



Facilitated Event Summary

Vicariate: Vicariate: Group II (Newcastle (Maghera), Kilkeel (Upper Mourne), Castlewellan (Kilmegan), Kilcoo, Loughinisland, Dundrum & Tyrella, Drumaroad & Clanvaraghen, Lower Mourne

Vicar Forane: Fr. Denis McKinlay

Date: 14th May 2012

Venue: St. Malachy's Primary School, Castlewellan

Speaker: Pat Mullins

On Monday 14th May 2012 people from 7 of the Parishes of this Vicariate gathered in St. Malachy's Primary School, Castlewellan for a Living Church event. There was no group from Newcastle. The purpose of the evening was set out and agreed as follows,

- To raise awareness of Living Church
- To begin a process of discernment for our Vicariate
- To pray together and take inspiration from the words of our guest speaker
- To prioritise areas of actions for the Parishes gathered

After introductions the evening began with a period of relaxation and guided prayer using Psalm 126 as our guide. The facilitators encouraged the people gathered there to reflect on the fact that God was, indeed, in the work that they were doing and to ask of themselves, 'why am I here'?

At this stage we invited the people to gather in groups of two's and three's to discuss their answers to that question. We further asked the people to attempt to summarise their motivation in one word which could be shared with the group. There was great energy in this task and in feedback we heard a range of reason why people had gathered. Some are recorded below;

Curiosity

Loyalty

Worried

Hope

Duty

Evolution

Care

God's will

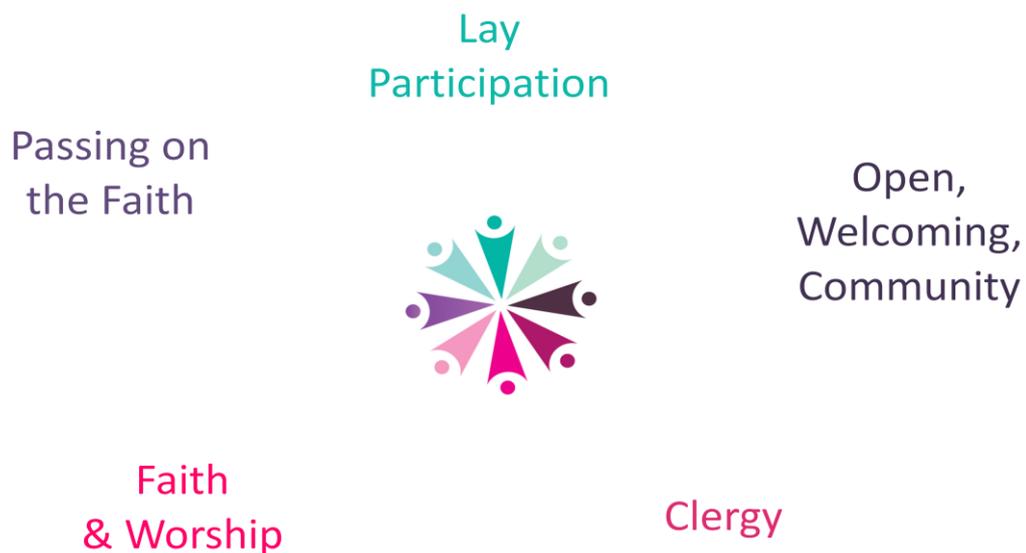
Faith

We acknowledged each word as it was said and agreed that these words would act as our motivation for moving forward tonight and in the time to come.

The Living Church Team then introduced themselves and spoke about the agenda for the evening. Paula McKeown spoke about the Living Church project to date. She spoke of the Listening Events, the Living Church Report and gave a sense to those gathered that **'Living Church seeks to release the energy of the Spirit at work within each and every one of us and listen to what the Spirit is saying to us. In this way, we will not create a Living Church but reveal it'**.

We reminded the people of the five core areas of Living Church as called for by the people in the Listening Events:

The 5 Themes of Living Church



A this point, we introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Pat Mullins. Pat spoke of what a Living Church would be like. He skilfully used the Gospel readings for this week to illuminate what he felt God was trying to say to us about the Living Church.



