

Pastoral Plan for the Parishes of Waterford and Lismore 2006-10

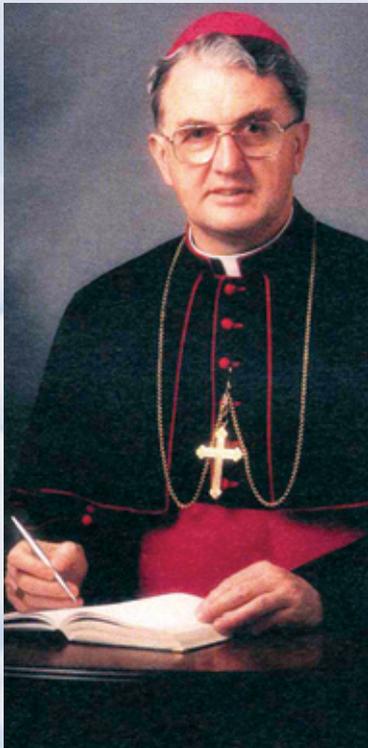
Building in Faith



Contents

	Foreword	3
1.	Introduction	5
	Background	5
	Vision	6
	Structure	8
	Guiding Principles of the Plan	8
	Implementing the Plan	9
2.	Section 1 – Living as a Christian Community	11
	The Parish Community	11
	Leadership	12
	The Wider Christian Community	12
	Communication	13
	Goals of Living as a Christian Community	15
3.	Section 2 – Growing in Faith	16
	Adult Faith	16
	The Family	17
	The School and the Parish	17
	Young People	18
	Goals for Growing in Faith	20
4.	Section 3 – Celebrating Who We Are	21
	Sunday Eucharist	21
	Special Liturgies	22
	Prayer	22
	Reconciliation	22
	Looking Ahead	23
	Goals for Celebrating Who We Are	25
5.	Section 4 – Caring for One Another	26
	The Parish, a Place of Care	26
	Collaboration in Care	27
	Looking Beyond	28
	Goals for Caring for One Another	
6.	Conclusion	31
7.	Appendix 1	31
	Overview of the Diocese	31

Foreword



Bishop William Lee

I WARMLY WELCOME this *Pastoral Plan* for the diocese of Waterford and Lismore. It is the fruit of many years work by very many people – more than that, it is the fruit of the faith and commitment of all those who contributed to it.

The *Plan* follows on the Listening Process of some years ago when meetings were held throughout the diocese and people tried to discern the pressing concerns of the diocese and parishes at the present time. I believe that the Holy Spirit was very much with us during this process of discernment and that the *Plan* articulates the direction the Spirit wishes us to take in the years ahead. I want to particularly thank the Committee who worked so hard to draw up the *Plan*. I commend *Building in Faith* to all parishes and people of the diocese as a programme of action for the next five years.

The *Plan* is a great challenge to us all to be fully involved in the life and work of our parishes. It is based on a vision of Church which is inclusive and collaborative. It is based on the baptismal dignity that every Christian enjoys as a child of God and a brother and sister of Jesus Christ. We are all one in Christ.

As we endeavour to implement the *Plan* the first thing we need to do is to prioritise. If we don't do that, the only reaction to this *Pastoral Plan* would be a sense of being swamped. We cannot do everything at once. Every journey, it is said, begins with one step. Finding the first step is the immediate task. Of course, about some of the items in the *Plan* there is a sense of urgency and a need to act quickly. Each parish will, I am sure, be able to make some start on the needs that it has identified for itself. Each grouping of parishes will identify areas of pastoral need in which they can support each other.

The *Pastoral Plan* belongs to all of us and the task for each one of us in the months and years that lie ahead is to do our best to make it happen. I want to stress that the *Plan* is not set in stone. It is a working document and it belongs to you because the insights it contains flow from your deep faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This *Plan* is for all of us and, because it belongs to all of us, it is important that we read it, study it, discuss it, endeavour to implement it and most importantly hold it in our prayers.

I congratulate all who were involved in working on the diocesan *Pastoral Plan* and all who contributed to it in any way. I thank you for your generosity and commitment. It is a sign of hope for the future of our diocese. I pray that it will bear much fruit.



