



Facilitated Event Summary

Vicariate: Group VII (Cathedral (St. Peter's), St Paul's, St John's, St Mary's, Corpus Christi)

Vicar Forane: Fr. Anthony Devlin

Date: 17th May 2012

Venue: St. Paul's Pastoral Centre

Speaker: Sean Goan

On Thursday 17th May 2012 people from all 5 of the Parishes of this Vicariate gathered in St. Paul's Parish Centre on the Falls Road, Belfast for a facilitated evening reflecting on the Living Church process thus far and where their Parishes were in terms of the Living Church. The purpose of the evening was 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 reasons why people had gathered. Some are recorded below;

Interest

Feedback

Care

Duty

Vision

Belief

Love

Kingdom

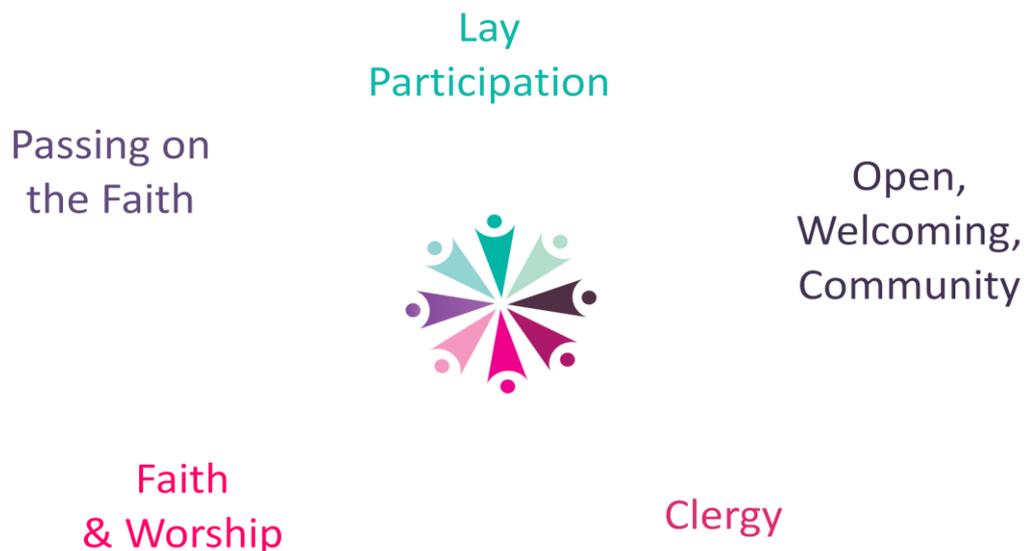
Part of a Living Parish

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 from 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



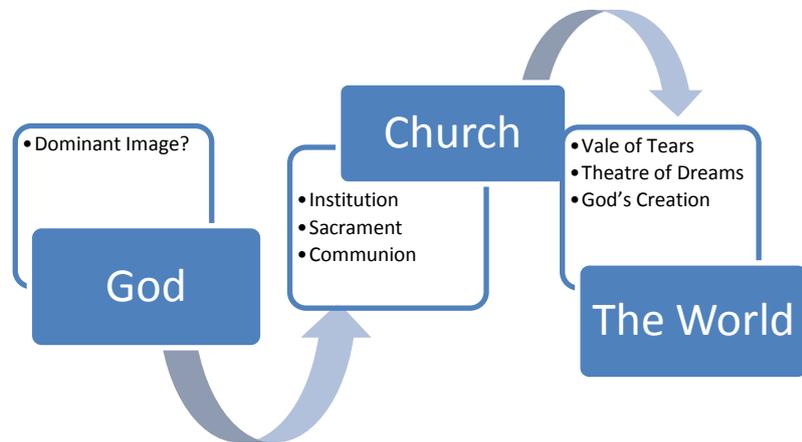
At this point, we introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Mr. Sean Goan. The title for Sean's



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.



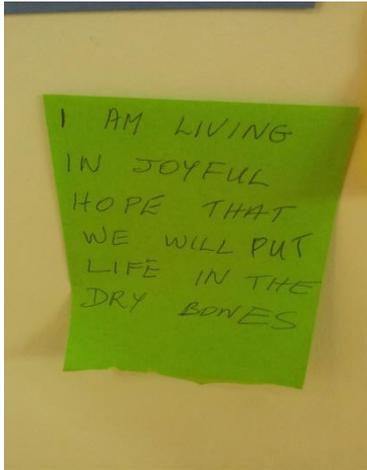
Sean went on to quote from Teilhard de Chardin who tells us that we are Spiritual beings on a human journey, and not the reverse. Sean affirmed for us that we are in essence spiritual and our sense of this comes from our Post Vatican II rediscovery of the scriptures- not as a history book but as a theology book.

He 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. He told us that a Living Church would be like a table with four legs- Community, Prayer Spirituality, Social Outreach and Faith Formation- and if any one of these legs were missing the table would fall. In this way he challenged us to look at how we could reveal a Church built on these principles.



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 lack of reading the scriptures in their Catholic upbringing. The need for change and for outreach was also a key theme. There were also some in the room who were frustrated that they had not had feedback from the original listening process.

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 six groups for this task. Corpus Christi broke into two groups owing to the large number of people who attended from that Parish. The people took to the task with great energy and the results of the exercise are recorded below:

St. Peter’s:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Open Welcoming Community	Nurture those who are currently involved in Parish life	The information from the Listening Evening

St. Mary's:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Open Welcoming Community	<p>Invite people who come to our Church to participate in creating an Open and Welcoming Community</p> <p>Arranging a place where people could be invited to meet</p>	

St. John's:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	Setting up a Pastoral Council	Expertise/ Facilitation on how to set up a Pastoral Council
Open Welcoming Community	Reaching out to new Parishioners, visitations and literature	Training for Parish Visitors

St. Paul's:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Passing on the Faith	<p>Faith in schools</p> <p>Lack of nuns</p> <p>Exposing young people to prayer</p>	<p>Concerted effort to address the catechesis deficit in schools</p> <p>Redo tonight in a small way for our group who are not here</p>
Faith and Worship	Women to pray for the young	

	Lay apostolate	
	Preaching	

Corpus Christi:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Passing on the Faith	Form a Parish Pastoral Council Children’s Liturgy Youth Formation Faith Courses (Alpha, Life in the Spirit, guided prayer) Training for Bethany Bereavement	Help with forming Parish Pastoral Council
Lay Participation	Reclaim the people who have gone outside the Parish Inform the people of the formation of the council and invite people to join	

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 Open Welcoming Community, 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. There seems to be an energy for this type of Parish based support in the future.

Each Parish gathered there in St. Paul's Pastoral Centre 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.

Jim Deeds

Training and Facilitation Officer, Living Church