Quoting from the Gospel of John, he told us that there will be no Living Church without birth, baptism and rebirth into the Way of Jesus. He told us that just as Jesus tells us He is the bread of Life, so it is through Him that the Living Church will be nourished. Just as Jesus is the Good Shepherd, so we are all being called to be good shepherds to each other in the Church and to those who are outside the Church.

Pat spoke of his time working in a vineyard where he first truly understood what Jesus was saying to us about seeing Him as the vine. Pat told us that he was struck by the fact that at the start of the season the vine is stripped back to one old piece of wood, firmly rooted in the ground and from which each year grows the new branches on which the fruit will grow. Without the constant of the old vine and its access to the nutrients of the soil, the new branches will not grow and there will be no fruit. Equally, without the branches there will be no fruit. Pat felt that we are called to be the new branches in our time and that we can only produce fruit that lasts by connecting to and growing from Jesus, the old vine. What a beautiful image. Further, he told us that living a sacramental life will make us living branches.

Pat went on to speak of the Doctrine of the indwelling of the holy spirit, so fundamental in the conversion of Blessed Cardinal Newman. He spoke of the sanctifying spirit of God being at work in all the people, but of that special Spirit of Regeneration (the indwelling Holy Spirit) that dwells in a special way only in baptised Christian people. He described this Spirit as the 'sap' which flows through us as living branches.

The way to stay living branches of the true vine is to keep God's commandments and not to get into seeing spirituality and the sacraments as two separate things- as so many have done before but especially after the child abuse scandals of the 1990's onwards. It is when we are keeping God's commands, living the sacramental life that we can experience the true joy of being in communion with a God who loves us. Pat went further saying that to keep God's commandments means living a life of services- 'washing the feet'- and that this is a key part of a Living Church: everyone will have a role to play in providing Pastoral Charity.

Pat concluded saying that a Living Church is a loving Church, which works in the communities, with all of us as good shepherds willing to 'wash the feet' of our neighbours (especially those who have left or never knew the Church).

Following Pat's talk, we moved on to ask the people to gather in groups of two or three and to ask, 'what struck me about the talk?' They then wrote their answers on paper provided and stuck them in a 'gallery area'. They made for a very colourful, interactive and interesting way to gather feedback. Some of the key themes that struck people are recorded here.

Learn to serve others

Get involved

Parish Council to involve all
Parishes

Christ the Vine

A loving Church = a Living
Church- in that order

Need for sacramental life or
no fruit

Choice- servant of God or
servant of Sin

We are the branches

Friends not servants

Church coming to life

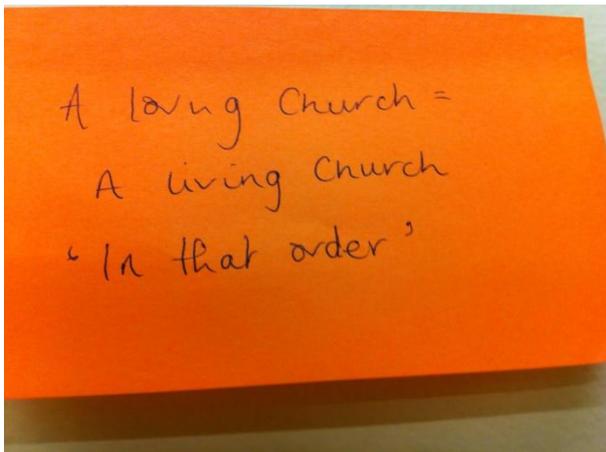
The Spirit works differently
in those baptised in the
Faith

The image of the
vine/branches

Love of neighbour

You have to be humble to
wash someone else's feet

Sense of Holy Spirit flowing
through me



The people seemed to be drawn to reflect on the image of the True Vine; the Holy Spirit flowing through all baptised and the need to serve others in our Church and communities. They also were drawn to the love we need to reveal the Living Church. There was a sense of searching for what to do next and a desire for the kind of Living/ Loving Church that Pat talked about. It certainly was a talk that spoke to people in many ways.

