

Building Hope Task Force Report

Archdiocese of Dublin



28TH OCTOBER 2021

The Task Force Prayer

Pilgrim God, we give you thanks and praise.

You constantly journey with us even in our darkness and doubts.

We seek your way of loving kindness to walk together as one family.

Open our eyes to recognise you in the faces of one another,

in the breaking of bread and in the splendour of creation.

May the risen Christ sow seeds of hope and new life deep within us.

May our hearts and minds be filled with your Word,

bringing forth truth, justice and peace.

May the Holy Spirit working in and through us do much more

than we can dare to imagine

as we live out our baptismal calling in humble and loving service.

We make this our prayer through Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

St Laurence O'Toole, pray for us.

St Kevin, pray for us.

St Brigid, pray for us.

Building Hope – Our Call to Action

‘For now, what we need is the chance to change, to make space for the new thing we need’

Pope Francis, *Let Us Dream*.

As we emerge from the Covid-19 crisis, there is a deep and widespread desire to re-establish our sense of belonging to a community of faith, but there is no future in going back unthinkingly to a pre-Covid practice. The model of church as we have known it is not the model that will best serve us in the future.

We are like the disciples walking on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-35). As a Task Force, we discern the presence of the Lord walking by our sides – pointing us again to the truth of the Resurrection – to the life-changing call to encounter Him anew – to be the members of his body, the Church in the Archdiocese of Dublin today.

We need to be brave in reimagining our Church so that it will continue to inspire and support a living faith in a secularised society. The challenges of the pandemic provide an opportunity to recommit to the renewal of the Church in its mission to reveal God’s love in Christ.¹

3,000 people, mostly lay faithful, responded to our invitation to share their views and among them was widespread acceptance of the need for change. Repeated expressions of goodwill to Archbishop Farrell and exhortations to him to ‘be brave’ in the decisions being made for the future of the Archdiocese give witness to this. The clergy and lay faithful together are ready for change, maybe more so than some might expect.

While we were very encouraged by these responses, we are conscious that our ability to reach people living in poverty, feeling unwelcome, unloved or unknown, marginalised, excluded or alienated, was unavoidably limited. A wider consultation at diocese and parish level will be required to hear more voices.

We also acknowledge that some issues raised in the consultation are beyond the scope of this Task Force and thus are not reflected in this strategy. We have, however, faithfully read every submission and carefully considered the views expressed in the consultation which are within our remit.

The themes which emerged from the consultation demonstrated the many facets of hope to be found in the life of the Church, including sacraments, liturgy, faith formation, community, prayer, leadership and social justice initiatives. These themes provide a framework for the development of a pastoral strategy.

Tá bonn láidir lenár ndóchas. Is léir ón méid a chualamar ó mhuintir na deoise go bhfuil creideamh láidir fós le n-aithint. Bhí rian an dóchais le feiceáil freisin sa tslí inar fhreastail paróistí ar riachtanais Phobail Dé le linn géarchéim na paindéime. San straitéis thréadach atá molta againn, tugtar cuireadh do gach pobal creidimh dul i mbun cómhra, machnaimh, agus athnuachana ar mhaithe leis an soiscéal a theagasc agus dóchas a mhuscailt.

There are three elements to our pastoral strategy:

- a set of principles which should guide the approach at both diocesan and parish levels (page 10)
- a process involving engagement between the diocese and individual parishes, and within individual parish communities (page 16)
- a framework to guide the process of discussion and discernment by parish communities (page 21)

Throughout this Report, when we speak of parishes, we are also talking of other faith communities with their distinctive charisms: religious communities, hospitals, schools, prisons, social services, chaplaincies.

This pastoral strategy is a starting point, but one which clearly acknowledges the need to:

- **hear the call to conversion of hearts and minds;**
- **deepen the spirit of prayer and attentiveness to the Word of God;**
- **re-imagine diocesan and parish structures;**
- **enthuse the community of faith;**
- **reach out to those who have stopped attending church, have been hurt or disaffected by the past actions of members of our Church, and to people living on the margins of society.**

Our purpose is not to provide definitive answers to the many challenges and opportunities in the Archdiocese and parishes today. Rather, in the words of Archbishop Farrell, the pastoral strategy is to support parish communities to undertake a radical renewal, looking to the future with creativity.

Mindful of the synodal path on which the Church in Ireland has embarked, we are hopeful that our work and strategy will provide a useful input to this path in the Archdiocese.

Renewal begins in reflection and prayer and conversion, if it is to inspire and support a living faith. Above all, change must grow from an ongoing discernment on the lived experience of the people in faithfulness to Christ. (Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, paras 166 -175).²

Encounter with Jesus is the goal and touchstone of this strategy because, in the words of Pope Benedict, “gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction”.³ In Baptism we are united with Him and drawn to His love (Eph 4:5-7). We walk with Him, in the words of Pope Francis, as Fratelli Tutti – brothers and sisters all - “that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person.”⁴

We are sent out by Him to be his disciples in the world (Mark 6:7-13). His Word inspires our actions and commitments.

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A strategy shaped by the Christian virtue of Hope

The Building Hope Task Force was established to build hope by opening a door onto our future in the Dublin Archdiocese. In the words of Pope Francis, “To Christians, the future does have a name, and its name is Hope.”⁵

The terms of reference given by Archbishop Farrell to the Task Force were:

“Taking account of the needs of the people of Dublin as we emerge from the Covid crisis, to develop a pastoral strategy that supports parish communities of faith to undertake a radical renewal, looking to the future with creativity, and that enables the Archdiocese of Dublin to act now so as to give effective witness and service in the years ahead”

Listening with open hearts and minds, we approach this Pastoral Strategy in a spirit of hope that is welcoming, inclusive, accessible and engaging. We build on our belief in Jesus Christ and the rich heritage of our faith including scripture, the sacraments, tradition and prayer. Hope finds its ultimate source in God. God is the source of the true goodness which we all desire and towards which we work. Christian hope is all the greater because, in Christ, all that we strive for has already been given. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11.1)

Pope Francis adds that hope “is able to see a tomorrow. Hope is the door that opens onto the future.”⁶

Hope orientates Christians towards the future in a way that is neither naïve nor fatalistic⁷. It demands a real honesty about past failings and scars caused by members of the Church. The scale and duration of the scandal of abuse of children by clergy, and the legacy of the institutionalisation of women and children, have gravely eroded the credibility of the Church.

All the baptised, whether practising or not, and all people of goodwill have a place in the mission of the Church and yet many assert that the Church in its teaching is opposed to equality and inclusion. In a changing culture, where God is no longer considered central, hope requires frankness about these significant challenges to renewal and to the mission of the Church to be a beacon of hope for the people of our time.

