, like it or not, 'the Church is the building', and to this end there is very strong opposition to any changes to buildings, in particular to closure.

Following disestablishment in 1870, the Church of Ireland became responsible for its own governance and entered into a programme of church building and in all 700 buildings were built. Many of these, which had no mains infrastructure or sanitation, are still used today.

All of the reports mentioned in some way or another that church buildings need to be looked at in conjunction with where the church should be and whether there are too many buildings for the current congregations.

(b) The 1960s

The 1966 Report (PR 1966) brought into question the holding of services on alternate Sundays in one union of parishes as undesirable for the following reasons:

- Tended to preserve narrow parochialism.

- To cause unnecessary expense in the maintenance of church fabric.

- Needless complications to both parishioners and visitors.

- They encouraged attendance at services on every second Sunday rather than every Sunday.

With these points in mind the report recommended that there should be consolidation into one church and closure of the others.

It also wanted to avoid creating unions with three churches but, at the same time sought to reduce the number of unions to three churches where this was not possible.

A schedule of the unions in the Diocese was produced showing churches, schools, halls and rectories in a union and the recommended changes for the new union was attached to the report.

Large numbers of churches in unions caused unnecessary hardship to clergy and almost inevitably led to services being rushed. Afternoon and evening services, after making many enquiries were neither desired nor practicable as an alternative to Sunday morning services.

The report then went through each union of parishes within an association giving the number of churches, clergy, schools and parishioners and how the union would work within the scope of the proposals within the report.

(c) The 1970s

The Diocesan Working Party 1974 (DWP 1974) in Part 11 of its report looked at a plan for parochial units and how this could be achieved within the scope of their brief and how this would reflect on church buildings etc. It recommended, as previously mentioned, the movement of one or two parishes to other dioceses within the whole Diocese of Cork, Cloyne & Ross.

(d) The 1980s and 1990s

The major report of recent times that upset a lot of people was that of the Commission on Church Buildings, June 14th 1989 (CCB 1989), this report was very intensive and recommended the closure of 20 churches within the whole Diocese.

The Cork, Cloyne and Ross Diocesan Church Buildings Review Committee (CCRDCBR 1990) was established by a resolution of the Diocesan Synod on 8th October 1990. This was as a result of the adverse reaction by many parishes to the findings of the Commission on Church Buildings as expressed in its Report dated June 14, 1989, following its visit to the Diocese. The Committee wrote to all select vestries asking for written submissions and offered to receive deputations from select vestries.

Seventeen out of twenty-four parishes replied and five of these asked to meet the Review Committee. The general opinion of the majority who replied was anger with, as they saw it, 'higher church authorities' for lack of consultation with grassroots members of parishes before final decisions were made.

Apart from the pain of the actual verdict of the Commission, the situation had been exacerbated by five additional factors:

1   The Commission's work did not take place within the context of a carefully thought out Diocesan strategy.

2   The procedures of the Commission showed a number of shortcomings.

3   In some cases, there had been inadequate preparation at local level for the visit of Commission.

4   In one instance, there was acrimony caused by major discrepancy in stated figures for average church attendance.

5   The fact that Diocesan Council chose not to circulate preliminary findings of Commission created suspicion. This was particularly true in one union of parishes.

The logic behind many of the recommendations might have been clearer had they been made in the context of a clearly stated agreed strategy and developed within the Diocese before the Commission came.

The Review Committee made these recommendations:

A   *Monkstown (St John's): Although the Committee could not reverse the decision of the Commission it was pointed out that a number of factors had emerged since the Commission had met and it was clear that the parochial situation was in a state of transition – increase in population due to housing developments and insufficient seating capacity in St Mary's Carrigaline for parishioners of that Union. The date for closure was to be a decision for the Bishop (when he/she sees fit).*

B   *A Diocesan Strategy still needs to be developed in stages: -*

a   *Stage 1: a special meeting of Diocesan Synod for general discussion.*

b   *Stage 2: Appointment by Diocesan Synod of a Diocesan Strategy Committee to view future work of the Diocese under the headings of Church Community, Ministry and Specialist Ministries.*

    c   *Stage 3: Involvement of parishioners in this task by meetings with the Strategy Committee
at regular intervals.*

    d   *These stages will take time but must be done.*

(e) The Present Situation

According to the Archbishop of Armagh, the Church of Ireland has to 'resolve the heritage issues of surplus properties' (AA 2034 Themes) so it is not only our Diocese that has to resolve these problems.

Many of our churches do not come up to modern day standards and to bring them up to these standards would be unviable in some circumstances. This, coupled with the fact that many of the churches are listed buildings, creates a further problem as they cannot be disposed of without great difficulty.

Other factors that must be addressed are:

- In the past when Church of Ireland buildings have been available for sale there have been many restrictive covenants placed within the sale, conditions that have a detrimental effect on the sale, or in some circumstance non-sale.

- When the Church of Ireland building has been sold, if a problem arises concerning the building, even though the church no longer owns the building, the Diocese is contacted and complaints made.

- A particular question centres on whether plaques and other memorials on walls should be removed before they are sold, and, if removed, where should they be put?

- Changing attitudes of today could mean that there may be less resistance to the closure of some further churches; although it has to be carefully thought through and managed by all concerned.

Finance

(a) The Past

In 1966 the Parochial Reorganisation (PR 1966) Report noted that financial resources were 'stretched to the limit' and that one of the chief objectives of forming Associations of Parishes was 'to co-ordinate the finances of the area, ensuring that money is spent to best possible advantage'.

In the section General Principles - Clerical 'Manpower' - the 1974 report (DWP 1974) mentions lack of finance as a main factor in reducing the number of clerical staff within the Diocese. However, it also went on to state that most of the parishes reviewed felt 'they did not have a financial problem'. This was due to the fact that most of the church members were unaware of the real financial situation in the Diocese. In the majority of cases, a parish paid less in assessment than it was costing the Diocese to run the parish. Therefore, the Diocese had to seek financial support, in the form of a grant towards stipends, from the Representative Church Body (RCB) every year. The RCB could not guarantee that the grants would continue at their present level.

In its report (DSG 1994), after feedback from parishes, the Diocesan Strategy Group indicated that there should be a business-like approach to finance by select vestries. This coupled with proper communication with parishioners would have a more positive influence on parochial giving. It recommended giving regular information to parishioners advising them of the financial position and how the money was being spent.

It also made the following observations:

- Some parishes found the Christian Stewardship system to be of benefit whilst others were less enthusiastic about the system.

- There was a lack of awareness of the structures of Diocesan financing and a need for information on Diocesan structures. Area meetings should be arranged with the Diocesan Treasurers giving details and information on the structure and financing of the Diocese.

- The report of the Diocesan Synod contains useful financial information and should be made available to a wider audience and should be sent to all select vestries.

- It was suggested that the balance sheets and other financial information be made easier for lay people to understand and maybe use visual aids and other media to assist them.

(b) The Present

Many of the points raised above are still just as relevant today. People frequently complain about the finances of the Diocese but are unaware of how the money is raised and used. Much has been done in recent years to address these issues, but clearly more needs to be done.

For example. the Finance Committee of the Diocesan Council has produced a leaflet in recent years called 'Understanding our Diocesan Finances'. This explanatory document sets out details on numerous areas such as:

What is the money for?

- To provide for the ministry and mission of the Church in this area.

- To assist with the cost of our lay church workers.

- National commitments.

What is the Fair Share?

- The cost of a parish having ministry.

Why and how is Fair Share calculated?

- What costs what?
    - > Ministry and Mission.
    - > Lay employees.
    - > Administration costs.
    - > Insurance and professional fees.
    - > Conferences and synods

Who pays for what?

- > People in the parish.
- > Other partner institutions.
- > Diocesan investments.

Who decides the costs?

- The Representative Church Body
- The General Synod
- Diocesan Council

What is the Tax Relief Scheme?

- Details about how the parishes and the Diocese benefit from it.

What is Christian Stewardship?

- Details of how the system works.

The leaflet was sent to all chairpersons of select vestries who were asked to give a copy to each member of the select vestry in their parish and to also give a copy to anyone else who asks about 'Fair Share.'

Some unions indicate that they are experiencing difficulty in raising the monies required to finance the union of parishes, not only the 'Fair Share' but general running costs of the union e.g. building repairs, heat, light and insurance to name a few.

That said, in recent years, a new system of annual budget in the Diocese, together with periodic communication with parishes has resulted in a current situation which is positive and, thanks to the immense generosity of voluntary giving within the parishes, most parishes are up-to-date with their financial obligations and commitments.

An enduring problem is that there are many churches within unions that maintain their own bank account(s) and the money does not go to the general union fund. This causes problems when large items have to be paid from the general fund. All monies received and collected, (other than specific bequests/donations) should go into one bank account and all bills relating to the union, including the Fair Share, should be paid from this account. This would give greater control of what monies were available and what was being paid out. It would make finances much less complicated, be easier for lay people to understand and make producing accounts and forecasts much more straightforward. It would also reduce the cost of accountancy fees as only one set of accounts would be prepared instead of numerous.

If people want to know various costs or receipts for a specific church, then this could be analysed within the accounts. It may be difficult to breakdown this barrier in some parishes as attitudes such as; "we have always done it this way" or "it's our money and we are going to keep it" are still very strong. The issue of education remains a constant challenge.

8. Conclusion

On reading the reports it has become clear that the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross has moved forward much faster than a lot of other dioceses within the Church of Ireland, in areas such as:

- Chaplaincy

- Youth work

- Finance and administration

- Parochial reorganization and the formation of unions of parishes.

In other areas we are experiencing the same problems that are faced by other dioceses:

- Dwindling congregations in some places.

- Ageing congregations.

- Changing attitudes towards Church.

- Current social and economic problems.

- The modern-day lifestyle.

These problems have always been around but the 1966 report (PR 1966) was the first major work highlighting these trends and how to deal with them. It recommended a total restructuring of the units (now unions) within the Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross to be known as an 'Association of Parishes', how worship/ministry could be further improved by rector's care and reducing their workload, reducing duplication within the Diocese and the co-ordinating of finances within the parishes.

Two other recommendations were the reduction of each parish/union to no more than three churches where possible, doing away with alternate Sunday services and improving chaplaincy provision, particularly in the inner city areas.

This report was followed eight years later by the Diocesan Working Party 1974 (DWP 1974) which was in two parts; the first part covering structures pertaining to ministry, worship and the education of parishioners as well as the distribution of the workload by rectors. The second part concentrated on a plan for 'Parochial Units' and then listed all the units/parishes within the Diocese with a recommendation of the movement of two units to other units. This was, like the 1966 report (PR 1966), very comprehensive in its ideas of union boundaries and structures.

The question of building closures was covered mainly by the Commission on Church Buildings 1989 (CCB 1989) which recommended the closure of many churches but this report upset a lot of people and to this end the Diocesan Council commissioned its own report in 1990 (CCRDCBR 1990) to challenge the Commission's proposals. The outcome was that some churches were closed, some re-opened and others given a stay of execution until further investigations had been made.

It was only four years later that a further report (DSG 1994) commissioned by the Diocesan Council, covered a vast range of ancillary questions to do with all aspects of church life and to create a vision of listening and planning within the Diocese.

This report covered many points covered in the previous reports with the additional main topics of:

- Church membership.

- Interchurch relations.

- Structures within the Diocese.

Whilst the final proposals of the Commission on Episcopal Ministry and Structures 2012 (CEMS 2012) in relation to diocesan boundaries were never tabled at General Synod, any re-organisation in the future may have a significant effect on our Diocese, as well as having financial implications and an impact on the role of our Bishop.

The Church of Ireland and in particular the Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross needs to be constantly evolving to keep up to date with current modern day trends and ideas and changing with these trends within the structure of the Anglican framework.

Over the last fifty years there have been various reports all covering fundamentally the same points and whilst some of these points have been addressed to various degrees, the same basic challenges still prevail. These are:

- Why do some new churches appear to be thriving whilst the Church of Ireland is struggling?

- Do we have too many churches?

- Can these buildings be put to other uses?

- How do we dispose of surplus church buildings in an appropriate way which respects their history while at the same time allowing them to continue to serve the community in new ways?

- How are clergy liberated to focus on the core tasks of ministry and equipping the laity, while at the same time addressing the increased demands placed upon them in a world where higher standards of compliance are the norm?

Recently the Diocese has been seen as a support for two communities in their time of distress. The flooding in Bandon and Midleton recently has shown the communities what the Diocese can do for them; in particular, the Bishop, clergy and members of the Church of Ireland that have rallied to bring not only practical help in their times of need but spiritual help also.

The reports have highlighted the main areas where there are challenges; some have, or are in the process of being addressed, but others have stalled and progress needs to be reviewed in these areas, particularly if we are to be seen as a fully encompassing diocese that is part of the community, that is financially sound and gives moral and spiritual support to all in parish communities that are welcoming, warm and give a feeling of belonging and live out Gospel values in the Ireland of today.

