



Advent - A Time for Reflection

In Pope Francis' exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate* (Rejoice and be glad), his words tune in well to the message of Advent;

'Along this journey, the cultivation of all that is good, progress in the spiritual life and growth in love are the best counterbalance to evil. Those who choose to remain neutral, who are satisfied with little, who renounce the ideal of giving themselves generously to the Lord, will never hold out. Even less if they fall into defeatism.'

It has been a tough year for the Church, and many of us have been challenged with changes in our Partnerships, our parishes, to our Mass times. The Jewish people faced huge problems during the time of the Exile. Some gave way to despair, but it is interesting to note that most of our Advent First Readings come from prophets writing around that time. They did not shy away from the problems but assured people that God had not abandoned them. They too tried to encourage people to "cultivate all that is good", to "progress in the spiritual life" and to "grow in love".

During Advent, you might like to look honestly at the things that have challenged you over the last year and how you dealt with them - with a determination to strive for the best for others, or with apathy and defeatism? If the latter, all is not lost! God has not given up on us but is at work in and through all that is happening. Advent's call is to turn to the horizon for the glimpses of all that offers us renewed hope.

To the Future...

So it's goodbye from the Department for Development and Renewal – as Tony Sacco concludes his work with the Diocese at the end of December and Nancy Gash takes on a new role from January. It has been a real privilege to work with so many dedicated and enthusiastic people over the past 4 years – initially under the *Forward Together in Hope* banner and, more recently, in supporting the development of our 18 Partnerships. Thank you ever so much for your support, your prayers and your willingness to travel with us on this journey.

Of course the journey doesn't end here – so what happens next? Arrangements for serving Partnerships are being embedded into the everyday life of the Diocese with a contact for the Partnerships in each of the Vicariates as follows:

- ★ Northumberland: [Fiona Standfield](#)
- ★ Newcastle and North Tyneside: [Amy Cameron](#)
- ★ South Tyneside and Gateshead: [Jeff Ledger](#)
- ★ Sunderland and East Durham: [Katherine Nugent](#)
- ★ Cleveland and South Durham: [Andrew Gillingham](#)

Each person will support the Episcopal Vicar for that area, and will help facilitate communication between the Partnerships in that Vicariate and the departments in the Diocesan Offices. It is hoped that, when appropriate, they will be invited by the Episcopal Vicar to attend some meetings of Partnership Chairs and Partnership Deans, meetings of Partnership Development

Groups and even to address suitable agenda items at Clergy Vicariate meetings. The Diocesan Implementation Group has completed its Diocesan-wide task and Episcopal Vicars will ensure co-ordination arrangements are in place within each Vicariate.

On the communications front, this issue of *Partnership Matters* is the last in a 'stand-alone' format. From February, updates will be included within the Diocesan E-Newsletter. The Partnership web pages will continue to be updated and developed – with a focus on sharing good practice between Partnerships and providing online guidance and resources.

So farewell and thank you for all that you have done and are continuing to do. It seems very fitting to conclude with words from the original *Forward Together in Hope* prayer:

**Inspire us all
in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
to live the Gospel,
to be open to change
and to move forward together in hope.**

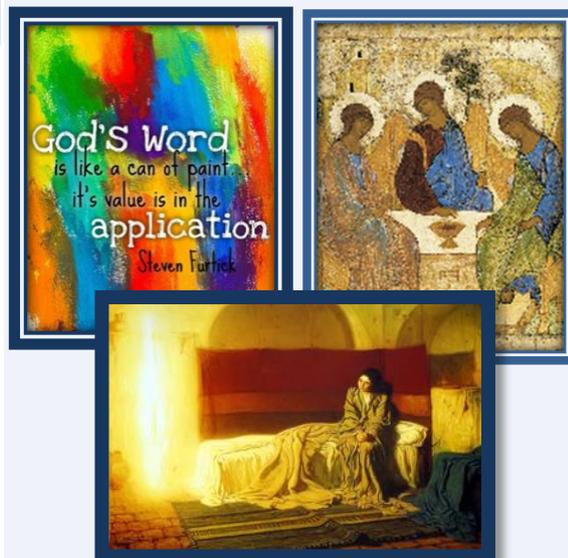


SHARING ACROSS

Brinkburn Contemplate Spirituality and Art – Visio Divina by Veronica Shearer

Veronica Shearer describes how art can inspire prayer

Brinkburn Partnership journeyed with the Lord through famous paintings and artists, icons and Byzantine Art, turning beauty into prayer. These sessions were held at St Robert's Church Hall. We analysed paintings and icons, learnt about the artist and reflected on the Scripture passage related to the scene and sang hymns which bore resonance to the piece of religious art. There was also a guided meditation to help the participants to use this method of prayer. In short, it was Visio Divina at its best. Six sessions didn't seem enough to do justice to this form of prayer. We ended our last on the 19th October 2018 with a celebration. Art has the capacity to move us profoundly. When aesthetic experience is combined with our communion with God in prayer, it can be an uplifting affirmation of our faith and our hope.