Following a short break, we re-convened for the second part of the evening where we set the task of seeing how we can create action points for Parishes to manageably move towards achieving some of the above. The people were asked to take part in a two part task:

1. To arrange themselves into appropriate Parish groups and discuss the 5 themes of Living Church. They were then asked to vote for their 'top two' themes in terms of how they felt their Parish needed to develop.
2. To set action points for each of these two areas- providing a contact name for Living Church and some suggestions of how Living Church could help.

We encouraged the people to hold the ideas they came up with 'lightly'. We acknowledged that, once back in the Parishes, the people may decide to go with these areas and action points or not, according to what they felt was best. As such, it is important to note that the following plans do not (necessarily) represent definitive Parish plans. The important point is to have gained the experience of what the process of Parish planning is like.

There were seven groups for this task with each group representing a Parish. The people took to the task with great energy and the results of the exercise are recorded below:

Upper Mourne:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Passing on the Faith	Facebook page for the Parish	Not at present thank you
	Youth Mission	
	Local Adult Education	
	Change times of GAA training	
Open Welcoming Community	Transparent Finances	
	Outreach- why have people stopped attending Mass?	
	Parish Council	
	Foreign National Integration	
	Parish Centre	

Drumaroad and Clanvagharan:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	Form a Parish Pastoral Council with help from Living Church Group	Training and Information in relation to Pastoral Councils
Clergy	To give support to the Clergy. In the absence of a PP, help is needed with the general running of the Parish	

St. Macartan's Loughinisland:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	Pastoral Council Communication	Training and information on providing a Pastoral Council
Clergy	Offer support and make an effort to find out where the Priest needs help and support and where you can offer help	

Dundrum and Tyrella:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	Prepare people for participation Draw on experiences of others	
Open Welcoming Community	Exploring ways of being welcoming	

Kilmegan:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	Readers Offertory Procession and music Children's Liturgy-helpers!	Give us a plan for a Pastoral Council
Open Welcoming Community	Parish Centre- social gathering Regular meetings- contacts (what happens elsewhere) Pastoral Council- How? Young People- John Paul II Awards	

Lower Mourne:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	Pinpoint people who would be willing to serve on a Parish Pastoral Council	Any help that can be given to achieve this

St. Malachy's Kilcoo:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Passing on the Faith	Follow up meeting from tonight Inform Parishioners of intended meeting	
Lay Participation	Invitation to Parishioners to consider participation in the Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist	

Conclusion and Recommendations

The above information gives an interesting insight into where the energy lies in terms of individual Parish development. It can be said that the participation of the lay people in the life of the Church was the strongest theme of the night. The action points reflect different approaches to making this happen- from Parish Pastoral Councils, to attracting more people to act as Ministers of the Word, to reaching out to young people. This theme may form the basis for joint working in this Vicariate area.

We welcome the requests from Parishes for support from Living Church and will gather requests from across the Diocese with a view to establishing a training and support programme to meet the needs expressed. In the mean time Living Church is happy, if asked, to return to the Vicariate/ Parish

to facilitate another meeting where the action points discussed herein can be developed into meaningful action plans for each Parish

Each Parish gathered there in St. Malachy's now has a sense of the direction that could be taken in developing their Parish. We would encourage each Parish to work to build on the suggestions of the night. We recommend that this report and the information gathered is shared with each individual Parish and those gathered on the night- perhaps through their contact people. It could also form the basis for further discussion at Vicariate meetings. The report summary will be available for all to read on our website. It can be downloaded at <http://www.downandconnor.org/livingchurch/may-vicariate-event>

This was a very lively and prayerful evening which saw a sizeable group of God's people come together to help move this Vicariate forward. In terms of the purpose of the evening we can say that we achieved what we set out to achieve. It is our hope that the evening was a realistic and hopeful glimpse into the work that lies ahead. Our guest speaker, Pat Mullins, added to the evening with his inspirational talk and the people participated enthusiastically in the group work. The Living Church Team offer sincere thanks to all those involved in organising the event.

Jim Deeds

Training and Facilitation Officer, Living Church