

# Building Hope



## Feedback on Easter 2022 Strategic Planning Process

*September 2022*

Archdiocese of Dublin

# *The Building Hope 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...



Schools group on the Dublin Diocesan  
Pilgrimage to Lourdes, September 2022

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## 1. Pastoral Renewal across the Archdiocese

Our Archdiocese of Dublin *Building Hope* pastoral strategy process has begun in earnest. Parishes have gathered and engaged in an initial process of dialogue and discernment, reflecting together on the Framework for Pastoral Renewal which was drawn from your input to the [Building Hope Task Force Report](#). We are united in our goal:

“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.” (*Building Hope Task Force Report*, p. 15)

### Framework for Pastoral Renewal



### Our Shared Mission

The Archdiocese as part of this process has published a [Statement of Mission](#). As individuals and in the faith communities we build together – communities centred on the person of Jesus and with the four dimensions of Faith, Servant Leadership, Welcome and Social Justice as their pillars – we share in this mission:

Encounter with the person of Jesus makes us who we are, and shapes what we do. Being at the service of this encounter is the heart of our mission. The living Christ calls and empowers the Dublin Archdiocese to act with resolve and become more fully a place of welcome and compassion, which embodies the power, hope and joy of the gospel.

## Thank You

In the period since Easter, *Building Hope* gatherings took place in parishes across the Archdiocese of Dublin. Parishes were each invited to look at their own situation – the strengths and areas for development. Parishes faced many competing pressures over the Spring/Summer period. I, along with the *Building Hope* Pastoral Strategy Implementation Group, am deeply appreciative of the thoughtful, considered work, led and undertaken in a synodal manner, by *Building Hope* leadership teams and parishioners who took part in the process. Responses have been received from 76% of parishes. Others are still reflecting on their local situation.

## Your Responses

The *Building Hope* responses have given a preliminary sense of what is working well, and what is in need of development and renewal across parishes. The responses suggest a measure of both commitment and realism. Acknowledging that local specifics pertain in particular areas, the following commentary provides:

- A broad overview of key consistent findings across the Archdiocese. The quotes are representative of widely held views.
- Direction and supports towards pastoral renewal.
- An invitation to greater involvement in our shared mission.
- A promise of ongoing engagement, dialogue and support.



"I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing... with others and for others." [Evangeliu Gaudium, 273]

## 2. Here's what you said about...

### FAITH in your parish:

- The **Eucharist** (95% of responses) and **Liturgies** (86% of responses) were widely identified as 'working well' in our parishes across the Archdiocese. There was a great sense of the importance, centrality and love of the Eucharist in the lives of parishioners. Many responses highlighted the 'solace' and comfort of the Eucharist in the lives of the people of God.

"We have the vigil and Sunday Mass that are welcoming, participatory, prayerful, celebratory and joyful. Liturgies are joyful sacred moments."

- **Prayer** was also identified and spoken of positively in parish life. There were expressions of gratitude for churches remaining open for private prayer in Covid times, when communal prayer in-person was not possible. Other types of prayer were also identified with the hope that these could be developed further in parishes.
- Additionally, many parishes noted the drop in numbers attending church services, the decline in numbers of volunteers post-Covid and the need to identify and train parishioners for lay-led liturgies.

"Prayer and liturgies are well presented and central to the life of the parish."



"Most of the above work well when there is good preparation and collaboration with the involvement of people. Successful events are when we are able to plan as a group (priests and people together)."

