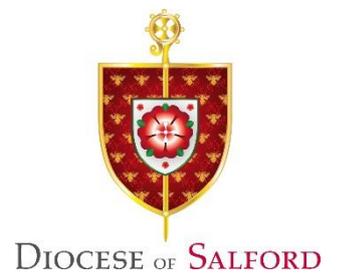




Establishing a

HOPE IN THE FUTURE

PARISH TEAM



Hope in the Future is Bishop John's invitation to every parish in the Diocese to recognise, celebrate and develop their missionary identity and their call to evangelise. To enable us to do this in the changed and changing circumstances of this present time, it is crucial that all members of the Church are involved.

This journey will take place over five distinct but related stages, beginning with a time to recognise and to celebrate the many gifts that already enrich all our parishes across the Diocese.

Why a Parish Team?

It is important, as the Bishop reminded us, that this not be seen as an imposition or burden but an invitation to set out with the Lord on a journey as missionary disciples. Some journeys are best accomplished together. That is why the Bishop reminded the priests, "*you cannot do this on your own!*" For that reason, we ask you to gather a small group of parishioners, between eight and twelve, who can work together on this process.

Some of you may already have an established and effective parish group. They may be the ones, with you, to take the lead on this.

As the Bishop's Working Party concerned with 'Hope in the Future' we are committed to help you, according to your need. The aim is that all parishes will have a group of people able to steer and move the parish forward in its missionary activities.

The Parish Team has a key role in the process. Its task is, with the parish priest, through prayerful reflection and planning, to be the co-ordinating hub of the process. Rather than seek to do everything, it will seek to harness the talents of the wider parish community.

Recruiting members of the group

The Parish Team should seek to be representative of the parish, in terms, for example, of gender, age, ethnic background and so on. Where a parish is made up of more than one church, or a number of churches are ministered to by one priest, care should be taken to ensure that the group draws members from each church (and the different Sunday Masses.)

It is important that the convening of the group is mentioned openly in the parish via the newsletter and other means. Parishioners might be invited to suggest names for the group. Parishioners may be invited to volunteer. Attached to this is a form on which people might express their interest. It is also a good opportunity to seek to invite those who are currently not actively involved but might be open to being so.

In choosing which of those interested might be asked to join the group, attention should be given to the skills required. Those who have volunteered but are not asked to join the group should be thanked. All parishioners should be reminded that, over the duration of this process, there will be many opportunities for further involvement.

It would be good to invite as members of the group one of your Parish Safeguarding Team, your Parish Youth Rep and Caritas Rep.

Personal attributes required by group members

Members of the group should:

- a) have a deep interest in their parish and a commitment to the mission of the church
- b) have a desire to grow in an understanding of that mission
- c) have the time, energy, and willingness to make an effective contribution
- d) have an ability to listen, with respect for others' opinions
- e) have a love for people, and an ability to inspire others who are not members of the team,
- f) be able to work in a team

The First Steps

Resources for the first four meetings of the Team will be given to all parishes on 4th October.

Parish Teams are asked to meet three times between the Launch on 4th October and the First Sunday of Advent and once between the First Sunday of Advent and Christmas.

Each meeting, which should not last more than one hour will include Prayer, Reflection/Formation and Points for Action. These points for action will lead to an opportunity to celebrate and give thanks for the parish's gifts and talents on the first weekend of Advent, rooted in the Second Reading at Mass that day.

The Next Steps

In the New Year further resources will be offered to support the Parish Team build on their experience of working together.

The members of the leadership team must see their role as partners with the parish priest, working closely together for the good of the whole parish, towards achieving its common goal, its fundamental purpose, which is its missionary activity.



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