

RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS
Hunter Deanery Gathering held Saturday 2 April 2011
St Augustine's Hall, Singleton

HUNTER DEANERY GATHERING CONVERSATIONS
(GROUP A)

Conversation/ Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As an ageing population the focus must include youth ▪ Why are numbers in decline? ▪ How best do our schools support parishes? How bet do our parishes support schools? ▪ Go back to early school days for more understanding – engage the children in all aspects of our Church ▪ Funerals
Deanery	HUNTER Gathering held Saturday 2 April 2011 – St. Augustine's Hall, Bathurst Street, Singleton
Convenor(s)	Chris Quinn
Scribe	Helen Whale
Other Members	Group A Large Group – Individual Names Not Recorded

Discussion Notes, Key Understanding, Outstanding Questions, Observations:

How do schools support parishes and vice versa?

- Many baptisms – when, where?
- Parents need involvement;
- Sacraments in schools or parish – where do they get greater formation? - home or school?
- Way of life in Australia does not put Church first;
- More relevance to youth needed (Catholic Rock) sustainable?
- Need paid youth coordinator at some level to get program going, coordinate schools and church groups;
- WYD American model – someone engaged with youth. A priest whose role is solely this (like Brian Mascord – Vocations) – no priests available;
- Don't overlook the opportunity to evangelise parents as their kids come to school;
- Schools need to ask priests into their playgrounds and lessons;

One Person's Action Plan:-

- Primary School – Four Seasons, Mass of each. Children do Mass parts as much as possible;
- Secondary School – Parishioners go into schools and ask what they want?
- Youth leadership – priest presence as well. Must be leadership role for youth.
- Schools need to ask priests into their playgrounds and lessons;
- Look at why kids don't want to join us at Mass. What can we do to be attractive to kids and others?
- Celebrate our witness;
- Communications dialogue between schools and parishes – about what each is doing,

especially social justice. Who will do this?

- Welcome people – how do we make parents feel welcome and comfortable in church?
- Older people are also leaving;
- We sell our youth short. At school they love retreats, mediations and social justice;
- School days – get youth involved;
- Parental involvement;
- Baptismal involvement;
- Program – school based/parish based?
- Limited “home” involvement – part of curriculum;
- No longer a way of life for children – changed focus (sport, etc.)
- Children are going to other churches (Rock Mass);
- Paid Youth Coordinator (25 hours per week);
- Access to guidelines – online;
- Laity to step up – can we?
- Teachers have enough to do;
- No priest who works with youth (Brian Mascord);
- Reconnect parents with Church;
- School role is about teaching about religion – not necessarily;
- My 4 Point Plan
- Why don't youth wish to be involved;
- Make a difference – senior high school – social justice;
- How can we improve?
- Children need to be aware of social justice within schools and parishes;
- Funerals – Christian symbols – with ?????
- Funerals – questions only regarding current practices;
- How do we make Church relevant to our society?
- Christianity is the issue, not “bums on seats”;
- Sr Ruth – dialogue between church and schools – shared load to be inclusive. Is there opportunity?

Action/Strategies:

- More IT at Masses (podcasts);
- Let youth take the lead;
- Empower parents with explanations of what we do;
- Adult Catechetical – held in security of school, dovetail with New Missal. Everyone is in the same boat;
- Market research – ask the people what they want;
- Paid youth workers;
- Lack of youth within Church;
- Australian society does not include Church;
- How do we get youth involved:
- Piecemeal involvement is also an issue;
- Do we need some form of market research – i.e. talk to interested youth?
- Do we need to make Church more interesting?
- Idea of paid coordinator and a designated priest;
- Use of modern technology

Recommendations:

- Laity will need to step up;
- Two pronged approach – primary school/high school (different mindset of age groups);
- Senior – Christian values;
- Issues of funerals discussed;
- Welcome young people to church;
- Once Church did not entertain;

- We need to entertain youth;
- We need to adapt;
- Market research – all groups;
- Parents uncomfortable – right and wrong;
- Adult education;
- Junior Vinnie's;
- Do we need churches – Christian values;
- Family values;
- Old Church – fear;
- People do want to learn values – we need to offer a service;
- Reading groups at schools/parishes – sense of community.

SUMMARY:-

- Primary school Masses – identify leaders, give responsibility/youth;
- Youth market research;
- Regular communication between parishes and schools. Common decision making.

