

FORWARD TOGETHER  
IN  
**HOPE**

# **Our Partnership Proposals**

**The eight parishes of the  
Darlington Deanery**

**Final Issue 25/11/16**



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**



## **Partnership in the Gospel**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,  
always in every prayer of mine for you all  
making my prayer with joy,  
thankful for your partnership in the gospel  
from the first day until now.

And I am sure that he who began a good work in you  
will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:2-6

Prayer resources have been developed to accompany this stage of our *Forward Together in Hope* journey.  
They are available from the resources section of the website and are designed to be customised for use  
within parishes and emerging partnerships.

## Our Partnership Proposals

For almost two years we have all been exploring what it means to be a disciple of Jesus within a viable and flourishing community. In the short time between now and the beginning of Advent we need to draw upon our exploration and look very practically at how resources can be shared and leadership developed to enable our communities to flourish into the future. Every parishioner has been asked to contribute to this by thinking and praying about partnership and offering their practical suggestions through the tear-off slip from the *Imagine new ways...* leaflet.

This document, *Our Partnership Proposals*, requests information from a **group of parishes** about their initial proposals for developing new partnership arrangements. Please read this in conjunction with the booklet *From Parish to Partnership* published in June this year which sets out detailed information about these partnerships and their benefits. In it we are reminded that Pope Francis speaks of 'parish' as '*not an outdated institution precisely because it possesses great flexibility; it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and community*'. We now have a real opportunity to follow this call to be flexible, open, creative and missionary as we travel together on the next stage of our journey.

Electronic versions of both of these documents are available within the resources section of the *Forward Together in Hope* website at [www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk](http://www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk).

**One completed document for each proposed partnership should be returned electronically to [hope@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:hope@diocesehn.org.uk) by mid-day on the First Sunday of Advent (27<sup>th</sup> November) at the latest. It is essential that all areas adhere to this deadline to ensure that their proposals are taken into account within the diocesan-wide proposals that will be developed as a next stage.**

We welcome completed documents ahead of this date. Please copy your proposals to the Dean(s) with responsibility for the parishes in the proposed partnership.

All information received by 27<sup>th</sup> November will be worked with during December to produce the first draft of a 'Flexible Plan' for consideration by Bishop Séamus and the Diocesan Board of Directors at their residential meeting. Prior to that meeting we may need to communicate with the contact person for the proposed partnership (usually the Dean or his nominee) to clarify particular issues or to ask for further details.

We are conscious that in parts of the diocese all of this is very new and that some proposals presented will be very much an outline. Other areas may well be able to go into a lot more detail. In all cases it is important to remember that the documents submitted at the end of November represent *initial proposals*. Once they are all received, these proposals have to be brought together to arrive at a position that works well across the diocese as a whole. While this is likely to mean that some proposals may not be accepted in their entirety, all thoughts and ideas received by the deadline will be brought to bear on the recommendations put forward to Bishop Séamus and the Diocesan Board.

When Bishop Séamus has considered everything, his decisions will be communicated widely across the diocese. Partnership arrangements will then be firmed up and each area asked to commence detailed planning and implementation.

For advice about completing this document, or for any other queries, please feel free to contact the *Forward Together in Hope* team by e-mail at [hope@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:hope@diocesehn.org.uk) or by telephone on 0191 243 3304.

Thank you for everything that you are doing to make *Forward Together in Hope* a success.

## Section 1: Details of the Proposed Partnership

(Please refer to Section 2.1 on Page 6 of 'From Parish to Partnership')

*The parish is not an outdated institution precisely because it possesses great flexibility; it can assume quite different contours...*

Pope Francis - Evangelii Gaudium

### 1.1 Please list the parishes that you envisage being involved in the proposed partnership.

(Please extend this table if necessary)

Parish Name	Location	Priest(s)	Deacon(s)	Mass Attendance*
St Teresa's	Darlington	Fr Greg Price Br Robert Moore OH, (St John of God) assists	Dc. Jurgen Muller	181
St William's & Francis de Sales	Darlington	Fr Greg Price Br Robert Moore OH, (St John of God) assists	Dc. Jurgen Muller	113
St Anne's	Darlington	Fr Greg Price Br Robert Moore OH, (St John of God) assists	Dc. Jurgen Muller	104
St Thomas's	Darlington	Fr David Russell	Dc. Jurgen Muller	118
Holy Family	Darlington	Fr David Russell	Dc. Jurgen Muller	281
St Augustine's	Darlington	Fr Seamus Doyle	Dc. Jurgen Muller	496
St Osmund's	Gainford	Fr Wilfrid Elkin Fr Ian Grieves in residence		56 Parish and 83 Ordinariate
St Mary's	Barnard Castle	Fr Wilfrid Elkin		113
St Aidan's chapel-of-ease	Middleton Teesdale	Fr Wilfrid Elkin		Jointly with St Mary's as above
<b>TOTAL MASS ATTENDANCE</b>				<b>1,462 +83</b>

\* Please include the average Mass attendance figure for each parish as reported in October 2015. (We are aware that there are sometimes seasonal variations in Mass attendance).

## The Ordinariate

The Darlington Ordinariate is not part of our diocese but are currently hosted within the Deanery and their priest can and does serve a number of the parishes. There has not been the opportunity to take their views into account as part of this FTiH process and neither has there been the opportunity for the parishes directly affected by the presence of the Ordinariate (particularly St Osmund's and St Mary's) to discuss any related aspects as part of this partnership plan. This report therefore does not include any input from the Ordinariate and they have not been directly involved in the development of these proposals.

Moreover, it is considered that further conversations between the diocese and the Ordinariate need to be had to clarify the aims and objectives of both, and more explanations are needed for everyone affected to gain a common understanding.

### 1.2 Why is this grouping seen as the most appropriate for your area?

Please provide as much information as you can in presenting a rationale for the proposed partnership arrangement. You may wish to consider, for example, complementary skills/experience, historical connections, distances, existing joint activity, finances, numbers attending Mass etc.

As an ideal, we do wish to keep to the existing parishes at least initially, working cooperatively with the Deanery under one partnership. This will be dependent on each parish to be able to sustain itself pastorally, socially, financially and administratively. There is an understanding that not every parish will have a resident priest, however, we believe it is best to maintain a visible Catholic presence in as many communities as possible. This will necessitate an increased need for lay leadership in most parishes. Only when a parish becomes unviable either pastorally, socially, financially, or not having sufficient capacity to manage its own affairs should consideration be given to closing church buildings.

Reasons for considering this to be the appropriate way forward include:

- \* A single cohesive structure for strong leadership, forward planning, financial and spiritual sustainability across all eight parishes
- \* This grouping offers sufficient support for priests and deacons.
- \* Efficiency savings
- \* Collaboration of skills and experience would ensure a robust steering group.
- \* Enhanced communication between partnership communities
- \* Joined up thinking for local training programmes and refresher away days
- \* Collaboration and support to plan larger events across communities
- \* Opportunity to boost fundraising
- \* The ability to share responsibilities for outreach work
- \* Ability to work together more effectively to provide suitable faith based experiences for young people to encourage and support them to take part in worship and church activities
- \* Offering a wider support network for lay leaders/volunteers etc.