Hope as realism, faithfulness and imagination counters nostalgia, denial, and conformity, all of which distract us from a brighter future.⁸ True hope is best experienced when we support each other. For it to flourish, it requires solidarity which expresses itself in life-giving communities where everyone can participate in decision making. (*Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine, paras 185-196*).⁹

Hope becomes real when taking on the challenges of a suffering world through actions of care, especially for the most vulnerable. Pope Benedict XVI writes that Christian hope is sustained in three ways: prayer, an active response to suffering (care), and the mutuality of justice and mercy.¹⁰

Hope then is courageous. It is the great hope based upon God’s promises that gives us courage and directs our action in good times and bad.¹¹

Hope is not the result of a pastoral strategy. Rather, Christian hope should shape the strategy itself, its motivation, and its process. A hope-filled strategy is marked by faithfulness, reality, discernment, leadership, communication, and encounter. A hope-filled strategy is not a final document but an ongoing and intentional way of being together as a diocese.

The Task Force was asked to consider ways to stimulate engagement with the whole diocesan family and shape an inclusive approach to a pastoral strategy appropriate to our times. We start with a strong sense of a faith that is alive and hopeful in a church that also needs real reform.

The initial consultation undertaken by the Task Force underlines the appetite among priests and people for a new culture: one that will underpin an authentic and creative renewal at diocesan, parish and individual levels.

The approach proposed by the Task Force develops this opportunity to stimulate conversations where priorities are discussed, actions proposed, commitments made and our shared faith in the Lord renewed.

This is a new beginning. Hope frees us to undertake radical change. Hope inspires us to be ambitious. Hope encourages us to be brave. An active engagement is critical now at both diocesan and parish levels.

Let the conversations begin.

Consultation Responses

“We need to embrace the world as it is today, with all its faults, and make the “now” the foundations upon which the future can be built. Building hope for a brighter future....!”

“The Church needs to be open to doing things in a different way....just because we have always done something in a particular way is not a justification for continuation.”

“The Church needs to promote the teachings of Christ in an authentic way through prayer firstly.”

“I am extremely concerned about the future. Looking at current trend and age profile of mass goes there will be very few remaining in 20-30 years.”

“Building the parish community post-Covid, by maintaining a welcoming spirit in our parish and ensuring good communication, in print, verbally, online and with each other”.

“Super Parish Priest, whose example is inspirational, whose demeanour is so welcoming, and whose celebration of Mass is a joy to experience”.

“I wish Archbishop Farrell a long and prosperous ministry but he must open up our church to more female participation. I believe God created man and woman to work together equally.”

“In Lourdes people come together as lay people, religious and priests, for the common purpose to serve those who are in need. It could be used as a template for service in the parish.”

Emerging from Covid-19

the Archdiocese of Dublin today

Archbishop Farrell asked the Task Force to begin with an assessment of the needs of the people of the Archdiocese emerging from Covid-19. The Archbishop's initiative in establishing the Task Force reflected the concern of Pope Francis that 'The Covid-19 pandemic is the defining crisis of this generation, from which we can either emerge for the better or the worse.'¹²

The true impact of the pandemic has yet to be fully assessed. The toll of Covid-19 related deaths is the most obvious indicator of the scale of the crisis, but the extent of the burden of sickness carried by those who required hospitalisation may never be known.

The indirect health impact is also extensive, with delayed diagnosis and treatment as a result of the interruption to general health services.

In addition to the burden of physical illness there is the legacy of the impact of Covid-19 on mental health. It seems inevitable that the pandemic will also leave psychological scars. No section of society was untouched.

A particular burden was carried by those in prison, who were denied visits and activities which provide a lifeline for prisoners.

The Irish people's response to the pandemic demonstrated a deep-seated capacity for mutual support within communities. Solidarity was evident in the public response and in the dedication of our healthcare workers and other essential service providers - reflecting values which are often overshadowed by the expectations of a consumer society.

Parish communities too, responded and adapted rapidly to the pandemic.

- Many parishes rapidly mobilised volunteers to support vulnerable parishioners.
- Necessary restrictions on public worship led to the widespread adoption of webcam, internet streaming and other technologies which allowed people to access the celebration of mass and other liturgies.
- Innovative use of social media and applications such as Zoom enabled many more to participate in faith formation and prayer groups than in traditional in-person events.
- The celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation involved a greater level of parish responsibility for the organisation and preparation of liturgies than would previously have been the norm. The more small-scale and intimate ceremonies themselves were widely appreciated by parishes and families alike.
- The continuous availability of church buildings for private prayer represented a place of refuge and a source of strength for many throughout the pandemic.

As a church we have seen that we can be innovative and we can respond quickly to turn difficult challenges into new opportunities. This gives us hope as we seek to engage in a radical renewal and as we look to the future with creativity.

Emerging from Covid

The Covid-19 pandemic has given us the opportunity to rethink our priorities as a church and as a people. In this 'Covid Moment' Archbishop Farrell has asked us to consider how we must plan for our future with creativity and hope.

In doing so, we must take account of the direct impact of the pandemic on the Archdiocese. It highlighted the ageing and reducing population of priests and significantly reduced the income of the Archdiocese.

Of the 312 priests who currently hold parish appointments in the Archdiocese, 139 are over 70 years of age. 116 of the 312 are on loan to the Archdiocese. We currently have just two students in formation for priesthood for the Archdiocese.

In 2016, the last year for which data are available, the population of the Archdiocese stood at 1.57 million, of whom just under 1.1 million, (70%), identified as Roman Catholic. Of those aged 25-29, just over half identified as Roman Catholic, while one-fifth of the total population recorded no religion. A minority of marriages are now solemnised in religious ceremonies. More than one in seven Catholics in Dublin in 2016 were born outside the State.

The demographic situation of parishes varies widely across the Archdiocese. While the average resident population in 2016 was 4,000, eight parishes had less than 2,000 residents, while six had more than 20,000. Between 2011 and 2016, only 24 parishes had stable or falling populations. There are significant variations not only in total population but in their declared religious affiliation: in 2016, 28 parishes had populations where more than 80% identified as Roman Catholic, while 15 parishes had less than 50%.

Our parishes also have diverse socio-economic characteristics, ranging from rural communities to those where a high proportion have moved to Ireland over recent years, some working in well-paid positions in the international sector, while others face more challenging employment and economic conditions.

The population of the Dublin region alone is expected to reach between 1.5 and 1.76 million by 2036, a 30% increase over recent years. This will affect not only designated growth centres but, through infill developments, virtually every parish. The pattern of growth may intensify inequalities between communities, while increasing pressure on sustainability.

A pastoral strategy should take account of the needs and concerns of the people – such as housing, employment, climate change, the desire for a society where people can live without fear and which supports and cherishes all people, young and old, equally.

As a charity, the Archdiocese of Dublin is required to demonstrate careful use of resources to advance the charitable objectives for which it enjoys charitable status. The obligation to sustain high standards of governance, administration and accountability means that pastoral planning is not only a means to advance the mission of the Church but required for prudent stewardship.

The impact of the Covid crisis has illuminated and accentuated systemic challenges facing the Church in Dublin. The severe impact of Covid restrictions on attendance at Mass and on the associated collections impacted on the finances of every parish and damaged the financial sustainability of the Archdiocese. Meanwhile, the pressure to fund both capital investment and operating expenses continues to increase. Many hard decisions cannot be avoided. However, the crisis has also revealed a resilience and ability for change which is a source of hope for our capacity to respond to these challenges.

