

**Leaving Safe Harbours
Upholland Pastoral Area 13
Under the Patronage of St John Rigby**

Following on from the messages of 'Leaving Safe Harbours' a Pastoral Area Working Group (PAWG) has been meeting frequently to discuss the particular issues of this area and to draw up a joint action plan. In December 2011, it was decided to form three sub groups who would meet monthly from January to April 2012 to focus on different aspects of the work in the Pastoral Area and report back to the whole group.

This is a summary of the three groups' report, which has been circulated to all parishes and schools for consultation. Comments from parishioners have been incorporated into the report, where appropriate.

There are nine churches, six parishes currently in our Pastoral Area. The obvious reduction in priests is a matter of concern for many, as is the decline in Mass attendance, particularly the low attendance of the youth. However, it is clear that there is a deep spirituality in our Pastoral Area marked by a great number of groups and individual parish and Pastoral Area initiatives and a willingness to build a future that ensures a secure and self- sustaining church community.

Communication, building and administration

There are nine churches in our Pastoral Area: Our Lady and All Saints (Parbold), St Bernadette's (Shevington), St James' (Orrell), St Joseph's (Wrightington), St Marie of the Annunciation (Standish), St Teresa's (Upholland), St Francis of Assisi (Skelmersdale), St Mary Queen of Apostles (Skelmersdale) and St Richard's (Skelmersdale).

They are spread out over a considerable area (the greatest distance being 12.6 miles between St Bernadette's and St Richard's). They serve very different socio-economic communities. They have been built at widely different periods in recent or distant history. Some have Social Centres & Parish Halls or outbuildings, which are used for a variety of purposes. Some have cemeteries. Some have a priest resident on site. The upkeep costs and building management requirements vary greatly, but all are in a reasonable or good state of repair. They are presently served by seven priests and four deacons.

There are some things happening in each parish, which may be better done in one place. Each parish has some form of administration; some paid and some by volunteers. 'Centralising' may not be feasible, or wanted, but meetings or training might help spread 'best practice' across parishes. Further study might show if some central administration might be a good thing.

Each parish also has a number of groups and societies who meet at regular intervals. Similar groups might benefit from contacting each other to explore the value of joining together to create a larger, more dynamic group. A Pastoral Area directory with contact details of groups would enable this.

Each parish, with the exception of St Joseph's, has a web site. These all have different 'looks' and 'feels'. A joint web site might be considered in the future. In the meantime, all agreed information releases could be posted at the same time to ensure equality of access.

Despite these differences, the members of the PAWG are all agreed to the following commitments:

- *As many Masses are celebrated as is possible and allowable under Canon Law
- *Where it is not possible to have a priest available, other services are held
- *As many churches as possible are kept open and thriving
- *Clear information and guidance will be given to enable parishioners to understand and participate in decisions
- *Partnerships across the Pastoral Area will be developed to identify and address areas of concern
- *Pastoral Area social events will continue
- *The good work of our schools and colleges will continue

Recommendations

- *Feedback needs to be given to each parish and school about the work we are undertaking and reiterating the commitments listed above
- *A press release should be sent to our local newspapers and local radio stations based on this feedback (one has been produced by this committee)
- *There needs to be a separate committee set up to enhance links between parishes and local schools (probably involving foundation governors of local schools)
- *Deacons or lay parishioners should undertake school/church links to support where priests are not available to visit schools regularly
- *There should be a generic format for parish directories that would feed into a Pastoral Area directory (template supplied by the group)
- *Pastoral Area website with information about Masses etc. in all parishes in the Pastoral Area
- *Provision of information about vocations for women and men.

Challenges

- *Less priests in the future means that things will have to be done differently.
- *There may need to be a radical re-think of how things are done. How well will we cope with change?
- *Although some parishioners are keen to encourage consideration of radical changes e.g. married or women priests, the reality is that these things are not within our remit; these kinds of decisions are the responsibility of the universal Church.
- *Deacons and lay people will need to play a bigger role in the future.

Evangelisation, outreach and formation

There is much excellent practice already in individual parishes/schools across the Pastoral Area: bible groups, lay –led liturgies, music groups, children’s liturgy groups, Governors, AA meetings; Men’s Fellowship. formation courses. Sharing the Gospel takes many forms and individual parishes have many good things that could be shared with others.

