



# Creating Pastoral Communities

**Diocese of Down and Connor**  
**Creating Pastoral Communities**  
*Consultation - 10th January 2015*



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# Introduction

During the Diocesan Congress 2013, when our Diocesan Pastoral Plan was launched by Bishop Treanor he said: 'We must ensure that everyone within the diocese has support for their Christian journey and this will require an increase in collaboration among neighbouring parishes. We must pray and discern about our future, recognising that we are called together as parts of one body.'<sup>1</sup>

In Spring 2014 the Living Church carried out a comprehensive Review of the pastoral activities of all of the parishes of the diocese. The information from this Review was collated with the help of Mr Séamús Cleary and it will be a useful resource as the diocese engages in meaningful planning for the future. Some of this information was presented last May in meetings in each of the twelve Vicariates.

After further consultation with the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests, Bishop Treanor is now inviting the diocese to move to the next stage of the process entitled Creating Pastoral Communities.

The work of Creating Pastoral Communities will have three phases:

- [Phase 1. Creating Pastoral Community Boundaries](#)
- [Phase 2. Formation](#)
- [Phase 3. Establishing Pastoral Community Structures](#)

We are now implementing Phase 1. Phases 2 and 3 will come later and will develop and overlap with one another organically.

## Phase 1. Creating Pastoral Community Boundaries

This document, in Part 1, identifies the current realities in the diocese based on the Census of 2011 and the findings of the recent Review. It then presents maps of the three regions of the diocese with a draft proposal for new Pastoral Community boundaries which facilitates the work of Phase 1. The draft maps have been drawn up in accordance with the rationale given in Part 2 of this document and they form the basis for a conversation with Clergy and people.

On November 20th, 27th and 28th we held three regional meetings in Ballymena, Belfast and Downpatrick for the Clergy of the diocese. These meetings were a forum for the views of the Clergy on the proposed boundaries.

We are now inviting the whole diocese to review that proposal along with some possible alternatives that arose out of the consultation with the clergy. We invite you to read the proposals and discuss them at parish level.

There will be 4 regional meetings with the Bishop taking place in late February/early March which will be attended by clergy and two lay people from each parish, from the Parish Pastoral Council where one exists. Using the consultation sheet in Part 3 of this document you can share your opinions with the Parish clergy and lay people who will be invited to meet with Bishop Treanor or send them directly to the Living Church office.

Following all of these consultations the final boundaries will then be communicated to the Diocese.

<sup>1</sup> Diocesan Pastoral Plan, 2013

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## Phase 2. Formation

This whole process must be rooted in the Gospel and be guided by our understanding of how the Holy Spirit is calling us to live as the Church in the 21st century. It will be essential for us to have good theological input for priests and people and to give ample opportunity for us to reflect prayerfully on each new step.

In the wider society people are constantly dealing with big changes in their professional and personal lives. That means that among us there are many people skilled and adept at change management. It will be important for us as a church community to avail of those skills and to foster them to ensure a healthy and mature transition over the next few years. As a first step the diocese will provide a course for priests entitled *Coping Skills in Changing Times*.

## Phase 3. Establishing Pastoral Community Structures

Each Pastoral Community will have its own Pastoral Community Council which will be made up of Clergy and lay people representing each of the member parishes. There are many instances of good practice in other dioceses who have worked to ensure that parishes cooperate in the best way possible within the Pastoral Community while still respecting the individual parish identities.

There are different canonical models of leadership that can be applied within Pastoral Communities. In time we will explore these together in order to see which one is most suited to each set of circumstances. Eventually we need to move to a situation that is well established in Canon Law and that will replace the existing vicariate structure.

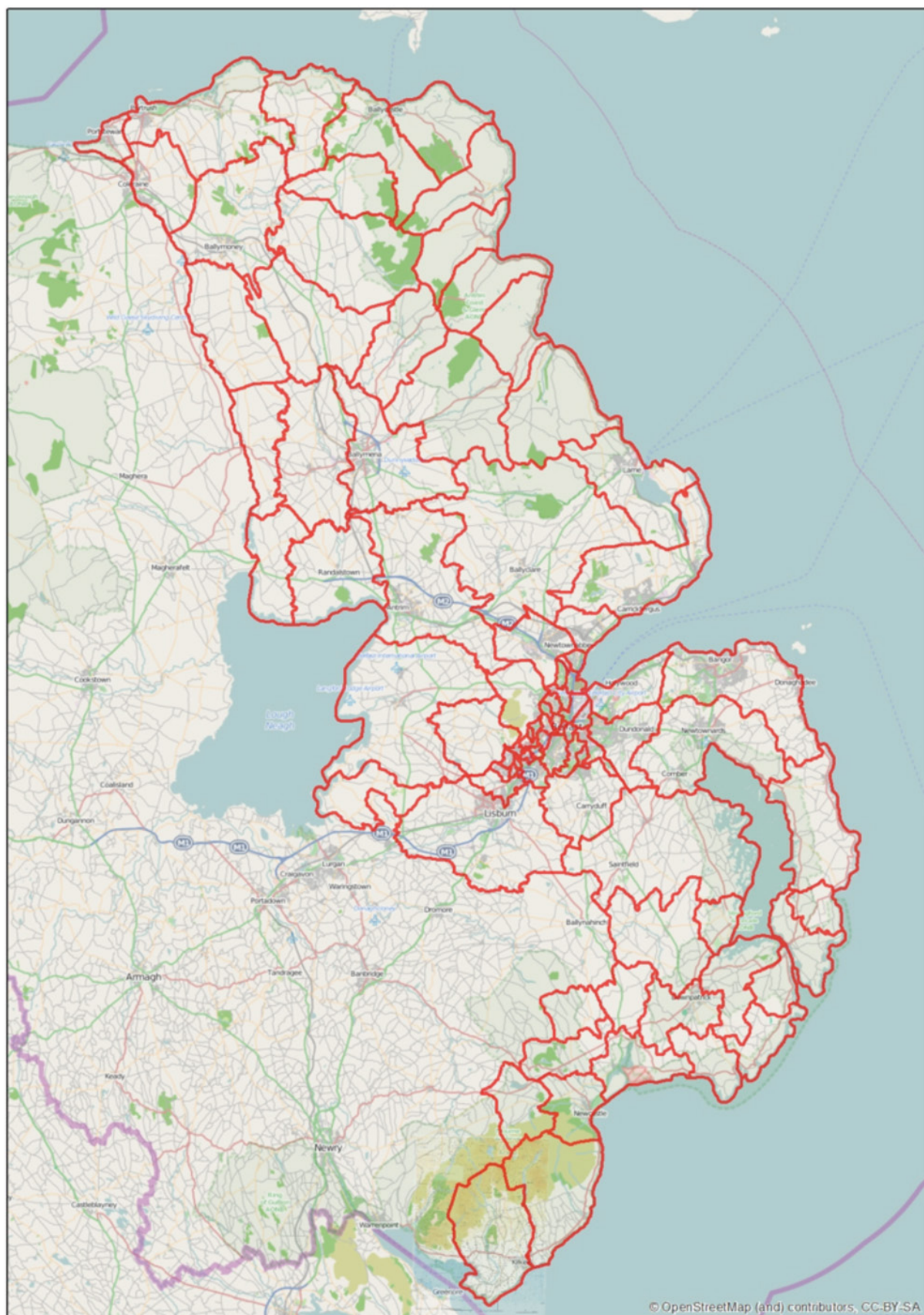
## PART 1

# Diocesan Review Findings



Creating Pastoral  
Communities

## Figure 1: The Diocese of Down and Connor



## The Catholic Population of the Diocese

A final figure for Catholics living within the Diocese of Down and Connor has been made using a combination of parish boundaries and the associated Small Area (SAs) and Super Output Areas (SOAs) statistics of the 2011 Census. This gives a Catholic Population of 356,585.

Table 1: Population and Sunday Mass Attendance across the Diocese

	Catholic Population	Sunday Mass Attendance 2014	Sunday Mass Attendance 2014 (%)	Sunday Mass Attendance 2011
Greater Belfast	198,163	32,425	16	31,300
Down	68,583	16,362	24	15,375
Connor	89,839	24,031	27	23,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>356,585</b>	<b>72,818</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>70,475</b>

Table 2: Population and Sunday Mass Attendance across the Diocese by Age Range

Age Range (Years)	Total Number of Catholics in Diocese	Sunday Mass Attendance	% Attendance
0 - 6	32,600	4,135	13
7 - 11	21,480	5,779	27
12 - 18	34,786	5,970	17
19 - 25	38,717	5,257	14
26 - 40	71,770	10,619	15
41 - 60	91,210	17,240	19
61 - 75	44,560	16,286	37
75+	21,462	7,532	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>356,585</b>	<b>72,818</b>	

## Gender and Age Profile of Sunday Mass Attendees

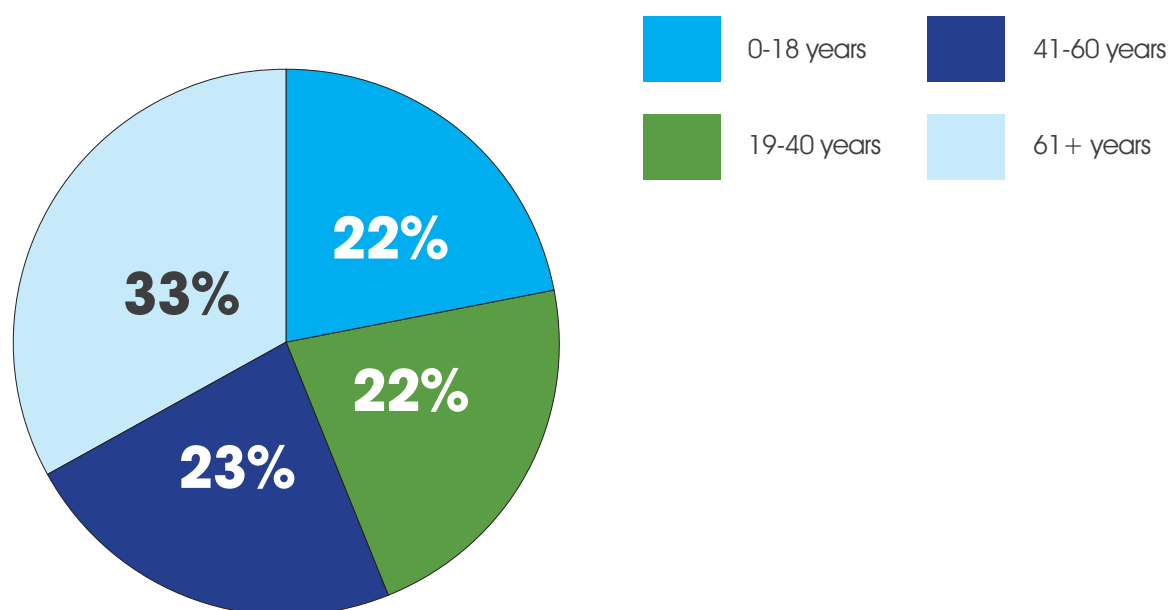
The information for our Diocesan Review was collected over 3 consecutive weeks in Spring 2014. On the third week detailed data of the gender and age of attendees was gathered.

For consistency purposes Week 3 is used throughout this document.

Table 3: Age and Gender Profile of Sunday Mass Attendees

Age Range (Years)	Male	Female	Total Sunday Mass Attendance	% of total Attendance
0 - 6	1,930	2,205	4,135	6
7 - 11	2,739	3,040	5,779	8
12 - 18	2,740	3,230	5,970	8
19 - 25	2,257	3,000	5,257	7
26 - 40	4,316	6,303	10,619	15
41 - 60	7,525	9,715	17,240	23
61 - 75	7,405	8,881	16,286	23
75+	3,327	4,205	7,532	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,239</b>	<b>40,578</b>	<b>72,818</b>	
<b>Gender %</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>56%</b>		

Figure 2: Profile of Mass Attendance by Age (%)



## Profile of Clergy

Table 4: Age Profile of Clergy with Projection

Age Range	2014	2019	2024
50 and under	27	21	17
51 - 65	54	50	43
65 - 75	32	33	31
Total under 65	81	71	60
Total under 75	113	104	91

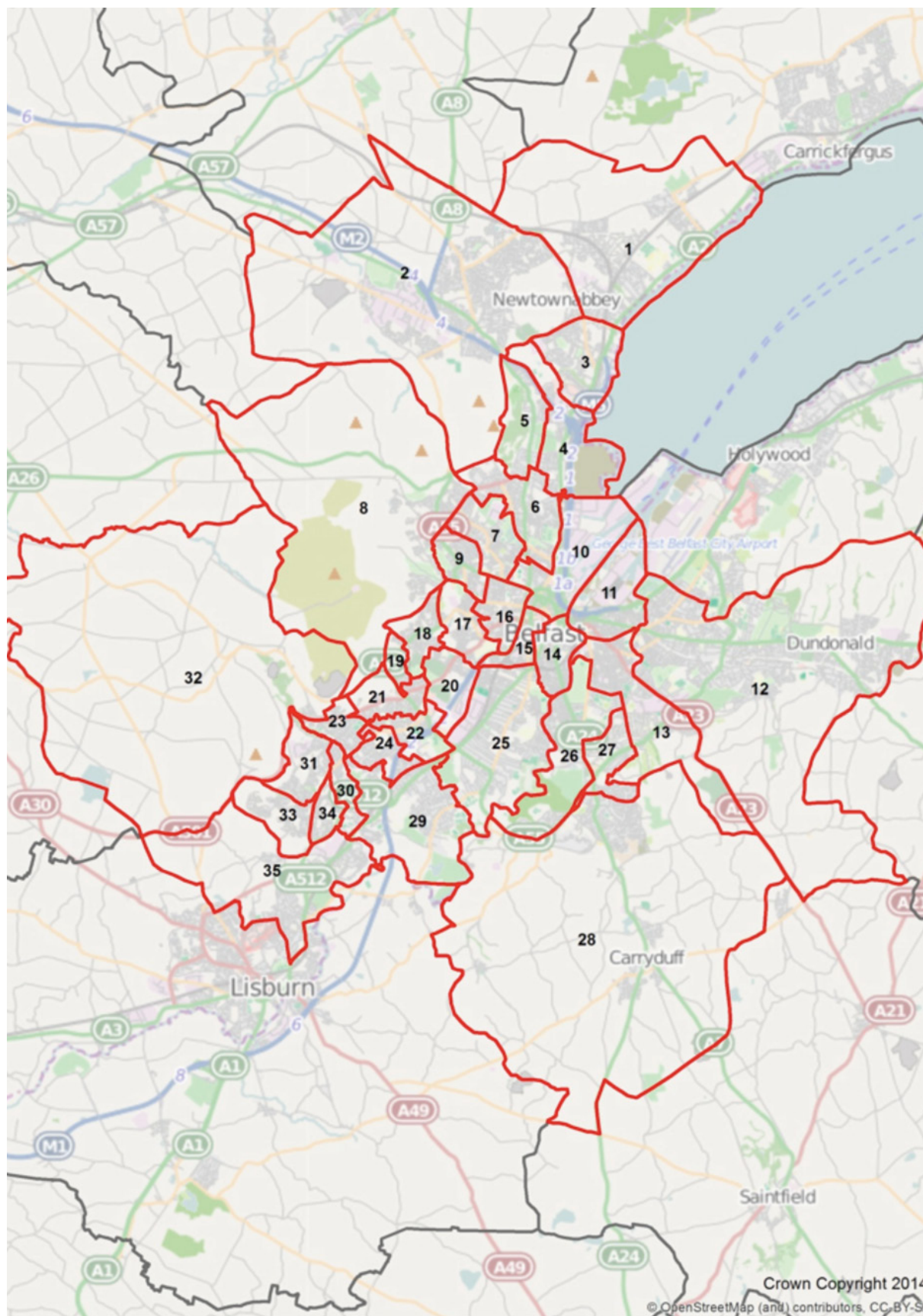
These figures assume on average one ordination per year and do not take account of sickness or death.

## Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals across the Diocese: 2003, 2011 - 2013

Table 5: Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals

	2013	2012	2011	2003
Baptisms	4,961	5,354	5,117	4,392
Weddings	1,095	1,082	1,026	1,061
Funerals	2,584	2,588	2,492	2,240

## Figure 3: Greater Belfast Parishes

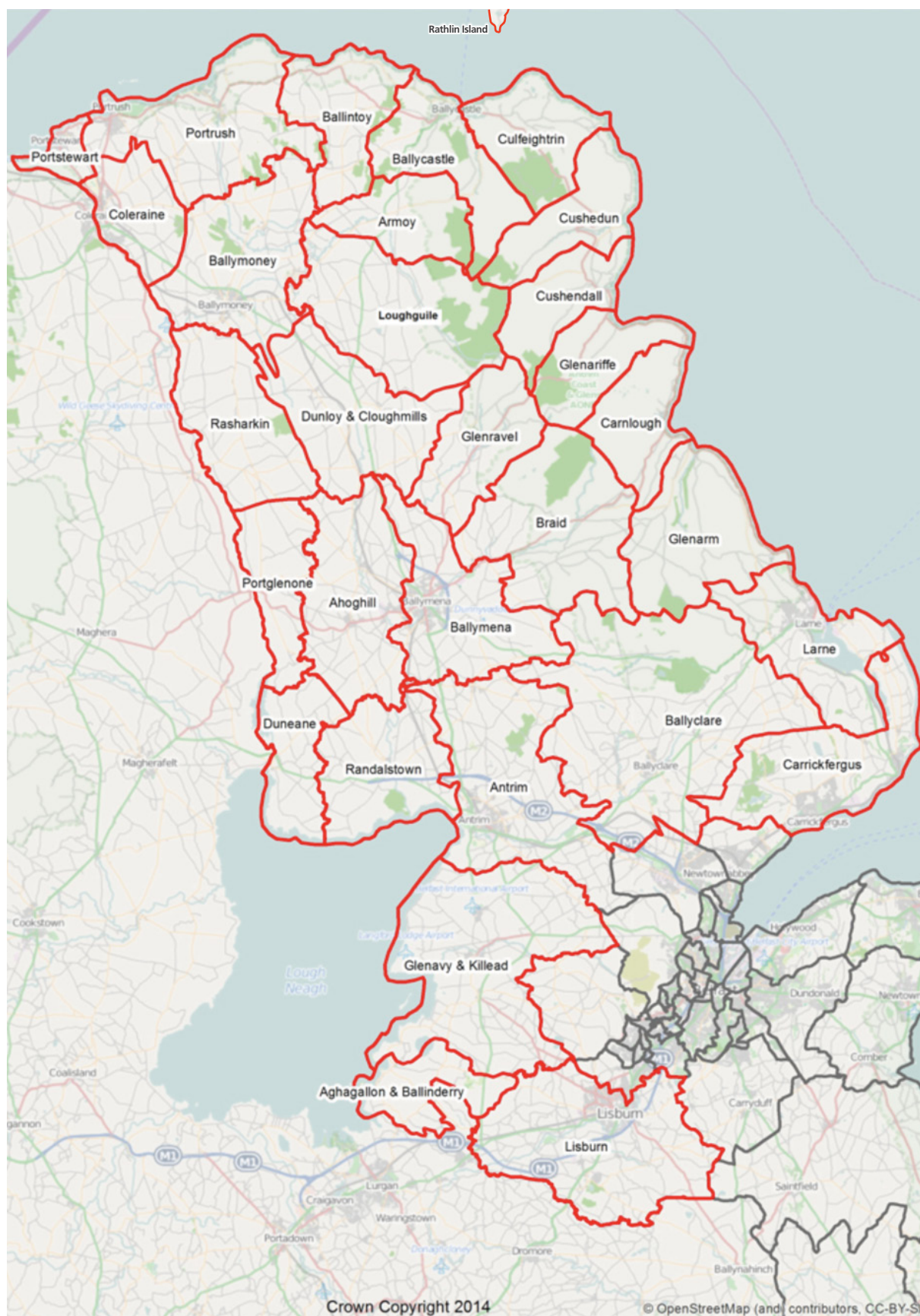


## Greater Belfast City Parishes

Table 6: Greater Belfast City Parishes

Map Ref	Parish	Catholic Population	Sunday Mass Attendance 2014	Sunday Mass Attendance 2011
1	St James' (Whiteabbey)	3,946	225	290
2	St Mary's on the Hill	12,993	2,480	2,290
3	Whitehouse ( St Mary's)	1,078	349	330
4	Greencastle	3,286	206	240
5	St Gerard's	3,273	724	755
6	Holy Family	9,890	1,728	1,800
7	Sacred Heart	8,611	910	955
8	St Vincent De Paul (Ligoniel)	4,142	486	305
9	Holy Cross	5,115	908	925
10	St Patrick's	6,003	903	1,080
11	St Matthew's	2,768	270	310
12	St Colmcille's	6,283	1,126	665
13	St Anthony's (Willowfield)	4,658	434	480
14	St Malachy's	5,842	1,126	1,330
15	St Mary's	1,132	374	415
16	St Peter's ( Cathedral)	4,658	690	655
17	St Paul's	8,314	932	755
18	Corpus Christi	6,118	499	340
19	Holy Trinity	2,787	710	1,075
20	St John the Evangelist	3,964	517	535
21	St Teresa of Avila	6,763	717	1,080
22	St Agnes'	4,518	1,575	1,455
23	St Oliver Plunkett	6,767	859	650
24	St Michael the Archangel	6,078	860	1,180
25	St Brigid's	13,491	1,944	1,985
26	Holy Rosary	8,004	1,640	1,640
27	St Bernadette's	3,553	821	870
28	Drumbo & Carryduff	9,690	1,916	1,815
29	St Anne's	8,080	1,013	1,075
30	Our Lady Queen of Peace (Kilwee)	3,330	827	805
31	Nativity (Poleglass)	6,643	469	365
32	Hannahstown	2,318	434	440
33	Christ the Redeemer	5,706	1,340	1,080
34	St Luke's	3,672	523	735
35	Derriaghy	4,689	607	595
	Clonard		1,283	
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>198,163</b>	<b>32,425</b>	<b>31,300</b>