- \* A collaboration of parishes from the existing deanery
- \* Could involve in various ways all the parishes of families with secondary school children attending the single Catholic secondary school in Darlington, Carmel College
- \* Two of the Catholic primary schools are also connected in the Academy Trust with Carmel College
- \* Historic links between Holy Family and Gainford, between Gainford and Barnard Castle; all Darlington parishes having grown out of original St Augustine's
- \* Sharing priests, resources including people's skills and experiences, finances, buildings etc.
- \* Cross fertilisation of good practice, identifiable area, bus routes
- \* A percentage of parishioners move round parishes to attend Mass and services already for variety of reasons
- \* Big enough potential to network enough volunteers to gather and plan, organise and do work for Youth Work, Adult Faith Formation, Lay Spirituality, Social activities, sacramental preparation and so on.
- \* The traffic light strengths and weaknesses chart, which is based on statements in the various parish Observations documents returned from diocese, graphically illustrates the areas of existing good practice, areas for potential growth, and also areas needing support. (See embedded spreadsheet). It is believed that this demonstrates the strong potential for growth which such a partnership would have.



10 Key Areas of Each Parish v2.xlsx

### 1.3 What issues might get in the way of effective joint working in this partnership area and how might these be minimised?

Issue	Minimising the impact
Resistance to change	
Inflexibility in sharing already established roles	Good communication across and within parishes
Having to travel further distances	Share transport – organise volunteers (motor insurance must include this)
Financial constraints	Diocese delegation of authority over finances and commitments would need to be understood and discussed with the diocese
Existing parish and diocese arrangements covering Charity status and other legal / tax considerations	Further consideration required, especially in the special case of St Mary's and St Aidan's. Expertise will be necessary from the diocese and/or professional support
Salaried roles are considered to be important to enable effective	Expertise will be necessary from the diocese and/or professional support

working over the area of a Partnership as opposed to a parish	
Limited diocese expert resources	Setting up so many new partnerships will require constrained diocese resources and careful planning will be required to prevent delays at the new partnership level
How to encourage clergy and laity to work effectively together	Need to encourage and support the clergy and galvanise the laity by establishing programmes of training for both.
Attitudes: may be rooted in past experience or be motivated by convenience.	A long term consistent approach is needed to address concerns, issues and fears. Case studies of situations and organisation in other parts of western Europe and the wider Catholic world of how things are done and arranged to grow communities led by laity under the guidance of clergy from distant locations.
Geographic distance especially from rural areas, areas of town not served by public transport on Sundays	Could be minimised by informally encouraging those with cars to offer lifts or transport, perhaps use hired minibuses to pick up parishioners from certain pick-up points.
Time/ availability/ energy/ skills and knowledge in how to begin processes of transformation of where we are now to where we would like to be in 15/20years.	Identify among the parishioners those with skills, leadership and experience on how to catalyse change, motivate and prepare communities for change.
Parish finances to evolve to shared partnership finances but how to coordinate this under diocese rules is unclear.	Finances may need to evolve to become partnership area finances: encourage parish volunteer accountants, bankers and others to meet and share good practices, support one another in times of changes. May also require diocesan resources to support which will be stretched as many partnerships go through this process.
St Osmund's Gainford currently hosts the Ordinariate with a priest in residence.	Careful consideration and appropriate communication between all affected parties will be required.
St Mary's Barnard Castle has unique financial circumstances	Such arrangements are important for maintaining Catholic life in a geographically remote community and need to be fully understood and taken into account.
Feelings of isolation for smaller communities	More effective joint communication via Partnership web sites, social media and paper bulletins.
Not enough paid employees to develop the structure because of current diocesan staffing	Additional staffing may be required to be delegated to the partnership or shared between partnerships by diocese especially during the initial period of change.
Specialist provision with a prevalent culture, e.g. Latin Mass / Ordinariate	This could be a concern were this to be a dominant provision in any particular location, with little or restricted access to current Catholic teaching and practice for mainstream Catholics. It would be a particular concern for small, remote or rural parishes.

#### **1.4 Were there any alternative partnership combinations that were seriously considered as part of your deliberations?**

Yes, but some of these have only have been discussed within one or two communities and certainly not by all and therefore cannot be said to be agreed by all as being real options for further consideration.

#### **If 'Yes', please describe these arrangements, their advantages and disadvantages and why they are less appropriate than your preferred option.**

In many, if not all, of our parishes the initial comments in response to the Imagine booklet questionnaire gave only one or two potential partners, e.g. Initially two members of the FTIH team had suggested St Teresa's to partnership with only St Anne's and St Williams. They suggested this option as they have a long relationship with them and have had joint services with them in the past. However, after further discussion within the team, it was agreed that for the purpose of longer term arrangements to avoid another restructure of the partnerships in the future, and because of the decreasing number of priests and parishioners, it makes sense to include all parishes in one partnership.

Similar thoughts from St Thomas - two smaller partnerships covering the current deanery but on a smaller scale, but this would probably have a short term life given the likely ageing of parish congregations and less available (and older) priests left to serve. We thought if big changes are to occur best to do it on a larger scale now.

Two smaller partnerships across the deanery was considered to be divisive, and could mean that in a geographically small area there would be duplication of activities and resources.

As it is likely that in the future there will be only be a small number of priests in our deanery we should plan for that scenario now by creating the one partnership covering all of our existing parishes. The larger partnership plan allows for a more efficient, cohesive approach to pastoral and spiritual provision and development.

A plan with two partnerships would have put further pressure upon the priests who would have been more stretched than they are currently.

Another option that has been considered is to have just the one large parish: this would have the advantage of pooling resources and bring about economies of scale. However, individual parish communities would feel a great loss of identity and it has been felt very important to keep the presence of local Catholic communities alive for as long as possible whilst recognising that in time even further measures may eventually be required. Such a process could be managed under the proposed partnership and in a staged manner.

One possible scenario in the longer term was suggested as follows and demonstrates the challenges to be faced:

Given the mathematics of approximately just 50 active full-time priests in the diocese in 13 years, it would seem prudent to plan for this eventuality. A realistic possibility would be a reduction in the number of full-time priests in the Deanery from 4 to 3.

Taking care of our priests - Placing a limit on the number of Sunday Masses: there will be expectations from some of our parishioners for our priests to provide many and conveniently timed Masses. Placing a limit of three Sunday Masses (which is actually the current situation) would help to limit expectations. The priest could then realistically serve a maximum of three Churches with a Saturday Vigil in one, Morning Mass in another and Evening Mass in a third. Priests should be located conveniently to minimize their travel.

For example, one full-time priest resident in Gainford to serve Barnard Castle, Gainford and two Darlington Parishes, with a retired priest in Barnard Castle. Barnard Castle is in a good position to provide accommodation to a working retired priest.

This would mean that each full-time priest would be responsible for a maximum of four parishes with support in one of these - effectively, having to say Sunday Mass in only three.

Placement of retired priest/s – Barnard Castle has the advantage that having a resident retired priest here to provide limited services including Sunday Mass would limit the travel required for any full-time priest with overall responsibility for the parish. This would seem to be a priority placement and other retired priests, if available, could be placed appropriately in our vacant presbyteries.

## Section 2: New Ways of Working Together

(Please refer to Sections 2.2 and 2.3 on Page 6 of 'From Parish to Partnership')

*There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit;  
there are all sorts of service to be done,  
but always to the same Lord,  
working in all sorts of different ways  
in all sorts of people.*

1 Cor. 12:4-5

### 2.1 What leadership/co-ordination arrangements are proposed for the partnership area?

Please think about possible leadership structures, roles and responsibilities and associated training and development etc.