9. Toolkit Questions for Discussion

Taking into account this overview of previous work done in the Diocese and the impetus of deliberations nationally within the Church of Ireland:

1   What, from previous reports, has worked and what has not worked?

2   What, from previous reports and work done in the Diocese, have we lost sight of that ought to be revisited?

Chapter 4

Report of Group III

The Current Situation in the Diocese

'To endeavour to assess what the current situation actually is in the Diocese, other than based on anecdote or the most vocal'

Executive Summary

This group was tasked with assessing the current situation in unions/groups of parishes and sector ministries in the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Information was gathered from three key sources: a questionnaire undertaken by representatives of all parishes, meeting with representatives of all parishes and a submission from clergy involved in sector ministries.

The statistics gathered from the questionnaires largely focussed on church membership, attendance, satisfaction with worship, and an indication as to the levels of confidence for the future. The majority of those who undertook the questionnaires and attended the meetings were life-long members of the Church of Ireland and were regular churchgoers. Satisfaction levels with worship style, music and spiritual needs being met through worship were high, as were perceptions of how welcoming respondents' local churches are.

The meetings with representatives of all parishes yielded much information about their current situations under the headings of: Worship, Outreach, Strengths, Challenges, Facilities and Finance. Discussions on worship largely confirmed the results of the questionnaire although there were some suggestions about making worship more accessible to younger people.

Information gathered under the headings of Outreach and Strengths provided much more detail about what parishes see as key aspects of their life and witness, among them parish organisations (e.g. Mothers' Union), children's/young people's activities, parishioners being active in the 'wider community' and a sense of community or belonging being cited as being of most importance.

The most common expressions of challenges were those of declining numbers, ageing congregations and the difficulty in attracting younger members.

Opinions expressed about church buildings under the Facilities heading showed a surprising level of satisfaction with church buildings with most being described as 'adequate' although there were common concerns about the provision of better heating, seating, disabled access and ancillary facilities such as kitchens and toilets.

Discussions on Finance showed that there continues to be a lot of ignorance of and misunderstanding of the Fair Share financial scheme and that the ability to fund parishes is one of the key concerns for the future.

The paper submitted by hospital chaplains spoke of the relative freedom of sector ministry in that it is not constrained by the parochial system. As such it is a ministry of presence and is where the caring and healing work of the Church can be seen most acutely day-to-day. It is often a 'ministry of presence' with churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike and by its very nature brings different demands on those carrying it out.

The information gathered for this report demonstrates the need for strategic financial and resource planning for the future, more investment in ministry to and among younger people, a new diocesan communications strategy and significant research in engaging with a fast-changing society which still calls on the church for rites of passage and pastoral care from time to time.

Charting a
Future with
Confidence

1. Aim & Methodology

'To endeavour to assess what the current situation actually is in the Diocese, other than based on anecdote or the most vocal.'

Charting a Future with Confidence

The United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross launched '***Charting a Future with Confidence***' in October/ November 2014. Since then, the Council of Charting a Future with Confidence has met and four working groups were established.

Our working group was tasked to assess what the current situation actually is in the Diocese, other than based on anecdote or the most vocal. As part of our work, our group members visited every Union/Group of Parishes in the Dioceses. Open meetings, to which all in the Union/Group were invited, were arranged by each Incumbent/Priest in Charge.

The main aim of the visits was to gather information and listen. This took the form of a short questionnaire, which was completed by those attending the meetings. There was also an opportunity for our group members to listen to the views of those present in relation to matters of concern in the Dioceses.

It was hoped that as many parishioners as possible would try and attend the meeting in their Union/Group of Parishes. This allowed our group gather as much information as possible about the current situation in the Dioceses.

The Survey was completed by 715 parishioners between April 2015 and February 2017.

2. Unions/Groups Surveyed

Below is a list of the Unions / Group of Parishes in the Dioceses that undertook the surveys and meetings;

Abbeystrewry Union	Cork ~ St. Fin Barre's Cathedral	Kinneigh Union
Ballydehob Union	Douglas Union with Frankfield	Kinsale Union
Bandon Union	Fanlobbus Union	Mallow Union
Carrigaline Union	Fermoy Union	Moviddy Union
Carrigrohane Union	Kilgariffe Union	Ross Union
Cloyne Union	Kilmocomogue Union	Templebreedy Group
Cobh & Glanmire Union	Kilmoe Union	Youghal Union
Cork ~ St. Anne's, Shandon		

3. Collated Findings

A summary of all returned data from the completed questionnaires across the Diocese:

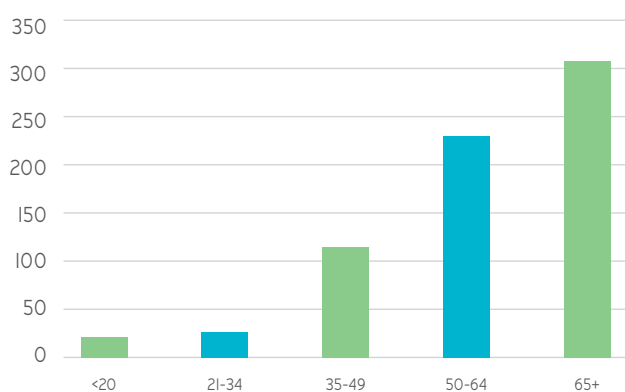*Total number of respondents*

715

Demographics

Male:	297
Female:	418
Total	715

Male Female

Age Category of Respondents
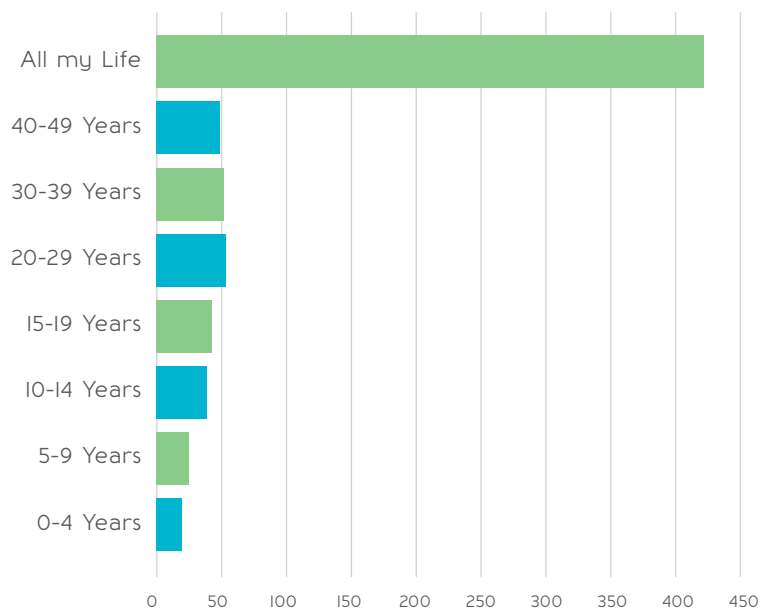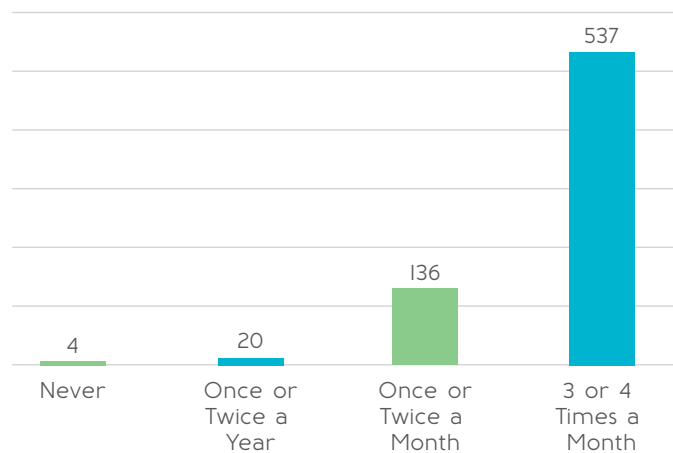
77% of respondents were 50 years and over.

Age Category

Membership, Attendance and Participation

The majority of respondents were life-long members of the Church of Ireland, regular churchgoers and involved in the life of their parishes.
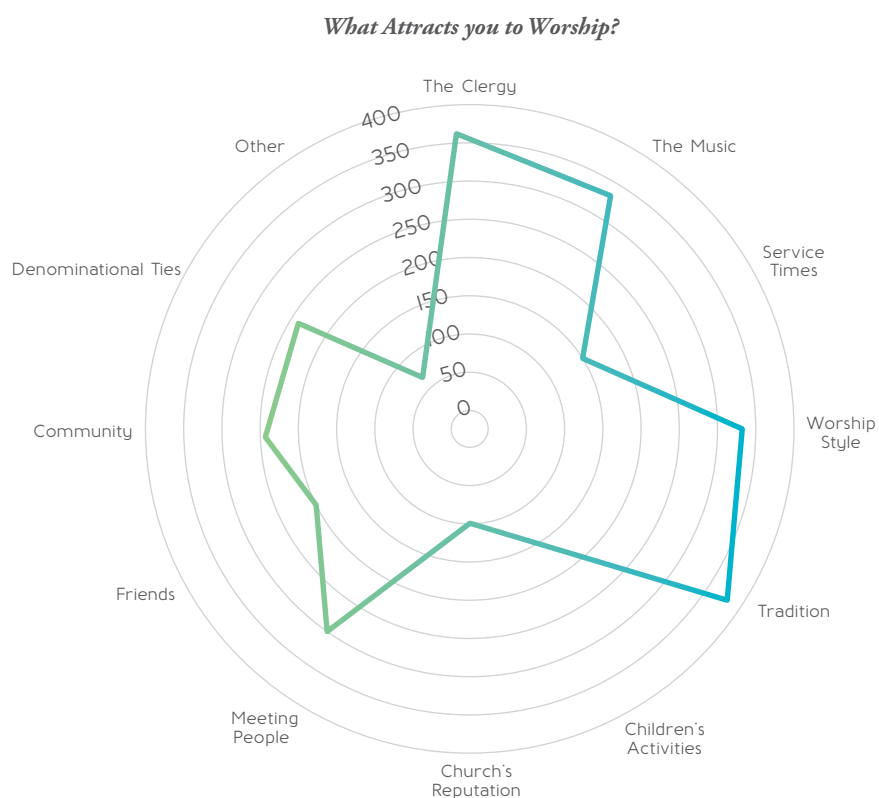
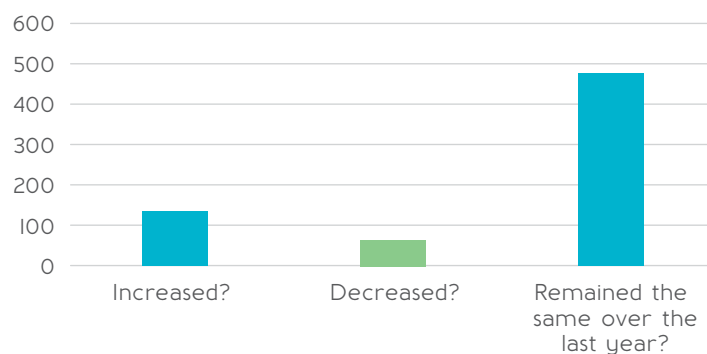*Membership of Church of Ireland*

Church Attendance - Past Year

Attitudes to Worship

Tradition, the clergy and worship style were the top three attractions to worship.
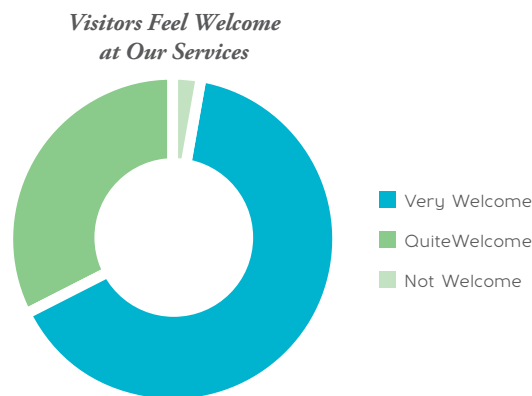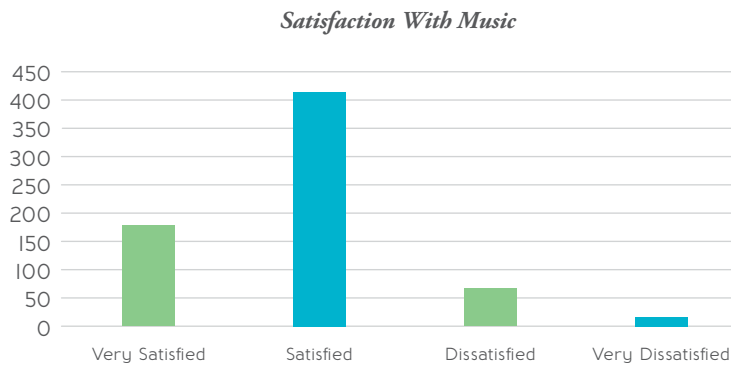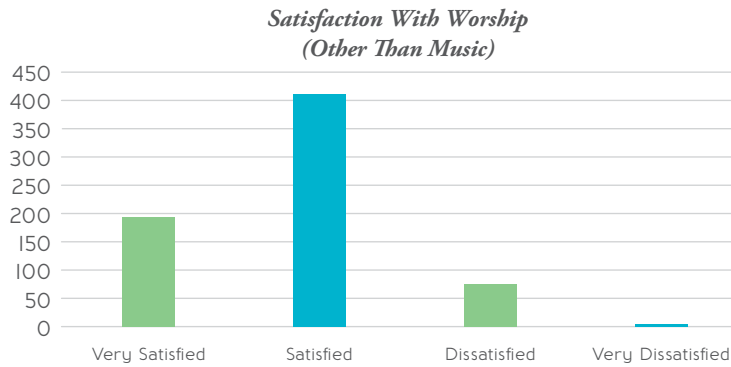
What Attracts you to Worship?