“Advise people of financial contribution per family / household per week needed to sustain the parish and diocese”

Consultation Response

‘...It is not a matter of inventing a ‘new programme’. The programme already exists - it is the plan found in the Gospel; it has its centre in Christ himself. But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified.’

Cf. John Paul II, Novo Millennio Ineunte, 29.

Looking Forward

The Archdiocese in Dublin is at a time of great change.

Our Archdiocese and each parish have choices to make: we can continue on the current path, seeking to maintain existing structures and practices, until a reducing number of priests and an accelerating burden of cost produce increasing gaps, and an accumulation of unplanned changes results in a collapse.

Alternatively, we can recognise the need for a changed approach that calls all the baptised to play their role in a new model of pastoral care, recognising that the future will look very different from the past, save for our continued focus on following Jesus and proclaiming his Kingdom. The challenge and invitation before us is to embrace the call to pastoral conversion.¹³

The strategy which we propose is one where the Archdiocese and parishes together embrace this call to radical renewal and are open to the change to which the Spirit is guiding us, confident that our hope is sure.

We are fortunate to have a very large body of clergy and lay people committed to ministry and service across the Archdiocese. Many thousands are involved in lay ministry, as members of Parish Pastoral Councils and finance committees, as well as in parish administration as secretaries and sacristans. A critical role in the leadership of any strategic approach, and in the implementation of change, will necessarily be played by priests who have pastoral responsibility for the communities in their care.

With a powerful commitment from clergy and lay faithful, across the full range of the life and ministry of parish communities there can be a renewal of energy and the adoption of new forms of outreach and ministry.

We look forward in the knowledge that ‘The whole People of God, in the reciprocal co-responsibility of its members participates in the mission of the Church, that is, discerning in history the signs of the presence of God and becoming witnesses of His Kingdom.’¹⁴

However, as Archbishop Farrell has observed, ‘there is no pre-packaged plan to address the reality in which we find ourselves.

There is a direction; there are way markers, we know them well: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.’¹⁵ The pastoral strategy we outline in this report is intended to enable these fruits of the Holy Spirit to flourish.

Our parishes are Eucharistic communities of God’s faithful people, appointed at Baptism for this mission given by Jesus Christ to the Church. Our hope is that our work will enable parish communities to live this Gospel mission and encourage all to identify effective ways to foster collaboration and promote effective communion within and among parishes, while respecting the unique identity of the parish community.

“It is necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all the members of the People in of God in their entirety is gradually promoted, with respect for vocations and for the respective roles of the consecrated and of lay people. This demands a change of mindset, particularly concerning lay people. They must no longer be viewed as collaborators of the clergy but truly recognised as ‘co-responsible’ for the Church’s being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity. This common awareness of being Church of all the baptised in no way diminishes the responsibility of parish priests”.

Pope Benedict XVI, Address at the Opening of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome, 2009.

“The true spirit of Christian charity of service and welcome without distinction of any kind. The embrace of God’s love in a non-discriminatory way evidenced through the service and community offering that service”.

Consultation Response

A Strategy for Renewal and Change

“The renewal of evangelisation requires a new approach with diverse pastoral proposals, so that the Word of God and the sacramental life can reach everyone in a way that is coherent with their state in life”.

(Pastoral Conversion of the Parish, N 18).

With falling vocations to the priesthood and religious life, perceived loss of relevance and reduced faith practice in an increasingly secularised society, a loss of moral authority due to successive church scandals, and a sense of hurt and rejection experienced by many, the Church in Dublin and in Ireland is facing a difficult reality.

This reality was reflected strongly in the voices heard throughout our consultation. There is a widespread acceptance that we must change, be open to fresh ways of thinking and be responsive to the Holy Spirit at work.

Our radical choice now is to build hope – hope that is real, sustained and prophetic.

In our consultation, many people said that “we need to get back to basics...”. It is right, as we look to the future to reflect again on the basic characteristics of the early Christian church, which unleashed such energy, joy and commitment in Christian communities.

The Acts of the Apostles tell us that early Christian communities were:

- distinguished by a vigorous discipleship inspired by the joy of the Gospel and a relationship with the person of Jesus;
- centred on Christ and on prayer;
- welcoming and focused on evangelisation and social care and
- enriched by a diversity of roles and charisms expressed in a spirit of communion.

These are characteristics which can guide us in defining ‘a new sense of purpose, belonging and responsibility’; they can help to renew our church as ‘a centre of spirituality, and connection, hope and courage for people’ (Consultation Response).

“As the old structures crumble away, we have the chance to create something new, exciting and vibrant that doesn’t throw out all that was good in our Tradition, that has a particular care for the lost and the least. We can be a people whose words and actions reflect those of Jesus. It’s time to rid ourselves of the trappings of false power and titles that only serve to create barriers between us and others. Ireland is a place where we can proclaim the good news of Christ, like St Patrick had to. The harvest is rich”.

Consultation Response

Principles which inform our Pastoral Strategy

The consultation phase of our work was a rich source of inspiration. Many views were expressed which were filled with a spirit of hope while being grounded in the reality of a challenging present and future. Some expressed the value of traditional practices and their importance in moving forward. There were also views from people who felt that the Church was out of touch and unwelcoming. All these responses are indicative of the signs of the times, to be examined, “interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 4).¹⁶

The Task Force recognised the expression of hope in the creativity with which many parishes approached the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation as we emerge from Covid, including the adoption of simpler and more participative liturgies. We were also encouraged by the experience of the Sacraments Implementation Group, who reported evidence of the sense of the sacred and the deep appreciation of these sacraments by parents who, though not regular churchgoers, saw them as important bridges between their most vital family experiences and the community of faith which provides the source of their spiritual lives.

The principles which inform our pastoral strategy reflect what we heard during the consultation period. They also reflect the guidelines for renewal contained in the document on ‘The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the service of the Evangelising Mission of the Church’ issued by the Holy See in 2020, which pointed to the potential for many different and creative ways of enabling parish communities to be ‘ever more centres conducive to an encounter with Christ’.¹⁷

We were encouraged to reflect on how a renewed sense of mission can be ‘capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation’¹⁸

“Change does not come as a threat; it comes as an opportunity which we must embrace with trust in the Holy Spirit getting prepared for the coming decades of Christian life in [the Archdiocese of] Dublin.”

