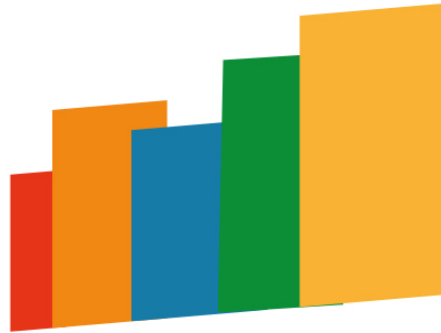


United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross



Charting a Future with **Confidence**



Lent Course 2019

**The Very Reverend Christopher Peters
Dean of Ross**

BISHOP'S FOREWORD

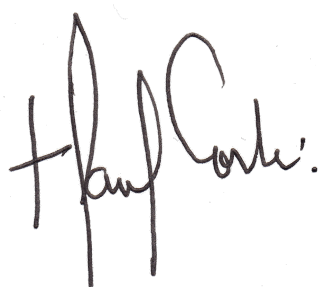
As a Diocese we set out on the path of *Charting a Future with Confidence* in 2014. A long period of prayerful reflection, practical engagement, consultation and research followed. The first report called *Moving on with Confidence* was published in 2017.

At every step along the way it has been emphasised that this would not be an instant recipe or a magic wand, but rather, that it is a process.

The process continues as a way to shape our thinking and decision-making as Christian disciples in Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

I am immensely grateful, therefore, to the Dean of Ross, the Very Reverend Christopher Peters, for writing this Lent Course for use in the Diocese as our journey continues. I thank him and I commend his work to you all.

I hope and pray that this Lent Course for 2019 will assist us all as we continue to seek faithfully to chart a future, under God, with confidence.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'H. J. Carr', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'H' and a distinct 'C' at the end.

January 2019



The Charting a Future with Confidence Prayer

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.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION.



This Lent course has been prepared to encourage engagement within parishes of the process of Charting a Future with Confidence which was introduced at the Diocesan Synod of 2014.

The course is intended to promote discussion and will take different forms depending on the local context and the character of the group involved. There are no set outcomes envisioned or correct answers to the discussion topics. An important principle of any such exercise is that all contributions should be heard with equal respect.

The course follows meetings which took place around the diocese initiated by four groups which each covered a different area of concern.

In 2017 a comprehensive report of the four groups' deliberations was published. Copies are available for anyone who wishes to study it.

In this course, there are four sessions each focussing on a particular aspect of the report. The final session is for each group to use as it wishes. Groups may wish to gather for a service or to work at drawing together the main themes and ideas which have emerged during the course to present in a report for the whole union of parishes.

The four topics are:

1. Planning for Growth.
2. Worship.
3. Ministry and Spiritual Formation.
4. Clustering –Parish organisation.

On behalf of the steering group I hope that this course proves a useful and encouraging exercise.

Christopher Peters
January 2019

AUTHOR'S NOTES TO LEADERS

Helping parishioners to engage with 'Charting a Future with Confidence' is a challenge. This Lent Course is designed to help that process. It had a trial outing during Lent 2018 in Ross Union of Parishes and while it only attracted a relatively small number it prompted much discussion and some useful ideas. At the end of the course I produced a report which I published in our parish magazine to reach a wider audience.

I have produced it as a framework which should be adapted for local use according to context and the character, size etc. of your particular group. No doubt there are topics that you will wish to add, to handle differently or to omit. I believe it is important to emphasise to the group that there are no set outcomes envisioned or correct answers to the discussion topics. An important principle of any such exercise is that all contributions should be heard with equal respect. I found it helpful to use a flip chart to record contributions and agreed ideas/ proposals.

There are leaflets for participants which again you may want to use as you see appropriate. The framework for each session is: Welcome and introduction, opening worship focussed on Bible reading, input from the report and discussion questions. Each session ends with prayer and there is scope to develop some creative prayer ideas there.

There are four topics which leaves the possibility of a final meeting to use in whatever way you wish. It might be appropriate to conclude the course with a service or a session drawing together the main themes and ideas which have emerged during the course to present in a report for the whole union of parishes.