Bringing People Together in Hilda Partnership by David Frank

David Frank (Partnership Chair) highlights some recent Partnership developments

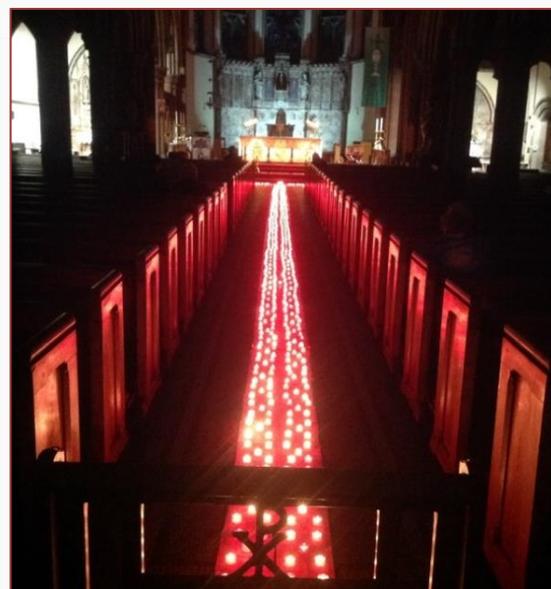


The Hilda Partnership consists of fifteen communities spread across the towns of Billingham, Hartlepool and Stockton. We have concentrated our efforts on bringing our communities together through Prayer and Liturgy in order to begin to build a sense of unity between three very different towns in the deep south east of our Diocese.

We began our Partnership with 24 hours of prayer in Saint Joseph's Church, Norton which was well attended. Subsequently we have begun a series of Patronal Saint Masses across our area. On Saturday, November 17th we celebrated the Feast day of Saint Hilda with Mass at Saint Mary's on the Headland, Hartlepool, followed by a procession to the nearby 14th Century Church of Saint Hilda for refreshments. At the end of December, there will be a Mass to celebrate the Patronal Feast of Saint Thomas of Canterbury, the Patron Saint of the Billingham group of churches.

Our Ministry Day, which is held every September, was attended by parishioners from across the area and a talk by Kathryn Turner on Pope Francis' exhortation "*Gaudete et Exsultate* - Rejoice and be glad" was very well received. In the run up to the Eucharistic Congress in Liverpool we organised a "*River of Light*" in Saint Joseph's, Hartlepool. This was an evening of prayer during which candles filled the centre aisle and the crossing point in front of the sanctuary to create a river of light in the darkened church. The atmosphere created was very special and the church was open from 7pm until midnight to allow for a time of private prayer. Subsequently a group representing the three towns attended the Eucharistic Congress in September.

Another opportunity for bringing communities together was a ceilidh held in Billingham. The music was great, the food was excellent, and the atmosphere was warm and welcoming. More events are being planned for the future.



THE DIOCESE



Benedict Partnership's WW1 Centenary Poppy Memorial *by Joan Formosa*

Joan Formosa explains how the Benedict Partnership marked the centenary of WW1



The idea for this project began on a country walk in Derbyshire. Jane Everett and Maria Ashburner were talking about how they could mark the centenary and combine their ideas with the Commemorative Mass which was already being planned in Our Lady Queen of Peace Church. From this small beginning grew the amazing installation which has been experienced by hundreds of people during fourteen emotional days in November.

Since that lovely summer walk, over twenty thousand poppies have been created by people of all ages throughout the community. The children had fun together at 'messy church' during the summer holidays making poppies from recycled plastic bottles, clay, felt and even baked poppy bread.

Every church in our partnership responded with enthusiasm and became part of the project. The choir had people from all the parish churches, the sick and housebound of our Partnership were active participants, historians in the parish conducted research, gardeners planned and created the remembrance garden, crosses were painted and inscribed, flowers arranged and finally the installation was completed.

Special thanks - to Donna Caldwell who designed the installation and all those volunteers from the Partnership who welcomed our visitors from far and wide.

1918 - WE WILL REMEMBER THEM - 2018



How to Engage Young People in Seaton Delaval? *by Fr Jim Dunne*



Seaton Delaval's Partnership Dean reflects on the successes and challenges over the past 18 months.

As Partnerships have been in existence for a year and a half, it may be a good time to see what "we have done and what we have failed to do", as the Act of Sorrows puts it! Our Partnership of six parishes runs from Gosforth Park in the south to Blyth and Cowpen in the north, and includes some very different communities. We were lucky in that any potential difficulties have been overcome by a lot of good will, so we were able to set up very quickly the three main committees: Partnership Development, Finance and Spirituality.