Consultation Response

Emerging from our consultation, the principles which inform our pastoral strategy are:

1. **Jesus Christ** is the foundation and centre of our mission and ministry.
2. **Baptism** gives us our vocation as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ respecting the different yet complementary roles of lay, consecrated and ordained people.
3. **Consultation**, collaboration, listening and discernment lead to a culture of dialogue, solidarity and openness.
4. **Active participation** of the People of God – clergy, religious and lay people, must be facilitated. It is essential to the life, leadership and decision-making of the Archdiocese and parishes.
5. **Inclusiveness** inspires the mission of the parish so that all may know the embrace of God’s love.
6. **Women’s role** in the life of the Church, and the sense of marginalisation expressed by many women, must be recognised and addressed to ensure their full participation at both central and local levels.
7. **The engagement of Young People** in the life of the Church begins with recognising their needs and appreciating their contribution. A commitment to developing and supporting peer ministry is necessary for this engagement.
8. **Shaping change** on a ‘bottom up’ not ‘top down’ basis respects the differences of context, history and capacity across the diocese. The ‘nothing about us, without discerning with us’ is the core approach of this strategy.
9. **Training**, support and care for all who are involved in ministry and volunteering across the diocese must be a priority.
10. **People on the margins and disaffected** are included, accompanied and have their voices heard.
11. **Care of the earth** and the cry of the poor call us to an appropriate response shown by our words and actions.
12. **Diocesan resource allocation** supports those parishes in greatest need.

In applying these principles, our goal is to realise a welcoming and compassionate Church where people experience the joy of the Gospel.

We will achieve this goal by:

- supporting people to deepen their faith and relationship with God,
- creating the structures that support vibrant communities of faith, and
- advocating for those who are on the margins.

Our future is one in which the joy of the Gospel shapes who we are and what we do. We must strengthen encounter, deliberately centre the mission of every parish in the Archdiocese on the person of Jesus Christ and reach out in solidarity to one another.

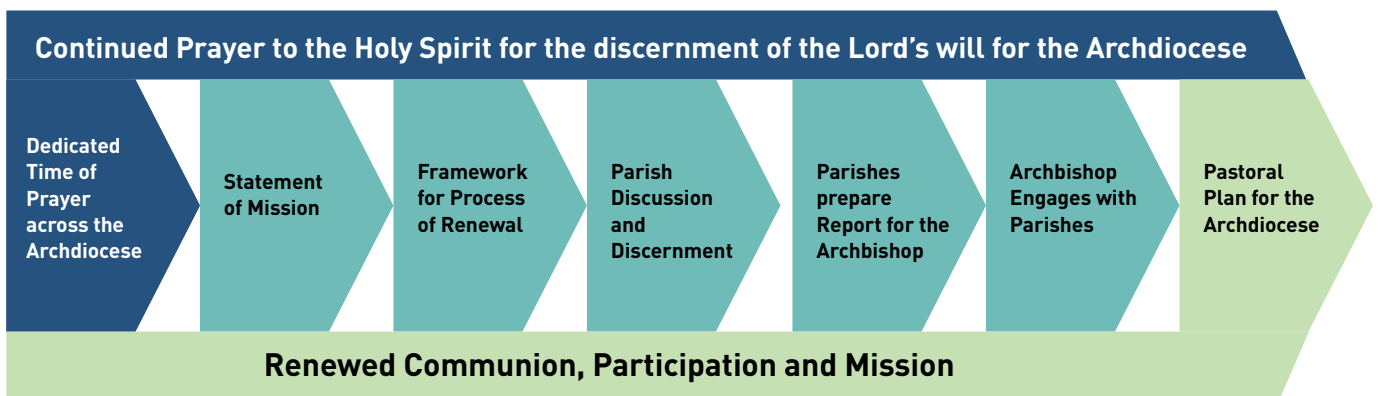
Making our goal a reality will require a change of culture to support renewal and reaffirmation of our mission. It will require commitment by all of us in the Archdiocese.

“Let’s help people to grow in their relationship with God first, then they are more likely to want to be involved in parish. Encourage lay involvement at local level and listen to their needs and act on that. Empower people of all ages to use their gifts for their local community”.

Consultation Response

Proposed Strategic Approach

The Task Force proposes a strategic approach to realising this vision which supports a renewal of mission and evangelisation across the Archdiocese. Dialogue and discernment are core elements of the strategy which will enable the Archdiocese to more clearly identify a pathway for renewal, participation and a renewed commitment to mission – living lives of faith, sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.



We recommend a six step process to developing the Pastoral Plan for the Archdiocese.

- Prayer
- A Statement of Mission
- A Framework for the Process of Renewal
- Discussion and Discernment within Parishes
- Parishes report the outcome of their discernment to the Archbishop
- Archbishop engages with parishes so that decisions can be made resulting in a Pastoral Plan for the Archdiocese.

Prayer

Any strategy for the Archdiocese must begin and end in prayer. Hope is ultimately found in God and together we turn to the Lord for renewal. Together we pray for the gift of discernment, that the Lord will help us more clearly to discern the signs of our times and show us a pathway that leads to radical renewal in all faith communities across the Archdiocese.

We recommend that this period of prayer commences in Advent and continues throughout the process. In the spirit of the Advent season, we pray for healing, conversion and renewal, acknowledging the hurt and wrongs of the past and looking to the future with hope.

‘A pastoral strategy that is grounded in a realistic analysis of the challenges to be met is more likely to be open to the Spirit in guiding the Church to be a beacon of hope for the people of our time’.

A Statement of Mission

We recommend that the strategic process begins with a clear statement of mission for the Archdiocese. In making this statement the Archbishop has an opportunity to mobilise the capacities and inspire the hearts and minds of the whole People of God, clergy, religious and laity alike: ‘where there is no mission there is no church’.¹⁹

As we honour the traditions of faith, we must find new ways to accompany the people of the Archdiocese, many of whom are distanced from the Church as a result of past failures, as well as by the obstacles to faith created by a secularised culture. All the baptised members of the Church have a right and a responsibility to find new pathways to accompany the people of our time.

In setting out the mission statement, the challenges which must be faced need to be clearly articulated. These include the crisis of personnel and finance which must be addressed, and the impossibility of sustaining current structures (including buildings) and patterns, given the projected reduction in the number of priests working in the Archdiocese over the next 10 years. This will help to ensure that the process of discernment across the Archdiocese is undertaken with complete knowledge of these very significant issues and that decisions emerging from the discernment process address this reality.

‘If we are going to be a big church - buildings, halls, property, then I need Admin support. If we are going to be a smaller church, then I need catechists, pastoral assistants, youth workers. If we are going to hang on as long as we can, then I will need a doctor, psychiatrist, healthcare.’

Consultation Response

We recommend that any process of dialogue, discernment and decision is conducted in a spirit of synodality, which enables the Archdiocese to read and interpret the signs of the times, ‘an essential task for the Church in a diocese at any particular time’.²⁰ The framework for that process would be set by the Archbishop.

A Framework for the Process of Renewal

The Task Force recommends that a framework is developed to support the radical renewal called for as we ‘look to the future with creativity’. The framework might include the commitments of the Archdiocese in respect of:

- a renewed focus of the Archdiocese on encouraging and supporting vocations to the Priesthood, Diaconate and Religious Life;
- an in-depth evaluation of the vocation of the laity in the life of the Church with specific examination on the role and participation of women;
- the development of training programmes for instituted ministries of lector, acolyte and catechist supported by comprehensive training programmes;
- a renewed focus on ministry to young people;
- the renewal and development of specific ministries such as to prisons, universities, hospitals, the Travelling Community and the deaf community;
- support for adult faith formation programmes;
- the development of the spiritual resources of the Archdiocese including a renewed focus on places of pilgrimage and prayer;
- the financial adjustments required to secure viability, whether through increased income or reduced expenditure;
- an openness to changing the boundaries of parishes and deaneries to reflect pastoral realities and
- working with parishes to see how administrative burdens might be eased.