**Involvement With Your Church - Past Year**

Satisfaction with Worship

There was a high level of overall satisfaction with the worship being offered in parishes alongside a high satisfaction rating for music in worship, the extent to which worship is meeting people's spiritual needs and the welcome received by those attending. Further analysis of attitudes to worship arose out of the meetings with parishes and is presented in Section 4. A. below.

**Satisfaction With Worship
(Other Than Music)**

Satisfaction With Music

**Visitors Feel Welcome
at Our Services**

- Very Welcome
- QuiteWelcome
- Not Welcome

Sense of Excitement for the Church's Future

46% of respondents who answered this question disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were excited about the church's future. 31% either agreed or strongly agreed. 19% had no opinion.

Sense of Excitement for Church's Future
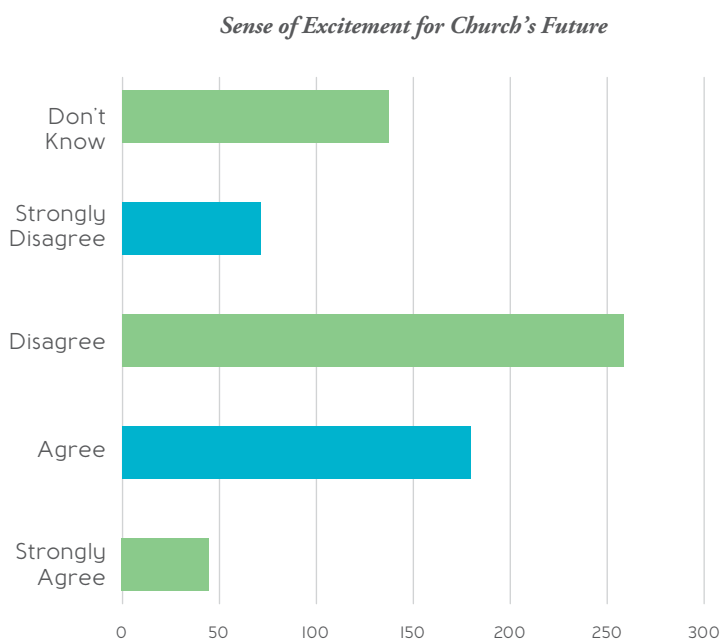
4. Analysis of Meetings with Parishes

(a) Findings

Summaries of the findings of both the surveys and meetings of representatives of the parishes were written by individual members of the group. These and the statistical data from each parish's surveys are too substantial to publish separately and in full in this report but can be made available to the Diocesan Council if required. For the purposes of this report the summaries of further information beyond the questionnaire, gathered in discussions with those present at the meetings in each parish, are collated below under the headings of Worship, Outreach, Strengths, Challenges, Facilities and Finance.

The numbers listed below refer to the number of parish groups who responded under the various headings.

(b) Worship

Parishioners were asked about their general attitude to the worship provided in their parish, the styles of worship and the music used at services.

There was widespread general satisfaction with the worship being provided in parishes. This may be due to the fact that most of those surveyed were regular churchgoers. Where there were some mixed views, there were expressions of interest in exploring different styles of worship that might especially speak to younger people.

Representatives of most parishes expressed positive feelings about the music used in worship with a small number seeking either different kinds of music or the provision of better trained musicians.

| Rating of Worship			
Models of the Church	General Satisfaction	Worship Style	Music
Positive	20	16	19
Mixed	2	6	3

Rating of Worship
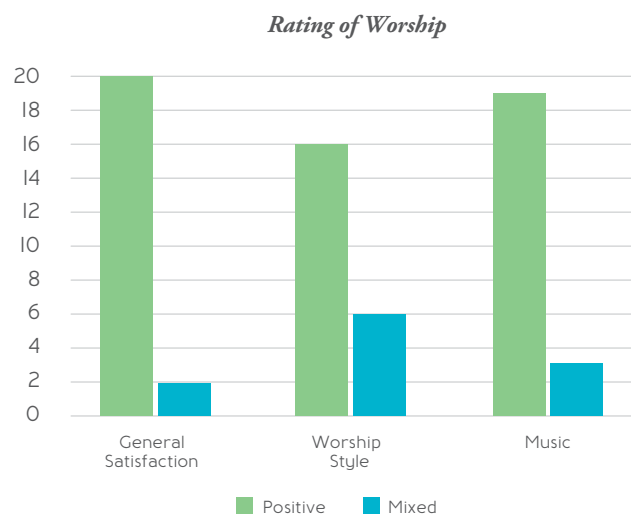
(c) Outreach

Parishioners were asked to talk about the attributes, activities and organisations which might come under this heading. Many of these also come under the heading of 'Strengths' and are listed in section 3. below. For purposes of clarity, the table and graph below detail only the activities and organisations mentioned by some of the parishes surveyed not included under 'Strengths'.

Activities/Organisations List Under 'Outreach'				
Choir/Music	Bellringing	Events/ Fundraising Events	Study Courses/ Groups	Mothers' Union
2	3	5	5	11

It is worth noting that half of the parishes cited the Mothers' Union as an important component to their outreach.

Activites/Organisations Listed Under 'Outreach'
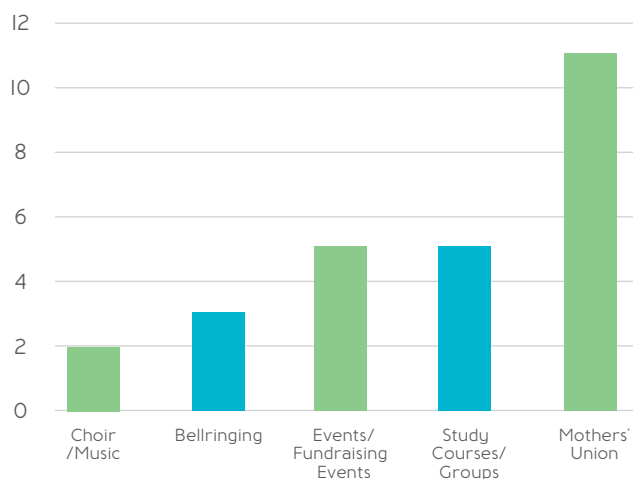
(d) Strengths

Those surveyed were asked about the positive aspects of their parish's life and witness.

More than half felt that the welcome received in their churches was a strong contributor to their outreach and to creating a sense of community and friendship. Many cited a sense of belonging as important in this regard.

Being active in the life of the 'wider community' also rated highly. 14 parish groups cited this as being very important in terms of outreach and Christian witness and three felt that such activity could be stronger and more obviously done in the name of the Church of Ireland.

Others felt that one of their great strengths was a variety of children's/young people's activities available in their parish. Sunday Schools and Youth Groups were seen to be of particularly high importance.

Most parishes cited their clergy as being very important in giving leadership, pastoral care and leading worship.

Strengths					
Welcoming	Unity/ Community/ Fellowship/ Friendship/ Sense of Community	Active in Wider Community	Dedicated Core Group	Children's/ Youth Activities/ Uniformed Organisations/ Sunday Schools	Good Fundraising/ Financial Management
15	18	14	8	12	4

Charting a Future with **Confidence**

Strengths
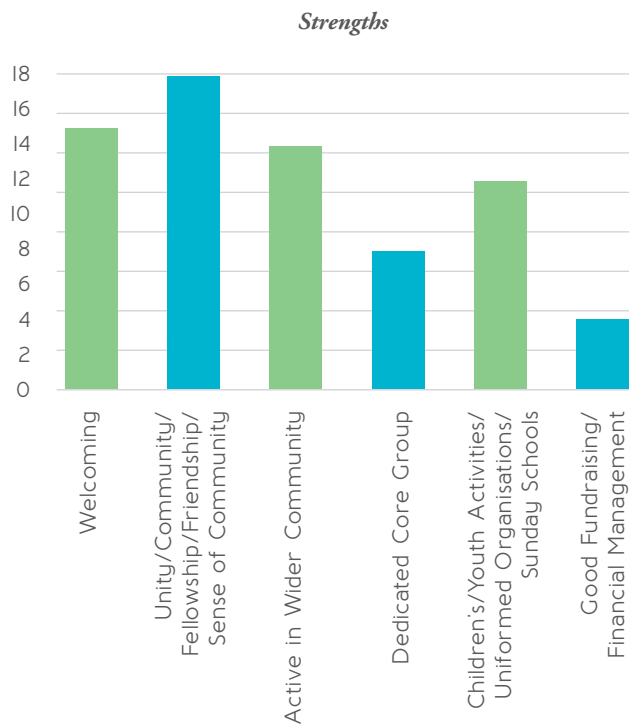
(e) Facilities

The parish groups surveyed were asked to comment on the adequacy or otherwise of their parish facilities, referring in the main to buildings under two headings: church buildings and other buildings (such as halls, meeting rooms, offices etc.)

Other Buildings

There were a few comments recorded with regard to other buildings, referring in the main to the need to upgrade parish halls or to provide some kind of central meeting facilities where there are none.
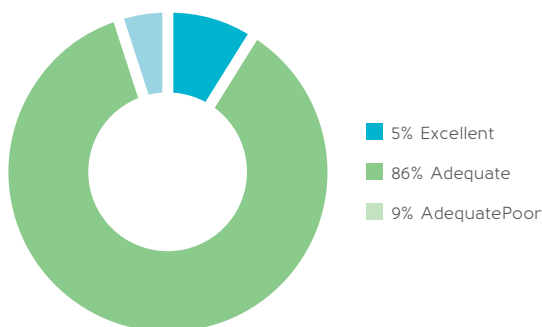
Church Buildings

Most of the discussions under this heading focussed on church buildings. Details of the information gathered are outlined below.

While 20 parish groups surveyed (almost 91%) spoke of their church buildings as being adequate, significant issues around inadequate heating, disability access and uncomfortable/inflexible seating were raised. 4 parishes said that they have too many churches and 2 expressed a wish that their churches would be open on weekdays for prayer or for other church/community activities.
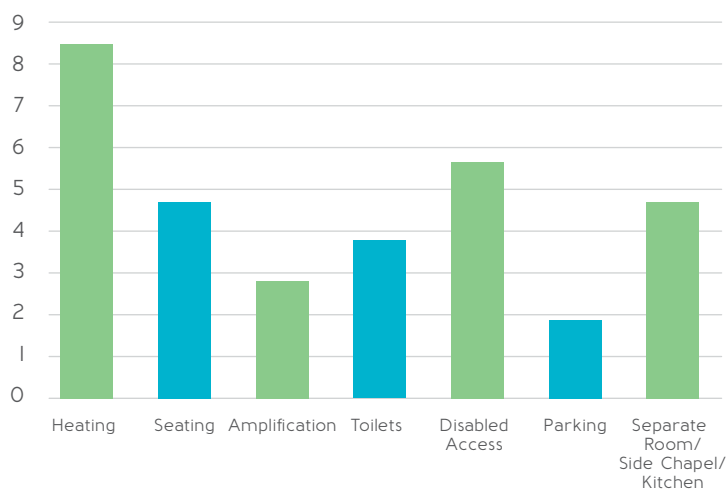
Adequacy of Church Buildings		
Excellent	Adequate	Poor
1	19	2

Adequacy of Church Buildings

- 5% Excellent
- 86% Adequate
- 9% AdequatePoor

Improvements Needed to Church Buildings						
Heating	Seating	Amplification	Toilets	Disabled Access	Parking	Separate Room/ Side Chapel/ Kitchen
9	5	3	4	6	2	5

Improvements Needed in Church Buildings

(f) Finance - Fair Share

Each parish group surveyed was asked to rate their level of understanding of the Diocesan Fair Share system.

9 groups commented as to whether they saw the scheme as being fair and 13 didn't give an opinion either way. Despite several attempts to promote understanding of the Fair Share system to clergy and select vestries, it seems that there is still a low level of understanding amongst parishioners.

Considering the majority of those surveyed were regular churchgoers and therefore most likely to be regular subscribers, it is somewhat surprising that the average percentage of those who don't understand or have a poor understanding of the system was 62.5%.

It is important to note however that further work has been done to explain the system by the Diocesan Council and that some of the data used here dates back to 2015 and 2016.