The four topics are:

1. Planning for Growth.
2. Worship.
3. Ministry and Spiritual Formation.
4. Clustering –Parish organisation.

There is much more in the report on each topic than I have referenced in these materials and of course you may well want to use more of this material.

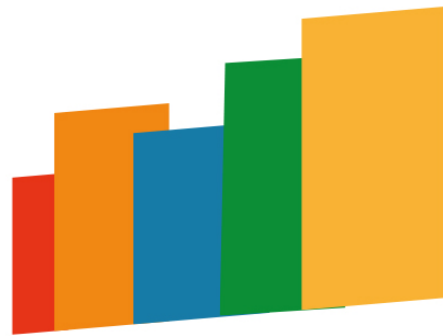
However you choose to use this material, I hope that it stimulates lively discussion and helps participants to develop their vision for Charting a Future with Confidence.

Note concerning Scripture quotations:

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LENT COURSE 2019

SESSION I



Charting a Future with **Confidence**



Planning for Growth

1. Planning for Growth

Welcome and Introduction

Bible Reading

Acts 6: 1-7

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. ² And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait at tables. ³ Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, ⁴ while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.' ⁵ What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷ The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Matthew 2: 21-22

²¹ 'No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. ²² And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.'

The Report.

Page 34ff. (Group : Models of Church)

'Our vision is (for) an inclusive, all-age church...

- ☐ That is a community of disciples following Jesus
- ☐ Where all people, by virtue of their 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.

Discussion

- 'An inclusive, all-age church.' What do we understand that to mean in our context?
- Which four of the eight points above would we pick out as most relevant for our parish/ union?
- What does 'growth' mean for the church and for the individual Christian?
- Is structural change in parish and diocese necessary before growth can occur?
- If we had unlimited funds, what one thing would we like to be different in our union five years from now?
- Without any extra funds, what one thing could be changed over the next 12 months?

Report

Page 31 (Group : Models of Church)

'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:

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.'

Discussion

Which, if any, of the factors identified are significant in our context?

Prayer

Arising from our discussion, what would you like to pray for our union of parishes?

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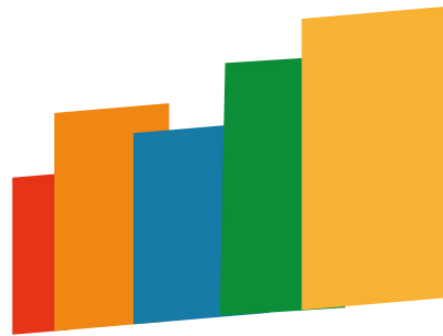
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What is the most significant point you will take from our discussion?

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LENT COURSE 2019

SESSION II



Charting a Future with **Confidence**



Worship

2. Worship

Welcome and Introduction

Bible Reading

Psalm 96

¹ O sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.

² **Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.**

³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvellous works among all the peoples.

⁴ **For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.**

⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.

⁶ **Honour and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.**

⁷ Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

⁸ **Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts.**

⁹ Worship the Lord in holy splendour;
tremble before him, all the earth.

¹⁰ **Say among the nations, 'The Lord is king!
The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.
He will judge the peoples with equity.'**

¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

¹² **let the field exult, and everything in it.**

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy

¹³ before the Lord; for he is coming,
for he is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with his truth.