## FAITH...

### areas in need of development:

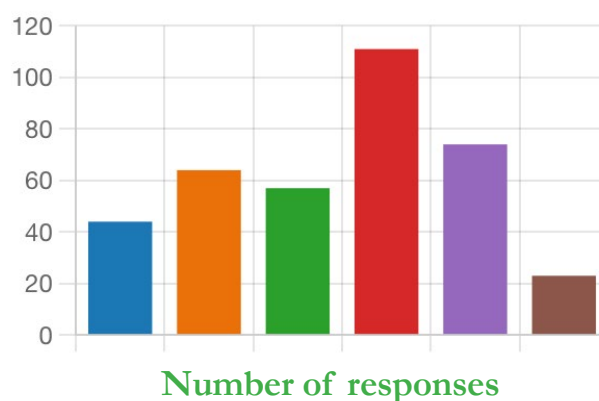
- Across the diocese 90% of responses identified the need for development of **Faith Formation** of various kinds; faith formation for adults about the Eucharist alongside sacramental preparation for children; education on participation at Mass and its meaning; teaching the beauty of our faith; greater catechesis; Bible studies, retreats, missions, scripture courses, *lectio divina*, pilgrimages etc.

"There is vital need for good cross generational faith formation programmes in a secular world... We need the means to grow in faith as we mature."

- 71% of responses identified **Sacramental Preparation** of young people as 'working well'. 59% felt it was 'in need of development'. Many identified that preparation worked well because of the involvement of the schools and, while acknowledging their significant contribution, wished for greater parish/lay/family engagement amidst concern that the 'passing on of the faith' was not continuing after the sacrament. Other parishes wished for greater development of wider Family Ministry beyond Sacramental Preparation.

### Areas you identified as needing development in your parish

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| ● Eucharist               | 44  |
| ● Prayer                  | 64  |
| ● Liturgies               | 57  |
| ● Faith Formation         | 111 |
| ● Sacramental Preparation | 74  |
| ● Other                   | 23  |



"Schools still need to be the place of religious education, but not the leaders of the Sacraments. Sacraments should be between parish and families, and supported by the education provided in the schools."

Here's what you said about...

## SERVANT LEADERSHIP in your parish:

- In general, **Affirmation of Priestly Ministry, Co-Responsibility of Clergy & Lay Faithful and Active Lay Ministries** are all considered to be working well according to the responses from across the Archdiocese.

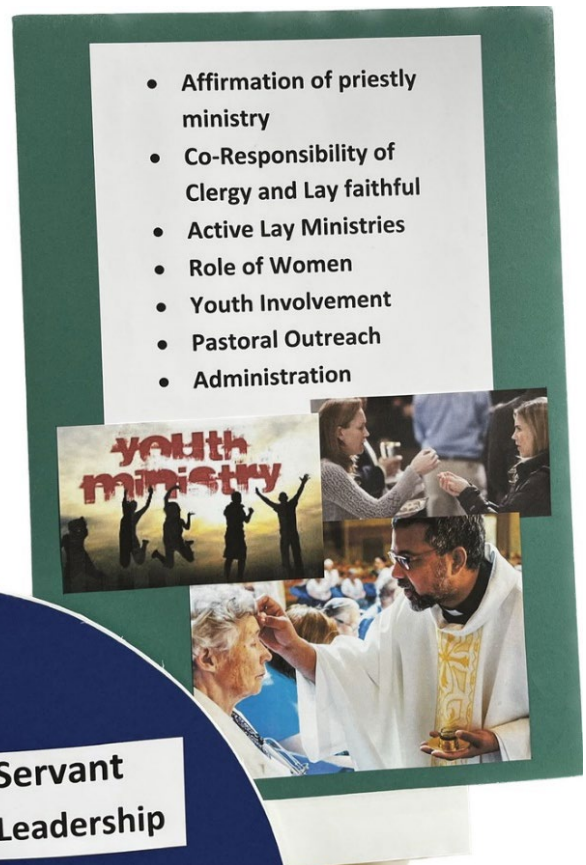
"We are so blessed with our hard-working priests. We have great involvement of lay people, mostly women, in our many groups."

Many parishes noted particularly the respect in which they held their priests – commending their commitment, energy and example of servant leadership.

"Our priests are hugely appreciated and approachable. Their Leadership, solidarity and generosity has been strong and encouraging..."

- The need for more volunteers and training in ministry was widely noted as was the large number of women who are to the forefront in supporting parish life across the Archdiocese.

