



## Facilitated Event Summary

**Vicariate:** Group IX (Downpatrick, Saul & Ballee, Strangford (Kilclief), Dunsford & Ardglass,

Killough (Bright), Crossgar (Kilmore), Killyleagh, Saintfield & Carrickmannon)

**Vicar Forane:** Fr. Sean Rogan

**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012

**Venue:** St. Mary's High School

**Speaker:** Sean Goan

On Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012 people from 7 of the Parishes of this Vicariate gathered in St. Mary's High School, Downpatrick. There was no group from Saintfield. 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;

Progression	God	Faith	Re-connection
Hope	Searching	Curiosity	Togetherness
Love	Mission	Community	Future

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



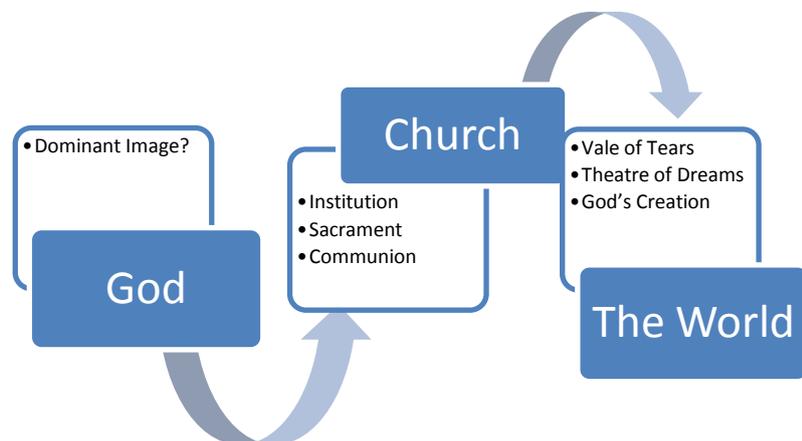
A this point, we introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Mr. Sean Goan. The title for Sean's talk came from 1Peter and was, 'The reason for the hope that is in you'. He told us that the letter



was written to a group of people a generation after Christ's death and resurrection when he told them that they needed to be ready with an answer to the questions others would pose to them about why they believed in a God revealed through a crucified man (this was radically counter-cultural to the people of the time- and perhaps still is). Sean then challenged us to think about how we saw God and where we found reasons for the hope that

was in us. One way for us to do this, he told us, was to think in terms of 'mental models', those ways we describe and understand concepts. He presented us with this diagram and explained that how we understood God will impact on how we see the Church and in turn both of these will impact on how we see the world and our lives in the world.

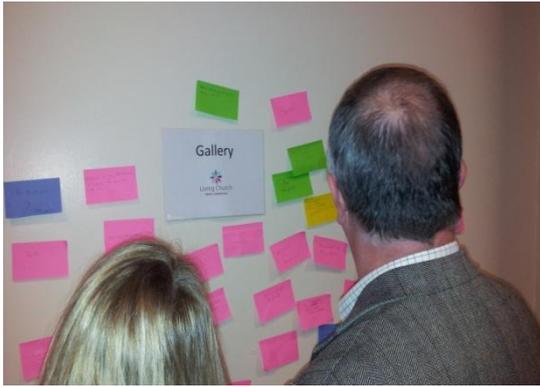
He explained that this was a very challenging task to undertake and may involve us re-evaluating how we see God. He offered us a mental model of a God who loves all of the world- everyone; a Church which is needs to be built on community, love, prayer spirituality, outreach



to others and faith formation and; a world where every small action we can perform for God and His Church counts- even if we think we are insignificant.

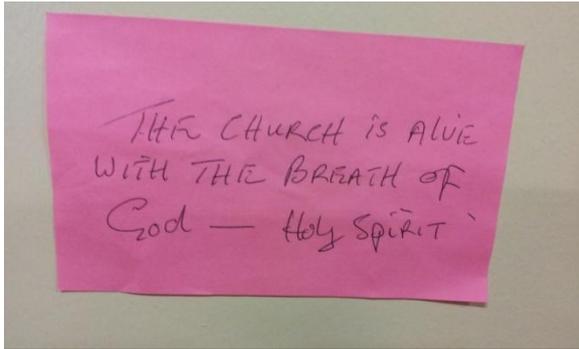
Sean went on to quote from Teilhard de Chardin who tells us that we are Spiritual beings on a human journey, and not the reverse. Sean affirmed for us that we are in essence spiritual and our sense of this comes from our Post Vatican II rediscovery of the scriptures- not as a history book but as a theology book. He described the scriptures as a 'family album' and like any family album if we get to know the people in the album we can learn a lot about our own lives and history. He challenged us to believe that when Luke wrote about Pentecost for example, he was not just describing an event 2000 years ago but he was letting us know that Pentecost is now and that we are made alive by the breath (Spirit) of God.

He finished by encouraging us to look to the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:42-45) for a description for what a Living Church is like.



Following Sean'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' for all to see. They made for a very colourful, interactive and interesting way to gather feedback. There were many pieces of paper in the gallery and there were a lot of key themes that arose for people. Some of these are recorded below:





The people seemed to be drawn to the idea of looking at 'mental models' of Church and of understanding that the Holy Spirit was at work in our lives and our Church. Some people felt that their faith was affirmed through hearing the words Sean spoke. Others reflected on the nature of the scriptures not as a history or science book but as a theology book. As such, some were drawn to reflect on their need to read the bible.

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. The people took to the task with great energy and the results of the exercise are recorded below:

**Saul and Ballee:**

<b>Living Church Area</b>	<b>Points for Immediate Action</b>	<b>Request from Living Church</b>
Passing on the Faith	Involvement of more people of all ages  Pastoral Council to set up group for teenagers to meet	Living Church come down and talk to Pastoral Council  Living Church give ideas on what can be done- examples
Faith and Worship	To grow from above	

**Killyleagh:**

<b>Living Church Area</b>	<b>Points for Immediate Action</b>	<b>Request from Living Church</b>
Clergy	We want our priest to accept help from the lay people	To help us learn how to facilitate our own listening process within the Parish
Lay Participation		

**Dunsford and Ardglass:**

<b>Living Church Area</b>	<b>Points for Immediate Action</b>	<b>Request from Living Church</b>
Passing on the Faith	Contact Parents- First Communion, Confirmation  Meeting in September of interested parents for Sacraments	Train Lay People  Parish Pastoral Council Training  Request a facilitator- where do we go from here?

**Killough:**

<b>Living Church Area</b>	<b>Points for Immediate Action</b>	<b>Request from Living Church</b>
Lay Participation	Formation of a Pastoral Council	Further meetings o help move towards formation of a Parish Pastoral Council



## Strangford and Kilclief:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Clergy	Approach Fr. Colm with reference to more quality time for himself	To assist us in acquiring our points as noted
	Formation of a Pastoral Council	
Passing on the Faith	Family prayer in home Reference: Statue of Our Lady to be brought back- to be rotated round homes  Young people of secondary education to participate in Mass readings	

## 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 Passing on the Faith and Lay Participation in the Church were the three strongest themes for this Vicariate group and may form a basis for moving ahead together.

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. Mary's High School 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, Sean Goan, 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.

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Jim Deeds

Training and Facilitation Officer, Living Church