

CLUSTER 1 (PEEBLES, INNERLEITHEN, GALASHIELS, MELROSE, SELKIRK)
CLUSTER MEETING 3 - "EXPLORING WHAT MAKES PARISHES VIBRANT
AND NAMING GOALS FOR JOINT ACTION"
TUESDAY 21ST FEBRUARY 2017 - MELROSE

Present

Fr Kevin Murray, Fr Wojciech Rybka, Fr Jeremy Milne
Ca. 35 parishioners with at least one person from each of the
communities.

Welcome and Prayer

Fr Kevin 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

Indicators of vibrancy include:

- Coherent, well planned liturgy with good music and hymns chosen to
reflect the readings of the Mass.
- Lay rota for choosing hymns encourages active participation
(Melrose)
- Having children participating.
- Welcoming is important. Youngsters are encouraged to be
welcomers (Innerleithen)
- Tea and coffee after Mass helps build community which feeds parish
vibrancy
- Rotas for lay readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy
Communion
- Well organised sacristy. Good preparation

Evangelisation

Indicators of vibrancy include:

- Participating in civic events/religion, e.g., Remembrance Sunday

- Church open doors events
- Participation in Christian Festival (Peebles)
- Joint schools services (Peebles, Selkirk)
- Participation in events marking 900th anniversary of Christianity in the area (Innerleithen)
- Christmas cribs on public display outside churches (Galashiels, Innerleithen)
- 'Landings', a programme for returning Catholics was run in the past but stopped due to lack of numbers
- It was recognised that the things mentioned are rather indirect means of evangelisation. The evidence in terms of RCIA candidates, adult baptisms and receptions, suggests that there have been very few converts or new members to parishes as a result.

Leadership

- Would like to see more direction, leadership, communication, inspiration from the Archdiocese
- Need to know what level of leadership can be devolved to laity. For example could they become signatories of cheques?
- The need for greater local leadership should be seen as an opportunity
- We need to review how decisions are made regarding all aspects of parish life and how responsibilities can be more widely shared
- There doesn't currently appear to be any Archdiocesan training for lay leadership in parishes
- Parishes rely on the talents of parishioners
- Lay involvement and responsibility is an opportunity that needs enabling, encouragement, direction, support and affirmation from the Archdiocese
- Lay enthusiasm is lost when there is no encouragement or when lay initiatives are "slapped down" by clergy
- Greater subsidiarity
- It was recognised that there is abundant lay involvement in the parishes and that much responsibility is already taken.

Catechesis

- Adult faith formation is required to build knowledge and confidence for evangelisation
- Training opportunities need to be better communicated, e.g., put in newsletters, announced, on noticeboards, websites etc.

- It would be straight-forward to assemble a list of email addresses to which information from the Archdiocese could be directly sent
- Training needs to be more easily available, e.g., some Borders based
- Clustering may help parishes to share resources if there is good communication between them
- Some Archdiocesan training has been undertaken in the areas of Children's Liturgy and Bereavement
- Need greater ongoing support for catechesis, both child and adult
- Need to provide catechesis/activities for teens, following on from children's catechesis/activities
- Give attention to retaining families after the children have received Sacraments

Outreach

Indicators of vibrancy include:

- Foodbanks
- Fresh Start homeless support
- Clothing distribution
- SSVP
- Refugee support
- Bereavement support groups
- Pastoral Care of the Sick
- Drop-in centre/community hub (Peebles)
- Care home and hospital visiting
- Hospital Chaplaincy support
- Catholic Union of the Sick
- Pilgrimages

Stewardship

- Collaboration between laity and clergy
- Understanding responsibility
- Fundraising
- Directing faith towards action
- Must have good safeguarding practices

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
Monday 13th March 2017, 7pm at Selkirk