"Active lay ministry is going well but needs more people."



*Building Hope –  
Kilnamanagh-  
Castleview Parish*

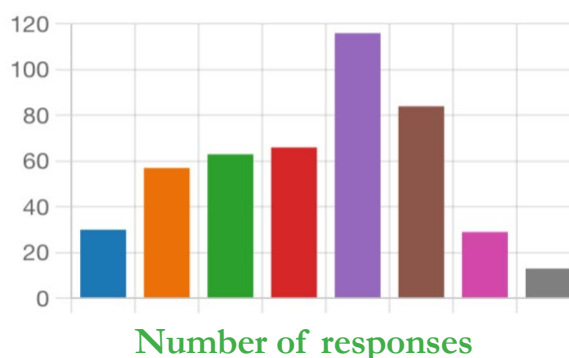
## SERVANT LEADERSHIP...

### areas in need of development:

- **94%** of responses identified the need for development in the area of **Youth Involvement**. The 'struggle to attract/involve young people' was a matter of sadness and grave concern in very many responses. Ideas such as social media, music/folk/Taizé group, Laudato Si group, Dublin diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes, liturgy tailored for young people; keeping in touch with families after Confirmation, Transition Year programme, World Youth Day and social justice initiatives were suggested. Many noted that it would require serious work, a 'whole new approach', 'assistance/training in this area and/or the appointment of youth leaders'.

### Areas you identified as needing development in your parish

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Affirmation of priestly ministry    | 30  |
| Co-Responsibility of Clergy and ... | 57  |
| Active Lay Ministries               | 63  |
| Role of Women                       | 66  |
| Youth Involvement                   | 116 |
| Pastoral Outreach                   | 84  |
| Administration                      | 29  |
| Other                               | 13  |



- **Pastoral Outreach** was another area identified, by 68% of responses, as in need of development. Responses identified a need for more 'listening to others and walking with them', greater outreach and accompaniment of those marginalised or those who feel excluded by the teachings of the church or by abuse and its cover-up.

"How to get Christ's message out to online world? That is where many young people live."

- **72%** of responses noted the significant **Role of Women** in parish. Responses said women were 'vital' to parish life / 'the parish wouldn't run without them' / 'the backbone of many parish initiatives and activities'. While 72% of responses acknowledged their broad-ranging contribution, 54% highlighted the 'role of women' as an area in need of development identifying the need for greater leadership roles for women in the church at 'decision-making levels'.

"Very hopeful that Pope Francis will advance the role of women in the Church, he is already doing this with his appointments in the Curia."

"A great error of injustice and judgement has occurred in the Church, in failing to acknowledge the proper role of women as wise leaders and this error must be rectified without delay."

Here's what you said about...

## WELCOME in your parish:

- **Community (86%)** and **Hospitality (82%)** were considered to be working well across the Archdiocese. Many parishes spoke of wonderful support for those sick or bereaved within the communities. Others noted particularly the need to care for volunteers and to ensure that they too feel valued.
- **78%** of the responses named **Inclusiveness** as an area felt to be working well. Many parishes spoke of the welcome they extend to those from other cultures/countries. However, 57% considered that it was also an area in need of development.

"The message of the Gospel is very important to build up Community."



"There has always been a strong sense of community, friendship and welcome in our Parish..."

"Yes, we are a welcoming community but we do not actively encourage others..."

"We don't exclude, but do we include enough?"



*Building Hope imagery in Mount Merrion Parish*

## WELCOME

### ...areas in need of development:

- **81%** identified a need for development in the area of **Evangelisation**, some in the context of an ever-changing community with new people relocating in/out of parish or new residential developments planned in the area.

Others felt the need for a structure or framework for a more active evangelisation and were unsure of the approach and resources, while understanding too that the example we set in how we live our lives is critical.

