

Be Prepared

Good things do not just happen - they take planning and careful preparation. And the more important the things we are planning for the more time and energy we put into preparing for them. Even God spent hundreds of years preparing his People for the coming of the Messiah!

This year's Advent resources from the Department for Spirituality focus on the theme 'Be Prepared' - and the idea of being prepared not just for Christmas but for all that God might have in store for us. The benefits of preparation are seen in so many areas of life - whether we think about the 'Be Prepared' motto of the Scout and Guide movement or the services that train and equip themselves for emergencies so that when something happens, they are fully ready to support those who are affected.



So what might this mean for us and our Partnerships? Well, we are now at the stage of training and equipping ourselves for the future. We do not know what lies ahead for our Diocese and our Partnerships but each of us has a responsibility to 'be prepared' - to use our gifts (and we really do all have them!), to develop our skills and draw on our experience so, whatever God's plans are for us, we can embrace the challenges that will come our way.

Perhaps one gift of the fashion for luxury Advent calendars is the reminder that we don't have to do it all at once. Each day brings its own 'gift' - its own opportunity. The question is whether we are willing to open the door, to unwrap what lies behind and use it for the building up of our Diocese and the Kingdom of God in our region.

So, as you tuck into your Advent chocolate or open the door on whatever gift or picture lies behind it, ponder how you can be prepared to celebrate the coming of the One who has called you as his disciple and friend and, going beyond that, to accept his commission to carry on his great work.



DIG for Victory

In the first edition of *Partnership Matters* we featured the newly formed Diocesan Implementation Group (or, in the world of acronyms, the DIG). Since its initial meeting in July the group has met four times and has focussed attention on a wide range of topics including: Formation, Property and affirming the gift of the Priesthood - as well as some of the very practical guidelines to help partnerships to get started.

Chaired by Vicar General, Fr Martin Stempczyk, the group was established by the Diocesan Board of Trustees to support the implementation of the new partnerships and to develop a strategic plan for the diocese. Fr Martin comments:

'Our discussions benefit greatly from the varied perspectives of those involved directly in Partnership Development Groups – both lay representatives and Partnership Deans – as well as from the specific knowledge and expertise on aspects like Young People, Formation, Spirituality and Property.'

The group has a challenging agenda and an important role in taking a diocesan-wide view of the next stages of our journey of renewal. We welcome your support and prayers.

Developing Discipleship

A Diocesan Approach to Renewing Our Mission and Vision

#welcoming - Becoming communities that welcome

The first disciples show the body of Christ to be a diverse and inclusive family. As we begin to form our partnerships, welcoming of our neighbours and celebrating difference is an important focus.

Exploring how welcoming we are requires honest self-reflection and the ability to think from a different perspective. Communities can sometimes see themselves as welcoming because they feel at home and welcome in their church. Perhaps a more reliable way of assessing how welcoming and friendly your parish might be is by asking newcomers or those who quietly remain on the fringes.



(Sieger Koder - Pauline Books & Media)

There are many different aspects to this whole area of welcoming, for example:

1. Welcoming people new to the community. This may now mean people from elsewhere within your partnership.
2. Ensuring people already within the Church feel welcomed and part of God's family.
3. Welcoming those outside of the Church. For example, those returning after years away or attending your church for the first time.

If you are interested in the gift of welcoming there is an e-resource available. It provides useful hand-outs for your visitors and regulars to help you become a welcoming and hospitable community. It is down-loadable at:

<https://pastoral.center/how-to-invite-and-welcome-in-gods-name-eresource-parish-leader-kit/>



You are invited to an evening of praise, worship, teaching and testimony on **5 December 2017 at St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle NE1 5HH at 7pm.**

Why 'The Summits'?

In the Bible it is often on the mountain-top that people experience God. We believe at this time we need a fresh outpouring of mountain-top experiences. *The Summits* are designed to involve:

- Your mind - in learning something new about who God is.
- Your emotions - in becoming aware of God's reality and his nearness in your life.
- Your will - when God shows up in our lives in a powerful, dramatic mountain-top way, it's so that we would do something differently, that we would be different.

So when we come down from that mountain we're impacted, not only in what we know and what we feel, but in what we then set out to do in our communities.

This month our Summit will feature:

Praise and worship led by...



Input by Andrew Brookes OP

Andrew has a long term passion and commitment to evangelisation. As a Dominican he is called to preaching and the salvation of souls, animated by prayer, study and community.