The PDG has organised a Mass every six months, going round the various churches, and having a social after each one. Three issues of the Partnership Bulletin have been well received. The Finance Group agreed quickly what each parish should contribute to a central fund. Our Spirituality Group has been very active, arranging days of recollection, prayer cards and various services throughout the area.

What has proved more difficult has been co-ordinating work with primary and high-school young people. This is due to the geography of the area: the North Gosforth children go to a primary school shared with St Charles' Parish in

Gosforth, then go on to high school in Newcastle. The others go to primary schools in Cramlington or Blyth, and then on to high school in Bedlington. None of the high schools are in the Partnership. The staff in schools have good contacts, but getting the children to meet up, or prepare for sacraments, across the whole Partnership has not proved possible. I'm sure that we won't be the only area where this is an issue. All-in-all, we have had a good 18 months together, but we agree that the real test (and benefit) of the system will be when there is a further reduction of the number of priests in the area.

The Property and Community Review

The Property and Community Review is to move forward in three pilot areas focusing on community needs. Recently appointed Property Review Coordinator, Jeremy Brock, briefly explains the process.



Planning is well underway to move forward the Property and Community Review in three pilot Partnership areas: Heavenfield, Monkwearmouth and Escomb, and discussions are now taking place with Partnership Deans, Chairs and PDGs to plan the local arrangements necessary to ensure that the reviews are effective.

The starting point for each review is to bring all the Parishes within the Partnership together to consider local community needs within Parish areas, including looking at evidence of local need and gaps in services. Parishes and Partnerships can then consider how property can be best used to help meet those community needs.

The review process relies on the participation of volunteers from Parishes who have an interest in strengthening the role of their Parish in their local community - looking at wider community needs, and developing missionary discipleship activity within their Parish. The process also requires volunteers from PDGs to be the key links with PDGs, throughout the review.

The pilot areas were chosen for their mix of urban and rural geographies and inclusion of areas of deprivation. The pilots will test out approaches before rolling the review out to more areas around March next year. A 'Sounding Board' has been set up to provide advice and guidance on the process.

The approach is now more streamlined than envisaged previously and the timescale for the review is to be shorter, but it retains a strong community focus. The pilot reviews should conclude by May 2019 with proposals to maximise the use and sustainability of our buildings and land in the short, medium and long term.

For further information, please contact Jeremy at: jeremy.brock@diocesehn.org.uk, or 0191 243 3303

Forthcoming Events

Here are some Diocesan events you may be interested in.



Developing Discipleship
presents

THE SUMMITS

12.12.18 - St Joseph's // Sunderland
13.2.19 - St Augustine's // Darlington
13.3.19 - St John Vianney // Hartlepool

Featuring worship by Expedition
www.expeditionworship.com

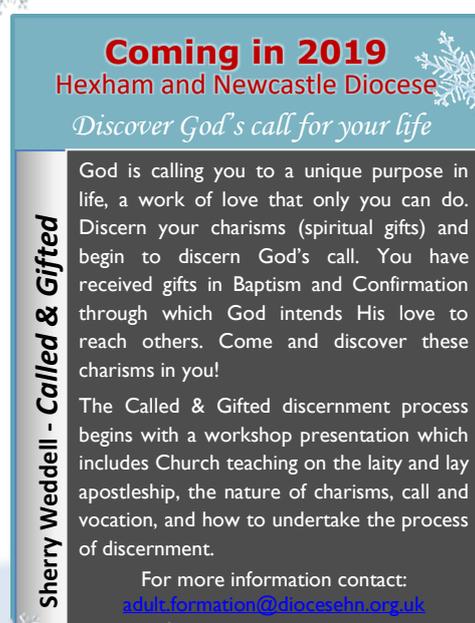
For more information, contact
adult.formation@diocesehn.org.uk



Spirituality Network
19 January 2019
St Hilda's Resource
Centre

Invitations have gone out to all Partnerships for representatives to come to meet and explore how the Department for Spirituality can support those working at local level in the future.

For more information contact:
spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk



Coming in 2019
Hexham and Newcastle Diocese
Discover God's call for your life

Sherry Weddell - Called & Gifted

God is calling you to a unique purpose in life, a work of love that only you can do. Discern your charisms (spiritual gifts) and begin to discern God's call. You have received gifts in Baptism and Confirmation through which God intends His love to reach others. Come and discover these charisms in you!

The Called & Gifted discernment process begins with a workshop presentation which includes Church teaching on the laity and lay apostleship, the nature of charisms, call and vocation, and how to undertake the process of discernment.

For more information contact:
adult.formation@diocesehn.org.uk

The items highlighted in the centre pages feature some recent items from Partnerships around the Diocese. You can find these and items from other Partnerships on the Partnership Sharing Area on the Diocesan website.

Please send your contributions to your Vicariate contact as shown on page 1.

We wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas