



Facilitated Event Summary

Vicariate: North Belfast Pastoral Area (St. Patrick's, Holy Family, Sacred Heart, St. Vincent de Paul, Holy Cross)

Vicar Forane: Fr. Michael Sheehan

Date: 3rd May 2012

Venue: Landsdowne Hotel

Speaker: Tony Hanna

Summary:

On Thursday 3rd May 2012 70 people from the above 5 Parishes gathered in the Landsdowne Hotel in Belfast for a Living Church Facilitated Event. The people had been invited by letters sent out by Fr. Michael Sheehan, VF, and we would reflect that the good number of people in attendance was, at least in part, due to this very individual and personal form of invitation.

In preparation for the event Living Church facilitators met with Fr. Michael Sheehan and agreed the purpose of the evening as follows:

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

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 the Pastoral team were beginning and to ask of themselves, 'why am I here'?

At this stage we invited the people to gather in two's and three's to discuss why they were there and 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. For example, some of the words we heard were,

Faith,	Angry,
Build,	Overdue,
Desperation,	Belief,
Hope,	Communication

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.

Paula McKeown and Jim Deeds then spoke about the Living Church project to date. We 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:

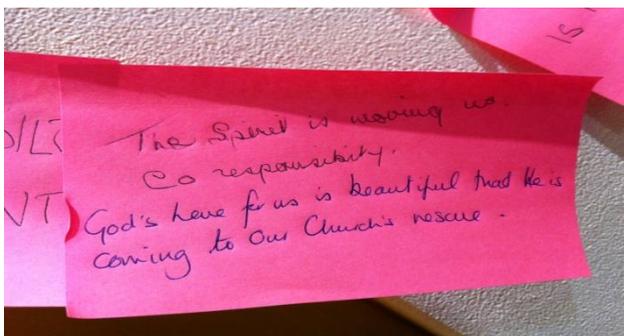
The 5 Themes of Living Church



A this point, we introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Mr. Tony Hanna, asking the people to allow the words from Tony to sink in and in particular to see how his words resonated with them when they thought of the themes of Living Church.

Tony proceeded to give us a very interesting talk that drew on his experience of working within an area that has clustered Parishes. He spoke of the increasing need for the Church to look at new structures that took account of the decrease in the numbers of priests, but also of the rights and responsibilities of all those who are baptised Priest, Prophet and King. He offered a challenge to the lay people in the room, suggesting that we have not been given the opportunities to develop our 'Theological Literacy'. Similarly, he acknowledged that a change in church structures which welcomes lay involvement as key was a challenge for some clergy. However, he asked us to trust in Providence and for the priest present to believe that their journey in the church was actually from the 'apex to the centre'. His talk was wide ranging, interesting, at times challenging at other times funny. All in all, he spoke very well and the people responded generously to him.

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. The people seemed to be drawn to reflect on co-responsibility in the church; the exploration of new structures; the need for all to engage in ongoing formation and training and; a love of God.



Co-responsibility
An awakening Church
Hopeful Challenge
A new Church in Jesus
The faith alive today
Theological Literacy- a need for education
Enthusiasm
Living
The spirit of Vatican II

Following tea and coffee, we re-convened for the second part of the evening where we set the task of seeing how we can move the development of the Pastoral area forward. Fr. Michael gave us the vision for the Pastoral area in North Belfast. Following this input, the people were asked to take part in a two part task:

1. To arrange themselves into groups according to their interest in one particular area of the five Living Church themes. We encouraged them to discern how they felt God was calling them to one area.
2. Once in that group to consider how they felt they could be involved in taking that area forward.

The options the people had for moving forward were as people who would be interested in one of the following:

Pastoral Area Work

Parish Work

Person of Prayer & Support

So, for example, we would see that a certain person is interested in moving Faith and Worship on and wishes to be involved at Pastoral Area Work level. Or, another person may be interested in creating an Open, Welcome Community and wishes to be involved at the Parish level. We have collated the information gathered and present it below according to the three areas of work above:

The information gathered has been sent back to the Parishes via their Parish Priest. No personal information will be published on our website. Please contact your Parish regarding how to access the full report.

There are various ways the above information can be used. It gives us a sense of where the people gathered saw their skills being used and also in terms of where the energy in the Pastoral Area lies. For example, Faith and Worship and Passing on the Faith are two areas where a lot of people put their names. This tells us that there is a great desire for movement on these areas. It also tells us that should the Pastoral team (or individual Parishes) wish to move to develop these areas, there are people willing to help co-ordinate at Pastoral level, work at Parish level and pray for the success of the project.

It also begins to develop a database of people who can be called on to support Church activities in general. The people who put their names and contact details down did so in the knowledge (hope?) that they would be called on.

Specifically, we know that there are 28 people who have put their name down as being interested in working at Pastoral Area level.

Conclusion and Outcomes

As part of the conclusion to the evening, and before a closing prayer we set a date for a second Living Church event: **14th June 2012 at 7 p.m.**, venue to be confirmed. Those people who have indicated that they are happy to work at Pastoral Area level will be invited back to a facilitated session in order to progress further towards setting up a Pastoral Area leadership team or council.

This was a very lively and prayerful evening which saw a sizeable group of God's people come together to help move this Pastoral Area forward. In terms of the purpose of the evening we can say that we achieved what we set out to achieve. Our guest speaker, Tony Hanna, 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 Fr. Michael Sheehan, Patricia Shearer and all those involved in organising the event.

Jim Deeds

Training and Facilitation Officer, Living Church