- An ad hoc group of parish representatives across the Darlington deanery began meeting at St Thomas' presbytery: first meeting on 8 August, subsequently 30 August and 21 September with further three meetings planned for 25 October, 8th and 22nd November 2016.
- The whole process so far has been exploratory, evolving out of those individuals from parishes across the deanery who are embedded in parish work.
- We start from a point where there are already some things organised across parishes e.g. sacramental preparation for Baptisms, Confirmations, RCIA, Marriage. Stress was made that continued partnership development needs to be evolved from the local contexts, not imposed from above or outside.
- We would want to learn from previous good practice and will need to explore what happens in practice and what experience there is from other areas in the diocese, other parts of the country and other parts of the world. What was the experience of Billingham, of North and South Tyneside Clusters of parishes, and of the Hartlepool pilot? What worked well, what didn't work well, what helped and hindered, rather than reinvent the wheel?
- We will need proper training for lay leaders, volunteers, key employees such as secretaries and administrators, as well as for clergy working in a more collaborative way and managing change at all sorts of levels. Currently the danger for everyone is that the whole prospect is so vague and overwhelming that people feel swamped and they close down. Training needs to be done at a local level rather than at a distance in Gateshead/Newcastle.
- Who exists who would be qualified and able to do the training?

A single leadership group for the partnership is clearly required, name to be agreed. Each current parish community has a pastoral council. Each pastoral council would have representation on the partnership leadership group. This group would be there to develop and lead the partnership. Individual councils would bring their successes and areas for development to the partnership.

There are many questions to be explored but in order to make a start, in summary a three tier structure in the one partnership is proposed:

Tier 1 - Overall Partnership Leadership Team (Council?) with representatives from each church community and possibly in time with sub-committees for some key activities or expert areas.

Tier 2 - A Pastoral Council led by the Laity for each Community, with representatives sitting on the Partnership Leadership Team and, depending on the size of the community, a number of sub-committees with representatives reporting to the Community Pastoral Council.

Tier 3 – Sub committees as necessary in each community working with sub committees of the overall Partnership Leadership Team.

It may be appropriate for members of sub-committees of a Pastoral Council to also be a member of the same topic Partnership sub-committee, e.g. Lay Leaders, Adult Formation, Finance, etc

These three tiers to cover all aspects of the smooth running of the Partnership for the various needs of all.

NB. Please see a diagram attached to this document depicting potential teams supporting the work of our clergy and also the embedded file 'Possible Responsibilities within a Partnership' below which describes in detail (but in draft for discussion!) a potential organisation for the relationship between The Partnership Leadership team and the individual community Pastoral Councils.

The diocese is requested to consider whether it would be appropriate for the diocese to define a new typical partnership structure along these lines but to define terms that can be used in common throughout the diocese. For example, the partnership could be led by The Partnership Pastoral Council (similar to the Deanery Council working under the Bishops Council?) and the communities could be led by The Community Pastoral Councils working under the Partnership Pastoral Council. Where there remains a resident priest in a parish, the constitution of The Parish Pastoral Council, which would normally be chaired by the resident priest in accordance with Canon Law, also needs to be confirmed because its work should be able to proceed without the priest necessarily being present.



Possible  
Responsibilities within



St Teresa's  
Provisional Proposal C

A number of central paid roles may be considered to support the whole partnership but it should be noted that this is only an initial idea and has not been agreed to by all parishes:

- An administration team which could include a paid business manager/ finance officer.
- Paid team coordinator(s) to lead teams made up of volunteers from each parish which will use their gifts / talents / experience and local knowledge to serve the deanery in outreach and in providing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

The team leaders / coordinator would liaise with local authorities, other churches and charities to facilitate the best outreach and provision for the most vulnerable in our locality. These would be responsible to a deanery committee which would be made up from members from each of the existing parishes.

Teams would include for example (not an exhaustive list):

- Ministry to the bereaved (spiritual and practical)
- Ministry to the sick, elderly and housebound
- Social Justice and Action
- Outreach and communication
- Spiritual development and formation
- Sacramental preparation
- Lay leaders
- Youth
- Places of worship premises team
- Community builders
- Etc

## **2.2 What initial areas of joint working are proposed for the partnership area?**

Please identify the main areas that are seen as initial priorities for joint working across the proposed partnership. It is important to share the 'Observations on Parish Questionnaires' and draw upon these.

Maximise the ability and effectiveness of existing clergy, Lay Leaders, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion and, in prayer, to make decisions at all levels for the good of all.

We see an initial priority of joint working would be to focus on young people. We must try to engage and encourage young people to come and worship in our churches. To ensure this is given a priority, we would like to see a Young Person's Co-ordinator employed to work across the partnership in Darlington, with perhaps trained volunteers to assist. The Formation of a youth development leader to take account of the responses given in 'The Way We See It' and the specific response from Carmel College who would develop a team to engage the youth and facilitate local, meaningful, youth led worship.

We need to do a comprehensive review to find the strength/weaknesses/skills/resources/deficiencies across the area. Review all existing structures

to meet changing needs; see which groups are working and change or add as needed, and in general to build on what we already have.

We need to identify the training, development of roles, identify those roles which are so key and bear much responsibility that they need to be paid positions to make sure work is done, is accountable and of a good consistent standard.

One of the first priorities and benefits that could be delivered for a reinvigorated laity is adult faith formation - mentioned so many times as being a priority need. It would give the opportunity to get together and start to get to know each other in the new common group.

Development of a common spiritual development programme which would include training for laity as spiritual leaders, bespoke courses in areas of evangelisation, formation, spirituality, Catechesis for all Sacraments (already carried out jointly to a large extent)

Gathering of information about local current provision of activities and groups and actively involved parishioners.

Use expertise of SS William and Francis de Sales who have growing numbers of worshippers despite having no resident priest for 20 years.

Whilst respecting local communities, investigate what could be 'merged' in order to strengthen provision by reducing duplication and avoiding overload.

Central administration and business management, enabling more effective communication.

Other areas for early development are: facility maintenance and administration, finance

### **2.3 What approaches will you use to ensure plans and developments are communicated well across the proposed partnership area?**

*Taking into account the expected decline in the number of priests and people over time you may wish to think about this in relation to the short term (1-2 years), medium term (3-5 years) and long term (up to 2030).*

#### **a) Short term:**

Formation of the joint Partnership Pastoral Council with our priests and representatives from all areas, to provide oversight of Partnership activities as agreed to by current parish communities and current Parish Pastoral Councils.

Representatives to make sure all decisions are made known to all the communities via the agreed paths.

Newsletters, weekly bulletins, Parish Council minutes, church websites. (using existing church websites at first.) We would like to see an intra-partnership website / social media platform be

developed for everyone to avoid isolation of smaller / geographically distant communities to use for information, and also for providing suggestions, ideas and asking questions.

Continued meetings after Sunday Mass using screen presentations

Using the three tier structure described above to disseminate information up and down

Monthly joint bulletins - increasing to fortnightly - to supplement or, where desired, to replace the individual weekly bulletin or some other solution to address the need of a common single message

Ensure training of sufficient suitable lay leaders in key areas.

Appointment of any agreed employees.

Freeing up the role of the priest to enable him to fulfil his vocation as the pastor and spiritual leader.

Administration team to coordinate home visits by priests and laity.

Focus on ensuring strong structures are in place with succession planning - developing thriving communities

**b) Medium term:**

Reduce the number of Masses, so that regardless of the actual number of priests and deacons within the Partnership, the Darlington Deanery Masses can, at times of absence, be covered and also develop new ways of working to increase the time available for priestly pastoral work and free up time to help the change processes.

Consider the implications of the diocesan property review and act on it, respecting local communities.

Teams with strong leaders should be in place and there should be regular review of their effectiveness.

There should be a move towards looking outwards, with a focus on serving, not only our own, but on becoming a beacon for all across our localities.

Christmas, Triduum and Easter liturgies could be held in certain larger churches with better liturgical or musical resources. These venues could vary from year to year.

Ensure that the Partnership Pastoral Council remains vibrant and forward looking.

Ensure that there is succession planning in place for team leaders.

**c) Long term:**

If it becomes absolutely necessary, we may have to have provisions in place for occasions when the Partnership can only have the services of even fewer priests. In order to plan for this scenario and also, in the meantime, to become more familiar with worship other than Mass, we will need to attract and train more lay leaders as well as develop familiarity with such services.

