

Proclaim! Report to Parish Open Meeting

It is two months since we launched our parish Proclaim! programme. Having listened to comments and spoken to key people, this report sets out how we are developing the ideas in the launch.

Remember that this is a whole parish initiative, which builds on existing parish activities. In a very real sense, evangelisation has been the mission of the Church for nearly two thousand years. So this “new” evangelisation is a continuation of what we have been doing anyway. What is new is a re-invigoration of that mission and a re-think of how we pursue it in a different, modern world. Proclaim! has a bearing on all our parish activities, so we are liaising with parish groups and steering the work through the Parish Steering Committee and reporting to parishioners through these open meetings.

We are now structuring and enhancing the activities referred to in the first notice into three tiers of work:

The foundation is **personal growth in faith**, with the Religious Education programme at its core. Using the Wednesday Word (in parish and children’s versions) and continuation of the Big Picture meetings are the first steps. Voluntary work, in both spiritual and temporal parish activities, is an important element in personal engagement with our faith and the parish community; we will continue to build and work through our wide range of parish volunteers.

I am calling the second tier “**Parishioner Participation**”. The focus of the Diocese presentation was re-engaging with “resting” (newspeak for “lapsed”) Catholics, which is still an important starting point. But our initial parish notice already went wider than that in “regular contact with all parishioners on our database”. While people are regularly attending Mass, it is relatively easy to maintain contact, but starting to miss Mass is stepping onto a slippery slope to “resting”. So, we will include regular communication with all parishioners, by regular letters (on paper and/or e-mail) and a visiting programme in our agenda. The latter would have to be very occasional if solely reliant on a priestly visit, but could be enhanced by local (village or township) communities with a local parishioner contact point. That would build on Fr Karol’s proposal for regular prayers for villages in our parish to future praying with people in the villages and having a local contact point. The proposed “designing parish and home events ... with personal invitations to family, friends and colleagues” fits well with this community building theme.

The third tier is **working with other Christians**. For St Ives town this is well developed – the local group has been operating for 50 years and preceded national initiatives for cooperation between Christians! Clearly we will continue to support and develop Churches Together in St Ives (CTSI); encourage parishioner participation in their events and volunteers to join the rota for the monthly Church in the Market Place tent. Outside of St Ives we hope to build similar contacts with local worship groups, which could develop from building parishioner communities in the villages.

On a practical level, parishioner communications and building local communities, is heavily dependent on increasing use of our parishioner database and parish web site. We need to enhance our expertise and practical support in these areas and are trying to recruit more voluntary support.

Your suggestions and support are always very welcome and will help to continue to refine the plans and roll out the programme. We will keep you informed through the weekly newsletters, through our web site – we now have a Proclaim! section - in Grapevine and through these Parish Open Meetings.