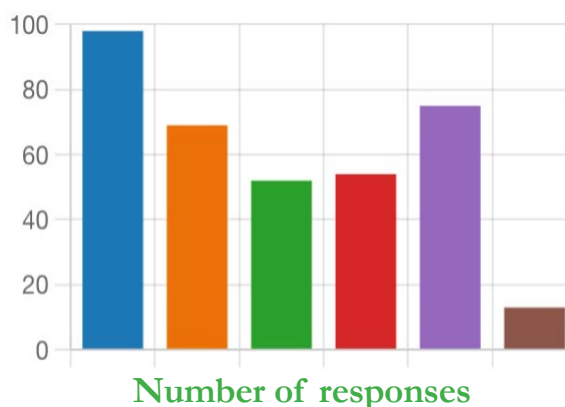
"Our evangelization efforts need to continue especially now as people feel ever more estranged from the church as a result of the pandemic."

- **Communication** was an area where local specifics were very much in evidence with parishes identifying easily what was working well but equally highlighting their needs relating to newsletters, notice boards, the use of communications and media to evangelise and welcome. In particular, the potential of social media for reaching out to young people and new families was widely mentioned.

"We need to look at ways to communicate our message of joy and hope to as many people as possible, especially through social media."

### Areas you identified as needing development in your parish

|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| Evangelisation | 98 |
| Inclusiveness  | 69 |
| Community      | 52 |
| Hospitality    | 54 |
| Communication  | 75 |
| Other          | 13 |



"Welcoming new people to the parish... how do we reach them and attract the varied nationalities and the gifts they bring?"

Here's what you said about...

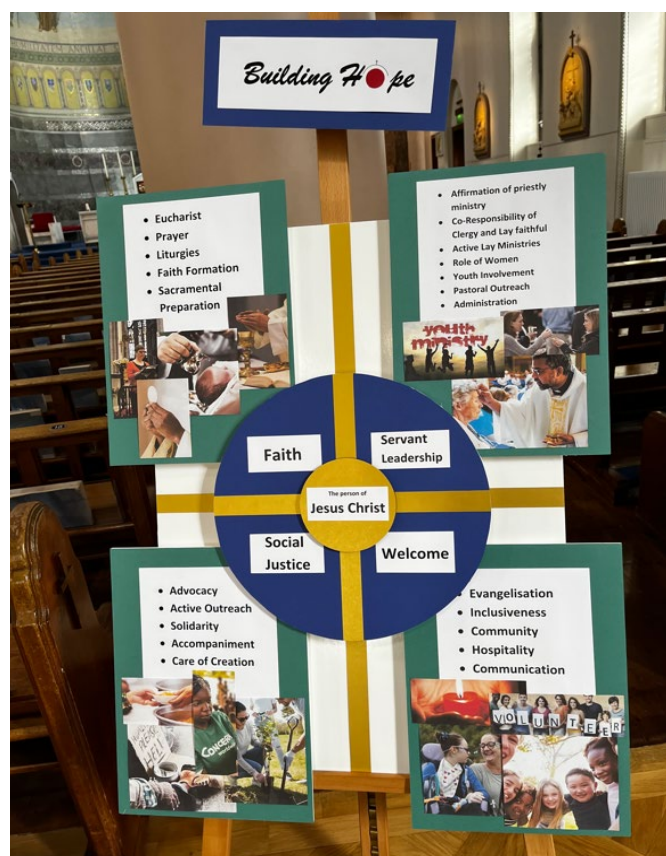
### **SOCIAL JUSTICE** in your parish:

- There were fewer responses to the questions under the dimension of social justice with some parishes noting that they felt the language used was difficult to understand. Others felt that there was a need for 'basic education on social justice issues' or that 'all areas need to be looked at' under social justice in their parish.

"We need a better understanding of the Catholic teaching on social justice and the common good... might help people fall in love with the rich teachings of the Church and inspire them to greater acts of love, justice and mercy."