HUNTER DEANERY GATHERING CONVERSATIONS (GROUP B)

Conversation/ Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lay Ministry ▪ Co-responsibility – How? ▪ How Much Can People be Put Upon?
Deanery	HUNTER Gathering held Saturday 2 April 2011 – St. Augustine’s Hall, Bathurst Street, Singleton
Convenor(s)	Sr Maria/Joanne Paget
Scribe	Barbara Pearce
Other Members	Group B Not Recorded
Discussion Notes, Key Understanding, Outstanding Questions, Observations:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communication/education as a family – to create awareness of one another’s ability and courage; ▪ What structures do we need to encourage that? ▪ Acknowledge structures that are already there; ▪ Newsletters – great sense of inspiration; ▪ Define Lay Ministry – how diverse? Can be just taking part (in the early Church, people had no priests in many areas); ▪ Need to give people the opportunity to take responsibility so that the gifts of individuals can be accessed; ▪ Small communities interact and cooperate well; ▪ Need to make people sitting in the pews realise by raising their awareness that they can take part and make a difference; ▪ Some have parish members who have trained to gain abilities to take on leadership roles but are not being used (funerals/service with communion). Maybe these people will become useful as less priests become available. Cannot see the Church surviving without co-responsibility between parishioners and priests; ▪ Difficulties handling small regions can only get worse with bigger regions. 	
Action/Strategies:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need clear definitions of lay leadership roles; ▪ Education and continuing education – to be kept up to date and give confidence and to be open to all. EDUCATION IN ALL ROLES IS KEY; ▪ NEED clear lines of what roles are for LAY and PRIESTS; ▪ Leadership of parish to be put in the hands of Local Lay Leadership Team; ▪ Invite people to ministry roles – be responsible to find other participants; ▪ Support for Canon Law 517.2 	
Recommendations:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education at all levels; ▪ Appropriate structures to be put in place; ▪ Group of people to advise a group of parishes; ▪ Develop a stronger faith community; 	

- Priests have to allow the people to be involved, otherwise the people lose heart;
- Currently the structure of the Church does not allow for full involvement. People need to have more say in the administration of the parish. Allow laity to be heard;
- Structures need to be regional as well as parish level, to avoid smaller parishes having to take on too much responsibility;
- ***We don't want a larger deanery*** (smaller deanery);
- Individuals have to realise they are only human – step back and ask for support. Priests are busy but they are TRAINED;
- Need to affirm what we are as Christians;
- Need to support one another in what we do as Christians;
- Must be a back up from stressed workers to have an outlet for their feelings developed in this type of work;
- Attach minutes from Upper Hunter Regional Meeting.

SUMMARY:-

HUNTER DEANERY GATHERING CONVERSATIONS (GROUP C)

Conversation/ Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Let's Not Forget Small Communities!
Deanery	<p>HUNTER Gathering held Saturday 2 April 2011 – St. Augustine's Hall, Bathurst Street, Singleton</p>
Convenor(s)	Jan Doyle
Scribe	Brian Doyle
Other Members	<p>Group C Fr Matthew Muller Col Green Others</p>
<p>Discussion Notes, Key Understanding, Outstanding Questions, Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Small communities don't feel part of larger regions/deaneries; ▪ Small communities will keep the Church alive; ▪ Lay leaders cannot be political, with their own agendas; ▪ Less parishes – more communities; ▪ Pair pastoral leaders to assist small communities with aged population; ▪ When does a small community no longer become viable? ▪ How do we structure the five pillars in a small and aged community? ▪ Every community needs good communication from the regions/deaneries; ▪ Leadership – contacts persons to keep the small communities together – balance between central support and local autonomy; ▪ Pastoral/sacramental leadership – differentiate between. 	
<p>Action/Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None Recorded 	
<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less parishes, more communities; ▪ Communication with central entity essential for small communities. 	
<p>SUMMARY:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	

HUNTER DEANERY GATHERING CONVERSATIONS (GROUP D)

Conversation/ Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consolidate Regions ▪ Decisions on Foreign Priests
Deanery	HUNTER Gathering held Saturday 2 April 2011 – St. Augustine’s Hall, Bathurst Street, Singleton
Convenor(s)	Evelyn Parkinson
Scribe	Patricia Egan
Other Members	Group D Fr Des Carrigan/Jon Frits, Neville/Albert/Kerry/Evelyn/Patricia/ Ruth/Pat/John
Discussion Notes, Key Understanding, Outstanding Questions, Observations:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustainability of regions into four (2 rural/2 city); ▪ Eliminate a number of churches; ▪ Easier for city to combine than country; ▪ Great loss if foreign priests are not continued; ▪ Pastoral attitude towards people of foreign priests; ▪ Lay people cannot do as priests, e.g. sacraments. Maybe they should have less administration to do; ▪ Reaction towards foreign priests not always positive due to Australian culture – cannot always understand the language; ▪ Enriched by the ministry of foreign priests, mutual learning; ▪ Either get more foreign priests or give lay formation for leadership; ▪ Suggestion – training foreign priests in Australian seminaries; ▪ Team of priests in region, with one being responsible for finance and administration and the others left free for pastoral ministry; ▪ Example of Chisholm – good experience; ▪ Universal Church – experience enriches all; ▪ Longer orientation before placed in parishes; ▪ Don’t want to go back 50 years with overseas priests, but for lay to work with them as they would with Australian priests. 	
Action/Strategies:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consolidation – all aspects – community/finances/buildings & property/clergy/priests ▪ Supplementation by foreign priests; ▪ 1 parish for number of communities – consolidate, supplement; ▪ Step outside of the square – married priests – encourage priesthood. 	
Recommendations:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of surplus property to fund Central Regional Parish. 	

