



## **Resource Book for Parish Pastoral Councils**

*January – August 2016*

## **Our Purpose**

Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ joyfully  
through witness, community, worship and service.

## ***Ár nAidhm***

*Fógair dea-scéala an Tiarna Íosa Críost le luchtáir,  
trí fhianaise, trí Phobal Dé, trí adhradh agus trí sheirbhís.*

## **Our Vision**

To be a welcoming compassionate faith community,  
with Christ at its centre, calling forth the gifts of all  
for the good of the world  
in praise of God.

## ***Ár bhFís***

*A bheith inár gcomhlúadar creidimh fáilteach truachróíoch  
le Críost ina lár  
ag glaoch amach ar bhuanna gach duine  
ar mhaithe leis an saol  
chun glóire Dé.*

## Introduction

The Diocese of Kerry Pastoral Plan 2016-20 reminds us that as Christians, we are called to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ joyfully through witness, community, worship and service. Over the coming 5 years, we want to be a more welcoming compassionate faith community, with Christ at its centre, calling forth the gifts of all for the good of the world in praise of God.

The plan focuses our attention on three key areas:

1. Develop welcoming, faith filled communities relevant to the age we live in;
2. Enable people to deepen their faith and proclaim the Good News of Jesus;
3. Be a catalyst for compassion and justice.

This resource book is intended as a support for pastoral councils as they focus on the three key areas and implement the actions outlined in the Pastoral Plan. Each of us is called to contribute towards the implementation of the plan; we are called to work co-responsibly and inclusively in an open, honest and respectful way.

The purpose of the following ‘discussion templates’ is to provide parish pastoral councils with a structured format for exploring the various actions identified in the Pastoral Plan. They provide a systematic way of examining the topic, agreeing a way forward and implementing actions. This particular resource book covers the period from January 2016 to August 2016. A new resource book will be published each September throughout the lifetime of the Pastoral Plan.

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## **Parish Pastoral Councils**

### **Role of Parish Pastoral Council**

The parish pastoral council is a leadership group through which priests and people work together as co-responsible partners in furthering the mission of Jesus Christ in their parish. In their advisory role, they explore a particular matter and make recommendations. As a group, they think and plan for the parish on an ongoing basis, to respond to present and future needs.

### **The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body**

Consultation in the church is rooted in the understanding of the Church as a community of believers who share in the priestly, prophetic and governing mission of Jesus Christ. The priest consults with people because he knows that wisdom resides with them. That wisdom emerges in dialogue. The task of parish pastoral council members is to "represent" by "making present" the wisdom of the parish.

### **The Parish Pastoral Council is a praying group**

Prayer is central to the work and life of the parish pastoral council as its source of inspiration and vision. This is not book-end prayer that opens and closes meetings but prayer that aims to change hearts and minds, prayer that sincerely searches out the mind of God in relation to the particular parish, a particular meeting, a particular agenda. Prayer is a source of strength and guidance and a group that spends quality time in prayer will be formed into a community of faith at the heart of the parish.

### **Using the Discussion Templates**

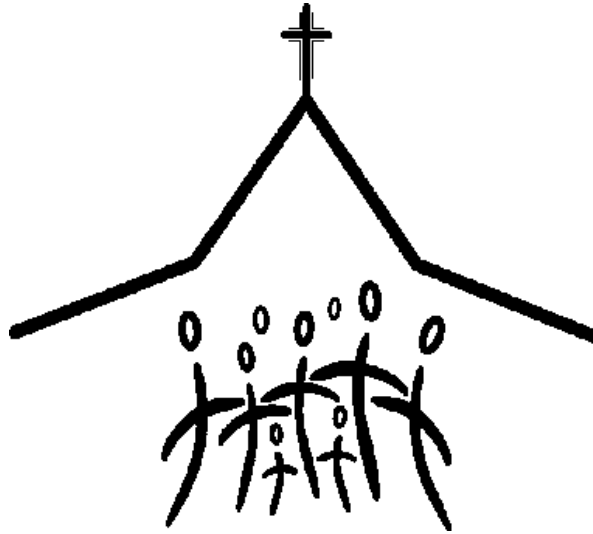
The purpose of the following 'discussion templates' is to provide parish pastoral councils with a structured format for exploring the various actions identified in the Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

The format for each discussion has five steps:

1. Examine the present reality in the parish;
2. Take time to hear God's perspective;
3. Explore various ways of responding;
4. Identify specific actions;
5. Review actions that were undertaken.