- Generally, under **Active Outreach**, 78% of parishes could identify strengths particularly in their support of agencies like St Vincent de Paul, Trocaire, Crosscare, Meals on Wheels, Order of Malta, Men's Sheds, Al Anon. Also listed were groups such as Laudato Si, Bethany Bereavement, visitor initiatives and outreach to Ukrainian refugees and their children.

*Building Hope* display  
in Foxrock Parish



## SOCIAL JUSTICE...

### areas in need of development:

- A somewhat similar percentage of responses (70%) also highlighted the need to do more under **Active Outreach**.

"More needs to be done to reach out to and respond to those in our community with no voice – the Church needs to be a radical witness and parishioners encouraged that this is baptismal call for everyone."

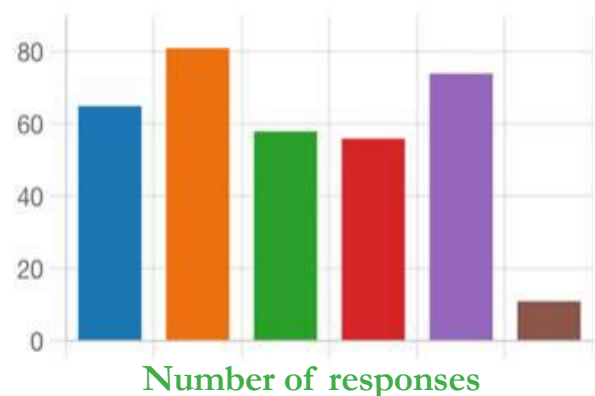
Some identified educational needs, others the need for outreach to new households in the parish and others again echoing again their concern that we as a faith community need to do more to reach out to our young people and that perhaps there may be opportunities to do this under the banner of social justice.

"Active outreach for young people: there is a genuine concern (and sadness) that our younger people are less engaged with the Church. This makes the older practising generation feel sad. There is an urgent necessity to think about initiatives to capture the mind, imagination and hearts of our beautiful young people."

- Equally under **Care of Creation** many initiatives could be identified by parishes as working well but most felt the need to do more to care for our common home.

### Areas you identified as needing development in your parish

|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Advocacy         | 65 |
| Active outreach  | 81 |
| Solidarity       | 58 |
| Accompaniment    | 56 |
| Care of Creation | 74 |
| Other            | 11 |



"Care of creation with transition year students is an area we hope to begin with."

### 3. Moving Forward Together

We began the first phase of the implementation of the *Building Hope* initiative across the Archdiocese at Easter – priests and people together – in prayerful reflection at parish level.

We have now shared feedback from that engagement. Drawing from the responses and as the *Building Hope* Task Force Report also concluded, we together as a diocese “have a strong sense of a faith that is alive and hopeful, in a Church that also needs real change”.

The creativity and commitment evident in the parish reflections is palpable, as well as the positive and open assessment of the strengths which can be shared in local parish partnership.

In taking the next steps together, we continue to be guided by the Principles which inform our Pastoral Strategy.

#### The Principles which inform our Pastoral Strategy

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.

## Continuing the Conversation Locally

While creating opportunities for parishes to collaborate and share in parish partnership, the Archdiocese is also focusing on strengthening the ability of parishes, rooted in their own communities, to be effective agents of accompaniment and pastoral care into the future. We aim to build together a sustainable capacity for leading and serving existing communities of faith while also reaching out with the Gospel message to those on the margins of parish and beyond.

### ● Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs)

The *Building Hope* responses are a starting point for further reflection. They are also a foundation for actions which could be taken by parishes, guided by your Parish Pastoral Councils with the *Building Hope* Leadership Teams and moving towards Parish Partnership.