John 4:23-24

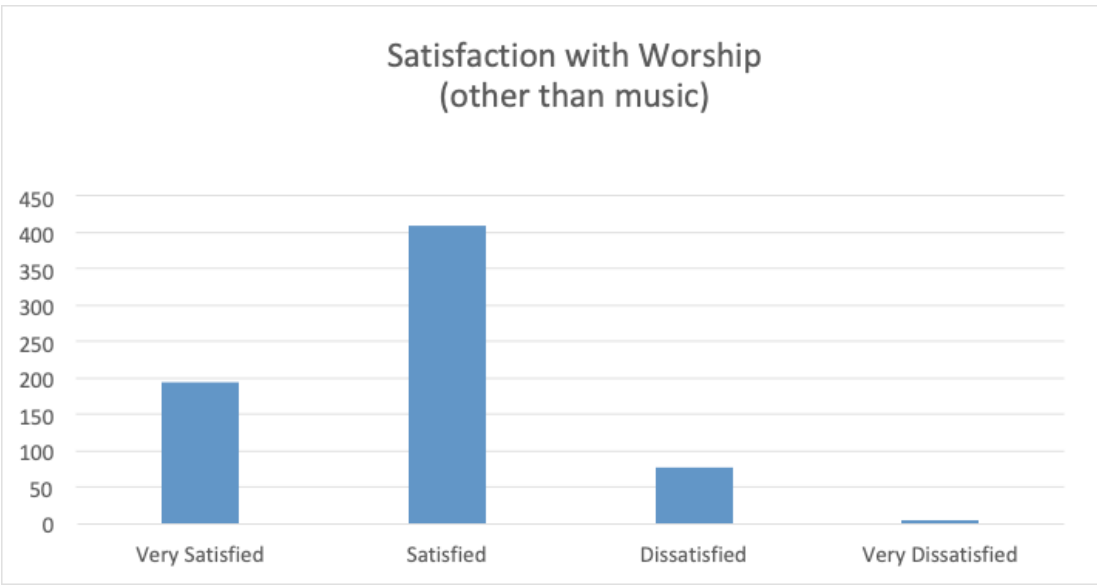
²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.'

The Report

Page 76ff (Group 3: The current situation in the diocese)

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.



‘Parishioners were asked about their general attitude to the worship in their parish, the styles of worship and the music used in 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 speak to younger people.

Representatives of most parishes expressed positive feelings about the music used in worship with a smaller number seeking either different kinds of music or the provision of better trained musicians.’ (Page 77/ 78)

Discussion

- Do the results from the whole diocese reflect your experience?
- Can you think of a specific service which made a significant impact on you? What kind of service was it? What impact did it make on you? Are there any common features from the different responses in the group?
- What factors contribute positively to our 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 to develop their worship?

Prayer

Arising from our discussion, what would you like to pray for our union of parishes?

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If you would like to, write a prayer which you might read out during the prayer time at the end of the meeting.

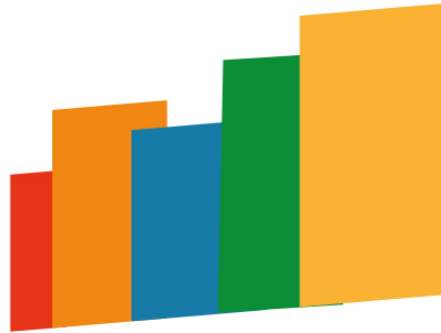
Action

How can I contribute more in worship to help build up the church?



LENT COURSE 2019

SESSION III



Charting a Future with **Confidence**



**Ministry ~ Called to Serve
Spiritual Formation ~ Called
to Discipleship**

3. Ministry – Called to serve Spiritual Formation – called to discipleship

Welcome and Introduction

Bible Reading

Ephesians 4:7-13

⁷ But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.'

⁹ (When it says, 'He ascended', what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Ministry – Called to serve