## **2.4 We are seeking to ensure that our worshipping communities nurture disciples to witness to Jesus in our world. What resources will be necessary to ensure this takes place and is co-ordinated across the proposed partnership?**

Note: People often think about administrative support – but please think more widely about how the various facets of the partnership (e.g. Young People, Outreach, Lay Leadership, Spiritual Development etc.) could benefit from co-ordinated voluntary or paid support and what training might be required.

Adult Formation and Spiritual Development to nourish an intimate and loving relationship with Our Lord - We need new ways of learning about our faith with themed retreats, inspirational and spiritual teachers, trained speakers on specific subjects-expertise to be found within the partnership/Diocese/further afield.

We need many more Lay Leaders to be trained UNIFORMLY throughout the Diocese.

- **Young people**
  - Those individuals who have expressed ideas and willingness to work are thin on the ground in individual parishes, but together there may be sufficient 'critical mass of numbers' to get something going. Attempts in recent years have been made in St Augustine's, St Thomas', St William's and St Teresa's
  - Employ Young Persons Co-ordinator to work across the partnership
- **Worship and spirituality**
  - Enhance the value of worship and spirituality of Services of the Word and Holy Communion
  - Skilled people who are willing to share their skills and their time – to provide spiritual development.
- **Outreach Work**
  - Volunteers who are willing to commit their time for outreach work in the wider community , e.g. social care for the needy in the town including working with other faith and non faith based organisations
- **Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist**
  - More and younger extraordinary ministers are needed along with those who already bring the Eucharist to the sick and housebound, in our hospital, hospice and many homes
- **Lay Leaders**
  - More and younger leaders needed.
- **Training**
  - Any training needs to be more local to our part of the diocese
  - Finance available for training programmes
  - Equipment to use for training purposes – overhead projector, screen, laptops etc. Some parishes have these & these could be shared
- **Venues** - for ongoing training and refresher courses
- **Administration** - Adequate administration assistance to prepare necessary correspondence, documents etc.

## **2.5 What proposals / initial thoughts are there for new ways of working within the proposed partnership area?**

Please remember that these new partnerships are not simply groupings of a number of current parishes with their existing arrangements and structures - they offer the opportunity to look at things differently and innovatively to ensure viable and flourishing communities. You may wish to consider, for example, bringing together existing groups/creating new groups, committees and Councils and strengthening links with schools. In some areas it may be desirable for the parishes within a partnership area to merge over time.

Once again, conscious of the gradually reducing number of priests and people, you may wish to think about this in relation to the short term (1-2 years), medium term (3-5 years) and long term (up to 2030).

### **a) Short term:**

With respect to organisation refer to the embedded draft document above describing the integration of Local Communities organised under their Pastoral Council and the Partnership Leadership Team

The Partnership Leadership Team would line manage employees as part of the accountability structure.

Ensure we cut workload to that which is manageable and sustainable.

A fair and efficient system to celebrate Masses and other services for the maximum advantage of all, taking into account transport for the elderly and those without cars.

Amalgamate all/each meeting to facilitate instruction in Baptism, Reconciliation, Holy Communion, Confirmation, Marriage etc. Joint social events to be considered in the same way.

Organize different music groups across the partnership to provide variety and to cater for all tastes.

**b) Medium term:** Regular review of the plan, progress opportunities as the situation develops.

**c) Long term:** Preparation of, and annual review of, a 5 year look-ahead rolling plan

### Section 3: Facilities

(Please refer to Section 2.4 on Page 7 of 'From Parish to Partnership')

*I will be looking carefully and seriously at any necessary restructuring, including: the closure of some of our church buildings; use of our building for other purposes and the need to reduce the number of Masses being celebrated.*

Bishop Séamus - July 2014

**3.1 Please list each of the churches in your proposed partnership along with their maximum capacity and details of any existing issues/future plans that might have a bearing on their use.**

Church Name	Location	Max. Capacity	Existing Issues/Future Plans
St Teresa's	Darlington	400	
St William's	Darlington	300	
St Anne's	Darlington	280	
St Thomas's	Darlington	288	
Holy Family	Darlington	325	
St Augustine's	Darlington	450	Plans have been lodged with diocese (but are now on hold) to extend and develop facilities, to allow increased capacity enabling further outreach and service to the community of Darlington.
St Osmund's	Gainford	110	Ordinarate of Our Lady of Walsingham currently hosted in this parish
St Mary's	Barnard Castle	250	The parish has made a request to the church trust to knock together two rooms in the presbytery to create parish meeting room
St Aidan's	Middleton in Teesdale	30	The chapel is currently not used in the winter months

**3.2 Please list any other buildings (e.g. schools) that are currently used, or which could be used, for worship. Please feel free to add any notes to explain your thinking.**

Venue	Parish/Location	Max. Capacity	Used Now (N) /Could Use (C) Include any notes here

We felt most of our local school halls were quite small, smaller than the parish halls: St Thomas' hall, Holy Family centre, St Augustine's centre, St Anne's hall. Perhaps the John Caden Hall at Carmel College but there may be issues with parking, traffic noise with neighbours on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings and in any case the town has the six churches so there is no need to consider potential additional buildings in which to celebrate Mass or other services.

### **3.3 What thoughts are there about the use of the current places of worship in the proposed partnership area?**

If we have around 50 active priests in the diocese in 2030 it is inevitable that Mass will be celebrated in fewer churches and less frequently. Please present your thoughts, however tentative, about the places of worship currently in use across the proposed partnership area and what the future arrangements might look like. In time it will be important to consider which buildings will be retained for worship (not necessarily for the celebration of Mass) and which might close or be used for other purposes.

Generally church buildings should be kept open, provided each community can finance, maintain, use well those buildings. Presbyteries could be used for various purposes such as offices, places for meetings, be rented out for family homes, young newly qualified teachers or nurses during this transitional 20+ years providing extra income and providing needed affordable accommodation as well as keeping a presence on the site for security.

We understand that there will probably need to be a reduction in parish buildings. Some churches have protected status (historic churches). We would like to see a place of worship in each of the existing parishes, though some of these could be multi use (community and worship). They may be attached to or part of schools.

There are properties in parishes that are either not used or underused. Parochial Houses could be fitted out to accommodate retired priests. There is likely to be a growing need for these. Having a retired priest who could provide limited support would be a real advantage. Alternatively they could be used to house a Church Warden to keep and maintain the Church and grounds. They should retain the capacity to provide some facility as a Parish Centre. They could be adapted for part of the house to provide rented accommodation, in this way securing an income for the parish.

### **3.4 Are there any thoughts about where the priest(s) would reside in the partnership area?**

Priests could consider/be invited to live together under one roof - it was noted in the clergy response that loneliness was an issue for some. If we have a single priest in the partnership perhaps live in St Augustine's which is geographically central. St Augustine's Presbytery, historically this is the Mother Church of Darlington. However, this is considered to be an issue which the priests need to discuss together and share directly with the diocese confidentially.

As above, careful consideration should be given as to how best use and look after vacated buildings including consideration of insurance etc of buildings left vacant for extended periods.

## Section 4: Next Steps

(Please refer to Section 2.5 on Page 7 of 'From Parish to Partnership')

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God.*

2 Pet. 9

### **4.1 Should your partnership proposals be accepted, please indicate what the key next steps would be for your area. Please add timescales where possible.**

Planning for the transition from separate parishes to a partnership will take time and it is expected that parishes will continue to exist but to start co-operating in more and more ways.