PPCs are invited to meet to consider:

- ◇ **Building Hope Response** – Issues and ideas were identified by parishioners in their parish *Building Hope* Response Form which could be actioned locally under the pastoral guidance of the PPC.
- ◇ **Building Hope Feedback** – i.e. the feedback contained in this document.
- ◇ **Framework for Pastoral Renewal** – The framework (p. 4) will continue to be to the fore as our *Building Hope* dialogue continues. PPCs are invited to consider how best to raise awareness locally of the framework and the four dimensions of faith, servant leadership, welcome and social justice, centred on the person of Jesus.
- ◇ **Parish in Partnership** – In order to develop parish partnerships and new ways of working and ministering, PPCs will need to collaborate more closely and make decisions jointly which affect the partnership parishes once these partnerships are in place. They will need to reflect together. A simple way to do this would be to seek a balance between local PPC meetings and joint partnership gatherings of the parish PPCs as a partnership pastoral council. This would mean that over time PPCs would meet less often as a single parish, and rather come together to discern

their mission jointly. Further guidance on this new way of working will be offered in the coming months. Initially, it would be important for the Chairs of the PPCs and the Parish Teams to meet together to determine which matters would best be considered at local level and which would be discerned together at the partnership pastoral council.

### ● Parish Partnerships

The widespread identification in the *Building Hope* Responses of potential (as well as already established) parish partnerships, confirms the commitment and realism within parishes that structures and ways of working must change. I, and the *Building Hope* Pastoral Strategy Implementation Group, acknowledge the detailed consideration given to this way of collaborating and sharing resources into the future.

Dialogue and discernment regarding parish partnership is ongoing, responding to the variety of suggestion made in the *Building Hope* Responses. All parishes within the Archdiocese will be in partnership and the named parish partnerships will be shared in the next *Building Hope* communication planned for Advent. For the moment we are offering an overall sense of direction, action and support:

- towards deeper engagement within parishes,
- towards identifying new leaders to progress pastoral development,
- towards closer collaboration, teamwork and sharing between parishes as parish partnerships are confirmed.

### ● Mass Schedules

We each know the richness of belonging and gathering as a faith community in celebration and prayer, in times of joy and in times of sorrow. It is therefore important for us together, at parish level firstly and eventually at the new partnership pastoral council, to schedule a suitable range of Mass times across the parish partnership. In doing so we must endeavour to:

- nurture the sense of community of worship, identity and mission which

exists in our parishes through gathering, perhaps at fewer Masses, but with greater participation in larger numbers.

- care for our priests and their well-being in the knowledge of the diminishing number of priests in active ministry across the Archdiocese.
- ensure that each priest is scheduled to celebrate no more than one Saturday Mass and two Sunday Masses on a weekend as their regular practice.
- ensure that Masses are scheduled so that a priest does not have to rush the celebration, has time to meet people afterwards and to comfortably travel between churches. 1½ hours between Mass times is considered appropriate.
- provide some local Sunday evening Masses.
- regularly review Mass scheduling within each parish partnership, including appropriate consultation with parishioners.



*Building Hope display in St Michan's, Halston Street*

## Diocesan Supports

### ● Faith Formation, Training, Policies & Guidelines

Faith Formation is a priority for the Office for Mission and Ministry which offers continuous training. New approaches are being developed now in response to *Building Hope* feedback. Examples of some existing approaches and resources are:

- Adult and Family Resources – [Pathways](#), [Family Friendly Ways of Praying](#), [Families Walking Together in Hope](#).
- Parish Pastoral Council Workshops, e.g. [Towards a Parish Assembly](#).
- Funeral Ministry – Parishes are alerted to the invitation and recent initiatives regarding training for funeral ministry team members and leaders, the [Funeral Ministry Policy](#) and [funeral resources](#).
- Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion for the first time) – The new policy document [Accompanying Families](#) addresses issues raised in the *Building Hope* Responses, builds on the work of the Sacraments Implementation Group and invites further opportunities for leadership and service in parish partnership.
- Digital Parishes – Policies and programmes offering training and best practice guidance in the many innovative ways and platforms through which we can engage with contemporary culture are also offered. They address some of the social media needs identified in the *Building Hope* Responses. Recent supports included; a Social Media and Digital Communications Policy, Safeguarding Digital Policy, How to set up a Parish Facebook Page and [Creating with Canva](#) (an online design tool which can be used to create content for your website, social media, posters and newsletters).
- Youth Participation – In addition to the sacramental, family, digital communications and other supports referenced above, the diocese is reviewing its overall resources and approach towards pastoral outreach and accompaniment of young people. The *Building Hope* responses reflecting your local concerns and suggestions will form part of the review.