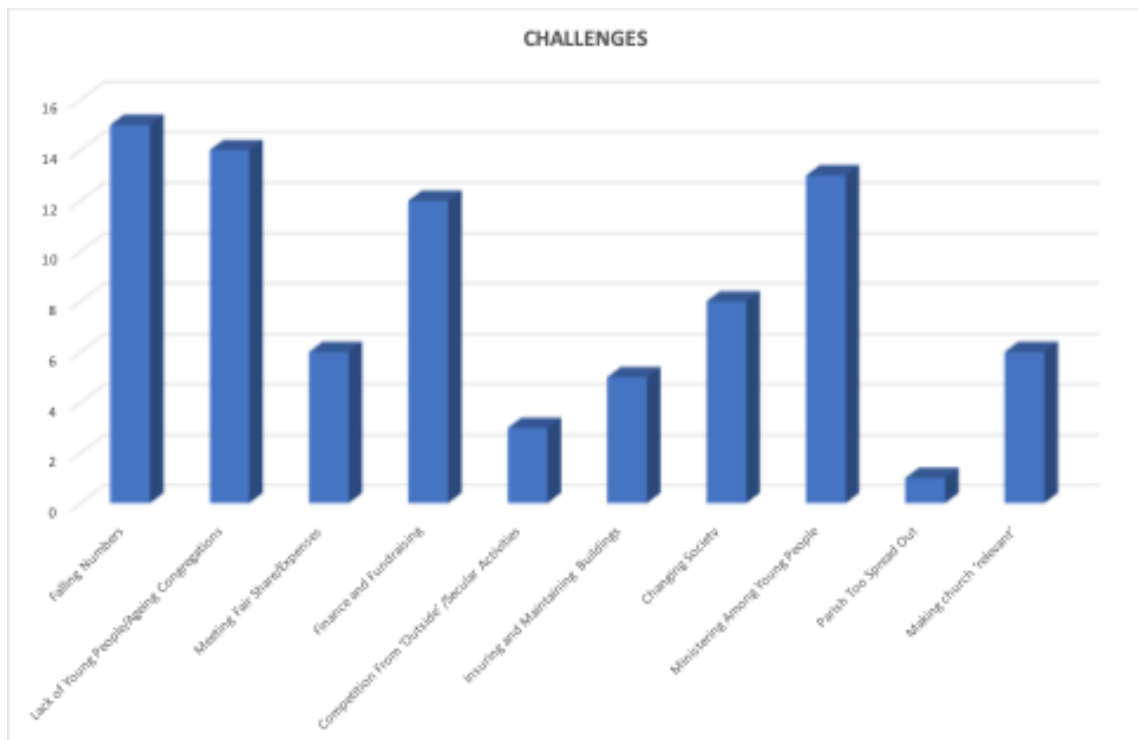
The Service of Holy Baptism

Christ claims you for his own.
Receive the sign of the cross.
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.**

Discussion

- What does our baptism tell us about discipleship and service?

- What are the challenges in the parishes? Report Page 83 (Group 3. The current situation in the diocese)



- What are the three most significant challenges we face as a union of parishes?
- Do we have the resources (personnel and finance) within the parish to address those challenges?
- What opportunities for ministry exist already at diocesan and parochial levels?
- Is our parish ready to accept a greater level of 'lay ministry'?
- What opportunities for service/ ministry exist beyond the church?
- What opportunities are there for us to RECEIVE ministry?

Spiritual Formation – Called to Discipleship

Report

Page 39 (Group 1. Models of Church)

'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 in 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 towards wholeness in Christ. There can be no single, prescribed route for a parish to take. Growth in understanding is one aspect of spiritual formation, as delivered, for instance

through various programmes. 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?’

Discussion

- What do we understand by words like ‘Spiritual Formation’ and ‘Discipleship’?
- 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?

See also Report Page 103 (Group 4. Sustainability)

Reflection

THE COMMISSION (Confirmation Service)

Those who are baptized are called to worship and serve God.
Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and,
whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you proclaim by word and example the
good news of God in Christ?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all people,
loving your neighbour as yourself?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you 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?

With the help of God, I will.

Prayer

Arising from our discussion, what would you like to pray for our union of parishes?

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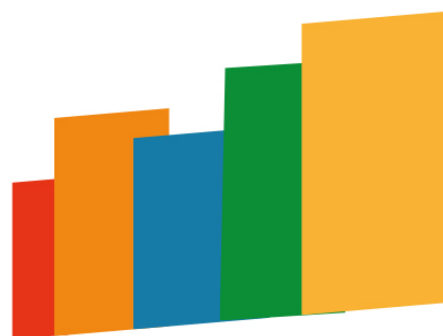
If you would like to, write a prayer which you might read out during the prayer time at the end of the meeting.

Personal Reflection

- ★ Are there new spheres of service and ministry that God may be calling you to explore?

