



## **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:** 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012

**Venue:** Sacred Heart Parish Centre

### **Introduction and Purpose:**

On Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2012 70 people from the above 5 Parishes gathered in the Landsdowne Hotel in Belfast for a Living Church Facilitated Event. The purpose for that night was to explore the possibility of moving forward with the establishment of a Pastoral Area. At that event, some of the people gathered there 'signed up' to one of three groups:

**People of prayer- who would support the venture with prayer**

**People of action in parishes- who would begin or continue to work in parishes**

**People interested in Pastoral issues- who would be involved in developing the structures whereby the Pastoral Area would function.**

The first two of these groups had already met and our meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June was an opportunity for the people who are interested in Pastoral issues to meet. 15 people from three of the parishes responded to the request to attend our meeting (there were no representatives from St. Vincent De Paul or Holy Cross Parishes). The purpose of the evening was agreed as follows;

**-To explore and agree what the purpose of a Pastoral Area/ Pastoral Area Team is**

**-To seek consensus on a way forward**

## **A Praying Discerning Community**

We began with a period of prayer using the following reflection:

**“We come together to model a Praying Discerning Community. We can only seek to reveal the Living Church in our Parish if we recognise first our need to pray and discern the will of God. We must be in communion with each other, resolving difference by reaching consensus.**

**That is why we begin with prayer. Not just because it’s ‘what Catholics do’, but because it invites God into our midst, into our meeting. It says that we are not here for our own agendas, ideas or issues. We are here to hear His will, to act on His behalf.**

### **A Spirit Prayer:**

**Rush Upon us O Spirit of God!**

**From this time on, rush upon us, like living water,  
like leaping fire, like fresh breath through an open window.**

**For this time, rush upon us, O Holy Spirit, with  
wisdom and knowledge, with understanding and  
counsel, with wonder and recognition and awe.**

**Just in time, rush upon us O Spirit of God,  
in life-giving words, in songs from the voiceless,  
in a passion for witness.**

**At this time, rush upon us, O Holy Spirit,  
this hopeful time, this searching time, this preparing time,  
this coming and going time, this trusting time,  
this new time, this full time.**

**ALL THE TIME, rush upon us, O Spirit of God!**

**Holy Spirit Prayer: available at [www.ppc.catholic.org.au](http://www.ppc.catholic.org.au)”**



Beginning in this way recognises that prayer and faith will be the bedrock upon which any of the work in the Pastoral Area will be done. It also allowed us to set the tone for the evening as being both prayerful and energetic.

We then moved on to reflect that in the previous meetings held (both the Listening Event and the recent event in the Landsdowne Hotel) the common theme coming forward was that of Co-responsibility. This gave us our basis for continuing our conversation about trying to put a structure in place for enhancing co-responsibility in the Pastoral Area.

### **Exercises**

We introduced the idea that we would have two exercises through the evening to help us elicit the opinions and feelings of the group. Our first exercise of the evening was to answer the following question:

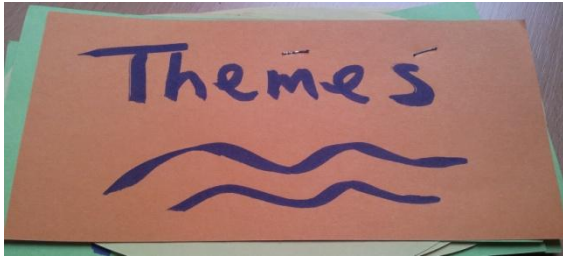
**When you hear the terms 'Pastoral Area' and 'Pastoral Area Team',**

**What do you think of?**

We created 5 groups of people to consider this question and encouraged them to think both in practical terms (i.e. what it would do) and also in value terms (i.e. what would it hold dear). We further encouraged the groups to think in positive terms- in other words what it would do rather than would not.

This exercise certainly got people talking. It was clear from the outset that the people who had come together were engaged and interested in the topic. They spent 5-10 minutes hearing all the voices in the group before beginning to write down their ideas. They were asked to offer up a maximum of 5 ideas per group.

Each idea was put up on a sticky board and we began the process together of grouping the ideas according to themes. We had over twenty ideas from the group as a whole and after 15 minutes of discussion we reached a consensus that the themes for any Pastoral Area and/or Leadership Team would be as follows:



Each of these themes has several specific ideas backing up the theme and which gives an insight into what the group meant. These will be shared at our next group meeting as part of the presentation.

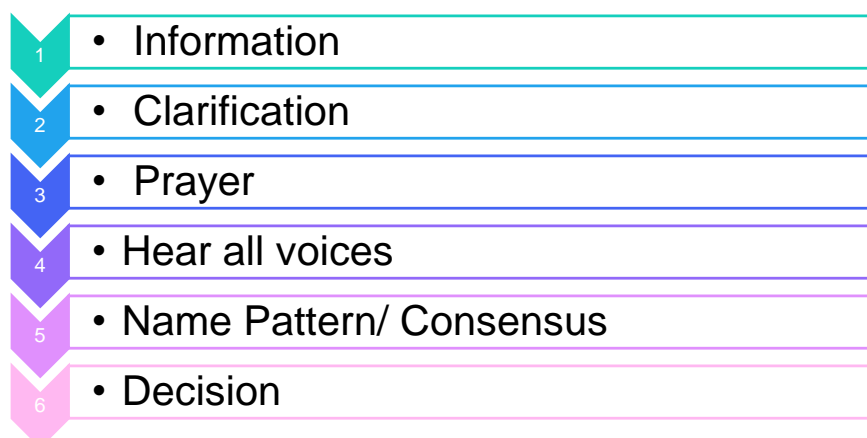
We moved on to have a short input about what a Pastoral Area Team was:

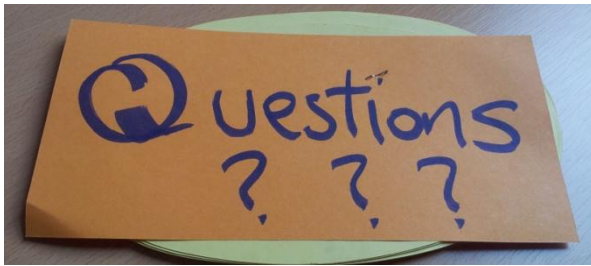
- A group of committed people of God (Priest, religious and lay people) called upon to **investigate** pastoral matters, **reflect** on them thoroughly and **recommend** practical conclusions
- Priests acknowledge the wisdom of the Parishioners and expresses their desire to share with them their responsibility for the governance of the Pastoral Area
- Set Pastoral Themes for the Pastoral Area- everything to do with the life of the Parishes can be discussed

We also heard about the purpose of the Pastoral Area:

- ensure the **effective sharing of the many gifts and talents** of the people of God in the pastoral area
- identify **pastoral matters that can be done better together** as a pastoral area than separately as individual parishes.

We also heard of the basic steps a Leadership Team would take to function and what they would do in their meetings:





Our second exercise of the evening was an opportunity for people to reflect on the work they had done in the first exercise and also on what they had heard in the input. We set about the task then to gather together questions that people still had about the idea of having a Pastoral Area and a Leadership Team. The

people had a number of questions in the following areas:

- Establishment of the Team- how do we do this?
- Effective communication to the Parishes
- Ensure effective involvement of all the Parishes
- Need for ongoing formation

### Conclusions

As the evening drew to a close, we agreed that there was a consensus reached in the room:

**We feel it was a good idea to move ahead with the establishment of a Pastoral Area and a Leadership Team in the Pastoral Area. The team would be representative of all five parishes in the area. The Team would work with the other groups- the People of Prayer and the People of Parish Work.**

Further to this we also agreed the following:

- This group is not the Leadership Team (although members of the group that met are not barred from being part of a Leadership Team)
- We will invite the 70 people who attended the Landsdowne Hotel meeting individually to our next meeting
- We will have a notice in each of the five parish bulletins about our next meeting
- A summary of our meeting will be produced from Living Church and sent to Fr. Sheehan
- Our next meeting is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July at 7 p.m. in Sacred Heart Parish Centre

The next meeting will focus on reflecting on our themes from this evening, more detail about what a Leadership Team would do and the skills and qualities needed to sit on the Team.

The meeting was prayerful yet energetic and the consensus reached sent all away hopeful of good things to come.

Jim Deeds, Living Church, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012