

## Facilitated Event Summary

**Area:** North Belfast Pastoral Area

**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> August 2012

**Venue:** Parish Centre Holy Family

### Introduction and Purpose:

On Sunday evening 12<sup>th</sup> August 2012, 15 people from North Belfast Pastoral Area gathered together in the Holy Family Parish Centre for the 3rd in a series of meetings designed to culminate in the forming of a Pastoral Area Leadership Team.



As always at our meetings we began in prayer. We had a lit candle and a book of Scriptures as our focal point. The lights were dimmed and the atmosphere was at once relaxing and prayerful. This evening we prayed and reflected on the Lord's Prayer. One member of the group read out a line from the prayer and then a short reflection on that line.

Before agreeing our purpose for the evening we agreed a set of guiding principles for this series of meetings:

- We are not the Pastoral Area Team
- We are in the business of giving and receiving wisdom from all
- We collect any questions as we go
- Our work informs the direction for our Pastoral Area

- We meet in the Spirit
- We seek consensus- not voting

Agreeing this allowed us to reflect that in this process we must set aside our own issues or agendas and really pray and discern what God is telling us in our time.

The purpose of the evening was then agreed as:

- To gather together as a community in prayer
- To gain an understanding of the skills, qualities and experiences necessary to be a member of the PAT
- To explore human relationships in the context of the PAT

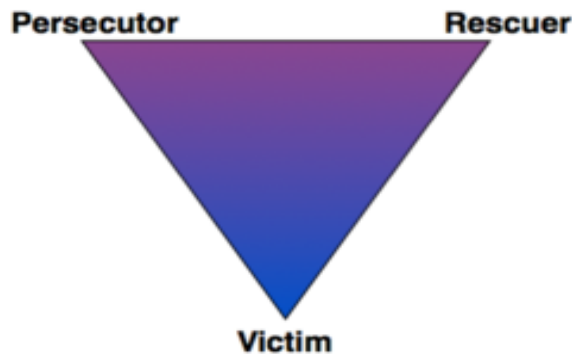
### **Review of the Previous Meetings:**

We spent quite a bit of time looking back at the work that had been done in the previous sessions. This seemed to be helpful for us all and served to re-focus our minds on the task at hand after a break of a month or so. For details of previous meetings, please visit

<http://www.downandconnor.org/livingchurch/pastoral-area-teams/>.

### **Exercise- The Challenge of Human Relationships**

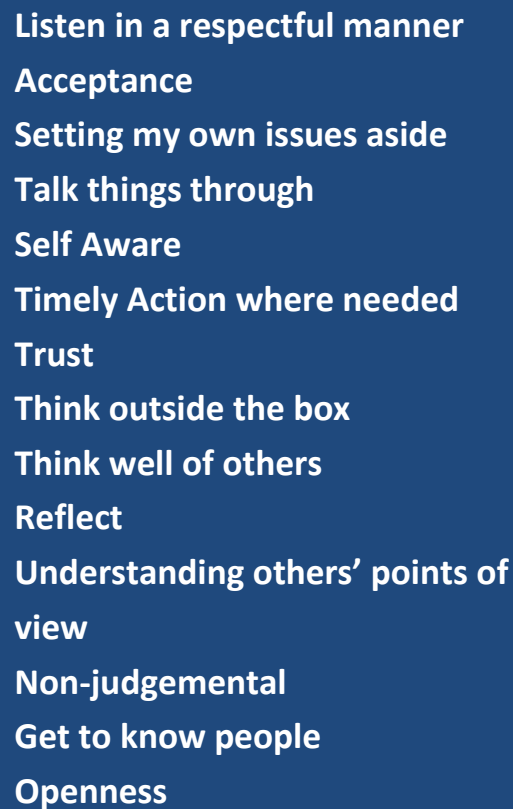
In our mission to create Co-responsible structures in our Pastoral Area we have to move away from the long held style of relationships that we have all become accustomed to. Doing so, will help us towards a more genuine realisation of what it means to be Church. However, we do this in the context of human (and therefore imperfect) relationships. We looked at one model for understanding how human relationships can go wrong and lead to hurt for those involved:



In this model we can see that if one person in relationship with another is constantly in 'victim' mode, it may force another person to try to 'rescue' the person. However, this in turn may lead the person who is rescuing to feel that the victim is actually a 'persecutor' should that cycle go on for some time. In another way, a person who is in 'victim' mode who is not rescued as they see it will feel the other person is a 'persecutor'. Repeated cycles of this way of relating can be very damaging to relationships (primarily because the pattern of relationships is not working for either party and often is unspoken about).

We took some time to consider this model in light of what can happen in a Parish. Small groups of people were invited to think of examples of these relationships. Importantly, the small groups were asked not to name names; not to be spiteful or hurtful. Each group achieved this and we reflected that we could still deal with difficult issues without hurting anyone. This will be a valuable lesson for those who sit on our Pastoral Area Team (who will, at times, have to deal with difficult situations but who should do so in a Christian manner).

The second half of this exercise was to look at developing a '**Charter for Healthy Relationships**'. Each of the small groups who had gathered for the first part of the exercise was asked to consider what they felt the elements of healthy relationships would be. They were asked to feedback their top two ideas. Each of the ideas was compiled into the following list:



**Listen in a respectful manner**  
**Acceptance**  
**Setting my own issues aside**  
**Talk things through**  
**Self Aware**  
**Timely Action where needed**  
**Trust**  
**Think outside the box**  
**Think well of others**  
**Reflect**  
**Understanding others' points of view**  
**Non-judgemental**  
**Get to know people**  
**Openness**

We agreed that this would be a good template for relationships within the Pastoral Area Team, the Parishes in general and, indeed, within our personal relationships.

### **Exercise- Skills, Qualities, Experience**

At this point, we considered what skills, qualities and experiences we would like our PAT members to have or to develop through being a member of the PAT. We acknowledged that we did not all have every one of the skills necessary but that as a group the members of the PAT may have the skills and would certainly have an opportunity to develop the skills as part of ongoing training for the PAT members.

In order to consider the above, we split into groups with the following task:

**In your group consider what skills, qualities and experience a member of the Pastoral Area Leadership Team could have**

Each of the groups came up with ideas which they recorded on cards. Once we collected the ideas we set about separating them into skills, qualities and experience. The results can be seen below:

*Experience*

Harnessing skills that are already there

Sourcing suitable training to meet needs

Active Parish experience

Ongoing faith development

Team work

*Skills*

Communication (Listening, talking, sharing a vision)

Leadership

Ability to empower

Active listener

Good verbal skills

Negotiation

Mediation

Co-operation

*Qualities*

Proactive

Empathy

Caring

Respect

Trusting

Self awareness

Understanding

The group produced a comprehensive account of the attributes they look for in their PAT

**Conclusion:**

Before finishing we once again spoke of the fact that there were Parishes who were not represented at these meetings and that this was not desirable at all. We also noted that there were only two clergy who had come to our three meetings. A sense of disappointment and sadness was expressed by the group at these points. We agreed that Jim and Fr Michael would attempt to engage with the Parishes in order to secure their attendance at these meetings and participation in this exciting venture.

We concluded the evening by, once again, gathering in prayer.

This session was certainly full. We worked extremely hard as a group of people. Discussing relationships can, at times, be difficult. However, this session was approached with humour as well as integrity and those who took part seemed to enjoy it. Importantly, it also helped gather more information about the skills, qualities and experiences of those who would form the PAT.

The next meeting is set for the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012 in Holy Family Church.

Jim Deeds

Living Church

August 2012