Parishes will be asked to undertake a process of discernment and to make proposals to the Archbishop on how they will develop their mission within this framework.

Discussion and Discernment within Parishes

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47.

The strategic approach recommended by the Task Force calls on each parish to engage in a process of discussion and discernment about the current realities of parish life and how they will approach the challenges outlined by the Archbishop in the statement of mission.

The Acts of the Apostles describes vibrant faith communities under the dimensions of faith, servant leadership, welcome and social justice.²¹ The contributions to the Task Force consultation demonstrate a hunger for these dimensions in our church today. This, therefore, is a model (set out on pages 15-20) against which each parish may consider where their strengths and weaknesses lie.

This shared time of discernment is an opportunity for parishes to consider how they can continue to function as faith communities in the context of the declining number of priests available for appointments.

“The time and number of Masses in each parish should be discussed in the parish (Pastoral Council), and with the Pastoral Councils in the Parish Grouping”.

Archbishop Farrell, ‘Some Principles to Govern the Re-Organisation of the celebration of the Eucharist’.

Such reflections may also uncover the potential benefits of closer co-operation with neighbouring parishes. This is a time for parish communities to be brave in the decisions they take, including considering the benefits of integrating some or all of the dimensions of pastoral life with other parishes.

Recognising the contribution made today by so many people, especially women, to the life of faith in their parishes, it is opportune to assess the willingness of parishioners to accept increased responsibility for pastoral care and parish administration.²²

Parishes will need to reflect earnestly on their long-term financial viability.

The process of discernment outlined would be conducted in a prayerful spirit of faith. However painful, leaving behind some structures and practices of the past may result in stronger communities of faith. This process aims to grow 'a culture of co-responsibility, of administrative transparency, and of service to the needs of the Church'.²³

Parishes report the outcome of their discernment to Archbishop

Each parish will be invited to produce a report to the Archbishop outlining the fruits of their deliberation and discernment. The report would contain proposals for addressing those areas of parish life which are considered to require change or renewal.

The report would outline discussions held with neighbouring parishes and others to identify the potential for collaboration and sharing of resources.

The report would also identify those who are willing to undergo training for mission in discernment, service and leadership of the parish community.

“The new face of the Church must be one where women and young people have a different visibility and where their voices are heard”.

Archbishop Farrell, *Homily on Feast of St Kevin, June 2021*

The Archbishop engages with Parishes

The final step in the strategic process proposed would see the Archbishop engage with parishes on their proposals. This will enable the Archbishop to determine the changes to be made across the Archdiocese

The decisions taken by the Archbishop arising from dialogue with parishes will constitute a Pastoral Plan to guide the Church: 'rooted in our heritage, rooted in who we have become, Christ calls us forward'.²⁴

We envisage that parishes will be invited to implement the decisions as they apply locally. Decisions about the future of parishes should 'be carried out with flexibility and gradualism' and conducted through a process of 'progressive implementation and verification'.²⁵

The ability to imagine a different future for the Church and her institutions, in keeping with the mission she has received, depends largely on the decision to initiate processes of listening, dialogue, and community discernment, in which each and every person can participate and contribute.²⁶

The initiation and guidance of the strategy which we are recommending will make demands of the entire People of God in the Archdiocese. It will have particular challenges for priests. The process of review and discernment will be demanding alongside the existing pressures which are all too obvious. The availability of support from the diocesan centre, the progressive changes to relieve priests of administrative pressures, and the encouragement of new ministries and lay responsibility should ease that pressure.

Nonetheless, it would be unfair to downplay the challenge of change which this process will represent, and the need for care and support for pastors at a time when they already carry the burden of rapid change, increased pastoral demands associated with reduced numbers of priests, and the impact of the Covid experience.

“[We] Priests need to be allowed concentrate on our pastoral work rather than being weighed down with governance, finance, Garda vetting. A radical restructuring of parish life is needed”.

Consultation Response

From the consultation process, the Task Force is gratified to note the strong support and respect which priests enjoy from the people of the Archdiocese. This should provide reassurance and encouragement to priests in this challenging period.

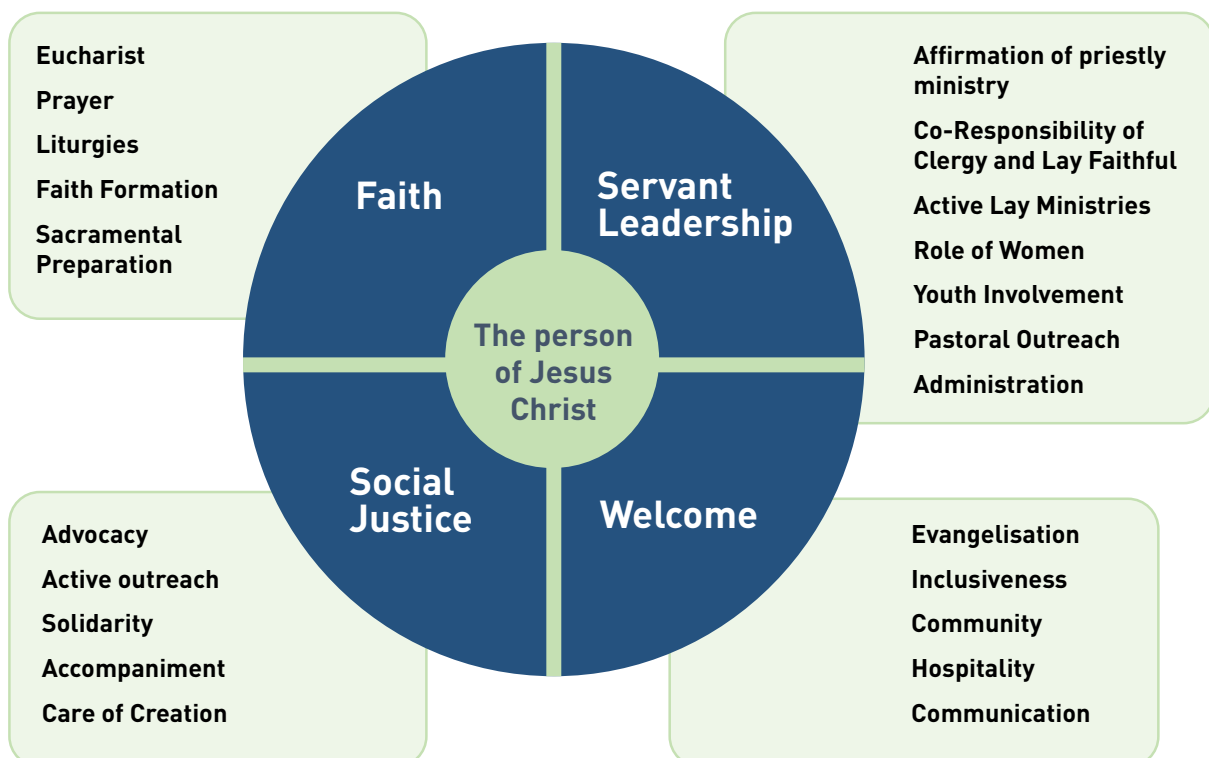
Renewal of our Parish Communities

The Archdiocese of Dublin is a family of families, parishes in communion, ‘listening to the Word and celebrating the Eucharist’²⁷ which ‘brings together in unity the variety of gifts, charisms and ministries ... for the mission’.²⁸

The goal of pastoral renewal in the Archdiocese and parishes together is to build up:

- communities that are faith filled,
- communities of co-responsibility through servant leadership,
- communities that are active in social justice and
- communities of welcome and inclusion.