For further information contact Amy on 0191 243 3313 or email adult.formation@diocesehn.org.uk



Adoremus 2018

The Bishops of England and Wales will hold a National Eucharistic Pilgrimage and Congress in Liverpool from **Friday 7 to Sunday 9 September 2018**. There will be a series of Catechism sessions, focusing on different dimensions of the Eucharist and the daily celebration and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.



The Eucharistic Congress has been given the title *Adoremus* (let us adore). This pilgrimage will bring people together from across the dioceses and further the service of the poor and marginalised in our midst. It will also provide practical resources to develop the mission of the Church in prayer, contemplation and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The Congress will include a Theological Symposium, various workshops focussing on Scripture, Ecclesiology, Eucharistic Language and Catechism, Rites and Music for Eucharistic Adoration, pilgrimage Masses and a street procession. The main focus is on the Saturday in the Liverpool Echo Arena where there will be a six-hour stage programme, which will include a Congress Mass, keynote speakers and a drama highlighting the beauty of reverence and devotion.

Bishop Séamus is keen for our Diocese to take a full and active part in the Congress and Fr Adrian Dixon is our diocesan representative.

The Diocesan Department for Education will organise for 2 senior students from each of our diocesan secondary schools to attend the Congress on the Saturday.

Each partnership will be allocated 17 tickets for the Saturday events. By way of preparation for the Congress a number of events are being planned around the diocese. There is more information available on the Catholic News website at:

<http://catholicnews.org.uk/Home/Special-Events/Adoremus-National-Eucharistic-Pilgrimage>

Hair today...

Every year there are 357,000 new cases of cancer in the UK. This means 980 people have been diagnosed today with cancer, so statistically, we all know someone who has suffered from cancer in our lifetime.

Our hair is very important to us; it is a huge part of our identity, how we feel about ourselves and, in turn, how others see us. So when a close friend was diagnosed with cancer and had to go through chemotherapy treatment, Nancy realised the one thing she was dreading was losing her hair.

During her treatment a wig was provided that was similar to her natural colour and style. Wearing



Hair today...

the wig helped her to feel less self-conscious and meant that people didn't see her any differently from anyone else.

Nancy thought the hair for the wigs had to come from somewhere and for this reason she decided to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support by having all her hair cut off and donating it to be made into a wig.

'I know that unless I have to face the battle of cancer myself, I can never fully understand the ordeal my friend and other cancer sufferers go through - but if I can help someone in this small way and raise a little money for Macmillan, I hope my small contribution will help to make a big difference.'



...gone tomorrow!

If you would like to support Nancy Gash in her brave endeavour you can do so by visiting her profile page on the [Macmillan Brave the Shave](#) site. Thank you.



Young People in Partnerships



Responses to the *'Forward Together in Hope'* parish questionnaire demonstrated the desire to bring young people into our midst and the recognition that they are a life-giving part of our community. 'Where to start' is, of course, the question and Partnerships certainly provide us with a new opportunity for youth ministry. As we share our resources, our gifts, our challenges, our hopes and our wealth of experience, there is the possibility of a greater response than when parishes work alone.

The wider Church has also been called at this time to examine its relationship with young people and Pope Francis has announced that a Synod on Youth will take place in Autumn 2018. *'Every young person has something to say to others. He or she has something to say to adults, something to say to priests, sisters, bishops and even the Pope. All of us need to listen to you!'*

Toolkit for Youth Ministry

An online Partnership Toolkit for Youth Ministry is coming soon from the Youth Ministry Team. This resource will assist Partnerships to respond to the needs of young people and to encourage them to take their place in the Church and share their unique gifts with the wider community. The aim is to provide ideas and inspiration as well as practical help and information.

Sections will be added one by one but the first part will include ideas about how to develop and implement a Partnership vision for youth ministry; ways to involve and listen to young people; and how to provide opportunities for young people to grow in faith.

The Source

While much can be done at local level, an important task is to discern what can happen at Partnership level. This may include enabling young people to participate in diocesan activities. *The Source* provides an event for young people - from Year 9 and above - which it would be difficult for one church or partnership to organise on its own. The Partnership can work with the chaplain and staff at the local secondary school to organise and provide funding for a coach or a mini-bus.

The Source takes place at St Mary's Cathedral - with the next date being Wednesday 6th December 7pm – 8.30pm. Partnerships are encouraged to bring young people to this special Advent Source with the theme *'I'm Coming Back Again.'* Music will be provided by 'Written in Kings' and there will be time to reflect and pray. Hot chocolate will be served in the Courtyard from 6.30pm. Future dates are February 7th and March 7th 2018.