### Figure 4: Parishes of Connor

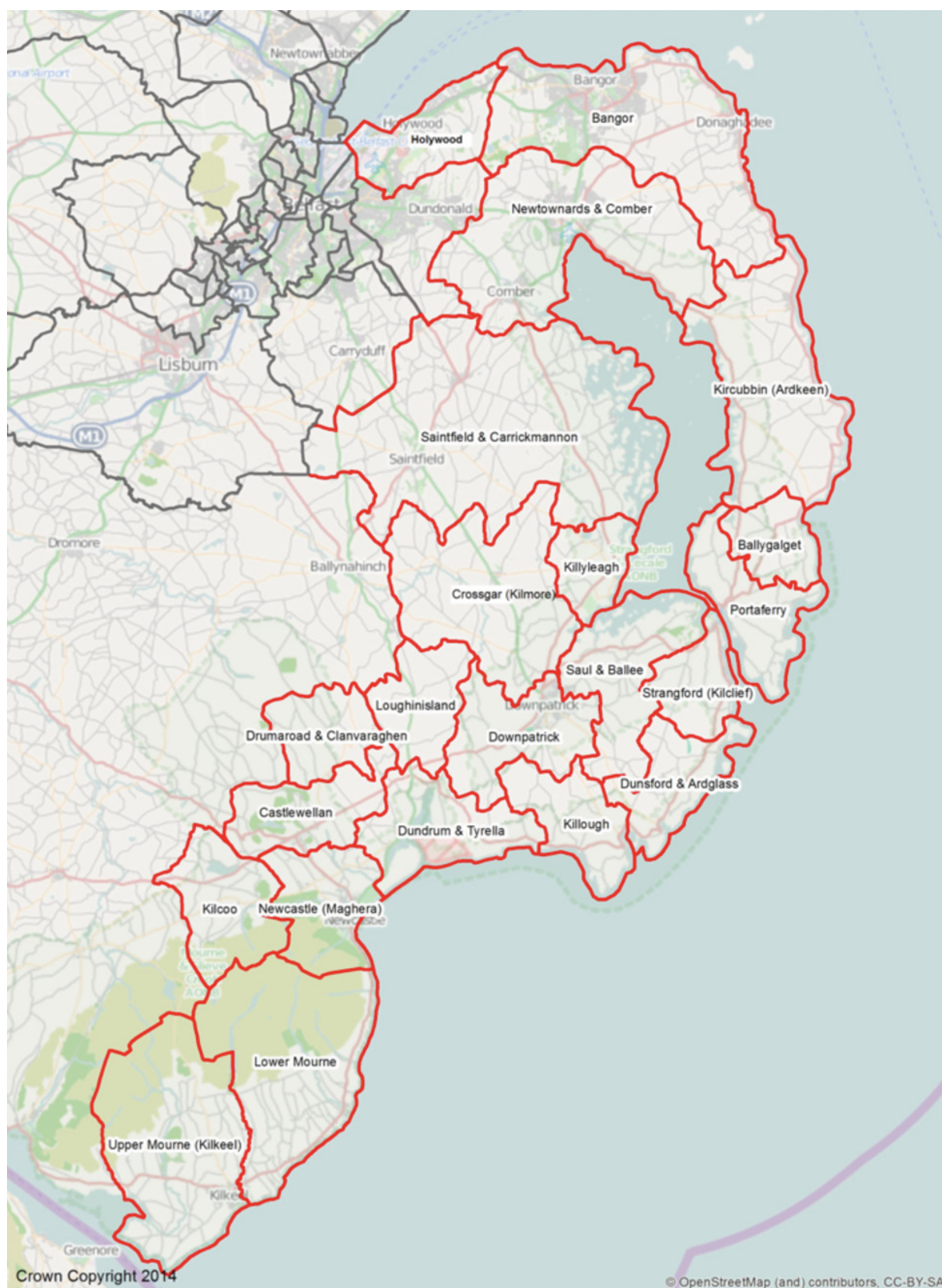


## Parishes of Connor

Table 7: Parishes of Connor

	Catholic Population	Sunday Mass Attendance 2014	Sunday Mass Attendance 2011
Aghagallon & Ballinderry	2,157	537	660
Ahoghill	1,243	141	155
Antrim	8,931	1,973	1,835
Armoy	690	348	330
Ballintoy	387	100	105
Ballycastle	4,228	1,199	1,400
Ballyclare	1,246	158	135
Ballymena	8,057	2,165	2,145
Ballymoney	2,349	601	605
Braid	354	100	60
Carnlough	1,560	448	485
Carrickfergus	3,232	519	460
Coleraine	3,583	639	615
Culfeightrin	591	467	270
Cushendall	1,657	1,025	780
Cushendun	889	328	430
Duneane	2,499	1,255	1,335
Dunloy & Cloughmills	3,035	1,041	925
Glenariffe	1,285	560	355
Glenarm	882	270	285
Glenavy and Killead	8,371	1,971	1,360
Glenravel	1,951	952	900
Larne	5,224	1,000	1,125
Lisburn	9,861	1,243	1,340
Loughguile	2,394	990	1,060
Portglenone	1,868	351	320
Portrush	2,051	367	465
Portstewart	2,766	835	810
Randalstown	4,307	1,589	1,390
Rasharkin	2,191	859	1,660
<b>Totals</b>	<b>89,839</b>	<b>24,031</b>	<b>23,800</b>

## Figure 5: Parishes of Down



## Parishes of Down

Table 8: Parishes in Down

	Catholic Population	Sunday Mass Attendance 2014	Sunday Mass Attendance 2011
Ballygalget	805	580	525
Bangor	8,369	1,309	1,195
Castlewellan	4,041	1,025	950
Crossgar (Kilmore)	3,905	588	660
Downpatrick Parish	8,768	2,029	1,770
Drumroad & Clanvaraghen	998	262	295
Dundrum & Tyrella	2,257	416	500
Dunsford and Ardglass	2,662	549	350
Holywood	3,592	622	705
Kilcoo	1,066	177	315
Killough	1,386	335	365
Killyleagh	1,406	303	260
Kircubbin (Ardkeen)	2,114	780	630
Loughinisland	1,416	477	395
Lower Mourne (Glassdrumman and Ballymartin)	2,874	755	800
Newcastle (Maghera)	6,785	1,870	1,645
Newtownards & Comber	3,038	543	615
Portaferry	2,627	886	1,025
Saintfield & Carrickmannon	2,727	1,085	870
Saul and Ballee Parish	2,206	510	450
Strangford (Kilclief)	1,041	419	480
Upper Mourne ( Kilkeel)	4,500	842	925
<b>Down</b>	<b>68,583</b>	<b>16,362</b>	<b>15,375</b>

## PART 2A

# Pastoral Community Boundaries Original Proposal Findings



# Guiding Principles to determine Pastoral Community Boundaries

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There are two guiding principles that will influence our decision making;

## 1. Pastoral Communities determined by Geography, Community and Population

Our new Pastoral Communities will be made up of adjacent existing parishes. They should reflect naturally occurring boundaries and centres and will not necessarily be based on the existing Vicariates.

They will normally have a population of between 20-25,000 taking both practising Catholics and inactive Catholics into account.

