

Feedback Session – 28 October 2009

Group 1 - Fr Eugene Campbell

Suggestions were sensible and by and large reflected all that was already being discussed in this area. The University/Cathedral needs to be looked at. Fr Michael Walsh expressed that he is excited to see that there is way forward! One issue – sensitivity needs to be shown for Deacons and those working within parishes when changes begin. The proposed plans for curates ie. 5 years in 2 places before becoming a PP are sensible and received wide approval from the group.

Group 2 - Fr Gregory Grant

This group felt that the guiding principles as outlined in the document and explained by David Mills did reflect the vision outlined in the pastoral guidelines 'Called...'

The recommendations may bring about isolation for some priests and we need to consider this. Issues for Deacons need to be more carefully considered.

How would plans work in the area – not all that well, there would be some issues to be ironed out but they didn't see the problems as insurmountable.

Overall – the plans look great for the wider Diocese – but not Bristol. Should the Bristol clergy have a special day to consider the Bristol clustering issue? Particularly in the light of forthcoming demographic changes in Bristol – an anticipated increase of 250,000 people to happen in Bristol – this hasn't been sufficiently taken into account.

Group 3 – Fr Tom Dubois

The plan was no surprise and is already well underway. Could there be central guidance about numbers – what makes a community viable (thinking particularly of mass centres)? How is the plan going to be implemented? Particularly where there is an elderly priest are we to rely on 'natural wastage'?!!! The 3 Sunday Mass rule – will this be imposed by the Bishop? Or could those who do and are happy to say 4 masses be allowed to continue to do so?

Group 4 – Deacon David Brinn

Their group agreed with principles and clustering proposals. There would be some issues regarding clustered parishes and schools (primary *and* secondary) However, these problems can be overcome. *Now* is the time to work together and help each other. Plans that are needed to sort out mass times to avoid conflicts of time (many of their masses take place at 9.30) will now take shape.

The plans are viable for our parishes.

Group 5 – Fr Peter Slocombe

The plan represents maintenance rather than mission. The committee should have been looking at viability of parishes and increased lay and Deacon leadership of parishes – more shared responsibility. Lay leadership in parishes is vitally important. Some clusters proposed do go across county boundaries and there could be a loss of connections with the schools if some of the clusters are gone ahead with (speaking of St Joseph's in Swindon.) The plan could hardly be called 'inspired' and proposals were merely what they were expecting. Need to consider successful mass centres carefully and remember that some of them may have more people attending than some masses in the main parish church.

Shouldn't we have had someone on the committee with Canon Law experience?

Group 6 – Fr Bosco McDonald

Concurred with many points already articulated by other groups. The Guiding Principles were based on common sense and good. The three mass rule is OK except that it doesn't factor in any slack in the system. If everyone is saying three masses every week, how do we help each other? Parishes represented in that group were happy generally and were already working together. Where is Plan B for the worst case scenario? Is this radical enough?

Group 7 – Fr Louis Beasley-Suffolk

Agreed with guiding principles upon which the plans had been based, concern amongst group that parishes *should* retain a pastor. Fr Louis is closer to another *Diocese* and there is good inter-diocesan cooperation (encouraged by Bishop Declan and Bishop Christopher). This group were pleased that process had been bottom-up and as a result felt that it would be successful. Mass Centres – although people are 'part' of X parish they feel that they 'belong to' and identify with their Mass Centre.

Group 8 – Fr Tom Gunning

Felt there was a hidden agenda – did the discussion groups (ie Feedback Groups 1-8) represent the outline plans for what will be the new Deaneries? In their group they had talked a lot about Mass Centres. Seems that – St John's now twinned with Batheaston – does it mean I turn away 120 from one of my masses to accommodate 75 from Batheaston?

The next step is in relation to the small mass centres – viability. Patrimony? (Finance is what he meant) – who gets the collection? If these groups *are* indeed the proposed new Deaneries then there is no way that people will attend a Deanery Pastoral Council meeting if they are that large due to the travelling distance involved.

Attendees were then given the chance to raise individual questions.

Deacon John Proctor – this is based on 5 years (median scenario). Given the speed things happen - it will take 5, possibly 10 years to implement. When we get there we will only need to start again and we'll never be free for mission only maintenance.

Fr Kevin Hennessey responded that actually he feels happy with the plan and now feels much freer for mission now he knows what's happening.

Fr Michael McAndrew – how do we support those parishes that are dealing with mass centres who are small in number? Can we find a form of wording that is helpful to the parish priest in helping that community deal with the issues/ that would empower parish priests yet not put the frighteners on people by citing a specific 'number' or threshold for closure?

Fr Michael Thomas - agreed with Canon Bernard and Fr Michael McAndrew that stating a fixed number is not helpful.

Fr Robert Rainbow – by far the largest University in the Diocese is UWE and there are no plans in this document regarding how we work with the universities – we must invest in our work with the young otherwise why are we planning for the future?

Fr Richard Barton – we must take into account, when it comes to building use/potential closure – our architectural heritage – weed out the less important buildings but preserve the important ones – this can't be done simply by considering capacity and attendance. In an area one building may be of much more significance than another. Could there not be central guidance/control over this – it is too important to leave to the decision of individual parish priests.

Fr Richard McKay – the most frequent number (of priests in a parish/cluster) is 1. My concern is that in the end this is all about sacramental and mass provision. Will priests be working in isolation from each other? There is a need to embrace new models of ministry – lay leadership, other forms of leadership. We need to be working and cooperating with each other – this should be structured not simply left to local initiative. This is more about partnerships than clustering –so this should be more about how do we work together as priests and communities working together. My point is *not* about living together it is about *working* together. How do we *structure* working together in 2,3,4 parishes. Will there be central guidance about this?

Fr Nick Tranter – presumably there will be a structure because there will be Deaneries (I presume) and this will fulfil the role that Fr Richard is speaking of.

Deacon Steve Godwin – need to issue press release/statement in order that all the faithful can begin to work towards the goals outlined in the document.

Fr Kevin Hennessey – This is not formalised is it? NO was the firm reply – this is a draft to work on.

Fr Nick Tranter – so, returning to Fr Tom Dubois' point - are we implementing this by natural wastage or will it happen in a more conscious way by moves?

Bishop Declan then spoke and expressed that the thread through all of this should be:

Are we deepening prayer, strengthening communion and enabling mission?

This document is a *draft*. There will be further questions that need to be asked and more feedback is needed. There has been much talk of the Code of Canon Law – we must remember that Canon Law is meant to help the prayer, communion, mission – it is there to help us and we should not get bogged down in it. Take the document back to your parishes, use it as real consultation. Last summer there were very few moves, that was because he knew this document was coming. There may be moves next summer and I will be using this document (the final one) to inform those decisions. I don't think that there will be large numbers of Anglican clergy coming across – but bear in mind that if they do come they will be coming into an *Anglican* rite – not our rite – they will be separate parishes under a separate Ordinate - it will not be as we have known it to date. We need to be realistic and we need to ensure our parishes are realistic. Thank you for coming and for all the work that has gone into this.