We feel a representative body is needed to oversee the larger picture, to facilitate communication and decision making, to balance subsidiarity and solidarity. A small steps approach, evolving, testing pilot schemes, reviewing direction and how to proceed - winning hearts and minds of parishioners by demonstrating success and benefits.

The priority is for the partnerships to decide membership of the Leadership/Coordinating/Management Team and to have this board/committee/team – whatever it's going to be called - in place as soon as possible and then to start taking on central responsibilities little by little. However for this approach to succeed the local community Pastoral Councils also need to be in a good condition and so an equal priority is to establish re-invigorated new councils and sub committees as required which will also be a challenge.

Partnership Pastoral Council	To be initially established asap but to develop to maturity over perhaps one or two years?	Once established to meet quarterly but sub-committees to meet as often as necessary to be effective
Community Pastoral Councils	to be re-invigorated by July 2017	in each parish.
Job roles for councils	to be established and filled by Dec 2017	in each parish
Training for parish	to be identified by Dec 2017	in each parish

A plan of priority actions needs to and will be prepared and developed as the Partnership takes shape.

Gathering of information about local current provision of activities and groups and actively involved parishioners.

Use expertise of SS William and Francis de Sales who have growing numbers of worshippers despite having no resident priest for 20 years.

Whilst respecting local communities, investigate what could be 'merged' in order to strengthen provision by reducing duplication and avoiding overload.

Setting up of a central website / social media to avoid isolation of smaller / geographically distant communities.

#### **4.2 What support would be most useful to you from other parishes/partnerships/the diocese in achieving the next stages of your proposed partnership?**

A dedicated team of skilled people to structure the way forward in achieving the next stages in community partnerships as soon as possible. There is no doubt that skilled and knowledgeable people and guidance, will be required, for example regarding legal and finance regulations, and potentially will have to be financed if professional and effective support is required.

Identify and evolve good practice coming out of the diocese e.g. Hartlepool, North Tyneside and South Tyneside cluster areas; and good practice from other dioceses e.g. Warrington and those from across the world, e.g. Africa and Mozambique where the deanery already has good contacts with and where the priests are used to serving multiple communities over huge distances.

#### **4.3 Please provide any additional information you feel we should be aware of when considering your proposals.**

That some people are resistant to change, and some just don't like change. We want to minimise any feelings of alienation or distress amongst our fellow parishioners, we cannot afford to lose any more.

Those church buildings which are listed as Grade III, or II, have severe restrictions imposed limiting or forbidding adaptation of buildings, practically even making them unfit for purpose for e.g. installing multimedia screens for worship, reflection or meetings, e.g. St Augustine's, St William's, St Osmund's and St Mary's. (not a fully inclusive list)

St Augustine's was recognised in the diocesan observations feedback as a well managed parish with excellent, well maintained facilities in the centre of the town. There is an active community hub, and extension and development plans have been lodged with the diocese. It is the aim of the parish to extend their capacity in order to provide further facilities to serve the community of Darlington and thus the Partnership.

The position of our Catholic schools in relation to the churches needs priority attention in order to build new stronger working partnerships between the worshipping communities, the parents, the youth and the schools to encourage increased participation in the growth of our Christian community in Darlington.

Consideration of other areas / deaneries within range in the long term if necessary i.e. Newton Aycliffe, Stockton, Billingham especially with regard to joint non regular events.

### **Polish community worship in St. Teresa's**

There is a strong Polish community in the deanery and Mass is celebrated twice a month in the Polish language in St. Teresa's. Members of the community were invited to join the FTiH team but declined as their priest has been keeping them informed, and they have been given access to the relevant FTiH documents which have been translated and put on a community website.

This Partnership plan document therefore takes no account of the situation of this community and its needs.

### **The Vincentian Fathers – Carmel Divine Retreat Centre**

The Vincentian fathers are resident in the deanery and offer week-long retreats, weekend retreats, intercessory support and personal ministry from their base at the old Carmel Convent. There is perpetual(24 hours) exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel and Holy Mass in English is celebrated daily at 7:30 am from Monday to Saturday. As the fathers are not part of the diocese no contact has been made during the FTiH planning.

## **4.4 What questions/concerns do you have about the next stages of the process of moving to partnership arrangements across the diocese?**

The very tight deadline has made proper prayer, reflection, conversations, deliberations, consultations and collation of opinions at best scratchy and sketchy for many parishioners.

Winning hearts and minds of everyone is a tall order given this new approach which is counter to culture, teaching and experience.

Different parishes are at different starting points along the journey, patchy progress.

Clergy involvement is crucial; without them little will take root. Many feel 'let the people get on with it', 'it'll all sort itself out'.

Many questions remain in people's minds - implementation - how/who/processes?

Knowledge of the diocese's overall view will be essential especially how it affects our neighbouring deaneries.

An issue that is continually raised is transport and how especially the elderly will be able to get to Mass when the number of churches where Sunday Mass can be held is reduced.

There is an expectation of a right to weekly parish Mass, we will need to work hard to change understanding and attitudes.

There is an attitude that if a lay person leads an act of worship, or a visit to a school, hospital or home, it is not as valuable as if a priest were to do it.... (oh, but he/she is not a priest). We need to work to change these attitudes.

We need to engender an attitude of participation rather than passiveness.

There will be many decisions to be made in areas like staffing and finance and we feel that to enable the Partnership to run smoothly and effectively, the diocese will need to empower the partnership in areas of finance, staffing and buildings whilst providing expertise and guidance especially whilst the new partnerships grow into their new responsibilities.

## Section 5: The Consultation Process

*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*  
Philippians 1:5

### a) Partnership View

#### 5.1 Please describe the process undertaken to arrive at your outline partnership proposals.

Telephone conversation and meetings recorded below.

#### 5.2 Were the individual Parish Observations and Profiles shared with all parishes in the proposed partnership as part of this process? Yes

#### 5.3 Please list any key meetings/activities that have taken place along with numbers attending.

Date	Venue	Purpose of meeting/activity	Numbers attending/participating
20.05.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	HF parish FTiH steering group initial meeting – steering team vision – what are we about?	8
31.05.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	HF parish FTiH steering group meeting using Robin Greenwood's approach to identifying the critical question – Sharing our Blessings	8
15.06.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	HF parish FTiH steering group meeting - reading conversation #2. "Who do you say I am?" – what does it actually mean to be a disciple of Christ?	8
29.06.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	HF parish FTiH steering group meeting	8
12.07.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	HF parish FTiH steering group meeting – reviewing the new documents including the observations	8
12.07.16	St Teresa's Church	Parish FTiH team meeting. To discuss the Observation document returned from the diocese, and plan distribution of information with weekly bulletin to parishioners, and meeting with hem after Mass on Sundays. Need more volunteers especially for young people. Much more discussed.	6
12.07.16	Tel. conversation	Maria Nicklin telephoned Ray Abbott Lead at Holy Family church, to ask if he had any more interest from others regarding meeting with a deanery team. Outcome - meetings commenced on 2.8.16	
17.07.16	Holy Family Social Cntr	HF steering team to brief the HF PPC on ideas to date	7
21.07.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	St. Thomas' PPC and Ray A to share HF progress and intentions	
27.07.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	HF parish FTiH steering group meeting – preparing to share communications with the parish, understanding the main messages	

