

CLUSTER 2 (HAWICK, JEDBURGH, KELSO, DUNS, EYEMOUTH)  
CLUSTER MEETING 3 - "EXPLORING WHAT MAKES PARISHES VIBRANT  
AND NAMING GOALS FOR JOINT ACTION"  
SATURDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2017 - KELSO

**Present**

Fr Hugh Purcell, Fr Jeremy Milne

Ca. 35 parishioners with at least one person from each of the communities.

**Welcome and Prayer**

Fr Jeremy welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with a prayer. The scripture reading was read and everyone was asked to reflect briefly on it in silence. They were then asked to spend ten minutes talking with their neighbour.

**Exploring parish vibrancy**

Following the handbook, the meeting was asked to share what makes parishes vibrant and to examine where there are signs of vibrancy in the parishes of the cluster under six headings: Eucharist, evangelisation, leadership, catechesis, outreach, stewardship.

*Eucharist*

At this point there were renewed requests to know what would be liturgically possible for congregations in the absence of a priest on Sundays and on weekdays. Will Communion services be possible? The suggestion that we would have to await guidelines on that from the Archbishop, was challenged by one parishioner who thought that this was wrong and that it should be the laity telling the Archbishop what was needed and being allowed to get on with it. When the rest of the assembly was asked if they shared this view there appeared to be a general consensus that instead of vying with each other for authority and control, laity and clergy should learn to collaborate better in all areas of parish life. It was felt that this would require the clergy to review their attitude to lay involvement and to accept that parish councils may need to be given greater responsibility.

In answer to the question posed in the handbook about what makes for vibrant Sunday celebrations the following points were made.

- Good Mass attendance helps

- BUT, it's not necessarily numbers that count but the quality of the participation. Small communities can be spiritually vibrant.
- Dynamic leadership and preaching
- Duns and Eyemouth are committed to a minimum duration of Sunday Mass being one hour based on Jesus' words to Peter in Gethsemane, "*could you not stay awake with me one hour?*"

### *Evangelisation*

Indicators of vibrancy include:

- Churches Together involvement. Participating in civic events, e.g., Remembrance services, carol services, hospitality tent at Borders Union Show (Kelso), World Day of Prayer
- Care Home Services
- Good Friday Walk of Witness (Jedburgh)
- Lent talks (Hawick), Advent talks (Eyemouth)
- Personal witness

### *Leadership*

- The starting point for lay leadership is the parish council which will become more important in the future
- All aspects of leadership, spiritual, pastoral and administrative, should be a collaboration between laity and clergy

### *Catechesis*

- Only one fully trained parish catechist in the cluster (Duns)
- Elsewhere there are several people who have done bits and pieces of training and formation offered by the Archdiocese over the years in the areas of Children's Liturgy and Sacramental Preparation.
- There are several ex-Catholic school teachers in the cluster whose knowledge and experience is an asset.
- SSVP Mini-Vinnies (Duns)
- RCIA tends to be one-to-one with priests as the need arises because the numbers seeking Communion in the Catholic Church in the Borders are very small and infrequent.
- Ageing congregations mean that there is a smaller pool of people to train as catechists. However, it was also pointed out that new retirees are often the people with the time and inclination to get involved with parish life and that their immigration to parishes in the Borders can bring about renewal.

### *Outreach*

- SSVP
- Participation in community foodbanks
- Pastoral care of the sick
- Social events
- Articles by clergy in local newspapers (Duns, Eyemouth)
- Ecumenical services
- Social Media - websites and Facebook
- The Church of Scotland are good at welcoming new incomers with welcome packs. Could we do the same?

### *Stewardship*

- Identifying talents and making use of them is essential.
- Parish audits of talent and planning for use are required.

### **Further goals for action**

It was suggested that until we know what the final structure of the cluster will be, it is pointless defining SMART goals for future action as suggested in the handbook. It was agreed to defer this.

### **Next steps**

Parish representatives to feedback to parishes on the discussions so far and then draft their responses to the four questions in Appendix 2 "Reporting to the Archbishop", p18 of the handbook. These will then be brought to a meeting of the parish representatives and the clergy to discuss and try and settle on a consensus response. A single report will then be drafted. This draft report will be made available for comments and amendments before being sent to the Archbishop before Easter.

### **Next meeting**

Parish representatives and clergy

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017, 7pm at Immaculate Conception, Kelso