## 2. Pastoral Communities determined by Resources

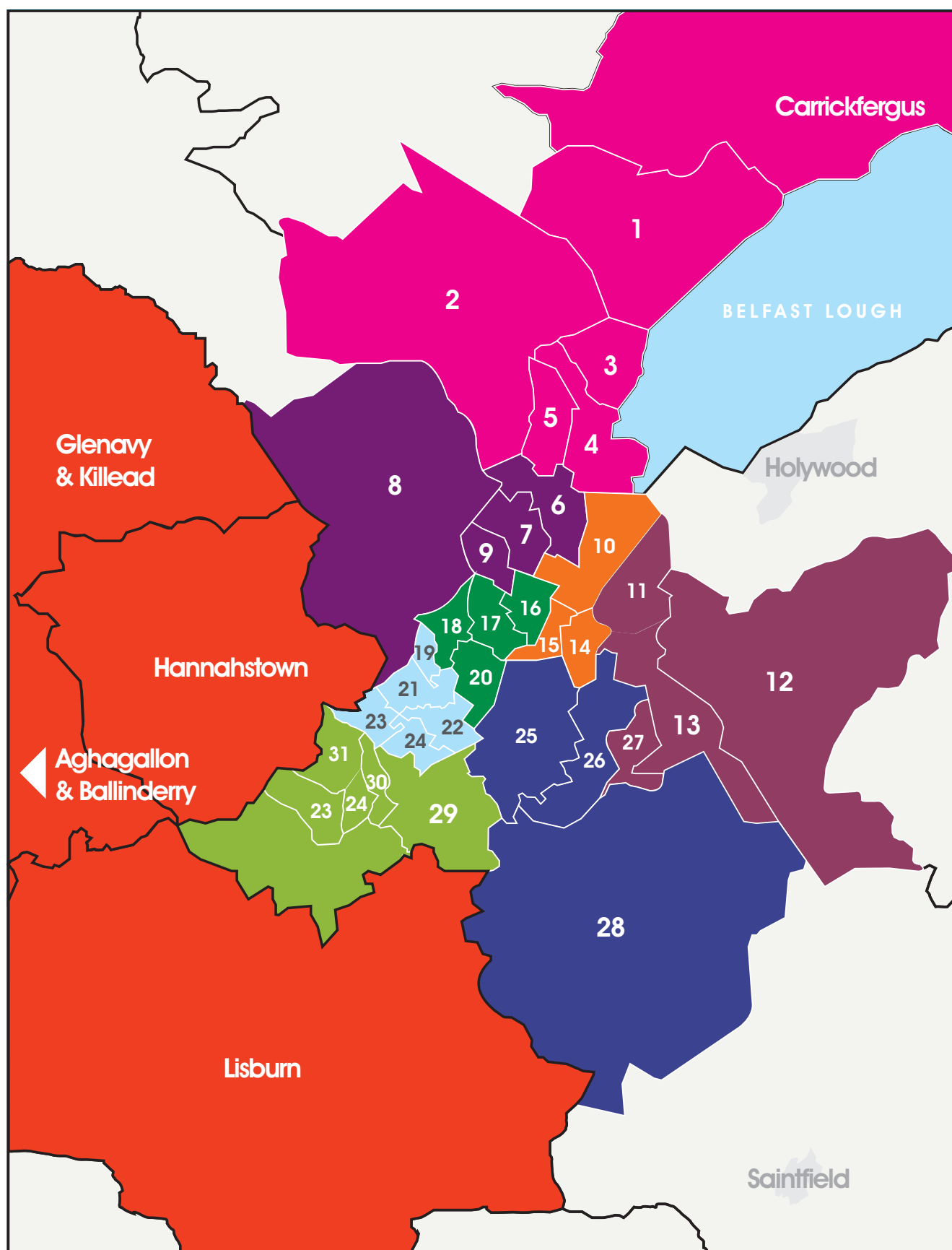
Through Baptism all Christians are called to come together to share in the Church's worship, prayer and mission. Our Pastoral Communities must become environments in which the giftedness of each individual is encouraged for the service of God and the community.

Pastoral Communities will have a team approach whereby Clergy, Religious and Lay people will share responsibility for the Church's mission. Each newly created Pastoral Community will have to be big enough to ensure mutual support and cover for clergy for at least twenty years. This will be a key factor in deciding what the critical mass of a Pastoral Community will be.

The Pastoral Communities should strive towards financial viability and sustainability.

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**Figure 6 : Proposed Pastoral Communities in Belfast**



## Proposed Pastoral Communities in Belfast

Table 9: Proposed Pastoral Communities in Belfast

Area and Population	Map Ref	Constituent Parishes	Review Info	Special Ministries
Loughshore Region 27,748	-	Carrickfergus	Churches 10	University of Ulster, Jordanstown Campus
	1	St James', Whiteabbey	Baptisms 361	
	2	St Mary's on the Hill	Weddings 61	
	3	Whitehouse	Funerals 133	
	4	Greencastle	Primary Schools 7	
	5	St Gerard's	Post-primary schools 1	
North Belfast 27,758	6	Holy Family	Churches 6	
	7	Sacred Heart	Baptisms 435	
	8	St Vincent de Paul, Ligoniel	Weddings 160	
	9	Holy Cross	Funerals 204	
			Primary Schools 8	
			Post-primary schools 4	
City Centre 12,997	10	St Patrick's	Churches 3	Mater Hospital New Ulster University Campus
	14	St Malachy's	Baptisms 203	
	15	St Mary's	Weddings 46	
			Funerals 128	
			Primary Schools 3	
			Post-primary schools 1	
Falls Road 23,054	16	St Peter's Cathedral	Churches 5	Royal Hospital St Mary's University College
	17	St Paul's	Baptisms 430	
	18	Corpus Christi	Weddings 43	
	20	St John's	Funerals 259	
			Primary Schools 7	
			Post-primary schools 4	
West Belfast 26,913	19	Holy Trinity	Churches 7	
	21	St Teresa's	Baptisms 398	
	22	St Agnes'	Weddings 82	
	23	St Oliver Plunkett	Funerals 343	
	24	St Michael the Archangel	Primary Schools 5	
			Post-primary schools 4	

## Proposed Pastoral Communities in Belfast

Table 9 continued: Proposed Pastoral Communities in Belfast

Area and Population	Map Ref	Constituent Parishes	Review Info	Special Ministries
Outer West Belfast 27,431	29	St Anne's	Churches 5	
	30	Our Lady Queen of Peace	Baptisms 504	
	31	Nativity	Weddings 88	
	33	Christ the Redeemer	Funerals 146	
	34	St Luke's	Primary Schools 8	
			Post-primary schools 2	
South Belfast 31,185	25	St Brigid's	Churches 3	Queen's University Belfast City Hospital Hydebank Prison
	26	Holy Rosary	Baptisms 371	
	28	Drumbo & Carryduff	Weddings 55	
			Funerals 105	
			Primary Schools 5	
			Post-primary schools 2	
East Belfast 17,262	11	St Matthew's	Churches 4	Ulster Hospital
	12	St Colmcille's	Baptisms 167	
	13	St Anthony's	Weddings 22	
	27	St Bernadette's	Funerals 69	
			Primary Schools 3	
			Post-primary schools 2	