02.08.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	First Meeting FTiH Darlington Deanery Representatives	15
14.08.16	Holy Family Parish Centre	Sharing with Holy Family Parish the steering group's progress to date and to gather further views – working with neighbours and partnership	20
16.08.16	St Teresa's Church	To plan for the open parishioners' meeting 15.9.16	6
16.08.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	Second Meeting FTiH Deanery Representatives	18
30.08.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	Third Meeting FTiH Deanery Representatives	19
11.09.16	Holy Family Parish Centre	Sharing with Holy Family Parish the steering group's progress to date and to gather further views – working with neighbours and partnership	20
13.09.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	HF parish FTiH steering group meeting	8
15.09.16	St Teresa's Church	Open Parishioners Meeting 1.30pm	29
15.09.16	St Teresa's Church	Open Parishioners Meeting 7.00pm	32
21.09.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	Fourth Meeting FTiH Deanery Representatives with Fr Russell and deacon Jurgen Muller present	15
27.09.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	HF parish FTiH steering group meeting.	6
12.10.16	St. Augustine's Church	Presentation by the Diocese at the Vicariate meeting	230
16.10.16	St Teresa's Church	Parish FTiH team meeting. To look at the 'Imagine the Ways' returns from parishioners, and discuss the content of the Partnership Proposals document. Agreement was reached and a provisional proposal begun.	6
18.09.16	St Thomas Aquinas	St Thomas parish hall. Open parish meeting after Sunday Mass 11:25-12:15 to respond to parish questionnaire, FTiH team comments, own parish survey results and share ideas, comments etc.	108
02.10.16	St Thomas Aquinas	St Thomas parish hall. Open parish meeting after Sunday Mass 11:25-12:15 to continue further reflections and suggestions, help give general outlines to parish council's deliberations	121
23.10.16	Holy Family Parish Centre	Sharing with Holy Family Parish the steering group's progress to date and to gather further views on how we move forward in a partnership, what the parish could offer and what the parish could gain from a partnership	15
25.10.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	Fifth meeting FTiH Deanery Representatives – apologies from St William's – agreement in principle for one partnership of all 8 parishes	20
31.10.16	St. Mary's	Open parish meeting to consider the written answers and prepare our parish response.	15
08.11.16	St. Thomas' Presbytery	Sixth meeting FTiH Deanery Representatives meeting together with our clergy to review the newsletter to be published in all parishes on Nov	20

		13 <sup>th</sup> (see attached below) and to review Draft 2 of the partnership plan document in detail	
<b>20.11.16</b>	All parishes	Final draft plan published for parishioner review with each parish making arrangements for either open meetings or at least Lay reps available after Masses to answer any questions.	
<b>22.11.16</b>		Final meeting of FTiH Deanery Representatives to review any feedback from the 19 <sup>th</sup> /20 <sup>th</sup>	
<b>Record of St Augustine's Parish Meetings :</b>			
<b>25.08.16</b>	Presbytery	Core group to plan next stage	5
<b>13.09.16</b>	St Augustine's School	Open meeting to feedback diocesan responses	20
<b>21.09.16</b>	St Augustine's School	Open meeting to discuss actions needed to ensure thriving Catholic Communities in our area	14
<b>03.10.16</b>	Presbytery	Report progress to Parish Council	8
<b>09.10.16</b>	Presbytery	Core group	6
<b>17.10.16</b>	Presbytery	Core group	6
<b>14.11.16</b>	Presbytery	Present Partnership Plan to Parish Council	8
<b>19.11.16</b>	Church	Summarise Partnership Plan at all Masses	

**Presentations used by Saint Augustine's include:**



St A FTiH  
presentation ONE and



P to P newsletter  
13\_11\_16 (3).docx

**Nov 13<sup>th</sup> Newsletter to all parishes :**

**Other meetings/activities that have taken place:**

**St. William's**

A parishioner spoke at Mass a few times asking people for their support throughout the process.

People were kept up to date each week on the bulletin.

There was a table at the back of church with all the booklets and leaflets for people to see. Through the newsletter we tried to explain that we should be looking to work as one church, and as long as our community can survive people haven't said anything against it. Our last big meeting was in October when half the people stayed back to listen to what we had been doing. Lots of talk informally when we meet for coffee after Mass.

FTiH representatives met with the other parish representatives at St. Thomas' as in the main table above

2.8.16	St Thomas	1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting with Steering group
30.8.16	St Thomas	3 <sup>rd</sup> Meeting with Steering group
21.9.16	St Thomas	4 <sup>th</sup> Meeting with Steering group

Parish meetings were held:

26.9.16	St William's	Talk from pulpit keeping people up to date
9.10.16	St William's	Parish Meeting with over 40 people staying after Mass with explanation of what has been going on and what is to come. They all had a questionnaire to complete but not much response.

**St. Thomas', St. Teresa's and Holy Family** - Parishioners have been kept fully informed of the FTiH process, and its development from the beginning. All relative documents have been copied and made available to them. Members of the FTiH team have made themselves available after Mass, for advice, questions, suggestions or concerns parishioners may have about the process. St. Thomas', St. Teresa's and Holy Family have held open parish meetings to enable people to ask questions and participate throughout the process.

Please see attached document from St Augustine's and the Powerpoint presentations that have been prepared in Holy Family and used in various parishes.



Exploring the Way  
with our Neighbours.ppt



Parish to  
Partnership.pptx



Thinking about  
Partnerships HF 2310

## **Saint Mary's, Barnard Castle**

05.08.16 to 30.09.16 - Different extracts printed each week in the newsletter taken from current FTiH documents.

07.10.16 to 30.10.16 - Questions printed each week in the newsletter asking for responses on Partnerships and the future. An answer box was left at the back of church and these were collated in readiness for our meeting on 31st October.

## **St Osmund's Gainford**

Throughout the process there have been regular well-attended meetings with frequent colour Update Booklets printed and distributed. Following the diocesan response to our questionnaire additional actions, meetings and information include:

- July:** Diocesan response to Questionnaire distributed at Mass
- 31<sup>st</sup> July:** Summer Update Booklet
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sept.** Forward Together September Update Booklet
- 15<sup>th</sup> Sept.** Open Parish meeting
- 18<sup>th</sup> Sept.** 'Food For Thought' Discussion Booklet distributed
- 18<sup>th</sup> Sept.** Further questions including those from Imagine New Ways distributed with above booklet
- 21<sup>st</sup> Sept.** Box for replies at the back of Church
- 21<sup>st</sup> Sept.** Deanery Lay reps meeting
- 12<sup>th</sup> Oct.** Cleveland and Durham Vicariate Meeting
- 16<sup>th</sup> Oct.** Information in Parish bulletin
- 25<sup>th</sup> Oct.** Deanery Lay reps meeting
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.** Contribution of document from St. Osmund's to Partnership Plan
- 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.** Partnership proposals distributed at Mass
- 15<sup>th</sup> Nov.** Parish Council Meeting to consider Partnership proposals
- 20<sup>th</sup> Nov.** Feedback from parish on proposals

**5.4 Please list any specific groups or committees that have been consulted.**

The Diocesan FTiH team.

Parish Councils

The Ordinariate have been made aware of the partnership plan

**5.5 How widely has this *completed document* been circulated prior to submission? Please provide details.**

An earlier draft was made available for parishioners on weekend Nov 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> and the final issue is planned to be published when finalised on a number of the parish websites.

***b) Parish View***

We are keen to understand the level of awareness and consensus within individual parish communities in relation to the proposed partnership arrangements. To this end, please ensure that ***each parish*** in the proposed partnership completes the questions below. If parishes wish to, they can provide a short (maximum of 250 words) perspective on the proposed partnership. Please enter the name and role of the person completing this on behalf of the parish.