Understanding of Fair Share System	
Understand Fair Share	Don't Understand/ Poor Understanding of Fair Share
37.5%	62.5%

Understanding of the Fair Share System

- Understand Fair Share
- Don't Understand/ Poor Understanding of Fair Share
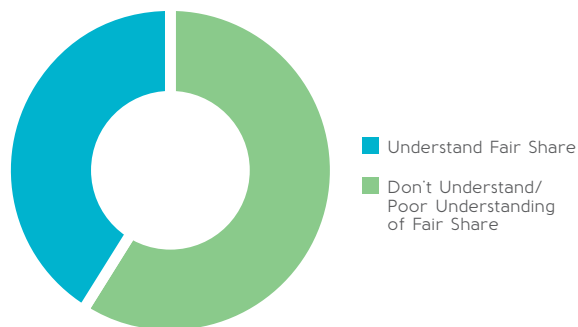
'Fairness' of the Fair Share System			
Majority Say Fair	Majority Say Not Fair	Mixed Opinion	No Opinion Expressed
2	4	3	13

Perception of Fair Share's 'Fairness'

- 59% No Opinion Expressed
- 9% Majority Say Fair
- 18% Majority Say Not Fair
- 14% Mixed Opinion
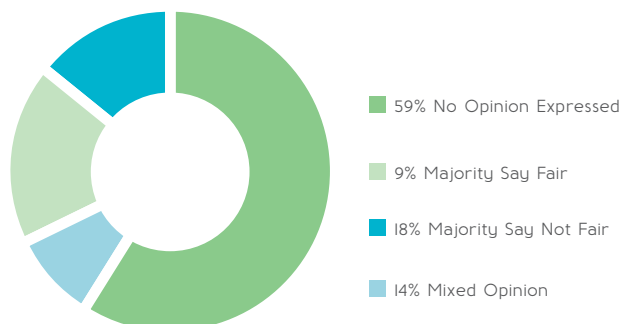
(g) Challenges

Those surveyed were asked to comment on the principal challenges facing their parish.

The top four areas of challenge cited were falling numbers, lack of young people/ageing congregation, ministering among young people, and finance/fundraising. In effect this means that an ageing demographic and finance are the two key concerns for most parishes. Both are probably connected, with many groups talking about a drop in the number of subscribers directly linked to the age profile and participation in their parish.

The majority (over 90%) of parishes citing falling numbers as a principal challenge were in rural settings. Some parishes who had cited their work among children and young people also cited such work as being among their greatest challenges.

Other issues, not listed below, included too much administration being done by clergy (thus eating into their time for pastoral care and other duties), the need for better communications within the parish, between parishes, and between 'the diocese' and the parishes, and the need to use email and social media for communications.

Improvements Needed to Church Buildings				
Falling Numbers	Lack of Young People/ Ageing Congregations	Meeting Fair Share/ Expenses	Finance and Fundraising	Competition From 'Outside' /Secular Activities
15	14	6	12	3
Insuring and Maintaining Buildings	Changing Society	Ministering Among Young People	Parish Too Spread Out	Making Church 'Relevant'
5	8	13	1	6

Challenges
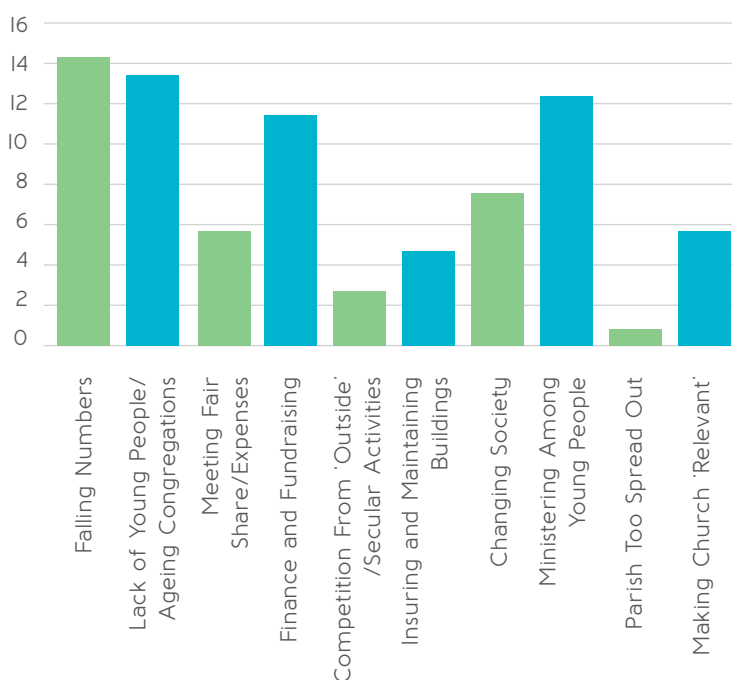
5. Sector Ministry

The following submission, in response to questions put to them, was made by the Rev. Anne Skuse, the Rev. Sarah Marry, the Rev. Daniel Nuzum and the Rev. Bruce Pierce:

What do you see as the importance of sector ministry/chaplaincies within the traditional diocesan model?

Sector ministry is a model of ministry that is not bound by parochial geographical boundaries and instead is focused on a particular context. For the purposes of this paper the context is hospital ministry. In ministerial terms the ministry of healthcare chaplains is to all people regardless of professed faith or philosophical belief. This brings the healthcare chaplain into a creative interface with society that is beyond parochial or diocesan structures and boundaries. This point of contact is a potent gospel expression of unconditional and incarnational care that is inspired by the life and presence of Jesus Christ.

This ministry is one that enables the Diocese to relate with and engage with many people which never come into contact with our diocesan or parochial structures in the ordinary course of events. It is ministry that has 'no strings attached' and by its nature is often seasonal. Healthcare ministry requires a high level of professional commitment, ongoing training and supervision and healthcare chaplains come into close contact with trauma and death and grief on an almost daily basis.

In addition, the care of patients, families and staff, healthcare ministry also engages with, and contributes to, the Healthcare System including the shaping of local and national healthcare policy shaping. Some chaplains are also involved in teaching, research and publication.

Sector ministry/chaplaincy in the hospital setting in its present form ministers to those who are both within the church and outside it. Many people who present in hospital identify themselves as belonging to the church, yet readily admit that they do not attend. They refer to themselves as 'spiritual' but not 'religious'. There are many reasons why this is so: loss of faith in the institution, moving away from home, past hurt, indifference to name but a few. But whether a churchgoer or not, a visit to hospital can cause people to re-examine their faith to see if it can answer the existential questions that arise for themselves or their families. For some people their faith is what sustains them and helps them through, while others can feel lost and abandoned by God.

Chaplains work in this 'gap' area of no man's land, offering support and a safe space for people to talk, for belief to be affirmed, restructured or perhaps disregarded. It is a ministry of presence with no agenda.

Where you see yourselves as fitting in within the Diocese?

We see healthcare chaplaincy as being an integral part of the Diocese. However, our experience is often that it is considered as a 'fringe' ministry and not considered as part of diocesan structures. As all members of the Diocese potentially relate with a hospital at some stage on their life we see our ministry as being one where we connect with a wide variety of people – churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike.

Hospital chaplaincy affects all areas of the Diocese; it is in truth a part of every parish as every parish is a part of it. Clergy, parishioners and their family members at some stage in their lives come into contact with the hospital services, hospital chaplaincy therefore is an integral part of the life of the Diocese.

What can be improved?

The support of colleagues who continue ministry when patients go home is a great value. However, there is sometimes confusion about boundaries and role between parochial ministry and hospital ministry. In a time of increasing pressure on resources we suggest a better understanding of this would be appropriate.

What do you see this model of ministry offering the Diocese into the future?

We see chaplaincy as a model that offers a very wide engagement with many people who would never ordinarily come into contact with traditional church structures. We believe that a higher priority should be placed on acknowledging this. The Diocesan financial commitment to, and investment in, chaplaincy is considerable and pioneering and this should be celebrated.

Hospital ministry is missional in that it reflects the unconditional love of God and reaches out to those who are sick or suffering offering to them support, love and a safe space to talk with no agenda. In a growing secular world where people no longer look for God in a church, sector ministry bridges that ever-widening gap. The Dioceses perhaps should consider creating more sector ministry/chaplaincy roles in those places where people of today mostly inhabit (work, school, college, etc.).

Is there anything else you would like to see the Charting a Future process taking on board?

Hospital ministry is by its very nature, more intense and emotionally draining than parish ministry and so should be equally valued and supported.

6. Recommendations

Further work is needed by the Diocesan Council on explaining the Fair Share scheme to parishioners at grass roots level. The financial burden of running a parish (or other ministries) and the Diocese featured highly in all our discussions with parish groups. A detailed analysis of present resources and future projections will be essential to the future viability of the church in Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

There is much work to be done in finding ways to attract/engage with younger people. The conversations with the parish groups pointed to this as being one of the key challenges for them. This needs significant research and the provision of resources into the future. We are aware that this area of ministry is fast changing and yet is a matter of urgency. There is a good base to build upon in the form of the existing efforts of diocesan youth workers, parish youth club leaders and the Cork Diocesan Youth Council. There is a lot of work to be done on communicating with younger people, particularly through social media and other online platforms. This will be a vital component in any future review of the Diocesan communications strategy.

There is a widespread perception that many people are using the church when it suits them, i.e. for 'rites of passage' but have no interest in becoming actively involved in parishes. There is a danger that such people are 'written off' rather than the very best efforts being made in the short encounters they have with church communities. Perhaps there could be some strategic thinking (and/or training) on how best to maximise such opportunities.

7. Implementation – Toolkit Questions

Change

From the groups we met with, there seems to be widespread acknowledgement that there will be changes needed to the current parochial and wider diocesan structures.

- What does this change look like?

- What will be sustainable into the future?

Outreach

- What can be done to encourage those who may have lapsed, or are on the fringes of parish life, or who have little or no contact with us at all?

Communication

- What are the best tools available to communicate our message with younger people?

Confidence

- What can we do at local and diocesan level to re-energise our church, making it more confident into the future?

8. Conclusion

I would like, as convenor of the group, to take a moment to reflect on what has been an interesting journey over the past 12 to 18 months. We have been, in the main, received very well on our parish visits. We have listened and gathered an amount of information. I would like to thank each of the clergy and their respective parishes for receiving and facilitating our meetings.

Our visits have confirmed that there are some extremely devoted and passionate people living within our Diocese. Most believe a change is required to adapt to our ever-changing lifestyles, but what this change looks like is a question of real significance. To summarise, the more discussed points of concern included:

- the financial burden of running a parish and a diocese.

- the lack of people being called to ministry.

- declining numbers.

- aging congregations.

- attracting our younger generations.

- making 'church' relevant.

- people using church when it suits them, i.e. Baptism, Confirmations, maybe marriage and funerals and having no interest in becoming actively involved.

What does this change look like? Is what we have sustainable? What can be done to 'reconnect' with those who have 'drifted'? What can we do at parish level to re energise our church? Finally, I would like to acknowledge the hours and hours of work this working group have given to Charting a Future, from planning meetings in Ashton School, to visiting each of our parishes and to collating, analysing and producing written reports on our Parishes while also continuing with our respective 'day jobs'.

Melvin Beamish
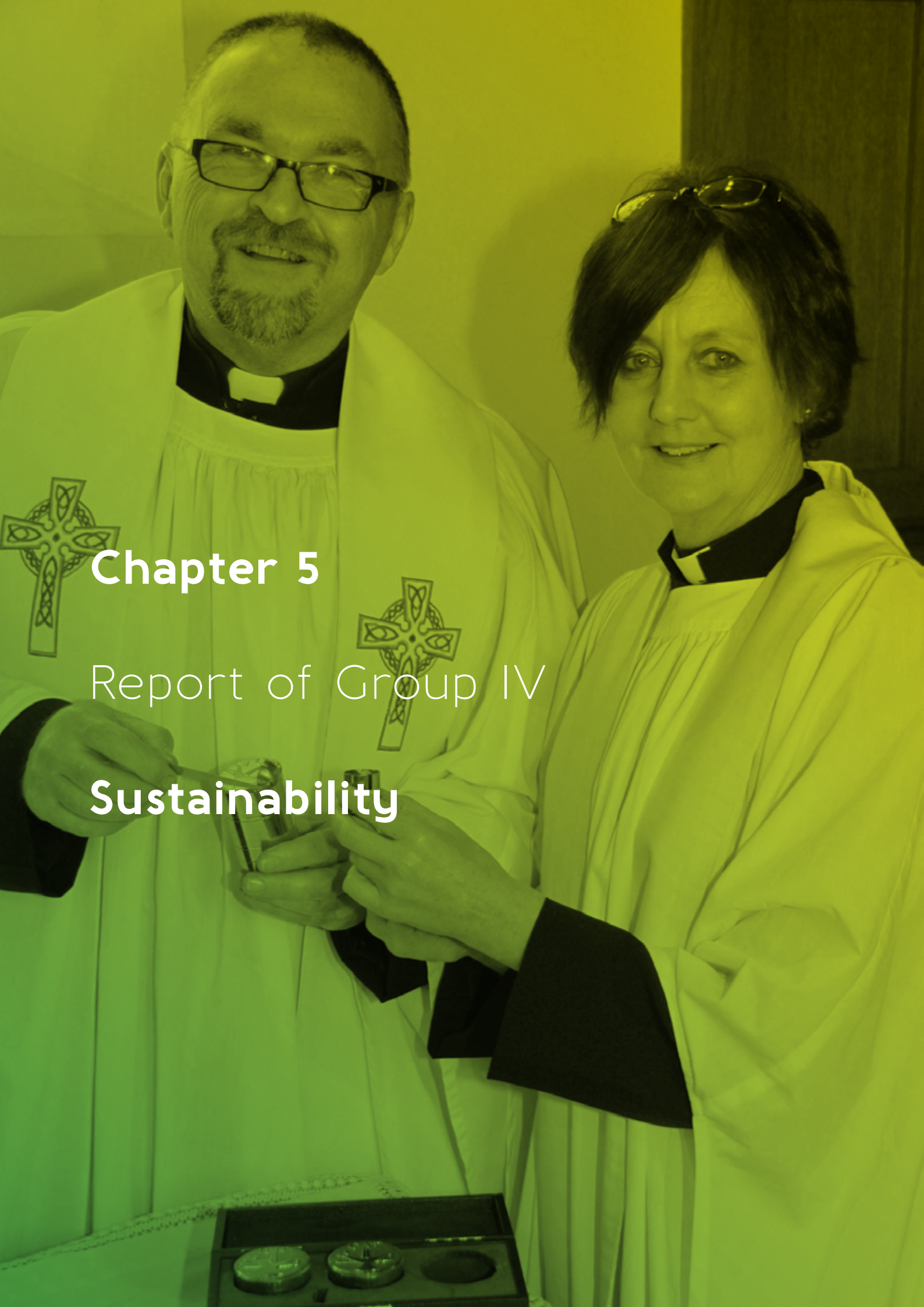
Chapter 5

Report of Group IV

Sustainability

Executive Summary

This group set out to gather information on what makes a parish/ministry and, by implication, the United Dioceses, sustainable. From the outset, the collation of numbers of parishes, parishioners, clergy, lay ministers/workers, church services etc. raised questions as to the sustainability of the current situation.