Preparation for sacraments has varied from parish to parish in the past, but now parishes and schools are actively engaging with ‘With You Always’ from the Archdiocese so as to ensure there is a consistent approach and experience of preparation by individuals and families. Catechists, clergy and school leaders are currently embracing the new Family Catechesis programme and the new Baptism programme is also underway. There have been joint Pastoral Area meetings for catechists, clergy and head teachers to discuss ways forward. We hope these initial meetings will lead to further sharing of good practice (and catechists, where

appropriate) and consistent, quality delivery across the Pastoral Area.

The Archdiocese is now focusing on how parents can pass on 'the Faith' and the role of the parish in supporting parents. We also recognise the growing importance of grandparents in this passing on of Faith, especially where parents may not have continued to practise their own faith, but seek a Catholic education and up-bringing for their child.

Recommendations

- *'Hubs' of expertise should develop in individual parishes e.g. marriage preparation, training for children's liturgy. At the present time good examples of this is RCIA being held at St Francis of Assisi, and St Teresa's.
- *Promote and develop RCIA for on-going contact and learning for adults linked to the new catechesis ways, and for Catholics wanting update on church life
- *Continued development of quality collective worship in schools shared with parents where possible to develop regular practice of prayer
- *Provide retreat experiences where possible, including for children (e.g. Cursillo, CAFÉ, Irenaeus projects)
- *Hold PA meetings for catechists involved in leading sacramental preparation and baptism preparation to support each other and share good practice
- *Encourage involvement of grandparents in school and parish events, as they are often key in 'passing on' faith
- *Encourage activities for young people e.g. Youth Masses, 'post' Lourdes events
- *Communication of opportunities for spiritual development across the Pastoral Area

Challenges

- *Capacity of catechists/liturgy leaders to deliver support in different venues and a growing number of sessions
- *Willingness and ability of parishioners to travel to other churches/parish centres
- *Communication (and understanding) of the changes occurring affecting parishioners and parents and children in schools
- *Willingness of clergy and parishioners to follow Archdiocesan initiatives
- *Liaison and communication of different sacramental preparation/adult formation/training/opportunities for spiritual development on offer across the Pastoral area. Who has an over-view?

Mass times, sacramental celebrations and pastoral care

Currently there are six Saturday evening Masses, eleven Sunday morning Masses and one Sunday evening Mass in the Pastoral Area.

It is suggested that parishes should be 'paired' (except for Skelmersdale, which is an entity on its own); St Bernadette's with St. Marie's; St. Teresa's with St. James' and St Joseph's with Our Lady and All Saints. In the eventuality of there being only one priest between the two churches paired, the following has been agreed for Parbold and Wrightington:

Masses would be at Our Lady and All Saints, Parbold at 18:30 (Saturday) and 09:30 (Sunday) and at St Joseph's, Wrightington at 17:00 (Saturday) and 11:00 (Sunday). (Contingency cover in other twinned parishes is now be considered.)

Sacramental Celebrations

Currently in a number of Parishes there is on a weekly basis: Exposition, Devotions to

Our Lady, Rosary and Prayer groups. During Lent there are Stations of the Cross in all Parishes. There is a Scripture Group at St. Richards.

Pastoral Care

*Contact in the first instance is the Priest, then Deacons, then Eucharistic Ministers. In Skelmersdale, the parish secretary.

*Eucharistic ministers bring the Eucharist to the sick on a regular basis.

*The S.V. P. visit and help in the Pastoral Area.

*Parishes are responsible for eight Primary Schools, three Secondary Schools and an FE college.

*Parishes are responsible for fourteen nursing homes in the area.

*Wrightington Hospital is covered by St Joseph's.

*Wigan Hospital is covered by the "bleep" by St James', St, Marie's, St Teresa's and some parishes in Wigan.

*The sisters at Notre Dame Convent, Parbold make their own arrangements.

Cemeteries: Most churches have provision for crematorium ashes. Burial plots are arranged in consultation with the parish priests, as some church cemeteries are full.

Recommendations

*There have been Pastoral Area Children's Masses and Youth Masses. These should be more frequent. In particular, Youth Masses with the help of Animate.

*There is a need to develop Sacramental Celebrations which fulfil the needs of our youth.

*A Pastoral Area Directory listing the Masses, Sacramental Celebrations and Parish Groups should be produced annually, with contact details of all parishes should anyone need to contact a priest or deacon in emergency when their own parish clergy is absent.

*Mass times for the PA need to be reviewed. There are many on Saturdays at similar times; not many on Sunday evening.

Challenges

*There are some things which are uncertain and/or beyond our control

*It is sometimes difficult for the clergy of the PA to agree on decisions which affect the whole of the PA