Upcoming Diary Dates

20th – 21st April 2018: A retreat for young people preparing for Confirmation takes place at the Emmaus Village. *'On Fire'* invites young people to reflect on the gift of the Holy Spirit who lives within them and who calls each one of us to set the world on fire by the way we live. This is also an opportunity for catechists to encourage and share with each other. Further information from YMT on 02107 592244 or admin@ymt.org

Saturday 12th May 2018: The feedback from *'The Way We See It'* Conference in May this year was very positive and practical in its hopes and suggestions. A follow-up Conference will take place in May incorporating a number of workshops enabling partnerships and parishes to develop their vision and plan for youth ministry. The keynote speaker will be Fr Dominic Howarth, Episcopal Vicar for Pastoral Formation in the Diocese of Brentwood and Chair of the *Flame Congress* Planning Group. Booking forms and full details will be available soon.

Partnership Chairs

The team takes shape

On Saturday 18th November, the Chairs - or another lay representative - of each the 18 Partnership Development Groups (PDGs) were invited to meet with Bishop Séamus. The objectives for the meeting were three-fold:

- To thank PDG Chairs for agreeing to carry out this important role of service
- To explore the role of the PDG Chair and to identify the type of support needed
- To provide an update on some key developments in relation to partnerships.

To do all of this in an hour and three quarters was 'going some' but with a group of enthusiastic and efficient people in the room almost anything is possible.



Saint Hilda keeps an eye on proceedings

After a round of introductions, and an insight into some of the many positive things that are already happening in Partnerships, the group turned its attention to what the role of Chair really is – and what it isn't. Words like 'facilitator', 'co-ordinator', 'trouble-shooter' and 'listener' were very much to the fore – as were 'encouragement', 'leadership' and 'strategic direction'. In addition, there was a clear recognition that the role would, on occasion, require 'diplomacy skills' such as 'resolving disputes'. There was general agreement that it was about 'service' and harnessing the energy of a team rather than about 'power' or 'position' or individual control. The importance of a strong working relationship with the Partnership Dean was also highlighted.



*On his knees!
Mike Weetman, Chair of the Escomb Partnership*

The focus then shifted to the key concerns that the representatives had about establishing partnerships and what support and guidance they thought would be most helpful. In the lively discussion that followed they homed in on areas like Training and Formation, Communication and sharing ideas between partnerships as well as Property and Finance and the need for clarity on a number of areas of the work of the diocese. Participants underlined the importance of all of this being carried out within a context of prayer and spiritual development.

There was a realistic acknowledgement of the scale of the task ahead yet an enthusiasm and energy that was very much up to the challenge.

Bishop Séamus offered some words of thanks and encouragement:

"Thank you for all that you've done already in serving your partnership – and for all that you will do in the future. I encourage you not to be overwhelmed by the tasks that lie ahead, but to be comforted by the words of Jesus, recalled by St Paul, when he says: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'"

Three wise men...



Fr Jeff Dodds, Fr Martin Stempczyk and Bishop Séamus at the meeting with Partnership Chairs

Christmas is for sharing...

We are always on the lookout for ideas and suggestions that we can share between partnerships. A recent e-mail from a thoughtful parishioner ran:

'I have had a little idea which is a simple one so you may already have thought about it. I think partnerships may be going to produce partnership newsletters - if the newsletters could be published in Advent and Lent they could include information about Christmas and Easter services throughout the partnership. This would support the new identity of the partnership and would make the newsletter more valuable for parishioners as they may refer to it more often. It would also be very useful information for parishioners who need to know about services within travelling distance, and not just the services where their Parish Priest will be presiding.'

We would love to hear about what is taking place in your partnership so that we can share this through 'Partnership Matters' and on the Partnership pages of the diocesan website.

The Blackfriars Partnership has provided another update which they are happy for us to share. We've included here the set of 'values' that they have developed for their partnership:

We Love Jesus

We Listen

We are Open and Honest

We believe in Transparency

We are Inclusive of Everyone

We Trust

We are Respectful

We Communicate Effectively and Often

We Work for Others



*And His name shall be called:
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Is 9:6)*

This year has seen some big changes and challenges in our Diocese. As we celebrate Christmas for the first time in our new partnerships may we welcome all who come to journey with us.

In remembering the birth of Christ who offered himself as a servant of God may we use our gifts to serve Him and become better disciples of Jesus.

Thank you all for working so hard to establish our new partnerships.

Have a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Partnership Matters is produced by the Department for Development and Renewal.

To provide contributions of feedback please contact Tony Sacco or Nancy Gash on
0191 243 3304 or e-mail: hope@diocesehn.org.uk