A short survey of 2014 parish finances and an assessment of 2016 diocesan finances helped to dispel some of the common perceptions and misconceptions about how money is spent in the parishes and wider Diocese. It is clear that the financial situation is tight across the diocese with little room for innovation in terms of buildings or of ministry. Strategic financial planning may be of help in this regard and could be facilitated by the Diocesan Council. Diocesan finances could be put under significant strain should there be cutbacks in chaplaincy payments.

An assessment of the number of church buildings and other parish properties pointed to issues such as the limited use of church buildings and their suitability and sustainability into the future. Another major factor pressuring the sustainability of parishes is the location of churches, many of them built in the nineteenth century, and now not suitably located with changing present and future demographics. Some parishes raised concerns about the number of redundant churches and graveyards in their area, but this group's contacts with parishes did not seem to suggest that they are of any significant financial burden.

The increase in administration at parochial level, especially relating to regulatory, compliance and policy procedures over the last two decades is putting clergy, Vestry members and parishes under pressure. Significant work is needed to ensure that both this essential work is done and that it does not interfere with the life and witness of parishes 'on the ground'. It may be possible to identify suitably qualified\skilled volunteers, especially from among the early retired. There may be some benefit in the Diocesan Council providing templates for key policies. The 'clustering' of administrative support for neighbouring parishes may also be an option.

Leading on from the group's thinking about administrative issues, it is suggested that the carrying out of a skills audit across the Diocese might help to identify key skills/gifts for ministry and/or organisational matters. Sustainable leadership will also be key to maintaining and developing the Diocese's life and witness. Not only would the identification of gifts and skills be useful in this regard, but also the introduction of new mechanisms or parochial structures would allow for the use of skills across present parochial boundaries.

Two other important areas were identified as being critical to future sustainability: (i) faith Education; (ii) welcome and inclusion. In an increasingly well educated, secularised (yet spiritually curious) society it will be essential that church members will be well versed in the key principles and tenets of their faith. Similarly, at a time when the Church has a relatively negative image in the media, it is essential that parishes/other ministries/chaplaincies are welcoming and inclusive at their core. Furthermore, there is need for a 'change of mind-set' in the wider Church of Ireland in the Republic which is less 'keeping the head down' and more unapologetically proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ (as inherited within the Anglican tradition) with confidence and an attitude of constant invitation to 'come and see'.

The sustainability and future mission of the Church of Ireland in this Diocese will depend on the Diocesan Council taking up some of the key challenges and suggestions highlighted in this report and acting upon them in a coherent and strategic way.

Meetings and Research

Meetings of Group IV

- Monday, 23rd February 2015
- Monday, 20th April 2015
- Monday, 18th May 2015
- Monday, 5th October 2015

- Saturday, 23rd April 2016 - Interim Report to Plenary Meeting - Bandon Grammar School

- Monday, 3rd October 2016
- Monday, 24th October 2016

Research and feedback was undertaken by email between meetings.

Research Undertaken

- Collation of number of parishes, clergy, lay ministers/workers etc.
- Short survey of 2014 parish finances.
- Assessment of 2016 diocesan finances.
- Collated list of church buildings and parish properties.
- Update of redundant churches list.
- Drawing up of proposal for a Skills Audit.

I. Introduction

(a) Starting Point

The Group began its work by asking the question: What makes a Parish Sustainable?

The following is a list of the key factors identified by the Group. This is not a checklist applicable to all situations but various combinations will apply in most contexts.

- Number of people.
- Demographics/age profile.
- Finance.
- Number of buildings.
- Condition of buildings.
- Geography:
  - > Size of parish area
  - > Location, infrastructure etc.

- Vision.
- Courage to change.
- Good/Sympathetic leadership and oversight.
- Faith education/knowledge.
- Common purpose/mission.

(b) Statistics

The second question related to statistics: How many people are involved in our Diocese and how many buildings are we responsible for?

The Group assessed the current numbers (updated 2017) of parishes, people and church buildings as follows:

Parishes and Chaplaincies:

- 22 parishes.
- Chaplaincies:
  > 2 full-time (UCC & CUH)
  > 4 part-time (Bandon Grammar School, Midleton College, CUH, St Luke's Home)
- 7,184 parishioners.
- One open church building/chapel for every 91 parishioners).
- One full time priest for every 299 parishioners.

Clergy:

- 1 bishop.
- 24 full-time clergy.
- 2 part-time clergy.
- 5 non-stipendiary clergy.

Lay 'Ministers'

- 26 Diocesan Lay Readers.
- 12 Lay Pastoral Assistants.
- 6 Lay Liturgical Assistants.
- 1 full-time Diocesan Youth Worker.

Diocesan Administration

(including education and administrative support for charities associated with the Diocese)

- 2 full-time.

Churchgoers:

- 4,254 churchgoers (all ages).
- 59.2% of parishioners attend.

- 1 church building/chapel for every 58 churchgoers.

- 1 full time priest for every 177 churchgoers.

- 3,213 churchgoers - 21 years of age and over.

- 1 church building/chapel for every 44 churchgoers over 21.

- 1 full time priest for every 134 churchgoers over 21.

Church Services:

- Average of 67 church services each Sunday in the Diocese.

- Average of 3 services per Sunday per parish/ministry.

- 1 service available per every 63.5 churchgoers per Sunday.

- 1 service available per every 107 parishioners per Sunday.

Church Buildings:

- 170 church buildings.

- 73 open, 97 closed.

- 1 open church building per 98 parishioners.

- 1 open church building per 58 churchgoers.

Graveyards:

- 98 graveyards.

- 79 open (overseen by incumbents and churchwardens).

- 19 closed (overseen by incumbents and churchwardens).

Observations

It was noted that while the ratios of those involved in ordained and lay ministry to the number of parishes and parishioners looks quite good, the figures above do not take into account the distances between churches and the territorial area of parishes.

One striking figure is that there is currently one operating church building/chapel for every 58 churchgoers in the Diocese. Considering the fact that most church buildings/chapels are designed to accommodate a minimum of 90-100 people, with many others having capacity for over 200, alongside the fact that most date to the nineteenth century, the sustainability of this situation naturally comes into question.

An assessment of the numbers attending all 67 church services each Sunday was not undertaken. It is well known that current patterns of church attendance are rather different compared to say thirty years ago, with many attending once or twice a month and still others a few times per year. This has implications not only for viable worshipping units Sunday by Sunday but also for the sustainability of coherent and confident parish communities. It was also noted that without the faithful ministry of Part-time clergy, Auxiliary Clergy, Diocesan Lay Readers and Lay Liturgical Assistants, the current level of Sunday services could not be sustained.

2. Finance

The Group felt that financial sustainability was at the forefront of most parishes' minds, not least in the problems presented by the recent recession and a perceived drop in financial contributions from parishioners in the light of a fall in the number of church members and attenders.

(a) Parish Finances

The Group undertook a short survey of parishes in the Diocese seeking information (in relation to 2014 only) under the following headings:

- Income and expenditure.
- Fundraising.
- Proportion of money spent on buildings:
  - > insurance
  - > maintenance
  - > development
  - > heat/light costs

It should be noted that figures were not received from two parishes. However, the Group found the information gathered to be useful snapshot of the financial picture in 2014.

Income vs Expenditure 2014

Expenditure
€1,872,545

Income
€1,974,589
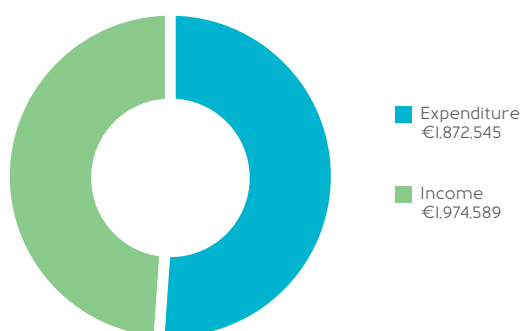
The shortfall of €102,044 (an overrun of 5.17%) was not seen to be significant in that some parishes may have lodged monies received in December after the end of the financial year. However the figures, such as they are, suggest that most parishes are living 'hand to mouth' each year and have little or no surplus for development or investment in new initiatives.

Expenditure on Church Buildings 2014

Insuranc
€155,739

Church I
€85,614

Heat & L
€61,414

The figures gathered in connection with running and maintaining church buildings confirmed the widespread perception that a significant amount of money is expended on the insurance of church buildings each year - 51.4%. However, it should be noted that expenditure on insurance of church buildings amounted to 7.9% of overall parish expenditure in 2014.

Expenditure on Church Buildings vs Total Expenditure

Expenditur
€61,414

Total Expe
€1,974,589
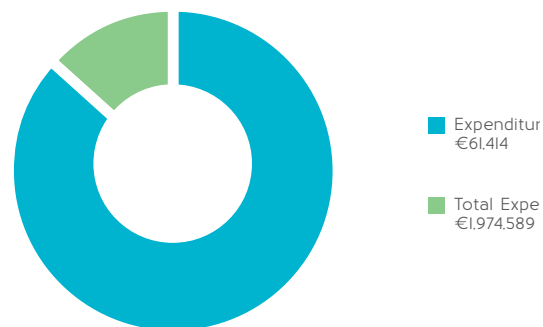
These figures show that 15.3% of total parish expenditure was on church buildings, somewhat dispelling the often-held view that parishes are disproportionately spending on buildings over and against ministry and other items.

Fundraising vs Total Income 2014

Other Income
€1,741,003

Fundraising
€131,542
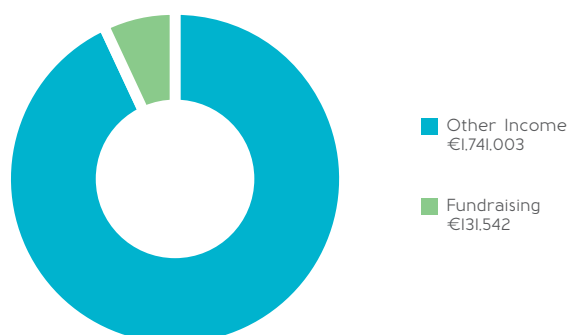
Whilst there is much time and effort put into fundraising events in parishes, these figures show how reliant parishes are on other sources of income, such as planned giving/sustentation programmes, collections, income from investments etc. Based on the figures submitted, in 2014 7% of parish income came from fundraising.

Strategic Financial Planning

It is clear that parishes need to instigate a coherent strategy and budgeting plan for several years in advance. The kind of figures presented above ought to be collated in each parish/unit annually so that income and expenditure trends can be clearly seen, and then used to inform strategic planning. Such strategies and plans need to include clear targets with regular monitoring and follow-up of them. Key performance indicators could be used to keep plans alive and acted upon.

- Would it be possible to have a diocesan implementation and facilitation team?

Should such a group not be feasible consideration should be given to the Diocesan Council issuing guidelines to every parish in the diocese and to put in place a mechanism to ensure that such planning is taking place.

- The need for balance between fundraising and direct giving was also highlighted.

There is need for a diocese-wide review of Christian Stewardship as a central principle of parishes' life. This would address both financial commitment and the giving of time and talents to the life of the parish.

- It was generally felt that the government tax rebate scheme for charitable giving is under-utilised.

The Diocesan Finance Committee may be able to assist in promoting the scheme by including it in their communications with parishes about the *Fair Share* scheme.