Ardmore cathedral – detail



Introduction

1. The Background

THIS *Pastoral Plan* is the fruit of an extended process of dialogue, listening and reflection. An assembly of the priests of the diocese, held in October 2002, identified the need to plan for the future as a priority and was followed by an intensive consultation with the people of the diocese.

In this consultation a wide range of views and experiences, hopes and needs were voiced and shared. Much concern was expressed about the quality of liturgies, about diminishing congregations, about the absence of younger people, about the declining number of priests. People spoke about the enormity of the challenge faced by the Church in today's culture.

At the same time, there was a strong sense of hope and enthusiasm, and a confidence that the Spirit would guide our way. People yearned for a new vibrancy in the experience of Christian community. They were inspired by the vision of a Church where men and women, clergy and laity, worked together as partners in the mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The findings from the consultation were published in the *Report on the Listening Process* in November, 2004. Bishop Lee then appointed a team who would build on this report by drawing up a *Pastoral Plan* for the diocese. In this plan we have tried to define, as best we can discern it, the ideal towards which the Spirit is calling us in the years ahead.

The 'heart' of the whole plan is its vision. This vision is centred on Christ and on how we can respond to his call today. It is presented below, and is followed by an explanation of the structure of the plan, of its guiding principles and of how we envisage its implementation.

“ People yearned for a new vibrancy in the experience of Christian community. They were inspired by the vision of a Church where men and women, clergy and laity, worked together as partners in the mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. ”

Kilgobinet Church



2. The Vision

THE VISION AT the heart of this plan is inspired first and foremost by Jesus' own vision. It is inspired also by the vision of the earliest Christian communities. But in the end it is a local vision, a vision for our own diocese, 'earthing' the vision of Jesus for our own time and place.

Jesus' Vision

All of Jesus' ministry revolved around his proclaiming the Good News of God's Kingdom. This 'Kingdom' is not a place or a territory; it is more 'the way things are' when God reigns supreme. It is what God wants for God's people. In his life on earth Jesus expresses what God wants for us with all the passion of God's own heart.

When people met Jesus they experienced God's own love for them. They felt liberated from whatever oppressed them. They rediscovered their humanity and their dignity. In particular, those who were poor or down-trodden, hopeless or outcast, felt that God had entered into their pain and distress.

In their new-found joy, people felt called to become disciples and to follow his Way. They were inspired by his vision of true human community, built on values of equality, justice, compassion and service. The experience of his death and resurrection confirmed their hope that he was indeed the incarnation of God's own self in the world.

The Vision of the Early Church

The following passage from the Acts of the Apostles gives us our earliest picture of a Christian community. It is clearly a community where the dream of Jesus lives on, where his Spirit is alive and active;

'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... The whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common... There was not a needy person among them.' (Acts of the Apostles 2:42; 4.32,34)

We too are called to be faithful to Jesus' vision, and to be co-workers with his Spirit in making the dream a reality.

☞ When people met Jesus they experienced God's own love for them. They felt liberated from whatever oppressed them. They rediscovered their humanity and their dignity. In particular, those who were poor or down-trodden, hopeless or outcast, felt that God had entered into their pain and distress. ☞

A Local Vision

All this provides the inspiration for our own vision for Waterford and Lismore. We have broken down the description from the Acts of the Apostles into four headings that give our plan its structure. They are;

Living as a Christian Community ('the fellowship')

Growing in Faith ('the apostles' teaching')

Celebrating Who We Are ('the breaking of bread and the prayers')

Caring for One Another ('there was not a needy person')

We see these as the four key dimensions of the life of the local Church, grounded in the New Testament itself and in the vision of Jesus. We see them also as faithfully reflecting the main thrusts of what was said in the Listening Process.

Living as a Christian Community'

Our parishes will be places where people feel a real sense of welcome, belonging and fellowship, and where all feel encouraged to participate and contribute their gifts.