***Note: Please copy and paste this section for each parish in the proposed partnership.***

Parish	Name of Person	Role
St. Teresa's	Maria Nicklin & Margaret Price	FTiH Lay Rep
<p><b>Level of knowledge of proposals</b> - Medium</p> <p><b>Any comment:</b> none received</p>		
<p><b>Level of consensus with proposals</b> - Medium</p> <p><b>Any Comment:</b> none received</p>		
<p><b>Parish perspective (250 Words or less)</b></p> <p>It became apparent after circulating the FTiH questionnaire in 2015, that a good deal of effort would be needed to help people of St. Teresa's understand that their involvement was crucial.</p> <p>Between July and August 2015, two or three questions were attached to the bulletin each week and handed to parishioners. In total 625 were distributed, and only 51 returned. Many people said they found the questions difficult to understand, others left the questionnaire in church, still attached to the bulletin.</p> <p>At the next FTiH team meeting members agreed the way forward was to talk with people as they left church, to try and get a feel of their understanding of the process. It was felt that as we have a resident priest at St Teresa's, it's difficult for the parishioners to understand the need for change, we have a relatively high percentage of older people, who are used to coming to Mass on a Sunday in their own church, with their own priest, the thought of change is uncomfortable for some of them.</p> <p>This year (2016), there was a better response from the 'Imagine New Ways' leaflet and the open parish meetings in September, which were well attended. There was good animated conversation and debate, people offered their ideas and there was a general consensus that changes would take place, and they would be willing to adapt to those changes.</p> <p>However, we remain positive as we go forward looking for parishioners with the time and energy to help with activities and to take on new roles as we move into the future partnerships, keeping our community strong and viable.</p>		

Parish	Name of Person	Role
<b>St. William's &amp; Francis de Sales</b>	Anne Robinson	FTiH Lay Rep, Parish secretary and multiple other roles
<p><b>Level of knowledge of proposals</b> - Medium</p> <p><b>Any comment:</b> none received</p>		
<p><b>Level of consensus with proposals</b> - Medium</p> <p><b>Any Comment:</b> none received</p>		
<p><b>Parish perspective (250 Words or less)</b></p> <p>We have found the whole process of FTiH very difficult to understand and explain to our community. They have listened to our explanations, attended meetings both formal and informal and tried to support the team. Information has also been given weekly in our newsletter.</p> <p>We are a parish of mixed ages and from different parts of the town. We have managed to run the parish for over 20 years without a resident priest, whilst always being willing to work in partnership with the other parishes in our deanery. We have a group of people who look after different aspects of parish life, all voluntary and without a parish office. Admin, Finance and weekly newsletters are done from home. If something needs doing or checking out, there is always someone to deal with it.</p> <p>We come together at Mass on Sunday and have a wonderful children's liturgy group. Afterwards we meet in the hall for tea/coffee and chat about things that maybe need doing, organizing fundraising events and keeping up with any sick people in the parish. We also have a wonderful group of young parents who support us. The children have a raised garden bed in the yard for them and our Mini Vinnies to cultivate, all made and donated by parishioners. They can also enjoy outdoor play with many suitable toys for all ages.</p> <p>We are financially secure at this present time; we continue to raise money for the parish and other deserving causes.</p>		

Parish	Name of Person	Role
St. Anne's	Michael Baldasera	Parishioner & Parish Safeguarding Officer
<p><b>Level of knowledge of proposals</b> - Medium</p> <p><b>Any comment:</b> none received</p>		
<p><b>Level of consensus with proposals</b> - Medium</p> <p><b>Any Comment:</b> none received</p>		
<p><b>Parish perspective (250 Words or less)</b></p> <p>Much effort has been made to generate awareness of the FTiH process as it has evolved &amp; it's potential outcomes with information regularly disseminated (from pulpit, notice-board &amp; meetings) &amp; the responses coordinated from questionnaires. Moreover, the tone, direction &amp; feeling from relevant, casual conversation within the parish domain has been noted.</p> <p>The prospect of inter parish cooperation created a positive response &amp; some animation with a predictable ferment regarding choice of collaborative parish neighbour. The exercise was never going to produce full consensus, given the unsettling influence of rumour, preconceived notions &amp; groundless apprehension about the future. Questionnaires presented a challenge to many – sometimes insurmountable, though some warmed to the task with perseverance.</p> <p>The general sense of the diversity of opinion may be described thus: 15% know that change is inevitable &amp; are open &amp; positive about it. 75% who have kept themselves on the fringe will carry on regardless. 10% probably believe the end is nigh! The consensus, if there is one, points to faith &amp; reliance on those entrusted with leadership (lay &amp; cleric) to produce the best viable plan for all &amp; broad acceptance of the principle of collaboration, especially if it entails the survival of St Anne's Church as our local community base.</p> <p>It would be safe to say that the hard core feeling is best represented by "what will be, will be – the church goes on".</p>		

Parish	Name of Person	Role
St. Thomas Aquinas	Cath Taylor	Multiple roles in the parish
<p><b>Level of knowledge of proposals</b> - Medium</p> <p><b>Any comment:</b> none received</p>		
<p><b>Level of consensus with proposals</b> – Medium</p> <p><b>Any Comment:</b> none received</p>		
<p><b>Parish perspective (250 Words or less)</b></p> <p>Since summer 2015 we began a journey of discovery about our parish. Initially we completed our F.T.I.H. Parish Questionnaire with a small group (mainly members of our PPC). We began to look at the more searching questions in part 2, The Christian Faithful, which brought home to us that we were lacking in volunteers in some aspects of our parish life. Father David has constantly pressed home this point and as a result volunteers have come forward but people are still needed to fill key leadership roles; our PPC chairman has resigned due to ill health and our priest has taken over that mantle. Sadly we have lost our Children's Liturgy volunteers but we are fortunate to maintain our First Communion catechists.</p> <p>This summer our meetings resumed in earnest following the "Imagine New Ways" questions. Responses show that most parishioners accept that change is inevitable. Holy Family had begun a steering group in April and we were pleased to join that lay leadership group with all Darlington parishes. The partnership plan is complete.</p> <p>For our parish it will be a relief to know that we can call on the expertise of all our deanery in the future.</p>		

Parish	Name of Person	Role
Holy Family	P J Duffy	Parishioner
<p><b>Level of knowledge of proposals</b> - Medium</p> <p><b>Any comment:</b> Knowledge of the main plan to form one partnership is considered medium/high but knowledge at the detail is possibly low as not very many people seemed to be interested in the final draft</p>		
<p><b>Level of consensus with proposals</b> - medium / high</p> <p><b>Any Comment:</b> - Steering team comment - A parish survey was issued in September asking parishioners to rank 6 different options and there were 62 questionnaires returned out of a normal Mass attendance of 280. There was a clear preference to re-invigorate the parish community and to form a partnership.</p>		
<p><b>Parish perspective (250 Words or less)</b></p> <p>I think it is difficult to offer a parish view given the range of views regarding this process. The questionnaires and process have appeared complicated and off-putting. Taking on this unenviable task would be daunting, but thankfully there were a few willing to do this. My understanding of their awareness and consensus is very good from attending open meetings. Outside this steering group there was some limited awareness about the process. It has been raised often at Mass, but input by the parish has been limited and not many have attended open meetings. The consensus seems to be an acceptance of whatever outcome is reached.</p> <p>The question of what partnerships might be has raised other questions such as what am I, what are we doing for our own parish and who is responsible for what. Perhaps those questions should have been considered before the partnership process, but for me, the two seem to be running hand-in-hand.</p> <p>As St Anne’s has also commented, perhaps we think it would be safe to say that a hard core feeling is best represented by “what will be, will be – the church will go on and someone will sort it”.</p>		