LENT COURSE 2019

SESSION IV



Charting a Future with **Confidence**



**Clustering ~
Parish Organisation**

4. Clustering ~ Parish organisation

Welcome and Introduction

Bible Reading

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

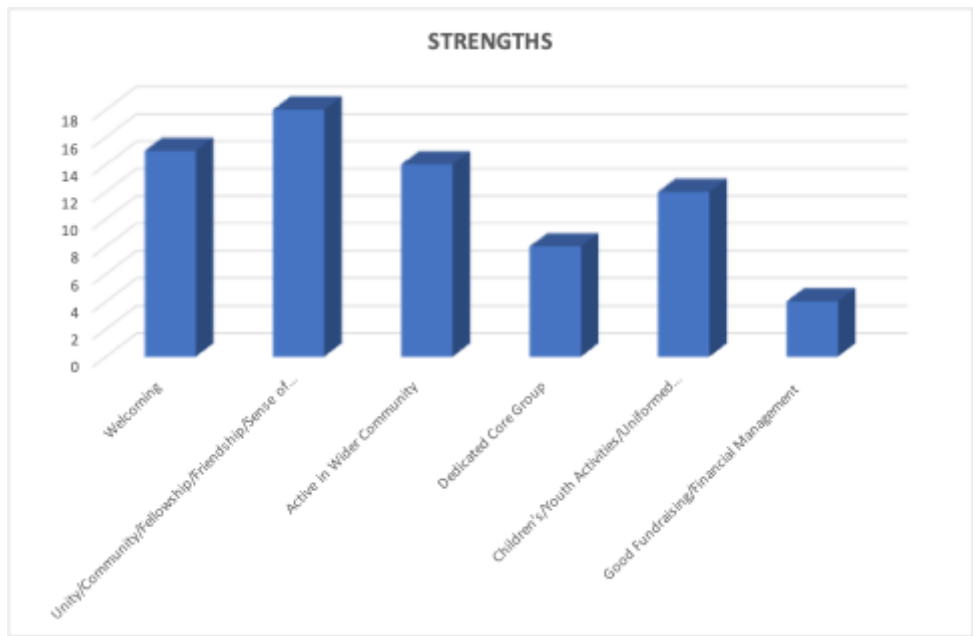
The Parish system

- ☐ The parish system has served us well...
 - ☐ What are its strengths?
 - ☐ What are its weaknesses?

The Report

Page 8. (Group 3: The current situation in the diocese)

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



Do they???

Sustainability

Report Page 89ff (Group 4. Sustainability)

At present:

- ☐ 7,184 parishioners in the united dioceses.
- ☐ One open church building for every 91 parishioners
- ☐ One full-time priest for every 299 parishioners
- ☐ 4,254 churchgoers (59.2%)
- ☐ One open church building for every 58 churchgoers.

Discussion

- Do the figures suggest that the way the diocese is configured at the moment is sustainable?

Sector Ministry/ Chaplaincies

Discussion

- What examples exist at present?
- Are there other areas of ministry which could be focussed on?

Clusters

Report Pages 27/28. 40. (Group 1; Models of Church.)

- ☐ Main focus. Not administration but: mission, worship, discipleship, support
- ☐ Ministry teams: clergy (full-time, OLM's), lay church workers, trained volunteers

Discussion

- What would be gained and what lost with clustering parishes?

Prayer

We pray for the church and for all who serve to build up the Body of Christ.

God our Father, you give us gifts that we may work together in the service of your Son:

Bless those who lead, that they may be firm in faith, yet humble before you:

Jesus, Lord of your Church

in your mercy hear us.

Bless those who teach, that they may increase our understanding and be open to your word for them:

Jesus, Lord of your Church

in your mercy hear us.

Bless those who minister healing, that they may bring wholeness to others, yet know your healing in themselves:

Jesus, Lord of your Church

in your mercy hear us.

Bless those through whom you speak, that they may proclaim your word in power, yet have their ears open to your gentle whisper:

Jesus, Lord of your Church

in your mercy hear us.

Bless those who work in your world that they may live for you, fulfil your purposes, and seek your kingdom first in the complexity of their daily lives.

Jesus, Lord of your Church

in your mercy hear us.

Bless those who feel they have no gifts and are not valued, and those who are powerless by the world's standards, that they may share their experience of the work of your Spirit.

Lord of the Church

hear our prayer, and make us one in heart and mind to serve you in Christ our Lord. Amen.

Arising from our discussion, what would you like to pray for our union of parishes?

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If you would like to, write a prayer which you might read out during the prayer time at the end of the meeting.

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