'Growing in Faith'

People will be helped at all stages of life's journey to deepen their faith and to connect it with their daily lives. Parents will be helped to make the home a 'school of faith'. All will feel supported in witnessing to Christ in the world.

'Celebrating Who We Are'

The Eucharist (the 'breaking of bread'), together with other special liturgies and prayer, will be uplifting celebrations of our Christian identity and opportunities for deepening our sense of God alive amongst us.

'Caring for One Another'

We will live like Jesus by 'washing each other's feet' in a spirit of care and compassion, with a special regard for those in great need. Our care will reach beyond ourselves in a concern for all God's people and all God's creation.

“ Our parishes will be places where people feel a real sense of welcome, belonging and fellowship, and where all feel encouraged to participate and contribute their gifts. ”

The Lismore Crozier



3. Structure of the Plan

THE *Pastoral Plan* is called ‘Building in Faith’. The image of ‘building’ is inspired by the words of Saint Paul; ‘You are God’s building... Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?’ (1 Corinthians 3: 9,16). In this building, Jesus Christ himself is the ‘cornerstone’ (Ephesians 2:20).

Developing this imagery, each of the four sections of the plan – which correspond to the four headings above – is described as a ‘pillar’. This is because we see each of the four as vital elements in our ‘being built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God’ (Ephesians 2:22).

For each section or ‘pillar’, a set of goals and priorities is identified. These are proposed as the key areas for us to address in building on our faith for the future. These are further pinned down in a list of specific objectives or targets, which are listed at the end of each chapter.

4. Guiding Principles of the Plan

AS WE implement the Pastoral Plan over the coming years, we see both the plan itself and its implementation as being guided by the following values. We believe that holding to these values will be key to the fruitfulness of all that we do.

Faithfulness

In all our planning we seek to be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to help one another witness to its vision and values.

Welcome

We want to build a spirit of welcome and openness to all and to dialogue with those who feel estranged and those who are searching for meaning in their lives.

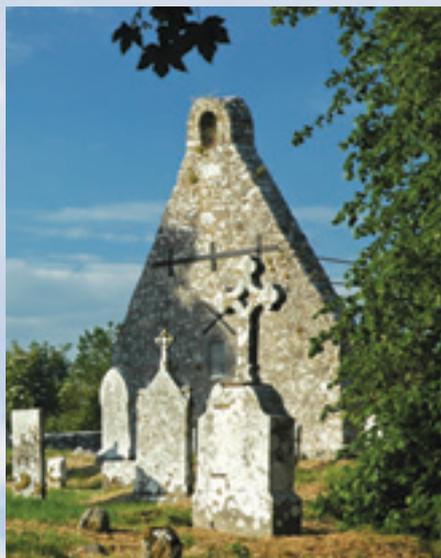
Partnership

We are a Church in which clergy, religious and laity share responsibility for mission and work together in a spirit of cooperation and harmony.

“ Each of the four sections of the plan is described as a ‘pillar’. This is because we see each of the four as vital elements in our ‘being built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God’ (Ephesians 2:22) ”



Abenny High Cross



Ancient church and cemetery at Tubrid

Honesty

We want to be honest, just and open in our dealings with one another and to make ourselves accountable to one another.

Care

Our planning will be characterised by a spirit of care for all, with a special regard for the vulnerable and the disadvantaged.

Prayer

We commit ourselves to prayer, to quiet reflection and to open listening, in order to hear and respond to the call of God's Spirit.

Service

We see ourselves as servants of the Lord, called to build his Kingdom and to serve one another in a spirit of humility and mutual encouragement.

5. Implementing the Plan

WE WANT this *Pastoral Plan* to be translated into action. We want it to begin making a difference in our parishes – in deepening our faith, in strengthening our sense of community, in impelling us to reach out with the Good News of the Gospel. For this to happen, it is vital that parish and diocese be seen as partners in a shared effort.

On the one hand, implementing the Pastoral Plan is a local affair. Each parish is different – in its circumstances, its traditions, its resources. In each parish, priests and parishioners will work in partnership to implement the plan in the way that is appropriate to their particular situation.