Parish	Name of Person	Role
St. Augustine's	Julie Humphrey	FTiH Lay Rep
<p><b>Level of knowledge of proposals</b> - Medium</p> <p><b>Any comment:</b> none received</p>		
<p><b>Level of consensus with proposals</b> - Medium</p> <p><b>Any Comment:</b> none received</p>		
<p><b>Parish perspective (250 Words or less)</b></p> <p>St Augustine's Parish is the oldest and largest parish in the proposed partnership. It is situated in the town centre and has easy access to Gainford and Barnard Castle.</p> <p>The Parish already benefits from a strong working relationship between clergy and laity, with much of the management of the parish undertaken by parishioners, many from professional backgrounds.</p> <p>Buildings are well used and maintained by designated committees.</p> <p>There is an ethos of development, particularly in outreach and social action, where in response to the first part of FTiH consultation, two initiatives have been started during the last year: a low cost lunch club for parishioners and Sunday Stop which provides a free meal to the most vulnerable of our town.</p> <p>Plans have been lodged with the diocese to develop our Parish Centre, in order to increase capacity, so that we can better witness to Jesus in our town, by offering a greater range of community services.</p> <p>We welcome the formation of a larger, deanery-wide partnership as an opportunity to work more cohesively and cost effectively with fellow Catholics, other Christians and existing agencies to provide spiritually and practically for the communities of Darlington, Gainford and Barnard Castle.</p> <p>Our Partnership proposals ensure that as a community we are more outwardly focused and better able to be fully inclusive.</p> <p>We believe our existing management team, together with representatives from other Darlington hub parishes, will enable us to best provide facilities and expertise for a successful central hub from St Augustine's.</p>		

Parish	Name of Person	Role
St. Osmund's	Joe Mc Auley	FTiH representative
<p><b>Level of knowledge of proposals</b> - Medium</p> <p><b>Any comment:</b> The Forward Together consultation has been received positively, although the time scale for developing secure partnership proposals has not been realistic.</p>		
<p><b>Level of consensus with proposals</b> - High for a one-group partnership. There is substantial reserve for the inclusion of a number of salaried roles within the structure. See below.</p> <p><b>Any Comment:</b> There was some discussion on a one or two group partnership. Once decided, the consensus from the many people attending meetings and providing comments was high</p>		
<p><b>Parish perspective (250 Words or less)</b></p> <p>During the questionnaire stage, all parishioners contributed in some way, either through attending meetings, writing comments or prayer.</p> <p>There is an understanding for the need to change - If we continue to do the same things we will continue to have the same results.</p> <p>Overall there is much enthusiasm for working within a wider partnership. Collaboration with larger parishes in Darlington will provide a substantially more varied range of opportunities for pastoral, spiritual and social growth than has been typically experienced in our small parish.</p> <p>In parallel with the Forward Together initiative there has been a significant increase in lay involvement within the parish. This includes liturgy, children's liturgy, music, social and other areas. A PPC has been re-established to work alongside the Finance Committee.</p> <p>There is consensus for a single three-tier deanery partnership grouping. The basis for success of this grouping is seen to be through strong parish roots. Parishes would have to be viable and sustainable pastorally, spiritually administratively and financially.</p> <p>Representation from each parish would contribute at the other two levels within the deanery structure.</p> <p>It is felt that the inclusion of a number of salaried roles within the structure is neither necessary nor desirable, with the exception of a Youth Worker, probably based at our hub secondary school, Carmel College, to coordinate links between the youth of our parishes.</p> <p>Finances are best dealt with at a parish level – thus maintaining local responsibility and accountability whilst affirming the independence and identity of parish communities.</p>		

Parish	Name of Person	Role
St. Mary's & St. Aidan's	John F Crabbe	PPC Chairman
<p><b>Level of knowledge of proposals – Medium</b></p> <p><b>Any comment:</b></p> <p>Imagine New Ways – We had 15 people respond to this document. It was a very disappointing response seeing it was promoted to the Parishioners by the Parish Priest every Saturday/Sunday Mass for at least four weeks (or more!). So, as far as knowledge of the proposals is concerned, while the FTiH website was advertised in the Weekly Bulletin, we have no idea as to how many accessed this website and read the documents related to the process. Also, we have no idea how many Parishioners completed the Parish Questionnaire – Part B – Reflective Questions or read the results of that Questionnaire which was left at the back of the Church for Parishioners to take home and read. We had a list for Parishioners to take the document home and read and place their names on the Reading List when they returned it. We only had one name on that list. I'm not aware that anyone read it in the Church after Mass – certainly not at the 6.30 pm Mass on a Saturday!</p>		
<p><b>Level of consensus with proposals - Medium</b></p> <p><b>Any Comment:</b></p> <p>We strongly challenge the Diocese;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To show how they were dealing with the urgent need for vocations to the priesthood. What programs are in place for regular vocation visits to schools and how are parishes guided to nurture vocations.</li> <li>2. To be looking abroad to countries who have a surplus of priests, such as Malta, even going so far as to make a payment to the local Diocese to reimburse them for the cost of the priestly training.</li> <li>3. To more fully incorporate the Ordinariate into the pastoral life of the Diocese and Deanery and to invite them to attend and participate in meetings and activities</li> </ol>		
<p><b>Parish perspective (250 Words or less)</b></p> <p>It is difficult to gauge how much consensus there was in relation to the whole process of FTiH. Amongst some Parishioners there is a definite reluctance to change and a disenchantment with the whole process of Moving Forward Together in Hope. For this small but significant group there is a feeling that the whole process of Questionnaires and formulation of Partnerships has been complicated and off-putting to the point of being seen as heavy handed and unnecessary. This small group would see a synergy of partnering with St. Osmund's, Gainford but struggles with the idea of widening the partnership to include Darlington.</p> <p>There is also a feeling the Vicariate Meeting did not achieve what it set out to do as too little time was given to Group Discussion at the end of the updated Presentation and that there might be some justification of feeling that because of shortage of discussion time and deadlines to be met for Final Proposals to be submitted that there was no real consideration of Laity input as decisions had already been made and the exercise was a mere formality of process.</p> <p>The Parish Council has nominated two representatives to sit on the Deanery Council and entrust them to secure a collaboration of partnership that will achieve the most beneficial outcomes for both St. Mary's, Barnard Castle, St. Osmund's, Gainford and St. Aidan's, Middleton-in-Teesdale and the whole process of FTiH.</p>		

## Contact Details

We may need to get in touch with you for additional information about your proposals. Please provide contact information for a main contact person and an alternate (should the main contact person not be available). We would recommend that the main contact is the Dean with responsibility for the majority of parishes within the proposed partnership (or his nominee).

	Main Contact	Alternate contact
Name	Fr Greg Price	Ray Abbott
Role	Dean	Family FTiH Lay Rep & coordinator of this plan document.
Address	St Teresa's Church Harris Street Darlington DL1 4NL	
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Please return your proposals to [hope@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:hope@diocesehn.org.uk) by mid-day on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and copy these to the Dean(s) with responsibility for parishes in your proposed partnership.

Thank you for completing this document and for all you are doing to support *Forward Together in Hope*.

## Revision History

Revision	Description	Prepared By
Final	Final Issue following the lay representatives meeting with Fr Séamus Doyle and Fr David Russell held on 22/11/16	Ray Abbott
Draft 5	Incorporation of contributions from St Osmund's, Gainford and revisions to previous comments concerning the out of town parishes and the Ordinariate plus other edits. Addition of St Augustine's attachments including meetings. Revised St Thomas' perspective	Ray Abbott
Draft 4	Final draft to share with parishes w/e 19 <sup>th</sup> /20 <sup>th</sup> November with additional information from all parishes and incorporating contributions from The Ordinariate	Ray Abbott
Draft 3	Revisions following Lay reps meeting 08/11. Addition of Parish Perspectives and details of meetings	Ray Abbott
Draft 2	Compilation of St Augustine's first input and additional Holy Family input	Ray Abbott
	Addition of Holy Family first input	Gráinne Duffy
	Addition of St Thomas' first draft	Ray A
	St Teresa's first draft	Maria Nicklin



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 HOPE