This is systematic way of examining the topic, agreeing a way forward and implementing actions, that can be helpful to any group.

## Discussion 1



**Identify specific occasions to extend welcome and build community for parishioners**

***Step 1: Examine the present reality in our parish***

- In what ways are we, as a faith community, good at creating a sense of welcome and building community?
- In what ways do we, as a faith community, fail at building community?

***Step 2: Take time to hear God's perspective***

*Read the following and take time to reflect on it.*

The first outstanding element in how people see their parish today has to do with *welcome*. Parishioners want their parishes to be places of hospitality, where people feel welcomed and appreciated, where people feel they belong. Many, as we know, feel excluded for one reason or another. They feel themselves to be on the outside looking in. Those involved in parish renewal want, rather, that all God's people in the parish would feel included, without pressure. They desire that people would feel about the parish something of what

they feel about home, namely, that it is theirs and that they are welcome always. They want a parish where people experience toleration and acceptance. They want a parish where difference is celebrated, just as St. Paul gave us the image of the human body, all of whose members are appreciated (1 Cor 12).

Parishes put this vision into action in a variety of ways, such as a ministry of hospitality at the Sunday Eucharist, or a welcoming team to visit new parishioners, or initiatives to reach out those who feel alienated or have been hurt by the Church. ...people will not come to have their thirst quenched without being invited. The word must go out in the parish that all are welcome.

*Donal Harrington, Parish Renewal Vol I, pps 61-2*

***Step 3: Explore various ways of responding***

Having looked at the reality in our parish and taken time to reflect on Donal Harrington's description of parish, explore the various ways in which our parish could become more welcoming and create a better sense of community?

***Step 4: Identify specific actions***

- Following the discussion and reflection, identify actions in which our parish could become more welcoming and create a better sense of community?
- If no action has been agreed, identify what further research is required?

***Step 5: When the action has been completed, take time to review it***

- a. Did the action achieve its purpose?
- b. What was not effective?
- c. Is there a follow-up action needed?

## Discussion 2



**Foster initiatives to support the faith and spiritual development of adults in our parish.**

***Step 1: Examine the present reality in our parish.***

- In what ways is our parish good at supporting the faith development of adults?
- In what ways do we fail at supporting the faith development of adults?

***Step 2: Take time to hear God's perspective***

*Read the following and take time to reflect on it.*

Today a good way of speaking about adult faith or mature faith is to see it as an integration of faith and living. Paul VI said that 'the split between the gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time'. Gospel and culture; faith and life; the holy and the ordinary – in recent times these have become strangers to one another. The split affects each one of us. The challenge to the parish is to help re-introduce them again as familiar friends. ....

The basic needs of adult faith are personal and experiential. People want help with their spiritual search. They want to be able to reflect on their life experience in the light of faith. They want faith to throw light on their daily living. ....

When faith and life connect, people take ownership of their own faith and their own faith journey. This means that they can take ownership of and responsibility for their own baptism and confirmation, sacraments which so often appear to be no more than dim and distant memories. .... Ownership reflects what has been called the shift from 'the experience of authority' to the 'authority of experience'. The culture of being told what to think and do has yielded to a culture where we learn to explore our own experience and trust in our own inner wisdom. But it can be a painful journey; some do not wish to begin; others do not know it is possible.