SUMMARY:-

- Regions to be four (4 deaneries/several regions):-
 - 1 Newcastle
 - 1 Maitland
 - 1 Hunter
 - 1 Coastal

HUNTER DEANERY GATHERING CONVERSATIONS (GROUP E)

Conversation/ Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parish Leadership ▪ What is it that our priests want to be doing/be responsible for? ▪ Paid Pastoral Associates with Theological Formation and Greater CSO Collaboration ▪ How do we Build a Living Church with Spirit?
Deanery	HUNTER Gathering held Saturday 2 April 2011 – St. Augustine’s Hall, Bathurst Street, Singleton
Convenor(s)	Not Recorded
Scribe	Cathy White
Other Members	Group E Not Recorded
<p>Discussion Notes, Key Understanding, Outstanding Questions, Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conflict between the anticipated role of trained lay leaders and the ideas of parish priests; ▪ Need for lay leaders to take responsibility and to deal with negativity towards them; ▪ What is the role of ordained ministry – finances/funerals?? ▪ How can priests and laity work better together? ▪ How can we be “co-responsible”; ▪ Collaboration with CSO and parish bodies – each a part of the Church. Can we engage parents through the schools? ▪ Diocesan payment for theological training for parishioners; ▪ Effort into maintaining old buildings, rather than growing a new “Living Church” in small group communities – this new model will cost nothing – is this a new way forward?? ▪ Need for <i>competent</i> leadership and a maintenance of a sense of community; ▪ Importance of a local community – this has to be honoured. The building in unimportant – a need to belong; ▪ First step is gathering as a community – leadership will follow as a result of needs. We need a common vision; ▪ Benefits of proposed Chisholm plan for lay leadership – a team of leaders is needed, not just one; ▪ People who have volunteered need to be cared for and encouraged through liaising with others; ▪ We have to be there and be keen to show the young people our faith – then they may want to be involved; ▪ Proposed leadership model in Vineyards struggled due to lack of support from clergy; ▪ Leadership can be very lonely for lay people if not supported from above; ▪ Leadership of parishes must be shared; ▪ What happens if the wrong leaders are in parish? ▪ Conflict between priests not just being seen as “sacramental machines” of Canon Law. 	

Action/Strategies:

- Lay leaders need to be paid;
- Diocese to employ theologically formed Pastoral Associates;
- Use face to face documentation to evangelise people;
- Choose a number of people to Masters level – they become Pastoral Associates (pay would need to be adequate);
- Focus on formation for all future leaders = “head and heart”;
- Revisit Chisholm Plan for Lay Leadership and develop a structure for this.

Recommendations:

- Parishes/regions/deaneries look to Chisholm Lay Leadership model as a possible way forward – priests and lay leaders share leadership;
- Look at Moderator Model – priest working with lay people as a way forward;
- Support proposal for Parish Leadership as printed on document.

SUMMARY:-

Recommendations from the Hunter Deanery Gathering

2 April 2011

Held at Singleton

After feedback from the five Open Conversations the following recommendations were put forward at this Deanery Gathering.

- A. Fewer parishes, more communities.
- B. As part of parish planning, parishes promote close liaison between parish and primary schools/secondary schools.
- C. We need to change our approach/methods of thinking.
- D. Priority must be given to support of faith communities before institutional models.
- E. We the People are the Church.
- F. Lay participation in all Church Synods, with voting rights.
- G. In regard to priests, leave as it is running currently but with more energy into lay people for Eucharistic service.
- H. Restore all things in Christ
- I. (i) Consideration be given to implementing a moderator model of leadership based on Canon 517.2, incorporating pastoral leaders or parish leadership teams, as a response to this shortage of priests.
(ii) Are overseas priests preventing us from putting into action the difficult decisions.
- J. Clarify the roles and responsibilities that laity have in the mission of the Church. Provide formation for lay leaders of all ages. State/define the mission and purpose and give people the opportunity to make a difference.

Those gathered were then ask to weight each of these recommendations using the scale 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. These weightings were then collated to ascertain the most favoured recommendations from this Gathering.

HUNTER DEANERY GATHERING RECOMMENDATIONS – 2 APRIL 2011