## ● Renewed Diocesan Deanery Framework

The [Deanery Framework 2022](#) provides a renewed vision of the Deanery within the Archdiocese. It affirms that each deanery exists in service and support of the communion, mission and ministry of its constituent parishes and of the particular grouping or parish partnership to which each parish belongs. Each deanery fosters pastoral care through common pastoral activity among parishes, sharing resources to support such activity.

## ● Pastoral Stewardship and Administration

Your parish *Building Hope* Responses frequently identified that the “administration responsibility on the priest is too high”, with concerns expressed that this “does not serve the pastoral life of the parish”. As we work together toward radical renewal, streamlining the administrative burden at parish level will be critical. The diocesan offices of the Archdiocese will be expanding its supports to parishes and parish partnerships, for example, in the areas of procurement, payroll and book-keeping, helping to free local resources for greater pastoral focus.

## ● Asset Management – Property

A newly appointed asset manager, in conjunction with the new diocesan Property Committee, will work with parishes and parish partnerships on issues related to property matters;

- to determine the most appropriate property requirements within each parish partnership.
- to assist in setting the future strategic direction of property throughout the Archdiocese.



The Monastery of St Alphonsus in Drumcondra, where prayerful reflections, including music from the Dublin Diocesan Music Group, took place leading into the *Building Hope* Week of Prayer to the Holy Spirit for the renewal of the Church in the Archdiocese of Dublin. This week of prayer was held from Ascension Sunday through Pentecost and concluding on the Feast of Mary, Mother of the Church, June 6, 2022.

## 4. Renewed Invitation

### An Invitation to Leadership and Co-responsibility

The Framework for Pastoral Renewal which we have adopted for our diocese is an exciting vision of how the Church in Dublin can respond to the call we have each received in Baptism to continue the mission of Jesus. In particular, it envisages a close and creative engagement between the Archdiocese and parish communities. The responses received from parishes through this process of *Building Hope* give a clear indication of the direction which we will travel together.



*Building Hope Parish Gathering, May 2022*

In this next phase of development we are called to reflect carefully on the particular contribution which we are called to make, both as individuals and as parish communities. Each parish is now invited to consider how to develop and encourage co-responsible leadership locally - priests and people working together. In doing so, I draw your attention once more to my words in Glendalough on the occasion of the Feast of St Kevin:

"I am therefore inviting women and men who feel that they are called to ministry to come forward to train for ministry as instituted lectors or acolytes or catechists. These are lay ministers, women and men, who are publicly recognised by the Church and appointed by the diocese to minister alongside priests and deacons in leading liturgies, supporting adult faith formation, and accompanying families preparing for the sacraments. I will appoint pastoral leaders – deacons, religious and lay people – where necessary when parishes cannot have a resident priest, to support the priest who will have pastoral responsibility for that parish. Their voluntary service will be supported by the pastoral workers in the Diocese. It is my pastoral responsibility, as Bishop, to do this – for the sake of the gospel, and for the sake of the People of God. Christ brought his disciples along a new way. He calls us to find a new way in our time." (Homily of Archbishop Farrell – Feast of St Kevin – June 3, 2022)

As we move towards Advent 2022 when we will continue our conversation I, along with the *Building Hope* Pastoral Strategy Implementation Group, would like to thank you once again for your considered and committed engagement with the *Building Hope* process in the Archdiocese.

With every blessing,



**+Dermot Farrell**  
**Archbishop of Dublin**

# ***The Building Hope Prayer***

...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.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

St Laurence O'Toole, pray for us.

St Kevin, pray for us.

St Brigid, pray for us.



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*Building Hope*