*Donal Harrington, Parish Renewal Vol I, pps 137-8*

***Step 3: Explore various options***

Having looked at the reality in our parish and taken time to reflect on what Donal Harrington says about adult faith development, explore the various possibilities of how our parish could support the faith development of adults.

***Step 4: Identify specific actions.***

- Informed by the discussion and reflection, identify specific actions that we could carry out in order to support the faith development of adults.
- If no action has been agreed, identify what further research is required.

***Step 5: When the action is completed take time to review it by exploring:***

- a. Did the action achieve its purpose?
- b. What was not effective?
- c. Is there a follow-up action needed?



## Discussion 3



### Enabling people to carry out the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

**Step 1:**        *Examine the present reality in our parish.*

- In what ways is our parish good at carrying out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy?
- In what ways do we fail to carry out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy?

**Step 2:**        *Take time to hear God's perspective*  
*Read the following and take time to reflect on it.*

#### **Reader 1:**

It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.

**Reader 2:**

We cannot escape the Lord's words to us, and they will serve as the criteria upon which we will be judged: whether we have fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, or spent time with the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-45). Moreover, we will be asked if we have helped others to escape the doubt that causes them to fall into despair and which is often a source of loneliness; if we have helped to overcome the ignorance in which millions of people live, especially children deprived of the necessary means to free them from the bonds of poverty; if we have been close to the lonely and afflicted; if we have forgiven those who have offended us and have rejected all forms of anger and hate that lead to violence; if we have had the kind of patience God shows, who is so patient with us; and if we have commended our brothers and sisters to the Lord in prayer. In each of these "little ones," Christ himself is present. His flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us. Let us not forget the words of Saint John of the Cross: "as we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love".[12]

Misericordiae Vultus 15

**Step 3:        *Explore various options***

Having looked at the reality in our parish and taken time to reflect on Pope Francis' call to mercy, explore the various possibilities of how our parish could be a reflection of God's mercy.

**Step 4:        *Identify specific actions.***

- Informed by the discussion and reflection, identify specific actions that we could carry out in order to respond to the call to be people of mercy;
- If no action has been agreed, identify what further research is required.

**Step 5:        *When the action is completed take time to review it by exploring***

- a. Did the action achieve its purpose?
- b. What was not effective?
- c. Is there a follow-up action needed?

## Discussion 4



### Identify actions to promote care for the earth

In preparation for Diocese of Kerry Earth Week, April 17-24 2016, the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee [JPIC] invites Parish Pastoral Councils to take up the urgent challenge put before us by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*. He calls on all of us to care for '*our common home*'.

One of the ways we have not cared for '*our common home*' is by allowing a huge loss of biodiversity. Biodiversity is the term used to describe a healthy balance in our world by having a wide variety of species of plants and animals (including bees), which helps maintain our earth in its optimum state encouraging the healthiness of our planet.

## **Checklist for Biodiversity in Parish Grounds**

### ***Step 1: In assessing parish grounds, have you:***

- Plants and shrubs that flower in autumn and winter? e.g. Ivy, Viburnum;
- Flowering trees? e.g. Alder, Crab Apple, Mountain Ash;
- A native plant? e.g. Hazel, Holly, Honeysuckle;
- A compost area? And mulching? [www.stopfoodwaste.ie](http://www.stopfoodwaste.ie);
- A pond or water with wildlife in it?

*If you can say yes to any of the above, you are already helping in the fight against the loss of biodiversity and helping to reduce bee decline.*

### ***Step 2: Is there another step you can take as a parish to encourage biodiversity?***

- Use organic pest control [www.thegardenshop.ie](http://www.thegardenshop.ie)
- Leave an area of grass unmown, leave an area for wildflowers, etc.
- Plant vegetables and herbs;
- Use only plants native to your area;
- Plant a native hedgerow; Hawthorn, Dog Rose, Blackthorn
- Install a water butt- <http://www.howtogarden.ie/install-water-butt/>
- Leave a wood pile in a shady corner;
- Make an insect hotel- <http://ecoevolution.ie/blog/building-insect-hotel/>
- Collect your leaves and make leaf mould.