The consultation process highlighted the key dimensions valued by people in their faith communities which provide a framework for pastoral renewal outlined below. It gives a focus for the discussions and discernment around pastoral renewal which the parishes will undertake. It will shape the strategic plan at diocesan and parish levels.



Communities of Faith

At the centre of the community of faith is the Eucharist. In this time of radical change, the celebration of the Eucharist remains the heart of our faith.

The primary community of faith is the family. This is where faith is lived and passed on in the struggles and achievements of daily life. It is the bedrock of the Church. Parents are the first and strongest source for handing the faith to their children. Vibrant parishes support all families to create faith-filled homes.

Prayer. Prayer deepens our relationship with God. Prayer groups, scripture study groups and other devotions (reflective prayer, Taizé prayer etc) nourish our spirituality. Coming out of Covid it is evident that technology can help to expand and enrich the faith life of our communities.

We recognise that **young people** are not just the future of the Church but its present.²⁹ Young people can take on a greater role in pastoral outreach. This can best be achieved through youth-to-youth ministry that engages young people as they are now.³⁰

Faith formation is a lifelong journey. Equal emphasis should be placed on supporting adult faith formation as on children's sacramental preparation. Catechetical formation for children in parishes is of growing significance, not least in the light of increasing enrolment in nondenominational schools.

Sacramental Preparation. Recognition by families of the value of belonging to a community of faith requires that community to recognise what is of value in the lives of families. Preparation for the sacraments – baptism, communion, confirmation should be grounded first and foremost in the family, supported by parish and school. Families should be provided with a faith-filled vision that addresses the challenges – spiritual, cultural, social and ecological – they face every day and that will frame the lives of children and young people.

“For leadership there is only one road: service. There is no other way.”

Pope Francis, *Address*, 12 May 2014.

“We need a greater focus on education and faith development for families in a programme that attracts them to the church and not only focuses on sacrament years.”

Consultation Response

“Faith is a very personal journey. There should be a way for people to share their faith journeys and how faith has helped them in their daily life. We can only grow stronger by listening to and supporting each other and learning from each other.”

Consultation Response

“An important part of every parish is the interaction between the school and parish and the support that parishes give to Catholic schools. The future of the Archdiocese is ultimately linked to the future of the Catholic schools”.

Consultation Response

“Parents should be more involved in the sacraments of Communion and Confirmation”.

Consultation Response



Servant Leadership

“What is now emerging is a different sense of “ownership” of the Church and its mission—from a “clergy-owned” to a Church truly “owned” by the People of God. This change, indeed, this transformation will take time. But there’s more: it also implies a different role and a new self-understanding by those of us in ministerial priesthood. We are servants of the Gospel of God (see Mark 1:4) – but we cannot continue failing to appreciate that all the baptised share this mission. We may no longer ignore that God’s people are the Church and their contribution cannot be underestimated in the Church.”

Archbishop Dermot Farrell, Homily, Feast of St Kevin, 2021.

People responding to our Consultation were strong in their appreciation and support for the work of their local priests. Many recognised the burden on priests, never more so than during the Covid-19 pandemic. “Cherish our priests and be careful of their wellbeing”, (Consultation Response).

The challenge of leadership across the diocese is a real one as the shortage of priests becomes more pronounced. The burden carried by many priests now is excessive although their commitment and dedication are unquestionable.

A new approach to leadership, however, is not just a response to the availability of priests but rather a recognition of the vocation of the lay faithful.

“The Church is not truly established and does not fully live nor is a perfect sign of Christ, unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy.” (*Ad Gentes* 21)

This Strategy, acting on the co-responsibility of all the baptised, recognises that new forms of leadership, ministry and service are both possible and necessary. We are invited to look outward to the Church’s mission in the world.

“Women, so often discriminated against and excluded from positions of responsibility are seen in the Gospels to play a leading role in the history of revelation.”

Pope Francis, Homily at Lateran Basilica, 13 June 2021.

Our vision of authentic leadership, ministry and service for the future has a series of interrelated elements, reflecting the shared responsibility witnessed in the Acts of the Apostles:

- Priests free to be priests and freed of unnecessary administrative burdens;
- New and renewed models of service which encourage lay involvement and equal participation by men and women³¹;
- Fit-for-purpose administrative structures with appropriate delegation of decision-making authority recognising the core principle of subsidiarity³² and
- A responsible stewardship of resources that recognises the need to generate income to support the Church’s mission.

“The conversion of structures, which the Church must undertake, requires a significant change in mentality and an interior renewal, especially among those entrusted with the responsibility of pastoral leadership. In order to remain faithful to the mandate of Christ, pastors, especially Parish Priests who “are co-workers of the bishop in a very special way”, must resolutely grasp the need for a missionary reform of pastoral action.”

Congregation for the Clergy, Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community, 35

Communities of Welcome

“While there is an essential personal dimension to everyone’s Christian vocation, the call to discipleship comes out of community, and is directed towards community. We are a community of disciples, a community of people who follow Jesus”.

Archbishop Dermot Farrell, *The Cry of the Earth, the Cry of the Poor*.



The importance of community and of belonging to this community was a recurring theme in many responses to our consultation.

Strong faith communities are a place of welcome where people of faith, or of little or no faith, are welcomed.

“If any of the saints are in need you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care.”

(Romans 11:13).

We heard a strong desire from many people for a more inclusive church and the living out of the gospel value of God’s indiscriminate welcome. We are called to evangelisation, to reach out without exception to our brothers and sisters and to invite, without discrimination, each person in our Archdiocese to meaningful and joyful encounter with Jesus Christ. Neither gender nor identity, poverty nor age, should ever be a barrier to participation in the community of faith.

“Rather than being humble, open communities we can fall into the trap of thinking ourselves better than others and pushing them away. The Holy Spirit does not want closedness. He wants openness and welcoming communities where there is a place for everyone”.

Pope Francis. Angelus Address, 26 September 2021.

The welcome offered by parish communities must ensure the safety and well-being of all, especially children and vulnerable adults.

“Our commitment to make the Church in Dublin a safe and secure home for children and vulnerable adults remains undiminished.”

