

# FORWARD TOGETHER IN HOPE

## Important News about the Forward Together in Hope Proposed Partnerships

Over the past 18 months parishioners in all eight parishes in the deanery were given the opportunity to take part in the decision making process, through various means; a comprehensive questionnaire, messages from Bishop Seamus on DVD's, documents that were available on the diocesan website, updates from the diocesan team that were sent periodically and made available in the parishes. Open parish meetings have taken place, and the parish FTiH team members have made themselves available, giving everyone the opportunity to share information, to ask questions and to feedback thoughts and ideas. More recently the 'Imagine New Ways' leaflet was circulated to all parishioners, asking them to state which parishes they could imagine being in partnership with in the coming months/years.

The priests, deacon and FTiH team members, have listened to what has been said throughout the process, and have given careful consideration to all your responses, thoughts and ideas. We would like to thank you for your participation, your input to this process has been extremely important, and instrumental in the deanery team making significant decisions for the future of our churches. We hope together through this process, to enhance the value of worship, spirituality and community in our churches, so that they thrive in the future.

During the past three months representatives from each FTiH parish team have met regularly, two or three times a month to look at the collective information parishioners have provided from each parish. This group of people became the deanery representatives for the area of Darlington, Barnard Castle, Gainford and Middleton in Teesdale. The remit of this group is, that after taking all the information into consideration, we must reach a decision regarding the proposed partnerships for the future. The group believe that the most appropriate model would be that the eight parishes in Darlington deanery become one partnership.

A draft of the final proposal that is to be submitted to the diocesan FTiH team on November 27<sup>th</sup>, will be available for your information next weekend 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> of November. Representatives in each parish will be available after Mass next week, to have a meeting and go through the proposal document with you, and you will have the opportunity to discuss, ask questions and comment about any areas within the proposal.

If the proposal is accepted by Bishop Seamus and his Diocesan Board, then this would need a reinvigoration of all our parishes to implement it successfully.

- It will require people with the appropriate skills and knowledge to promote a cohesive, strong and capable leadership.
- We will need more volunteers to come forward, who are willing to give their time and commitment, as we move into the next phase of creating a structure within the partnership.
- We need strength in numbers that will enable an effective and a flourishing partnership, that will give us the time to engage and encourage the young people in our churches to be members of the partnership, and to stimulate outreach work in the community.
- We will need to have the willingness to share resources, training, finances, buildings etc. and most importantly people.
- Collaboration is the key to success.

**Please continue to pray as we move forward together in partnership.**