(b) Diocesan Finances

The Group undertook an analysis of the 2016 Diocesan Accounts outlining 'Ministry Costs' and 'Diocesan Costs' to show the breakdown on how Fair Share and other sources of income cover the costs of running the Diocese.

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Division Between 'Ministry' Costs and 'Diocesan' Costs 2016

EXPENDITURE		INCOME	
Episcopal Levy	52,700	Fair Share (from parishes)	1,525,052
Clergy – Stipends, PRSI Allowances, Pension Fund	1,549,844		
Dignitaries, Rural Deans & Ecumenical Officer	14,368		
Auxiliary Ministry & Retired Clergy	4,594		
Youth & Children's Officers	44,845		
LPAs & Lay Readers	4,077		
Vacancy Allowances	2,561		
Interest on Fair Share	712		
St. F.B. Cathedral Allowance	18,110		
'Ministry' Costs	**1,691,811**	**Fair Share Income**	**1,525,052**
Staff Salaries & Pensions	121,102	3rd Party Income (HSE etc.)	305,190
Communications Officer	9,075	Miscellaneous Income	9,834
Continuing Min. Education	10,328	Investment Income	109,031
Insurance	12,961		
Child Protection Officer	3,243		
Conferences	7,008		
Administration Expenses	37,261		
Legal & Professional Fees etc	13,974		
'Diocesan' Costs	**216,277**	**'Diocesan' Income**	**424,055**
TOTAL	**1,908,088**		**1,949,107**

Observations:

Expenditure

'Ministry' Costs	= 88.67% of total expenditure.
'Diocesan' Costs	= 11.33% of total expenditure.

Income

Fair Share	= 78.24% of total income
Other Income (3rd Party)	= 15.66% of total income
Investment & Miscellaneous Income	= 6.10% of total income

The designation of 'ministry' costs and 'diocesan' costs above arose from a common misconception that the Fair Share contributions from parishes were in some way financing a 'diocesan machine' that is costing a lot of money. This misconception is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the fact that 'the Diocese' means the collective of all Church of Ireland members within it. The figures as set out above show that the cost of funding 'the Diocese', the necessary administrative and organisational structure underpinning ministry at local level, is 11.33% - a figure of which many charitable organisations would be very envious. The group observed that many charitable organisations would be reporting anything up to 25% for this element of their activities. Perhaps this is testament to the significant voluntary input by parish members through the select vestry system, alongside the significant amount of administration being undertaken by clergy?

This analysis shows that Fair Share income does not cover ministry costs in the Diocese – a shortfall of €166,759 in 2016. Income from third party sources relating to the provision of chaplains, youth officers etc. more than makes up for this shortfall, leaving a balance from Fair Share to assist with 'Diocesan' expenditure. With increasing pressure on State bodies such as the HSE to review and possibly abandon funding of chaplaincy this would have serious implications for funding the Diocese in general and the provision of ministry in particular.

The Group feels that the greatest threats to the sustainability of the diocesan financial scheme are:

- A further drop in subscribing members in the parishes.

- A possible cut to or cessation of payments for hospital and third level chaplaincy work.

- 'Sector' ministry is vulnerable to future falls in stock markets - for example, the monies currently contributed by St Stephen's Protestant Orphan Society to the youth officers' positions could be under threat in the event of a stock market crash.

- Whilst the Fair Share figure shown above tells of much generosity and hard work on the part of parishioners, there can be no doubt that declining numbers of subscribers in the future will call into question the viability of some parishes under the present funding model.

The Group concluded that this kind of analysis is most helpful in dispelling some of the misconceptions among people 'in the pew' about the diocesan financial scheme and that effective communication of this kind of breakdown of the diocesan accounts is important.

3. Buildings

(a) How Many Properties?

In the light of many comments about the perceived predominance of issues relating to buildings exercising time and energy at parish and diocesan level, the following table of information was gathered to gain a better understanding of the number of parish properties in existence.

Parish	Churches	Glebes/ Curates' Houses	Halls/ Centres	Other Buildings
Abbeystrewry	4	1	2	3
Ballydehob	2	1	1	0
Bandon	5	2	0	1
Bandon Grammar Sch.	1	0	0	0
Carrigaline	2	1	1	1
Carrigrohane	3	2	1	1
Cloyne	4	1	1	0
Cobh & Glanmire	3	1	1	0
Cork – Ashton School	1	0	0	0
Cork – CUH	1	0	0	0
Cork – Shandon	1	1	1	0
Cork – St Fin Barre	1	2	1	3
Cork – St Luke's Home	1	0	0	0
Douglas	4	2	4	2
Fanlobbus	4	1	2	0
Fermoy	5	1	1	0
Kilgariffe	4	1	2	0
Kilmocomogue	2	1	1	0
Kilmoe	3	1	1	0
Kinneigh	3	1	2	0
Kinsale	3	1	1	0
Mallow	3	1	1	0
Moviddy	3	1	0	0
Ross	5	1	1	1
Templebreedy	2	1	0	1
Youghal	3	1	1	1
Total	*73*	*26*	*26*	*14*

It is clear that the sustainability of ministry within the existing parochial framework is somewhat pressured by the upkeep of church buildings and other parochial properties (15% of total expenditure in 2014). Underlying these figures however is the fact that many churches are in need of significant investment to bring them up to proper repair and basic conservation standards. Many incumbents who were spoken with said that there are major projects pending which have been put on the long finger for many years.

Whilst it can be said that maintenance, restoration and insurance costs place significant pressure on parish finances, and are in some ways detrimental to funding ministry and outreach initiatives, the more pressing issue is the fact that many church buildings remain uncomfortable and limited in terms of the uses to which they can be put. Many churches are cold and damp with uncomfortable and impractical seating arrangements. Others are simply too big for the size of their Sunday congregations and most are closed and unheated during the rest of the week.

The group suggests that the future sustainability of church buildings may depend upon finding multiple uses for them (i.e. outside of worship), which in some cases may mean adapting them accordingly.

It was also felt that key centres (including church buildings) need to be identified:

1   Can they be adapted for multipurpose use?

2   Are they sustainable beyond ten years?

3   Could the sale or rental of other properties enable the creative adaptation of key centres?

The question arose as to whether there is a critical mass for a congregation and if so what should it be? It was felt that in some cases smaller units function quite well, have a distinctive sense of community and identity, and can be sustainable into the future. In situations where anything below 10 people regularly attend worship, it was felt that it is unlikely that such churches are sustainable into the future.

(b) Church Buildings and Parochial Boundaries

Related to the issues raised above is the question of parish demographics, with traditional parochial boundaries and church building locations no longer being reflective of current population distribution, road networks and state spatial planning policy.

There is an urgent need to look at both parochial boundaries and church building locations so that more 'logical parishes' can be formed for the future. This re-evaluation needs to take account of demographics, geography, schools, transport infrastructure etc. The National Spatial Strategy and the forthcoming 'Ireland 2040 - Our Plan' strategy should be central to informing the Diocese on the future deployment of resources. For example, there needs to be close attention paid to the decline in the rural population of Ireland alongside future plans for rural communities to be centred on key population centres/large rural towns.

The Group felt that whilst there may not be much appetite for consolidation within parishes, the time has come for parishes themselves to begin auditing their situation. This approach is more preferable to either a Commission on Church Buildings such as was used in the 1980s or a 'top-down' approach within the Diocese. Any future consideration of the use of buildings needs to be 'local-up' and the Diocese should consider putting in place mechanisms for this to happen. There may also be scope for strategic planning across parish boundaries, perhaps on a Rural Deanery basis.

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Confidence

(c) Redundant Church Buildings

The plenary meeting in April 2016 asked Group 4 to investigate a perceived problem of the number of closed/redundant churches in the Diocese and the financial and administrative burdens they bring to parishes. Using the list of closed/redundant churches closed since disestablishment published in the Diocesan Rules, the Group sought this information from the relevant incumbents and priests' in charge.

The Episcopal Visitation 2016 reported that there are 170 church buildings in the United Dioceses of which 73 are open and 97 are closed, some of which are put to other uses, while others are ruins on ancient ecclesiastical sites. There are 19 graveyards now closed.

Whilst there was some uncertainty as to the status of some of the buildings and the extent to which they are costing parishes money, the general sense of the feedback received was that such buildings are not placing much of a financial burden on parishes. In some cases there were issues with the future maintenance of those closed churches which remain intact. In other cases, there seemed to be general satisfaction where churches were now either in alternative use or converted to private dwellings. In short, the perception that this is a major issue for parishes did not seem to concur with our (somewhat incomplete) findings.

4. Administration

(a) Administration Workload

There is work to be done on assessing the current and future levels of parochial administration. Over the last twenty years there have been increasing compliance and regulatory matters which require significant administration at parish level; e.g. Child Protection, Health & Safety, Data Protection, Copyright, Conservation and Planning regulations, Charities Regulation etc.

Key questions raised were:

- Who is doing it and who should be doing it?

  (All agreed that too much administration falls to the clergy.)

- Can administration be simplified/rationalised?

- Can more be done by the sharing of resources between parishes and/or better use of suitably skilled (and trained) volunteers?

(b) Spreading the Administrative Burden

The Group recommends the following:

- Freeing up resources to 'hire in' specialists (e.g. Health and Safety).

- Templates for policies and other administrative matters might be professionally drawn up and provided for use in all parishes.

- The possible pooling of administration resources by neighbouring parishes,

- More use of suitably skilled volunteers.

- To ensure accountability, confidentiality and perhaps fixed time periods for voluntary administration work, volunteers could be put on a volunteer 'contract' or agreement. It is important that where volunteers are used for administration (and other) purposes they be trained for their role and clear line management should be in place.

- It was suggested that parishes should make further use of state employment schemes such as CE, TUS and CDO.

5. Skills

The church frequently uses words such as 'gifts', 'talents' and 'skills' in relation to discerning how its members might contribute to the life, witness and outreach of its parishes and other units. A systematic assessment of what gifts, talents and skills are available across the Diocese would help in the implementation of many of the recommendations in this report.

(a) Skills Audit

A Skills Audit could be usefully implemented in the Diocese. A comprehensive description of what a skills audit for the Diocese would involve is included in this report as Appendix A. Such an audit could be carried out in every parish/ministry in the Diocese and would help to identify existing skills, those needed for the future, and those that might be shared across parish boundaries.

Such an audit would include the use of SWOT analysis - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats - this process is much used in other organisations and would be very useful in our context.

Group 4 is willing to draw up a draft Questionnaire for use in the parishes and to provide assistance in helping them assess their results.

A similar exercise, assessing the particular gifts and skills of clergy, might also be useful. See section 6 (c) below.

6. Leadership in Ministry

If such things as strategic planning, parish consolidation, devolving/sharing of administration and skills audit outlined above are to be carried out, the question of leadership becomes very important.

(a) Sustainable Leadership
The Group identified the following areas as being essential to sustainable leadership:

- Measured leadership.

- Enabling vision.

- Keeping in touch with reality.

- Willingness to learn and take direction.

- Oversight: Episcopal, Clerical, Lay.

- How to enable, delegate, encourage and dream.

- How to direct, communicate and decide.

- Self-care for those who lead.

- Clarity of roles and boundaries.

- Knowing strengths/weaknesses.

(b) Time and Space

There was a strong feeling among the members of the group that clerical and lay leaders need to be given the time and space to exercise their vocations and to allow the Holy Spirit to work through them, which would in turn would benefit the church. It was felt that the current structures are hindering this. The increase in administrative and compliance matters placed before clergy over the last two decades has put significant pressure on time and talents which ought to be used for leadership and ministry 'on the ground'.

(c) Use of Gifts

It is clear that different clergy and lay church workers have different gifts for ministry, yet full-time clergy in particular are expected to have all the gifts needed for all aspects of ministry.

This Group feels that the time has come to assess what the particular gifts among the clergy are and to find ways of sharing them across parish boundaries, or at least in clusters of clergy centred on a designated leader over a wider area than their 'own' parish. For example, incumbent A might be very good with young people, while incumbent B might be good with older people; or incumbent C might have gifts for teaching adults, while incumbent D might be a skilled pastoral visitor … and so on. Incumbents A, B, C and D (alongside lay church workers and volunteers) could work together in a much wider area than their own parish. There would need to be at least one of A-D (or another incumbent) with a particular gift for leadership and coordination designated to head up such a 'team'.

(d) A Wider Sense of 'Ministry'

If there are new pressures on the clergy's ability to do what they were ordained to do, then there is also the question of time and space being used to tap into local networks outside of traditional 'parish' activities, sometimes described as 'meeting people where they're at'. These include 'non-church' community events, interaction on social media, spending time in the local town or village, membership of local organisations etc.

(e) Leadership of Worship

Strong feeling was expressed in this Group about the number of church services being led by clergy on Sundays. This is effecting the quality of liturgy and worship being offered. The travel between services and/or the number and timing of services in many parishes does not allow enough time and energy to be given in the churches on Sundays. Regardless of the nature and style of services, time, energy and space is needed to allow 'good liturgy, done well' to be delivered.

7. Faith Education

(a) Faith Education and Sustainability

Group 4 considers faith education as being essential to sustainability. It is about identity, community, belonging, thinking and strengthening faith. What do we believe? Why do we believe? What have we to say to the world? What do we do in the world? etc.