### ***Step 3: Identify specific actions***

- What will we do to continue to prevent the loss of biodiversity?
- How will we do this?
- Who will take responsibility for it? Can we involve others in this exciting project?
- Is there further help we need from JPIC Committee on this topic?

## Calendar

- Jan 1<sup>st</sup>** World Day of Peace
- Jan 12<sup>th</sup>** Public Talk in INEC Killarney  
Martina Lehane Sheehan
- Jan 17<sup>th</sup>** World Day of Migrants and Refugees
- Jan 18<sup>th</sup>** Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- Jan 24<sup>th</sup>** Catholic Schools Week
- Jan 21<sup>st</sup>** Choir Workshop - Liam Lawton  
In Church of the Resurrection, Killarney, 8.00- 10.00pm
- Feb 7<sup>th</sup>** Day of Prayer for Temperance
- Feb 10<sup>th</sup>** Ash Wednesday
- Feb 12<sup>th</sup>** Fr. Seamus O’Connell will explore  
***“Showing Mercy” —The Road to Life according the Luke’s Jesus***  
In KDYS, Fairhill, Killarney, 7.30-9.30pm
- Feb 26<sup>th</sup>** Fr. Seamus O’Connell will explore  
***Jesus as Mediator of Mercy in the Gospel of Luke***  
In St. Brendan’s Pastoral Centre, Tralee, 7.30-9.30pm
- Mar 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>** 24 hours for Jesus –  
Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available  
in the Parishes of Cahersiveen and Listowel

<b>Mar 17<sup>th</sup></b>	St Patrick's Day - Special Day of Prayer for Emigrants
<b>Mar 27<sup>th</sup></b>	Easter Sunday
<b>April 17-24<sup>th</sup></b>	Earth Week
<b>April 20<sup>th</sup></b>	Ceiliúradh na nÓg
<b>May 16<sup>th</sup></b>	Feast of St. Brendan
	Certificate Night for Pastoral Ministry and Youth Ministry
<b>May 20<sup>th</sup></b>	Youth Ministry Celebration
<b>May 29<sup>th</sup></b>	Corpus Christi
<b>July 25<sup>th</sup>-Aug 1<sup>st</sup></b>	World Youth Day, Krakow, Poland

*Let the Church be always be a place of  
Mercy and Hope where everyone is  
welcomed, loved and forgiven.*

**Pope Francis**

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the word “creation” has a broader meaning than nature, for it has to do with God’s loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance. Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion.

*Laudato Si 76*

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since ‘no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord’.

*Evangelium Gaudium 4*

## **Diocesan Prayer**

Loving God, Creator of the universe,  
you have made all things good and given us the earth as our home.

You call each of us by name,  
to proclaim the Good News of your Son, Jesus Christ  
through witness, worship and service.

May your Spirit guide us as a welcoming and compassionate community;  
responding to the needs of those most vulnerable;  
and sharing our gifts for the good of all people to the glory of God.  
We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

### ***Paidir na Deoise***

*A Dhia Ghrámhair, Cruthaitheoir na Cruinne,  
dheinis an uile rud maith agus thugais an domhan dúinn mar ár mbaile.*

*Ghlaois ar gach duine againn  
ina ainm le Dea-Scéal do Mhic Íosa Críost a fhógairt  
trí fhianaise, trí adhradh agus trí sheirbhís.*

*Go dtreoraí do Spiorad sinn  
mar chumann fáilteach truachroíoch  
ag freagairt dá nglao siúd is soghonta;  
ag dáileadh ár dtabhartas ar mhaithe le gach duine chun glóir Dé.  
Sin é ár nguí chugat trí Chríost ár dTiarna. Amen*

***[www.dioceseofkerry.ie](http://www.dioceseofkerry.ie)***