## Rationale for Proposed Pastoral Communities in Belfast

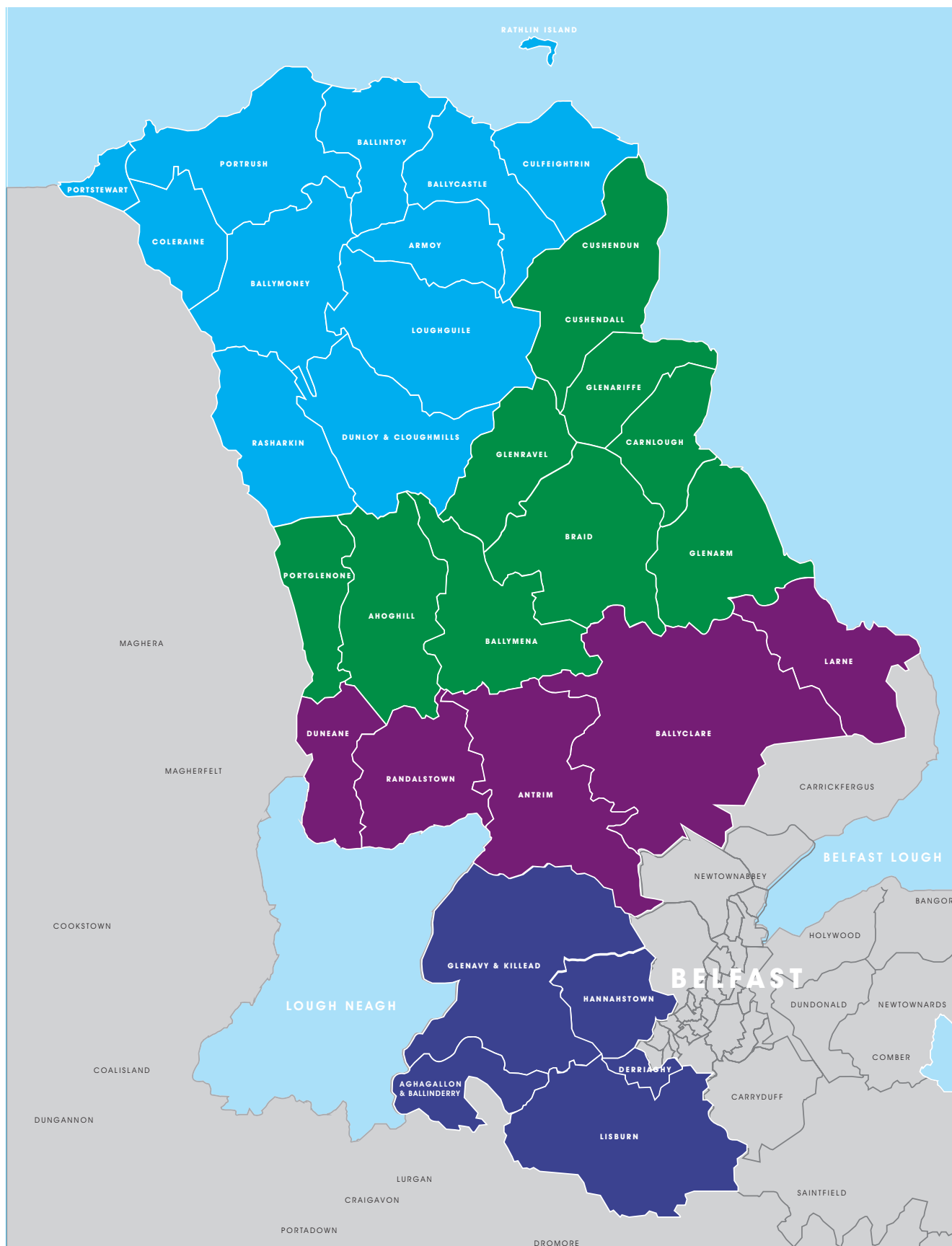
<b>Loughshore Region</b>
There is a natural progression out the Shore Road which reaches to and includes Carrickfergus. This long stretch has near neighbours in St Gerard's and St Mary's on the Hill, an area which is experiencing considerable population growth.
<b>North Belfast</b>
Saint Vincent de Paul's, Ligoniel, borders with the 3 neighbouring parishes of North Belfast, Sacred Heart, Holy Family & Holy Cross.
<b>City Centre</b>
In our diocese the centre of Belfast is a unique hub of life and activity which throws up very special pastoral challenges and opportunities. It is a home to people, a place of work, a centre of culture & tourism, a shopping centre, the location of the Mater Hospital and, in the future, the major campus of the Ulster University. The 3 parishes situated in the City Centre should be united in a common mission in this very particular environment.
<b>Falls Road</b>
Along the Falls road within a very short distance we have 4 parishes and a major hospital. St Peter's Cathedral, St Paul's, St John's and Corpus Christi have the Royal Victoria Hospital right in the centre.
<b>West Belfast</b>
In the 5 parishes along the Andersonstown Road, Stewartstown Road and Glen Road there is a highly concentrated Catholic Population.
<b>Outer West Belfast</b>
In recent years this area has seen the growth of new housing developments, schools and parishes.
<b>South Belfast</b>
St Brigid's and Holy Rosary with a large Catholic population include the following institutions: Queen's University and Belfast City Hospital. Carryduff is a commuter area which naturally looks in towards the city.
<b>East Belfast</b>
These four parishes, St Matthew's, St Anthony's, St Bernadette's and Saint Colmcille's have the Ulster Hospital in their area, and a small but growing Catholic population.

## Proposed Pastoral Communities in Connor

Table 10: Proposed Pastoral Communities in Connor

Area and Population	Constituent Parishes	Review Info	Special Ministries
North Connor 24,265	Armoy Ballintoy Ballycastle Ballymoney Coleraine Culfeightrin Dunloy & Cloughmills Loughguile Portrush Portstewart Rasharkin	Churches 19	Causeway Hospital, Ulster University, Coleraine Campus
		Baptisms 307	
		Weddings 87	
		Funerals 183	
		Primary Schools 13	
		Post-primary schools 4	
Ballymena 19,746	Ahoghill Ballymena Braid Carnlough Cushendall Cushendun Glenariffe Glenarm Glenravel Portglenone	Churches 15	
		Baptisms 273	
		Weddings 73	
		Funerals 171	
		Primary Schools 12	
		Post-primary schools 3	
Antrim 22,207	Antrim Ballyclare Duneane Larne Randalstown	Churches 11	Antrim Area Hospital
		Baptisms 279	
		Weddings 61	
		Funerals 175	
		Primary Schools 11	
		Post-primary schools 1	
Lisburn 27,396	Aghagallon & Ballinderry Derriaghy Glenavy & Killead Hannahstown Lisburn	Churches 14	Maghaberry Prison
		Baptisms 343	
		Weddings 83	
		Funerals 110	
		Primary Schools 8	
		Post-primary schools 1	

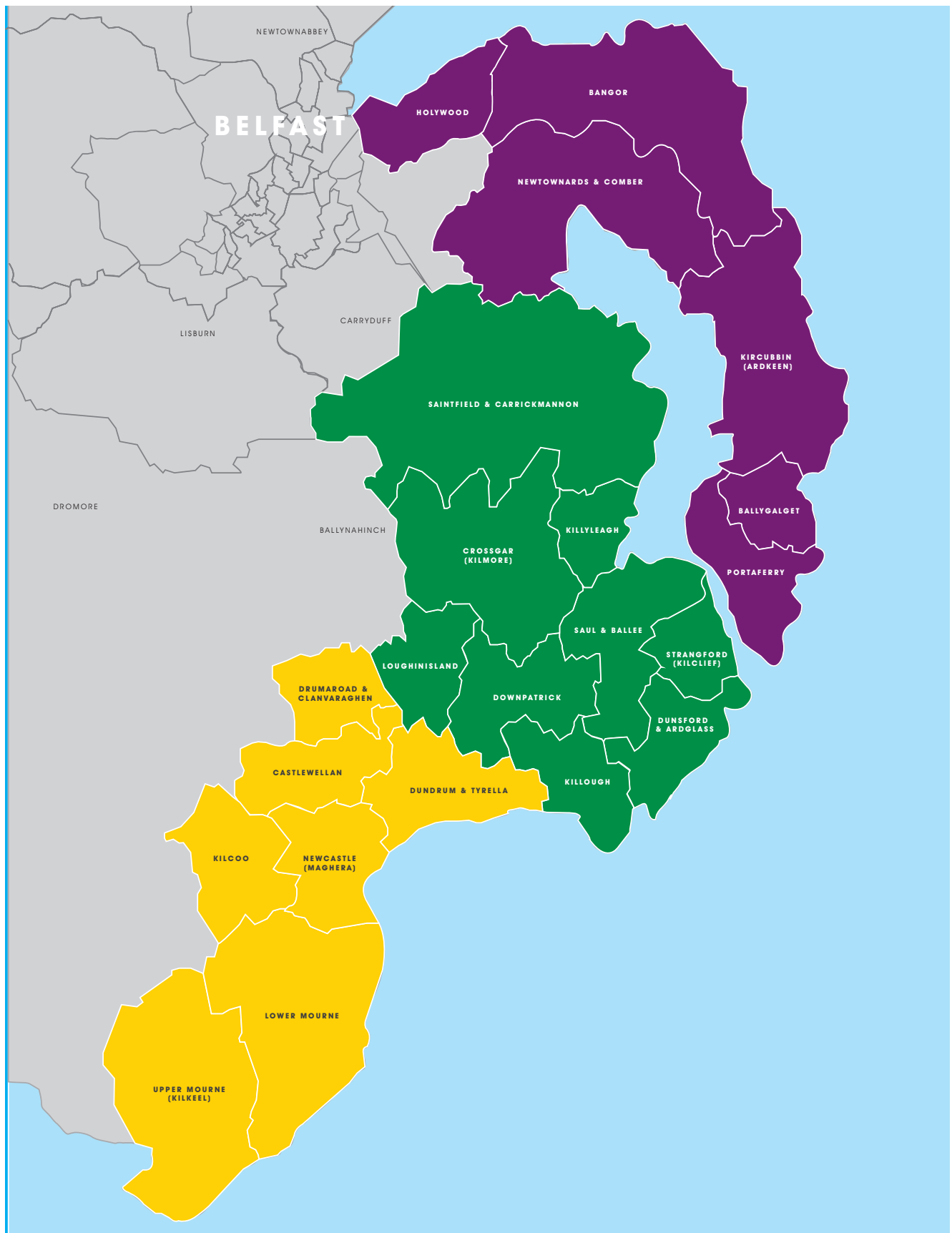
## Figure 7: Proposed Pastoral Communities in Connor