Archbishop Farrell, Letter for Safeguarding Sunday 2021).

Social Justice

“Solidarity is not the sharing of crumbs from the table, but to make space at the table for everyone ... If the church disowns the poor, she ceases to be the Church of Jesus.”

Pope Francis, *Let Us Dream*.

Jesus walked with people in poverty and on the margins of society: the leper, the lame, the blind, the widow, the prostitutes and tax collectors, those attacked by evil. We are asked to look outwards towards those experiencing poverty, injustice and alienation. A lively faith requires engagement, listening and responsiveness to the voices of people who are marginalised and disadvantaged.

Pope John Paul II spoke of the need to ensure that “in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the kingdom?”³³

St Teresa of Avila summed up what it means to be a Christian in our world:

“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on the world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, yours are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

Young people responding to the consultation spoke of the importance of ‘Faith in Action’. We acknowledge the role of schools in developing the social conscience of young people and promoting social justice and faith in action.

“If we want to spread the Good News, therefore, we are going to have to do it by what we do, not by what we say. We have an opportunity now to rebuild from the ground up. We should seize it”.

Consultation Response

“We cannot remain indifferent before the cries of our brothers and sisters. These ask of us not only material assistance – needed in so many circumstances – but above all, our help to defend their dignity as human persons, so that they can find the spiritual energy to become once again protagonists in their own lives. They ask us to fight, in the light of the Gospel, the structural causes of poverty: inequality, the shortage of dignified work and housing, and the denial of their rights as members of society and as workers. As Christians we are called together to eliminate that globalisation of indifference which today seems to reign supreme, while building a new civilisation of love and solidarity.”

Pope Francis, *Address at Patriarchal Church of St. George, Istanbul, (30/11/2014)*.

Care of Creation

The call to care for the Earth, our common home is central to our mission. The climate crisis is a societal issue. Addressing it – nationally and globally – requires a societal response.

In his pastoral letter ‘The Cry of the Earth, the Cry of the Poor’, Archbishop Farrell calls on us to join with him “in wondering what people of faith and communities of faith – the people and parishes of the Archdiocese of Dublin – might do to mitigate this [climate change] disaster. We are at a critical moment as a global community and so I wish to encourage all people of faith to embark on this journey to live our call to protect and care for the garden of the world.”

With Christ, we affirm the bonds that unite us and commit ourselves to cherish each person and to be faithful stewards of God’s creation. This kind of communion thrives in parish communities that are strong, stable and oriented to mission.



Conclusion

In looking to a radical renewal of our parish and faith communities, it is appropriate that we do so with open and listening hearts, ready to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to new horizons.

We were asked to consider ways to stimulate engagement with the whole diocesan family and to shape an inclusive approach to a pastoral strategy appropriate to our times. As we conclude our work, we have a strong sense of a faith that is alive and hopeful, in a Church that also needs real change.

We appreciate the rich diversity of views expressed during our initial consultation. Many parishes are already engaged in reflective conversations and journeys of renewal. The hope of the Task Force is that the process proposed will build on those efforts and inspire a new springtime of faith and community across the Archdiocese.

Prayer has marked the beginning and the end of every meeting and effort of the Task Force. We commend the Building Hope prayer to all parishes: this acknowledges the strength of our Catholic tradition and asks the Holy Spirit to guide our vision and strengthen our courage as we collaborate in developing new ways to advance our mission.

We ask that parish conversations continue to expand our horizons, and to guide our Synodal path and our faith in tomorrow.

We invoke the protection of Mary, the Mother of Evangelisation, that she may help us to say our own “yes”, conscious of the urgent need to make the Good News of Jesus resound in our time³⁴. A Mhuire Mháthair, guí orainn.

Appendix 1

The Work of the Taskforce

The Task Force was established under the title “Building Hope” to begin its work with an assessment of the needs of the people of the Archdiocese, emerging from Covid-19.

The Archbishop underlined the significance of the composition of the Task Force: equal numbers of men and women, a majority of lay people, drawn from a variety of backgrounds and geographical locations. It has been supported throughout by a priest-secretary and by three expert consultants with competencies in canon law, pastoral and systematic theology who have helped to clarify issues and options.

The Task Force was mandated to prepare an approach to a pastoral strategy to support parish communities to undertake a radical renewal, looking to the future with creativity, and to enable the Archdiocese to act now so as to give effective witness and service in the years ahead.

To achieve this, the Task Force met in plenary session over twenty-five times, both in-person and using video conference technology and established several sub-committees over the period of its work. Each meeting began with dedicated periods of prayer and reflection, seeking always the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discern the particular call of the Lord for the Church in Dublin today.

From its earliest meetings, the Task Force was conscious that the “holy people of God shares also in Christ’s prophetic office” (LG 12).

The Task Force engaged in a broad consultation of individuals and groups, recognising the diverse tapestry that is the Archdiocese of Dublin. That consultation consisted in direct contact with a list of stakeholders including:

- priests,
- deacons,
- parish pastoral workers,
- diocesan and parish staff,
- chaplains in schools, prisons, hospitals and universities,
- religious communities and evangelisation movements,
- charities at work in the Archdiocese,
- Catholic primary and secondary schools,
- Catholic and other media editors and
- other Christian communities across the Archdiocese.

The consultation sought to engage the existing team structures across the Archdiocese including special meetings of parish pastoral councils, parish finance committees, deaneries and the Lourdes pilgrimage family.

Having reached out to these specific groups, we proceeded to launch a general appeal for contributions to all Catholics and people of goodwill in the Archdiocese. This included the publication of a video appeal from the Archbishop and promotional materials circulated for use in every parish community.

Many people were grateful to the Archbishop for reaching out and asking for their views. As a Taskforce, we are very grateful to the over 3,000 people who took the time to answer the invitation to make their views known about the life of the Church and their suggestions for the future. Perspectives on the broad pastoral situation in Dublin, the impact of Covid, and suggestions for change and continuity in the life of the Church here were invaluable to the process of discernment.

These reflections were carefully read and analysed and shaped discussions at Task Force meetings. Two broad approaches emerged in this general consultation. On the one hand there was a stronger sense of identity within parishes based on intentional discipleship and a consistency of life and witness. On the other hand, there was a greater emphasis on inclusion and outreach to the disaffected and those who, for reasons of lifestyle or identity, feel alienated from the Church. In particular, the Task Force was attentive to the role of women and those who feel hurt or alienated from the Church.

The responses received shaped our work, confirming that pastoral care, access to Mass and the sacraments, and the sense of community offered by parishes were overwhelmingly the most valued aspects of the life of the Church in Dublin. It is important to note too that there was also a significant divergence of view regarding pastoral priorities, beyond a consistent emphasis on the need to foster vocations, expand youth ministry and adult faith formation, relieve priests of the burden of administration, and encourage lay participation and leadership.

We also considered examples of pastoral strategies from Ireland and abroad and heard from the Boundaries Commission, the Sacraments Implementation Group within the Archdiocese, and expert assessments of the social and economic situation.

Particular attention was given to the document issued by the Congregation for the Clergy last year on “The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church”.