Questions arise as to how parishioners can be encouraged not only to pray and worship together, but also to nurture their knowledge of scripture and to think more deeply and critically about their faith. Such nurture would greatly strengthen parishioners' and parishes' ability to engage confidently with those around them in everyday life, and would therefore strengthen the mission of the church in their communities. See 8 (c) below.

(b) Enabling Faith Education

The Group recommends the following:

> *The re-establishment of the Bishop's Course in Theology - this could be run at different levels, perhaps with an option of accreditation for those who wish to take their studies further.*

A comprehensive assessment of what is being done in parishes under the headings of Faith Formation and Adult Education. The Bishops' Visitation will be able to inform this assessment. This Group feels that there may need to be investment in organising a coherent programme across the Diocese, perhaps centred in existing parishes, or bringing parishes together for modules which encourage reflection on the nature of the Church, the nature of God, the use of Scripture, Christian ethics, faith in the workplace, faith in the city, faith in rural communities, healing and pastoral care etc.

There may be potential for the combination of one of the current part-time parochial posts with a part-time 'Faith Education/ Formation Officer'.

A first step might be for neighbouring parishes to 'cluster' together for Advent and Lent reflection/study groups. The advantage of this is that many parishes already have a pattern of doing such sessions themselves and there could be a 'cross-pollination' of skills and topics covered according to the interests and skills of clergy and other group leaders in the parishes involved.

8. Welcome and Inclusion

(a) Church Membership and Denominational Choice

A significant aspect of the future sustainability of parishes/units will depend on their ability to reach out into the communities within which they are situated. It is likely that future membership of the Church of Ireland will be less focussed on traditional family allegiances and more on those who choose to make the Church of Ireland their spiritual home.

(b) Invitation

Parishes always need to be inviting both for people of faith and for those of none. This of course means being welcoming at the church door but there is also important work to be done in generally extending a continuing invitation to people to 'come and see'.

(c) Change of Mind-set

There still remains a 'keeping the head down' mind-set in many parishes, the result not of any selfishness or sectarianism on the part of church members but because of past history and of being a minority denomination. There is also a danger of a 'remnant' mentality dominating parishes' life, particularly where numbers are small. This Group's discussions and consultations have led us to conclude that sometimes small communities with the right mindset are better placed to grow than larger ones who don't.

There is needed a much more confident approach in our parishes, proudly saying what we have to offer to people of faith and of none. Sustainable parishes ultimately will be self-confident parishes, who know what they believe and are keen to share that belief with others.

(d) Inclusion

It is important that in a fast-changing society the message of the gospel of inclusion is clearly stated. There is no point in saying 'all welcome' if deep down there is a sense that not all are. The Church of Ireland is well placed to explain its role as a 'bridge church' which uniquely embraces both the catholic and reformed traditions within a wide spectrum of how faith is expressed and worship is offered.

9. Recommendations

(a) Strategic Financial Planning

1   Drawing up and implementation of a diocesan facilitation scheme to enable parishes to plan and budget strategically.

2   Diocese-wide review of Christian Stewardship.

(b) Church Buildings

1   There is a very real issue with the number of church buildings versus the number of parishioners worshipping in them.

2   An assessment of the current state of repair of all buildings.

3   An assessment of the suitability of churches for comfortable and flexible worship.

4   The development of existing or even new buildings for worship and other activities in key locations.

(c) Working Across Parochial Boundaries

This report has suggested several areas where work could be done across parochial boundaries:

1   Administration

2   Adult Education Programmes.

3   Advent and Lent Study Groups.

4   Sharing skills/gifts for ministry.

(d) Skills and Gifts

1   Skills audit of clergy.

2   Skills audit of parishioners and assigning those gifts in 'clustered' areas for defined periods of time.

(e) The Parochial System

The time has come to analyse critically the sustainability of the current parochial system. The following should be considered by the Diocesan Council:

1   The 'clustering' of parochial areas, alongside a comprehensive review of parish boundaries.

2   Forming 'teams' of clergy, lay church workers and trained volunteers to work in strategically formed areas.

3   The identification of key centres for worship, outreach, ministry and education.

Charting a
Future with
Confidence

10. Implementation – Toolkit Questions

a   Is the Diocesan Council prepared to instigate a major review of the parochial system within the Diocese, including the possibility of 'clustering' for some activities or 'team' ministry structures across current parochial boundaries?

b   Can a facilitation process be put in place to encourage parishes/sector ministries to evaluate critically or strategically assess their current and future situations which would feed into a wider diocesan sustainability strategy for the future?

c   Would a diocese-wide professional assessment of the condition of all churches and other church buildings (say over a five-year period) be a good investment in ongoing financial and strategic planning?

d   Could the existing *Charting a Future* sub-groups be used to monitor and assist in the implementation of any recommendations/processes which they have tabled and the Diocesan Council wish to pursue?

Appendix A – Skills Audit

Skills Audit - 'Charting a Future with Confidence' Group 4 - Sustainability

As a diocese, we need to be aware that administrative issues, board of management involvement and chairing vestries tie up clerical resources and must come to the realisation that a range of gifts, skills, expertise and experience and significant commitment of time and energy are required to support the worshipping and functioning life in a diocese hence the need for a skills audit.

There is a need for skills sharing between parishes. Church involvement needs to be led by way of a personal approach by a rector and not solely admin driven. There is a clear need for good delegation and leadership and to identify our common purpose as a parish/church. How can we relieve the burden of clergy so as they can focus on ministry?

In terms of the input of the laity on relieving the administrative burden on clergy and ensuring that the effective running of a parish is not left to the 'same few' we need to pose the following questions and conduct a skills audit within the parish. Select vestries need to evaluate the following:

- What skills do we need?

- Why do we need them?

- Who will do it? (active retired, youth, people looking to up-skill).

Persons on a Jobseeker's payment with the Department of Social Protection can engage in the 'Voluntary Work Option' whereby they can enhance their skillset by volunteering with charitable bodies subject to certain conditions.

We all can contribute to active stewardship. We need to identify exactly what needs to be done, the gaps in our knowledge and skills and find out how best we can address this in the future to ensure activity is shared by all in a parish effectively. Ideally this would be highlighted with parishioners by way of a questionnaire. Each parish requires a different skillset and should undergo an assessment of talent and time needed for active stewardship.

- A timetable of participation needs to be created encompassing dedicated time slots so as parishioners do not feel an overdue demand or burden is put upon them. The purpose of the timetable of participation is to create an atmosphere of unburdened giving dependant on availability.

- Time slots are created whereby those ranging from active retired, to full-time employed, to homemakers can make a small commitment to the running of the parish based on their own strengths and availability:

- Timetable to be drafted by select vestry and amended as necessary.

- Emphasis that voluntary sharing of skills eases burden on ordained/lay ministry.

- Emphasis that a willingness to share skills is not permanent, tasks should be rotated where possible to enhance willingness of parishioners to subscribe.

S.W.O.T. analysis

We need to conduct a S.W.O.T. analysis, examining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to us as an entity. The Diocese as a whole needs to identify in line with the constitution of the C of I areas which the rector can delegate responsibility effectively.

- Identify the qualities, skills, and experience that we want our parish to have. Identify the professions our current parishioners have and those of active retired and the skillset that accompanies each.

- Conduct a survey of all parishioners to identify the skills and qualities both select vestries and parishioners have. Identify the time periods people would be willing to volunteer in, whether they prefer to work as individuals or groups.

- Once the parish has identified the skills that we possess we can pinpoint where we can alleviate the burden on ministry so as the rector can focus on ministry.

Prior to audit the following questions need to be addressed:

- Where are we as a parish?

- Where do we want to go, what vision do we have of ourselves in our area?

- What direction do we take / what skills do we need to move forward effectively?

- Who is responsible for co-ordinating the list of available skills/rota?

- After a two-month period enter a period of evaluation, how are we doing as a parish / do changes need to be made / what is going well / not so well?

The questionnaire must be targeted to get the best response under the heading of qualities, skills, experience. Once skills have been identified we can look at how to address the gaps in same and focus everything towards the maintenance of our parish unit.

Skills/Knowledge:

- Knowledge of the structure/operating procedures of the Church of Ireland on a parochial basis, RCB level, diocesan basis, and at Synods etc.

- Previous voluntary experience of parishioners e.g. Community development.

- Membership of boards/organisations outside of church: drawing on lived experience.

- Proficiency in budget management.

- Involvement with local agencies e.g. Mother's Union, museum, Lions Club, Boy's Brigade, Scouting and Guiding etc.

- Fundraising / campaigning.

- Health and safety.

- Heritage and conservation / planning applications.

- Horticulture and maintenance (certification, machine tickets, Safepass etc.).

- Human resources / recruitment /events management.

- General and financial management.

- Research and policy / legal (canon / civil law).

- Information technology / web maintenance design / Microsoft packages (MOS/ECDL).

- Dealing with media and social media / drafting correspondence.

- Minute taking / accurate maintenance of records.

- Networking and public speaking.

- Ability to work to deadlines and within agreed parameters.

Board/Committee experience:

- Experience of being a chair, secretary or treasurer.

Organisational experience:

- Business / government sector / voluntary sector.

Time:

- Create available time slots to cover age profiles of parish. Each parishioner contributes time as they can towards the common good and sustainability of parochial life.

Chapter 6

Reflection and Response

The Right Reverend Dr John Neill

I. Introduction

The purpose of this concluding chapter was articulated in the opening chapter as being "to extrapolate insights, challenges and reflections". Such a response will seek to reflect much of what has been undertaken in a monumental piece of work, but also to reflect on it in the sense of seeing it from outside, as it were through the reflection from a mirror. It is not the purpose of the present writer to provide answers but rather to facilitate the ongoing encounter between this report - "Charting a Future with Confidence" and the church in the Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

Many a reflective mirror has a frame, and this one will seek to be within the parameters and experience of the Christian tradition in which the Church of Ireland has lived, lives today and hopefully in God's good purposes into the future.

Throughout this report is the implicit and frequently explicit description of the Church of Ireland as an episcopal church. This implies an understanding of the church as in some sense gathered around a bishop. The church which is gathered around a bishop is a diocese. The diocese then becomes the basic unit of the church. It is important to grasp this when comparing Anglican ecclesiology with that of other traditions which are "congregational". Such congregations may indeed be linked to others but each congregation is seen as complete in itself and the local pastor will sometimes even be described as "bishop" in some the Reformed churches. However in many episcopal churches, especially with much larger dioceses than in Ireland, the bishop becomes a remote figure and the parish becomes an end in itself, and is perceived as the real basic unit of the church. This allows a parochialism to develop which finds diocesan structures problematic. There is throughout this study a real questioning of parochialism – especially in considering the mission of the Church, and the gifts and resources required for its mission.

This report is permeated by the sense that change is inevitable and even to be welcomed. It is stressed that this arises because the church exists in a new and rapidly evolving context. Reference is made to the House of Bishops Statement concerning "Growth, Unity and Service" which speaks of the task of the church "to develop communities of faith, in and through which the Kingdom of God is made known….." What is significant in this statement is the reference to the Kingdom of God, and the recognition that the Church is servant or instrument of God's rule. Once that truth is grasped, the often forgotten biblical truth follows – that the Kingdom of God is greater than the Church, and that God works outside our structures, and is already active in the context in which the Church is set to minister and to fulfil its mission. The changing church becomes a movement within God's world. Bishop Michael Curry, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church (USA), seems not to speak so much of "Church", but rather of "The Jesus Movement" thereby reflecting these same themes of facing change and living with change that permeate this report.

In looking forwards there are two temptations. One is to have such a clearly defined vision that either fails to be shared by others, or else crashes in disillusionment. The other temptation is to be so rooted in the present day, or more likely in the past, that one ultimately fails to change at all. There is within the broad scope of the report a refusal to succumb to either temptation. The ideal and the reality have to be held in such creative tension if confidence is to flourish.

What follows relates specifically to parishes in some respects and to the Diocese as a whole in others, and the headings simply refer to certain aspects that emerged in one or more of the four groups.

2. Ministry

The theme of ministry, both lay and ordained, comes up again and again. A picture emerges of an ordained ministry that is weighed down with administration, set within geographically large parochial units, and the inevitable frustration experienced by clergy. The other side of this picture appears to be an under-utilised lay ministry. There are signs of change in respect of lay ministry. Lay ministry includes more than the traditional role of Lay Reader. There are now lay members trained and involved in pastoral ministry and chaplaincy.

The issue of lay leadership is one which raises certain questions. Is this leadership to be in areas in which clerical leadership has been taken for granted but is not necessarily good and places a heavy burden on clergy? Or is this lay leadership to extend to those areas for which the clergy have been ordained and not merely trained? Much work and discussion is required in this area.

One concern is expressed that as the Church of Ireland looks to the future whether or not there are sufficient vocations to ordained ministry, and further whether there are the resources to maintain adequate numbers of clergy. Attention is drawn to the fact that the Non-Stipendiary ministry which has served the church for decades has virtually disappeared through new patterns of training. This is an example of what happens when an ideal fails to take account of a reality on the ground. A sign of hope is recognised in the recent move by the bishops towards a locally ordained ministry. This development brings a new dimension to the issue of lay leadership, by introducing a ministry which is local and yet ordained.

