



## Facilitated Event Summary

**Parish:** Downpatrick

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> September 2012

**Venue:** St. Mary's High School

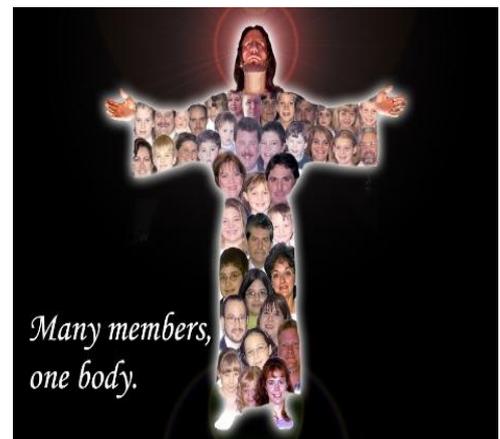
### **Introduction:**

On 27<sup>th</sup> September, around 45 people gathered in St. Mary's High School to consider the idea of Living Church in our Parish of Downpatrick. The people who gathered represented a wide variety of the people of God who make up our church. There were lay people; young adults and older. There were clergy. There were those living in consecrated religious life.

### **A Praying Discerning Community**

We began the evening with a period of prayer as a way of 'arriving' at the session and looking to God for direction for our session this evening. This allows us to model the type of Church we want to see: a Church that is a Praying, Discerning Community. We prayed with 1Corinthians 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.**



## **Purpose**

After the prayer there was a proposal from the Living Church facilitator that this meeting could be seen as the first in a series of meetings designed to achieve the following:

**“To begin a process of better understanding ourselves in the context of our faith, as well as exploring our Parish in our time. We hope, as the process goes on, to further plan for initiatives that will reveal the Living Church in our Parish.”**

The group welcomed this as an idea. Following on from that we agreed our purpose for the evening:

-  To gather together as a community in prayer
  
-  To put this meeting in the context of Living Church
  
-  To consider what a Parish is

## **Update on Living Church**

There was an update about the Living Church process in our Diocese. We heard that work had begun in almost thirty Parishes over the last four months. This work has taken a similar form to the meeting tonight: groups of people coming together to pray and ask what God wants of us at this time. In this way, Downpatrick Parish is united with Parishes right across the Diocese.

## **Exercise**

In groups of three or four 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 their answers. We collected the cards, reviewed them and collated them under themes as follows:

### **People**

Caring Christian community; who is my neighbour; people together

### **Place**

Geographical location; area

### **Family**

Belonging; where all feel welcome; togetherness; identity; spiritual and inclusive

### **Active**

Bonding; social; sharing knowledge; togetherness; support; school; youth centre; parish hall

### **Prayer**

Sahred worship; our belief in God; clergy and people together in worship

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

*A people of faith brought together as a family in a particular place in active participation in worship and who live this faith by caring for and sharing with others.*

**Conclusion:**

We finished with a period of reflection and prayer. Following this time, we agreed the following action points:

-  Living Church will provide a write up of this meeting for the Parish and also put it on their website at <http://www.downandconnor.org/livingchurch/pastoral-area-teams/>
-  There will be a summary of the meeting in the Parish Bulletin
-  The priests of the Parish will speak positively about the meeting from the pulpit
-  The people who gathered this evening will encourage others to become involved
-  There will be a further meeting on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> November at 7 p.m. in St. Mary's High School

The next session will look at the nature of Downpatrick according to the definition and areas we set out in our definition of Parish above.

This was an energetic, yet prayerful meeting. Those who attended did so with hope and enthusiasm and got a lot from the meeting. We thank them, the priests of the Parish and all who helped set the room up, open the building and support the work of Living Church.

---

Jim Deeds

Living Church September 2012