The Archbishop wanted the Task Force to stimulate reflection and creative thinking across the whole community about how pastoral needs should be prioritised, guiding a process of dialogue to continue long after we reported. It is the sincere hope of the Task Force members that this process of consultation, beyond its invaluable role in the discernment of the pastoral strategy, will encourage Catholics across the Archdiocese to continue the mission of the Church to build hope in the Ireland of today.

It is the hope of the Task Force that our work will be relevant to the synodal process in Dublin and so that it should contribute to deepening the synodal goals of communion, participation and mission.³⁵ Indeed, the focus on a pastoral strategy that builds hope in service of the renewal of the church in the Archdiocese of Dublin provides content to the synodal process.

Timeline of the Task Force’s Work

31 March	20 April	5 May	27 June	July-Sept	28 Oct
Archbishop announces Task Force at Mass of Chrism	First meeting, online during lockdown	Constituency Consultations begin	Online General Consultation launched	Analysis and Discernment	Report to Archbishop

Building Hope Task Force Members

Very Rev. Msgr Ciarán O’Carroll, Chair

Mr Tom Foley

Ms Marie Therese Kilmartin

Ms Rosemary Lavelle

Ms Christina Malone

Ms Laurie Mannix

Rev. Dermot McCarthy

Ms Rose McGowan

Sr Bernadette Mac Mahon DC

Very Rev. Liam Canon Rigney

Very Rev. Donal Roche

Very Rev. Bryan Shortall OFMCap

Ms Geraldine Tallon

Very Rev. Paul Thornton

Consultors: Rt Rev. Msgr John Dolan, Dr Donal Harrington, Rev. Dr Michael Shortall

Secretary: Very Rev. Robert Smyth

Endnotes

1. "... the church ... at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal ... that it might reveal to the world, faithfully though darkly, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it will be manifested in full light." (Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 8).
2. Discernment is necessary not only at extraordinary times, when we need to resolve grave problems and make crucial decisions.... We need it at all times, to help us recognize God's timetable, lest we fail to heed the promptings of his grace and disregard his invitation to grow. ... Discernment also enables us to recognise the concrete means that the Lord provides in his mysterious and loving plan, to make us move beyond mere good intentions. (169).
3. We have come to believe in God's love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1).
4. *Fratelli Tutti* finishes: For us the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From it, there arises, "for Christian thought and for the action of the Church, the primacy given to relationship, to the encounter with the sacred mystery of the other, to universal communion with the entire human family, as a vocation of all". (*Fratelli Tutti*, 277).
5. See *TED Talks* – Ideas worth spreading. Pope Francis goes on: Hope is a humble, hidden seed of life that, with time, will develop into a large tree. It is like some invisible yeast that allows the whole dough to grow, that brings flavour to all aspects of life. And it can do so much, because a tiny flicker of light that feeds on hope is enough to shatter the shield of darkness. (Pope Francis, *TED Conference*, 26 April 2017).
6. Ibid
7. Hope is "a reaching out for anything that is perceived as good and for the anticipated fulfilment that the possession of something good brings". Josef Piper, *Hope*, 1986.
8. See Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (1986).
9. See *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2006).
10. The judgement of God is hope, both because it is justice and because it is grace. If it were merely grace, making all earthly things cease to matter, God would still owe us an answer to the question about justice—the crucial question that we ask of history and of God. If it were merely justice, in the end it could bring only fear to us all. (Pope Benedict, *Spe Salvi*, 43).
11. "So on the one hand, our actions engender hope for us and for others; but at the same time, it is the great hope based upon God's promises that gives us courage and directs our action in good times and bad. (*Spe Salvi*, 35) "When no one listens to me any more, God still listens to me. When I can no longer talk to anyone or call upon anyone, I can always talk to God. When there is no longer anyone to help me deal with a need or expectation that goes beyond the human capacity for hope, he can help me. When I have been plunged into complete solitude ...; if I pray I am never totally alone." (*Spe Salvi*, 32) "So on the one hand, our actions engender hope for us and for others; but at the same time, it is the great hope based upon God's promises that gives us courage and directs our action in good times and bad. (*Spe Salvi*, 35).
12. <https://www.humandevlopment.va/en/vatican-covid-19.22.html>.
13. Cf. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, N 27; Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction "The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church", 35.
14. Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction "The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church", 109.
15. Archbishop Dermot Farrell, *Homily at the Mass of Installation*, 2 February 2021.
16. The full quote is: "4. To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinising the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the

Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognise and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics. Some of the main features of the modern world can be sketched as follows.”

17. International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 70.
18. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 27.
19. Archbishop Dermot Farrell, *Homily on Vocation Sunday*, 25 April 2021.
20. Archbishop Dermot Farrell, *Homily at Chrism Mass*, 31 March 2021.
21. Cf. Acts 2:42-47.
22. Pope Francis, *Prayer intention for October 2020*: “We must promote the integration of women, especially where important decisions are made”.
23. We pray that by the virtue of baptism, the laity, especially women, may participate more in areas of responsibility in the Church, without falling into forms of clericalism that diminish the lay charism.”
24. Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction “*The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church*”, 20 July 2020, 106.
25. Archbishop Dermot Farrell, *Homily at Mass of Installation*, 2 February 2021.
26. Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction “*The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church*”, 20 July 2020, 36.
27. Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction “*The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church*”, 20 July 2020, 36.
28. Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction “*The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church*”, 20 July 2020, 36.
29. International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 70.
30. “We cannot just say that young people are the future of our world. They are its present; even now, that are helping to enrich it.” Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 64).
31. Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 203.
32. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* 33: Gathered together in the people of God and established in the one body of Christ under one head, the laity, whoever they are, are called as living members to apply to the building up of the church and to its continual sanctification all the powers which they have received from the goodness of the Creator and from the grace of the Redeemer.
33. The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the church’s saving mission. Through Baptism and Confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself. Moreover, by the sacraments, and especially by the sacred Eucharist, that love of God and humanity which is the soul of the entire apostolate is communicated and nourished. The laity, however, are given this special vocation: to make the church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that it can become the salt of the earth. Thus, all lay people, through the gifts which they have received, are at once the witnesses and the living instruments of the mission of the church itself “according to the measure of Christ’s gift.
34. Besides this apostolate which belongs to absolutely every Christian, the laity can be called in different ways to more immediate cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy, like those men and women who helped the apostle Paul in the Gospel, working hard in the Lord. They may, moreover, be appointed by the hierarchy to certain ecclesiastical offices which have a spiritual aim.
35. All the laity, then, have the exalted duty of working for the ever greater extension of the divine plan of salvation to all people of every time and every place. Every opportunity should therefore be given them to share zealously in the salvific work of the church according to their ability and the needs of the times.
36. This is informed by the Catholic Social Principle of subsidiarity, that is decision making should happen at the appropriate level. On the principles of Solidarity, Subsidiarity and Participation, see *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2006), 185-196.
37. 33 John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 50.
38. Pope Francis, *Message for World Mission Sunday* 2017, 10.

