



Facilitated Event Summary

Area: North Belfast Pastoral Area

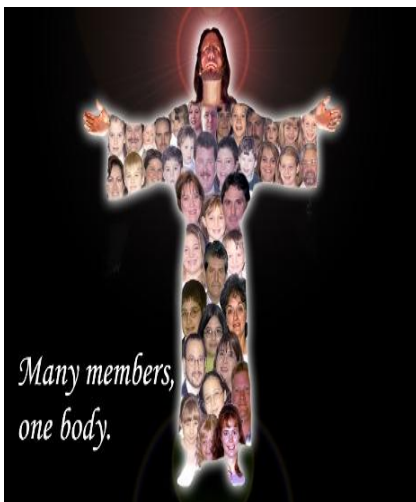
Date: 20th September 2012

Venue: Holy Family Church Meeting Area

Introduction and Purpose:

On Thursday evening 20th September 2012, 9 people from North Belfast Pastoral Area gathered together in the Holy Family Church for the in 4th 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 placed it before a book of Scriptures We began this section with a reflection on 1 Corinthians 12:



“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an

eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.”

This set the scene for our discussions about our own Parishes as we strive to be One Body One Spirit in Christ.

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 get an update about the process
- To define Parish

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. For details of previous meetings, please visit

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

Update on the process

Fr Michael gave the group an update since our last meeting, where it was brought up that we had two of the five Parishes who were not represented in this group (although they have been represented in the other two groups that meet- Parish workers and Prayer people).

- 5 Parishes are in agreement with the Pastoral Area formation
- There will be a launch of the Pastoral Area on 13th and 14th October with an announcement made in each of the 5 Parishes
- More will be invited to join us in these meetings
- There will be more Pastoral Area Initiatives taking place
- We keep working as we have been- but more involvement of other Parishes/Clergy

We were also able to reflect to the group that the work they had done so far was already having an impact on the Parishes with joint initiatives planned according to the themes suggested by their group. Feedback from the group indicated that they were happy that there was a more definite and inclusive direction set for our project of establishing a Pastoral Area. This allowed us to move on to the main task of the evening.

Exercise

In groups of three we asked for answers to the following question:

When you hear the word 'Parish' what do you think of?

Each group had a ten minute discussion about their views on what a Parish is before considering their answers. Each group was given cards and recorded four or five answers. We collected the cards, reviewed them and collated them under themes as follows:

Worshipping Community

Family of God; Parish Priest; a baptised people; a believing community who seek and portray Christ

Place

Boundaries; a geographical area with a Church at its centre

Living and Evolving

Ever-changing; growing; dynamic; people coming and going

Active Participation

A place where the Kingdom of God is being realised; committed people, working together and taking care of each other; social justice

Sense of Belonging

Christian identity; parochial; inclusive; oneness between home, school and Church; respectful

The work above allows us to bring together a working definition of what a Parish is:

A living and evolving community of faith in Jesus Christ brought together in a geographical area with the Church at its centre. The people of the Parish share a common identity as Catholic people and through active participation in their Parish and a commitment to social justice they bring the message of Jesus Christ to the world around them.

Conclusion:

We finished with a period of reflection on the themes we had set for Parish and in particular we asked ourselves silently if they had affirmed us or challenged us to new action in any way. We prayed with Ephesians 4:1-6 for some time and then Fr Michael led us in a closing prayer.

This was a smaller gathering than earlier meetings. However, we had apologies from several members of our group who will be at the next meeting. Also, we now have added impetus in the process and will advertise our next meeting at masses on the weekend of 13-14th October. This may add to our group. We reflected, however, that we can and will continue with whatever number of people who come along.

Our next meeting is on 22nd October at 7 p.m. in Holy Family Church.

Jim Deeds

Living Church September 2012