Ministry and Clusters

This report stresses that the individual priest cannot be expected to have all the gifts required for ministry in a given parish. For example, the priest may well not be a good communicator with the younger members of the church. The theme of clusters of parishes, teams of clergy, or even association of the parishes is raised at several points and has been in reports to the Diocese down the years. It is worth reflecting a little on this as it would seem not to have "caught on" widely. In England, many a rural deanery – or simply deanery – appears to have some of the characteristics of such a clustering. However these deaneries are frequently as large as an Irish diocese. This raises a key question: Does a real cluster already exists in Cork, Cloyne and Ross – the cluster being the Diocese itself?

The examples given of clustering within two Irish dioceses each refer to geographical areas smaller than the majority of individual unions of parishes in Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Experience in one diocese has also shown that even this clustering for a selected purpose – such as youth ministry – is very hard to maintain for the long term, unless the parishes are more integrated with each other than simply sharing a resource. Eventually the work centres increasingly on one of the participating parishes, and a gradual alienation takes place in the other. This difficulty would not be so inevitable in the practice of shared administrative support between two or more parishes.

The variety of ministry provided by teams of clergy is rightly emphasized. The team may well however over time become very fluid, as only the team leader will have incumbent status and the other clergy will be likely to stay for shorter periods. This may be quite acceptable but the issue needs to be considered.

Pastoral Ministry and Clusters

One of the defining aspects of the Anglican parochial ministry has been that it is essentially pastoral. This is changing in that the pattern of parochial visiting of a previous generation is hardly sustainable in most urban and suburban parishes as people's lives become busier, and often less home based. Discussion in the English church press suggests that the pastoral ministry seems to be the first to suffer as the clergy are being urged to strive for outreach at all costs. The pastoral ministry, however it is expressed and implemented, must remain a priority for parish life. A lesson could be learnt from what has occurred in many places in Ireland in GP practices. A number of doctors set up a medical centre, providing a wide variety of excellent services.

The result is that some complain that there is little continuity of care in other than the clinical sense. The relationship between doctor and patient is undermined when one seldom see the same practitioner. The question is whether team ministry might have the same effect.

Attention is drawn to those who "use" the church for occasions, but are outside its membership. These occasions provide an opportunity that is both outreach and pastoral, but may not immediately be realised by those struggling to keep a parish solvent! Pastoral care is frequently expressed by clergy who are actively involved in local life beyond church structures.

There are certain areas of the Diocese in which resources can be shared locally. Much of the administrative burden is certainly a possible area to be explored in this respect. The issue remains though whether a clear distinction should be made between "Cluster" and "Diocese".

Sector Ministry and Youth Ministry

There is in the report an emphasis on sector ministry especially in the area of health and education, and indeed specialist ministry such as that to seafarers. This is alongside the parochial model, but there is the awareness that it should not be seen as utterly separate from it. This is important for the clergy and laity involved, but it also provides a sense of "ownership" by parishes as well as the Diocese as a whole for these ministries.

Sector ministry highlights another important aspect for the development of ministry, namely that the parish with its model of geographical community does not reflect the fact that community is evolving today in terms of interest groups and peer groups of various types. Such a realisation already apparent in this report could be linked to the often quoted deficit in the area of youth ministry. This ministry is not so much neglected in many situations as evolving with a new impetus on a scale that is beyond parish youth groups. Alongside this is another sector beginning to emerge as significant, that of the young adults. Attention is drawn to the fact that with later marriage and later settling into a regular lifelong pattern of employment, the 18-35 age group is notably lacking in large numbers in parishes.

The Diocese is tackling issues of youth ministry. The absence of many young people from regular worship is noted, and this re-enforces the points that this ministry requires a sufficient numerical base that is not always there at the parochial level. This work may indeed be undertaken in areas, and for geographical reasons must be, but there is a sense that this is a ministry best resourced by the Diocese as a whole. Youth ministry is one of the clearest examples of the way in which the church needs to see that the parish is not an end in itself but part of the diocesan family.

Parochial Boundaries

Alongside this whole discussion of the ideal setting for particular ministries, whether parochial, cluster or diocesan, the issue of the existing parish boundaries is raised and it is noted that some parish unions no longer correspond naturally to the community patterns that have developed since such unions came into being. Furthermore there is a plea that parochial boundaries should be more fluid.

3. Buildings

Numbers of Buildings

The Report has references throughout to buildings, chiefly to numbers of churches. Careful analysis of costs throws up the result that less is spent on these churches than is generally perceived, and that even the high insurance costs are not as crippling as is often thought. But there are two provisos. The first relates to the adequacy of the buildings for modern use – heating, comfort, toilets and facilities such as kitchens and handicapped access. The second suggests that the buildings in many cases are in urgent need of expenditure, but frequently as yet untackled.

The issue has to be addressed as to the adequacy of many church buildings – whether they are appropriate to the needs of today, and even possible to maintain in a proper manner.

Church Closure

Bitter experience in the Diocese and elsewhere reveals that the closure of churches is a painful process and certainly cannot be imposed from "on high". A church is often an essential part of the local community – and the memorials on the walls relate to the families still present in the locality. The parish church is a visible sign of the worshipping community that is present in that locality. The converse of this is pointed out in this report in that where the church building is not near the centre of population in a parish, it is hard to maintain "a visible presence" in that community. It might be said that visibility in a community requires some plant, or project, or clerical presence.

The large number of churches in relation to worshippers is a concern at parochial and diocesan level. Previous reports have highlighted the fact that alternating services between churches fails to address the real issue, and simply develops a mentality that undermines weekly worship.

Key Centres

There is a plea for the identification of key centres for the church, and for its worship. This echoes what was said in earlier reports proposing a focus on the urban centres. This is not a question of urban versus rural, but the realization that local life now centres on a local town, and that strategies for rural development seem to be moving in a similar direction. It is the church building in the centre of population that is more likely to attract those who at present are on the "outside". A church in a town centre is less likely to be perceived as a venue "owned" by and for a gathered congregation, rather than a place of "welcome" for all.

If certain churches are designated as key centres for the worship and the mission of the church, then it may well be that prior to any closures central services should be held from time to time in those key centres. If however all the churches in a parish host such services, it merely re-enforces the status quo.

If churches are to be closed, this must be a decision taken locally, though with diocesan help. The suggestion is made that the sheer number of churches with Sunday worship has a detrimental effect on the quality of worship, and divides parishes. It is the younger church members that suffer most from small congregations depriving them of a sufficient peer group. Closure however, unless very carefully handled at the local level will lead to the loss of some worshippers. Change may be easier in the future due to a more mobile population, and more church members joining from personal choice rather than "inherited" church membership. The report does place an emphasis throughout on these discussions and decisions taking place in the parishes.

4. Worship

There are many references to the quality of worship and that worship should be inclusive, providing a variety of styles, and in particular a variety of music. It is recognised that such variety is very difficult in a situation of a scattered population and small numbers. The survey of attitudes towards worship is encouraging in that it represents a high satisfaction level among those surveyed. However the majority of respondents were very committed lifelong church members, regular worshippers and in the upper age groups. Such factors should not however lead to the results being under-estimated. Examples elsewhere suggest that changes imposed to attract new members can ignore the needs of church members. A church that ceases to be pastoral will not sustain outreach. Once again we need to keep in mind that the strength of the parish system is the pastoral care that it provides.

The Church of Ireland has historically provided little variety in worship. Clergy and indeed laity may have differed theologically and in matters of "churchmanship" but this was not expressed through variety in worship, except in a handful of parishes throughout the island. This has changed somewhat of recent years. The call for variety throughout this report centres on music, which is the area in which change has taken place, especially in churches with choirs and choral groups. There is a call for cross-fertilization in this respect. Demands for worship in the "Fresh Expressions" mode are emerging too. Variety can be very difficult in the average rural parish, but with support from other parishes and the Diocese, special events can be arranged and perhaps reach a new group of potential worshippers.

In relation to worship in general, there is a certain dichotomy in possible approaches. The traditional approach, which is not to be played down, centres everything on regular weekly worship. This worship does change and evolve but seldom in any radical direction, as it meets the needs of the regular worshippers. The survey bears this out. The other approach is to recognize that special services and special events which are radically different may be the growth point. This latter approach reflects a change in society – weekly routines and patterns of life are changing. "Events" rather than regular patterns are more likely to catch the imagination of a rising generation.

5. Faith Formation

Throughout this report there is a strong emphasis on faith formation. This may be seen as a matter for the local parish, but this report highlights the need for a diocesan approach. The sermon slot on Sunday morning does not provide sufficient instruction in the faith. The suggestion of making more use of the Sunday "gathering" by having study groups and interactive learning is to be welcomed. It would emerge more naturally with designated central churches and adequate facilities – both aspects already mentioned as needing attention. This would be the ideal, but the recommendation is made for the Diocese to set up programmes and co-ordinate a diocesan wide programme, and even establishing a part-time post for this to be implemented.

There is recognition that faith formation is the area in which vocations to ministry, both lay and ordained, begin to emerge. Faith formation is about growth in the sense of deepening, putting down roots, before growth in numbers can follow.

It is a matter for further exploration as to how far such a programme would be parochially led or diocesan led, but it seems that this is something that starts at diocesan level.

6. Finance

This report is very blunt and realistic in relation to financial matters. Attention is drawn to dependence on external funding for certain sector ministries, and that such may not continue indefinitely. Other funding that will always be precarious comes from investment income. There are fears surrounding a possibly diminishing number of subscribers as the age profile of donors is high.

A realistic response is offered. "Strategic Financial Planning" is called for, including practical advice to parishes in this respect. A fresh look at the direct giving model is required and the implementation of the tax rebate schemes to the highest possible degree.

At the parochial level, it is surprising to note that the amount of money actually raised through fundraising is a very small proportion of the total income of parishes. This may be disheartening for those who put such an effort into such funding projects. This could be viewed in several different ways. For example, is fundraising the prime parochial activity replacing others forms of service, and possible deterring others from getting too involved in the parish? Or, does fund-raising actually provide a social centre to the parish and build up the parish community and relate the parish to the wider community? This report states that parishes seem to be living "hand to mouth", and that the money at present produced by fund-raising is an essential part of funding.

7. Administration

Throughout this report, there is the realization that the administrative burden on the parishes, the clergy, the bishop and the diocese is increasing continually. Among the issues are those relating to compliance and regulatory matters such as child protection, health and safety, charities, conservation of buildings, to name but a few.

There is the sense that clergy are being diverted from the exercise of the ministry for which they have been ordained, and that an impossible burden is placed on the bishop as well. Some people may indeed be standing aside from serving on select vestries because of the liability relating to some of these responsibilities. The fact that many of these administrative functions are being carried out at the parochial level by volunteers with administrative skills is saving cost. However many parishes find it hard to find such people, and the suggestion is made that it might be done more on an area basis, and that the Diocese should provide templates and guidance for such work.

There are references throughout this report as to what the Diocese might do. In some cases this may refer to guidance to be offered or decisions to be made at the level of the Diocesan Council. However in many cases, such suggestions are adding to the workload of the diocesan office. This report has highlighted the modest costs of this office in relation to the diocesan budget as a whole – indeed below the level of the administrative costs of the average charity. The question needs to be addressed whether in fact the diocesan administration should expand – lessening greatly the load on the parishes, but on the other hand losing out on the voluntary contribution of so many people at the parochial level.

The question remains, but a more centralised administration may streamline and simplify much of the administrative load that is at present resting on the bishop, clergy and parishes.

Charting a
Future with
Confidence

8. Final Reflection

This report as a whole produces a sense of questioning of some of the inherited parochial system and points to parallel and indeed new patterns of ministry and church life. It tackles with great care and in detail the perception of the Diocese as viewed from the parishes. It admits that there has been a gap in communication fuelling some misconceptions. The Report lays to rest the myth that exists in some dioceses, where parishes feel that they are being almost "robbed" by the diocese in whatever method of assessment is made for diocesan costs, including those costs for the emoluments of the clergy. This exercise is a serious step in allowing people to identify more clearly as part of a diocesan family and not simply members of a parish.

In very large dioceses, the sense of diocese as a unit is often lost, and the bishop becomes a remote figure, through no fault of his or her own. Experience within Ireland would prove this point, even though we do not have really large dioceses. The larger the diocese, the less sense of diocese exists. This is one of the reasons that people sometimes cry out for more bishops, not fewer. It would seem that Cork, Cloyne and Ross is an ideal size – small enough to be "family", large enough to provide the variety of ministry, both parochial and sector, which can meet the challenges of today. The theological and ecclesiological balance between parochial congregations and the diocese personified in the bishop is to be explored and celebrated.

The overall message of this report seems to be to think beyond "parish" and to explore what it means to be together as "diocese" serving the Kingdom of God – part of the "Jesus Movement" – a dynamic model of church signifying a living, growing body, facing change and living with change. This was similarly expressed many years ago by a former Dean of Cork, Archbishop Henry McAdoo, who insisted that the church must not be seen as an organisation, but rather as a living organism. This is surely how a future can be charted with confidence.