



## Facilitated Event Summary

**Vicariate:** Group IX (St Mary's on the Hill, Carrickfergus, St. James', Whitehouse, St Gerard's, Greencastle, Ballyclare & Ballygowan)

**Vicar Forane:** Fr. John Forsythe

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012

**Venue:** St. Bernard's Parish Pastoral Centre

**Speaker:** Martin Kennedy

On Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012 people from 6 of the Parishes of this Vicariate gathered in St. Bernard's Parish Pastoral Centre. There was no group from Ballyclare and Ballygowan. 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;

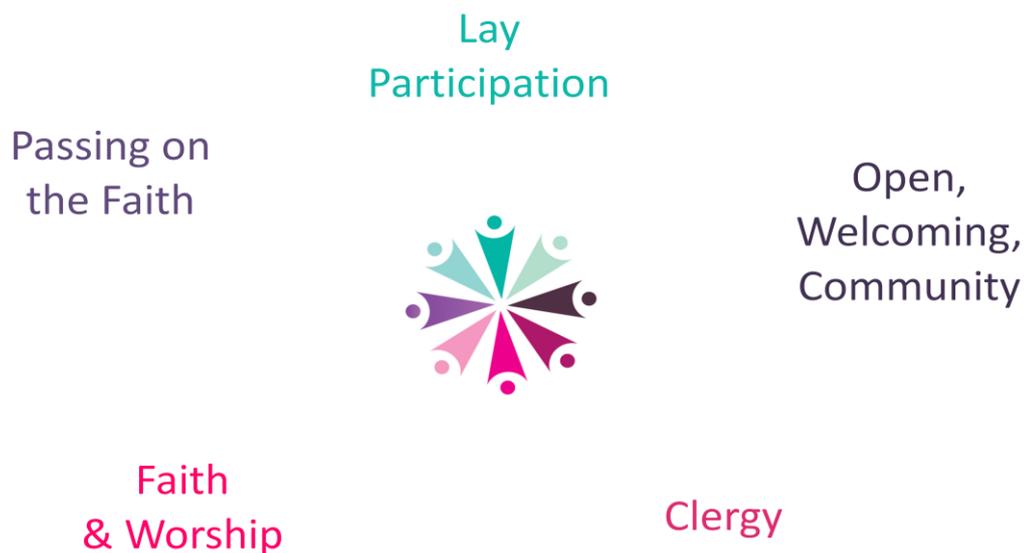
<b>Build</b>	<b>God</b>	<b>Faith</b>
<b>Hope</b>	<b>Excitement</b>	<b>Curiosity</b>
<b>Love</b>	<b>Caring</b>	<b>Involvement</b>

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.

Jim Deeds and Paula McKeown from Living Church then introduced themselves and spoke about the agenda for the evening. Paula 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. Martin Kennedy, asking the people to allow the words from Martin to sink in and in particular to see how his words resonated with them when they thought of the themes of Living Church.

Martin spoke with great energy and humour. He began by offering a challenge to all of us who are involved in the Church. He offered that a lot of the time we did not look too happy! His challenge was that given we had Good News, we should look like it was working for us. He went on to offer us a model for understanding the levels of involvement different people of faith had in the Church. He told us that one group could be called the C's. C's are people who get involved in meetings, in organising and in courses. He suggested that we who had gathered that evening were mainly C's. He then went on to say there was a second group, he called the B's. These people went to Mass regularly, prayed regularly but would not in general come to meetings or get involved in C type of groups. He completed his model by saying that there was a group called the A's. These people are disconnected from the Parish. They rarely go to Mass, except for Christmas and Easter or weddings and funerals. He reminded us that these were also good people and commented that God hadn't deserted these people nor vice-versa and indeed he felt that God's spirit was working across the A's, B's and C's. His challenge for us gathered was that we needed to think 'out of the box', as C's, if we are to get those A's and B's involved in the Church or just to reach them about the Good News. He reflected his experience of organising alternative ways to engage people rather than inviting them to a meeting. He spoke about making a DVD and holding information mornings in schools for families for example.

His second theme was that of Co-responsibility. He began by saying that the Priest in a Parish could not be expected to run a Parish on his own- it was unfair. He went on to say that the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) was the structure whereby a Priest could be supported and lay people could claim their right to co-responsibility. He described his experiences of being on a PPC and offered a six step method for working in a PPC:

- Gather information about an issue
- Share the information at the PPC
- Clarify the information
- Pray about the issue at hand
- Hear all voices in the PPC- this needs good leadership to ensure all are heard
- Make a decision- is there a pattern or consensus?

He concluded by saying that Parishes needed people of great passion and resource.

Following Martin'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.

Think out of the box

Don't judge others

Look to yourself

Need for a Pastoral Council

Real Co-responsibility

Energising the People of God

Priests need to trust to  
delegate

Let God do the Calling- we  
respond

We need to grow our C's!

Change of mindset-what can  
we do to bring the B's and  
A's in?

Tap into the wisdom of all

Become involved

Reach out

The 6 step approach to PPC

Importance of Lay

Participation

God is already working

Look out for the families



The people seemed to be drawn to reflect on co-responsibility in the church; the exploration of new structures; the need to engage the people who would be A's and B's; the need for PPC's, and; the fact that God was already working in our Church.

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 five groups for this task. St, Mary's on the Hill broke into two groups given the large numbers who came from that Parish. The Loughshore Parishes came together also. The people took to the task with great energy and the results of the exercise are recorded below:

**Loughshore:**

<b>Living Church Area</b>	<b>Points for Immediate Action</b>	<b>Request from Living Church</b>
		Support for new PPC

**St. Mary's on the Hill 1:**

<b>Living Church Area</b>	<b>Points for Immediate Action</b>	<b>Request from Living Church</b>
Open, Welcoming Community	Mass for exam pupils Tea and Coffee Website	Youth Programme
Passing on the Faith	Gift Programme Pathway and courses	

**St. Mary's on the Hill 2:**

<b>Living Church Area</b>	<b>Points for Immediate Action</b>	<b>Request from Living Church</b>
Passing on the Faith	Ask young people what they want from the Parish	
Open Welcoming Community	Have coffee/tea after Mass to help develop community  Prepare a welcome pack for new people in the Parish	

**St. Gerard's:**

<b>Living Church Area</b>	<b>Points for Immediate Action</b>	<b>Request from Living Church</b>
Lay Participation	Survey/ consult parishioners but do it differently from previous similar exercise  Organise more 'one off' events for the A's (those who are disconnected from the Parish and who attend Mass only on major occasions)	All assistance, ideas, available resources will be most welcome.  When can you come?
Passing on the Faith	Show films in the Parish Hall (establish a committee to organise and co-ordinate). Perhaps a talk or discussion afterwards.	

## Carrickfergus:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Open Welcoming Community  Passing on the Faith  Clergy	This is an area we would like the Diocese to focus on, particularly the care of the clergy.	

## 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, Open Welcoming Community 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. Bernard'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, Martin Kennedy, 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