## Proposed Pastoral Communities in Connor

<b>North Connor</b>
The Northern end of the diocese of Connor is made up of 11 parishes, some of them very small in population and, unavoidably, covering a wide geographical area. The Causeway Hospital is located in this area.
<b>Ballymena</b>
All of these rural parishes in the centre of Co. Antrim, some of them with quite small populations, naturally converge on the town of Ballymena. There is a natural commuting link between the parishes on the Antrim Coast and Ballymena.
<b>Antrim</b>
The M2 and the newly developed A8 link these 5 parishes across South Antrim. Antrim Area Hospital is in the centre of this area.
<b>Lisburn</b>
The greater Belfast parishes of Hannahstown and Derriaghy, along with Aghagallon & Ballinderry and Glenavy & Killead hold boundaries with the Parish of Lisburn. Together they contain a large Catholic population.

## Figure 8: Proposed Pastoral Communities in Down



## Proposed Pastoral Communities in Down

Table 11: Proposed Pastoral Communities in Down

Area and Population	Constituent Parishes	Review Info	Special Ministries
North Down and Ards 20,545	Ballygalget Bangor Holywood Kircubbin Newtownards Portaferry	Churches 11	
		Baptisms 192	
		Weddings 45	
		Funerals 143	
		Primary Schools 9	
		Post-primary schools 2	
Downpatrick 25,517	Crossgar (Kilmore) Downpatrick Dunsford & Ardglass Killough Killyleagh Loughinisland Saintfield & Carrickmannon Saul & Ballee Strangford (Kilclief)	Churches 21	Downpatrick Hospital
		Baptisms 369	
		Weddings 89	
		Funerals 214	
		Primary Schools 17	
		Post-primary schools 4	
Mourne 22,521	Castlewellan Drumroad & Clanvaraghen Dundrum & Tyrella Kilcoo Lower Mourne Newcastle (Maghera) Upper Mourne (Kilkeel)	Churches 15	Antrim Area Hospital
		Baptisms 330	
		Weddings 94	
		Funerals 201	
		Primary Schools 15	
		Post-primary schools 3	

### North Down and Ards

The 3 parishes on the Ards Peninsula naturally link with Newtownards, Bangor and Holywood.

### Downpatrick

All of these rural parishes in the centre of Co. Down, some of them with quite small populations, naturally converge on the town of Downpatrick.

### Mourne

These parishes, gathered in and around the Mourne Mountains at the Southern end of the Diocese are a natural unit.

## PART 2B

# Pastoral Community Boundaries Alternative Proposal



# Alternative Proposal

The proposed Pastoral Community boundaries outlined in Section 2a – were presented to the clergy and, for the most part, the rationale behind them was acknowledged. The following possible alternatives have arisen from those consultation meetings with the clergy.

## Belfast City Centre

With regard to the City Centre the clergy welcomed the idea of a specific mission for the centre of Belfast. There are various schools of thought as regards its makeup. In the first place some are convinced that the City Centre Community should remain as proposed earlier containing only the three parishes very close to the centre. Another proposal was that since St. Brigid's is separated by the Lagan from the rest of South Belfast it should join the City Centre, ensuring a wider socio-economic spread and bringing additional resources. This would also mean that the two large universities would be included in the one area as well as the Mater and City hospitals. Some felt that having two universities and two hospitals in the one Pastoral Community would mean an excessive workload, while others felt that this would allow for a more unified approach to chaplaincy in our hospitals and third level education.

## West Belfast

It was recognised that while some people in Hannahstown associate more naturally with neighbouring country areas a large part of the parish looks spontaneously towards West Belfast. This proposed alternative would see Hannahstown as a part of the West Belfast Pastoral community.

## Outer West Belfast

The parish of Derriaghy, while containing significant rural areas that border Lisburn, identifies with the Outer West Belfast Pastoral Community. This proposed alternative would see Derriaghy as a part of the Outer West Belfast Pastoral Community.

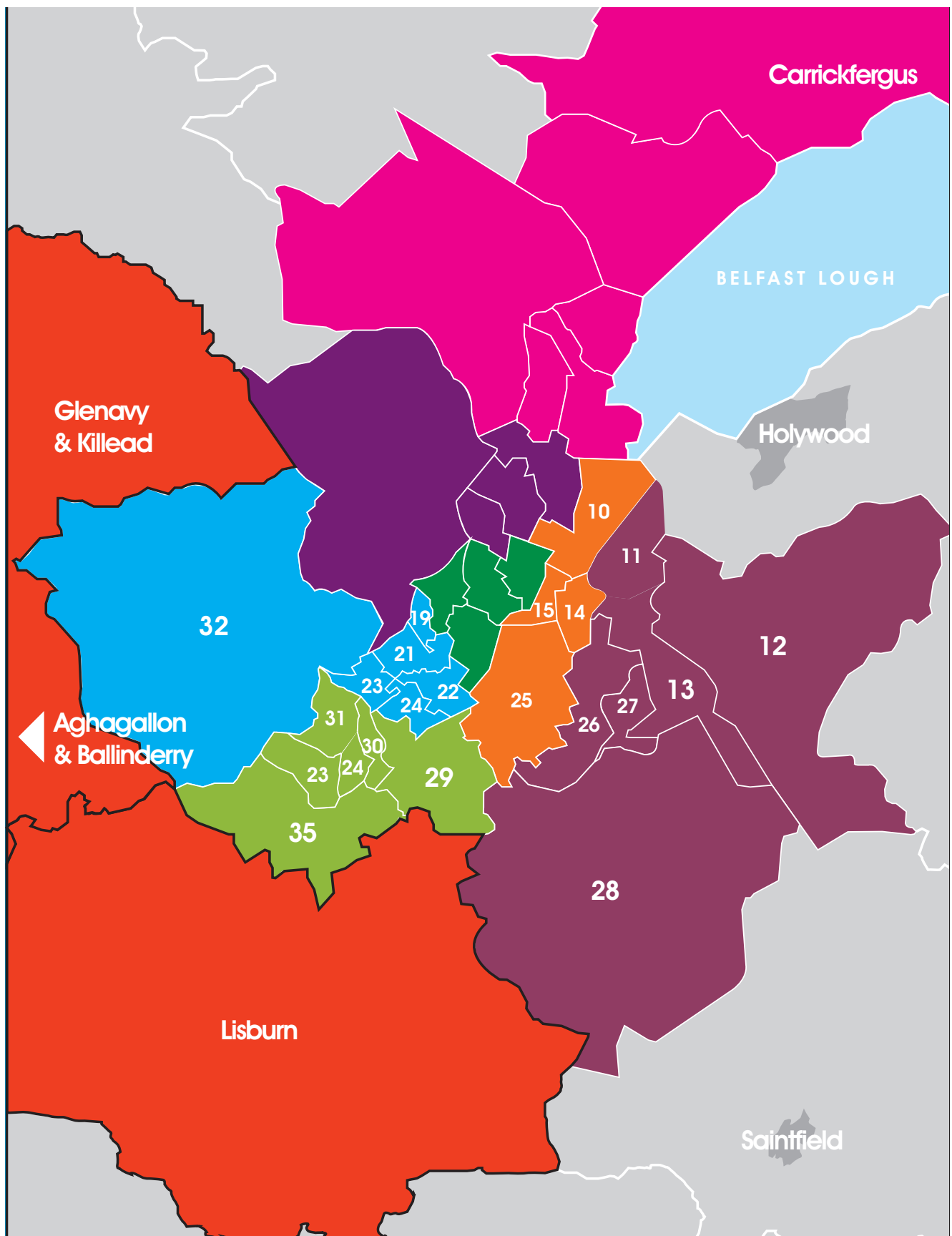
## Lisburn

The Lisburn Pastoral Community without the parishes of Hannahstown and Derriaghy still has a population of over 20,000 and the area is experiencing significant population growth.

## South & East Belfast

If St Brigid's were moved to the City Centre it would leave only 2 parishes in the proposed South Belfast Pastoral Community. It is proposed that they form one Pastoral Community with the parishes of East Belfast. In this area there is a natural sense of community with children crossing parish boundaries to attend both primary and post-primary schools.

**Figure 9: Alternative Proposed Pastoral Communities in Belfast**



## Proposed Pastoral Communities in Belfast

Table 12: Proposed Pastoral Communities in Belfast

Area and Population	Map Ref	Constituent Parishes	Review Info	Special Ministries
City Centre 26,488	10	St Patrick's	Churches 4	Mater Hospital Ulster University Campus Queen's University Belfast City Hospital
	14	St Malachy's	Baptisms 291	
	15	St Mary's	Weddings 69	
	25	St Brigid's	Funerals 163	
			Primary Schools 4	
			Post-primary schools 1	
West Belfast 29,231	19	Holy Trinity	Churches 9	
	21	St Teresa's	Baptisms 426	
	22	St Agnes'	Weddings 99	
	23	St Oliver Plunkett	Funerals 349	
	24	St Michael the Archangel	Primary Schools 6	
	32	Hannahstown	Post-primary schools 4	
Outer West Belfast 32,120	29	St Anne's	Churches 7	
	30	Our Lady Queen of Peace	Baptisms 557	
	31	Nativity	Weddings 97	
	33	Christ the Redeemer	Funerals 151	
	34	St Luke's	Primary Schools 9	
	35	Derragh	Post-primary schools 2	
South & East Belfast 34,956	26	Holy Rosary	Churches 6	Ulster Hospital
	28	Drumbo & Carryduff	Baptisms 450	
	11	St Matthew's	Weddings 54	
	12	St Colmcille's	Funerals 139	
	13	St Anthony's	Primary Schools 7	
	27	St Bernadette's	Post-primary schools 4	
Lisburn 20,389		Aghagallon & Ballinderry Glenavy & Killead Lisburn	Churches 10	Maghaberry Prison
			Baptisms 262	
			Weddings 57	
			Funerals 99	
			Primary Schools 6	
			Post-primary schools 1	

# PART 3

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# Consultation



# Consultation

It is envisaged that our Parishes will collaborate much more closely in the years ahead within the new Pastoral Communities. The Listening Events of 2011 pointed us in the direction of greater co-responsibility. This new move towards greater collaboration across parish boundaries is a natural development in the process.

It is important at this early stage that parishioners across the diocese take time to consider the current proposal.

Parishioners can engage in consultation in a number of settings:

- Holding a Parish Meeting
- Parish Pastoral Council
- Parish Groups (St Vincent de Paul, Legion of Mary, Parish Youth group etc.)
- Individual Responses

Outlined is a suggested session plan.

## Opening Prayer:

God our Father, we gather in the name of your Son, guided by your Holy Spirit.

Help us to leave behind all that weighs us down and open the horizons of our minds and hearts. Pour out on us the gifts of your Spirit so that we, your Church, will grow together in Love and become a sign of hope in our world.

We ask you this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Mary, Seat of Wisdom, **Pray for us.**

St Malachy, **Pray for us.**

St MacNissi, **Pray for us.**

St Columbanus, **Pray for us.**

## Scripture Reading:

Mark 8:22-26 Cure of the Blind Man at Bethsaida

They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought to him a blind man whom they begged him to touch. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. Then, putting spittle on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked; 'Can you see anything?' The man, who was beginning to see, replied; 'I can see people; they look like trees to me, but they are walking about.' Then he laid his hands on the man's eyes again and he saw clearly; he was cured, and he could see everything plainly and distinctly. And Jesus sent him home saying; 'Do not even go into the village.'

## Reflection:

We, both individually and as a Diocesan Community, need new sight that only Jesus can give if we are to see clearly how God is calling us to live at this time in our lives. It is good for us to reflect on the experience of the blind man at Bethsaida. His movement from blindness to new sight was gradual. He didn't see everything clearly right away. 'I can see people; they look like trees to me, but they are walking about'. How can I identify with his experience in my own life?

Jesus touched him a second time and only then did it all become 'plain and distinct'.

## Group Discussion:

1. On looking back over the figures in Part 1 both for our parish and for other parishes in the diocese:  
What struck you?  
What response, if any, is called for?
  2. We remember Bishop Treanor's words: 'We must ensure that everyone within the diocese has support for their Christian journey and this will require an increase in collaboration among neighbouring parishes.'
- What good things happen in our parish that we would like to share with neighbouring parishes?
  - What initiatives are you aware of that take place in other parishes that you would like to be a part of?
  - How can we best group parishes for the sharing and creation of new opportunities?
  - Are there any obstacles that you can identify to the successful co-operation of parishes in the Pastoral Community?
  - What recommendations do you have for the proposed Pastoral Community boundaries?

## Closing Prayer:

### Our Father

Let us pray: God Our Father, your Son Jesus has given his Church the mission to proclaim the Gospel to all the nations. May our efforts to fulfil this mission be guided by the Holy Spirit so that we might be a leaven of new life, salt for the earth and a light for the world. Help us to be worthy missionaries and faithful to you. We pray through Christ our Lord.

### Amen

Mary, Seat of Wisdom, **Pray for us.**

St Malachy, **Pray for us.**

St MacNissi, **Pray for us.**

St Columbanus, **Pray for us.**

# Consultation

Name	
On behalf of group (if applicable)	
Parish	
e-mail address to confirm receipt	

What recommendations do you have for the proposed Pastoral Community boundaries? Why?

**Please send your response to;** [office@livingchurchdc.org](mailto:office@livingchurchdc.org)

or

Living Church Office  
Good Shepherd Centre  
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Creating Pastoral  
Communities

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