On the other hand, implementation is a diocesan challenge. Our needs are broadly similar and we need each other if we are to progress. The diocese has an indispensable role in supporting and resourcing local efforts, and in networking between parishes for our mutual benefit.

Ní neart go cur le chéile!

To this end, the following structures are being put in place. Bishop Lee is appointing an Implementation Committee, to work with the Director of Pastoral Development. They in turn will liaise with the following diocesan personnel :

“ We want this *Pastoral Plan* to be translated into action. In each parish, priests and parishioners will work in partnership to implement the plan in the way that is appropriate to their particular situation ”

The Director of Communications
The Director of Ecumenism,
The Director of Family Ministry and
The Director of Vocations,
and the following diocesan committees;
Child Protection,
Liturgy,
Pastoral Councils,
Youth Ministry,
Spirituality.

The diocesan personnel and committees will have responsibility for implementing the relevant section of the *Pastoral Plan* at diocesan level and ensuring that parishes will have the support needed at local level.

New committees will be established to take responsibility for:

Adult religious education and faith development,
The care and support of priests,
The work of social justice.
A Communications Committee will be established to support the work of the Director of Communications.

These committees will also be linked with the Implementation Committee.

The Implementation Committee will review the progress of the Pastoral Plan and make appropriate adjustments in the light of experience. It will have a three year term of office after which a Diocesan Pastoral Council will be put in place. This body will then take over the functions of the implementation committee. At this time, an evaluation of progress made in the implementation of the Pastoral Plan will be conducted.



Section One

Living as a Christian Community

THE CHURCH is not principally a structure, a territory, or a building, but rather a family of people. It is the family of the followers of Jesus Christ, a community of disciples, the 'Body of Christ' – joining together in worship, sharing his life and continuing his mission in the world.

The Parish Community

This vision of the Church as a community is most evident at the level of the local parish. There, it takes on a shape that we can identify with. The Listening Process stressed the need 'to create a real community spirit in parishes and to build parishes that are true communities'.

We believe that a spirit of welcome and belonging is central to this. Parishes are meant to be places where people feel welcome, included, valued and cared for. They are meant to be places where all feel Jesus' own welcome and where all, whatever their situation, feel themselves included within the embrace of his love.

At this time, there is a big influx of immigrants into our diocese, the majority of whom are from Eastern Europe. We must extend a warm welcome to them in our faith communities and ensure they feel included in the life of the parish. To that end, the appointment of a chaplain to the Polish immigrants in the diocese highlights our commitment to support and care for them.

Besides feeling welcome, all are meant to feel 'called'. The Church has been described as 'a mystery of vocation', a vocation rooted in Baptism and pertaining to all. We need to develop a culture where each person appreciates the unique ways in which they are called and gifted, with gifts that enrich the whole community.

We are blessed by the ways in which people live out their call and contribute their gifts – in priesthood and religious life, in marriage and in single life. Religious make rich and varied contributions to the life and mission of the diocese, through their commitment to prayer, their presence in the local communities and their active ministries. Today lay people are also participating in new forms of ministry in their Christian communities. This encourages us to believe that the Spirit will continue to provide what is needed for the future vitality of the Church.

“ Parishes are meant to be places where people feel welcome, included, valued and cared for. They are meant to be places where all feel Jesus' own welcome and where all, whatever their situation, feel themselves included within the embrace of his love. ”

“ Leadership in today’s Church is also an exercise of partnership between priests, religious and lay people. ”



Ballyneale Church

“ Today we are increasingly aware of our diocesan family, of the diocese as a community of communities, with a responsibility to work together and care for one another. We are called to commit ourselves both to our local parish and to our diocesan family. ”

Leadership

Vibrant Christian community depends on leadership. It depends, firstly, on the priest, who proclaims the Word of God and presides at the Liturgy of the community. A key part of the priest’s leadership today is to encourage and call forth the many gifts in the community, so that all can play their part in building up the Body of Christ.

Leadership in today’s Church is also an exercise of partnership between priests, religious and lay people. Through Baptism, we are all responsible for one another and our shared responsibility is expressed today in new leadership structures – in particular the Parish Pastoral Council, where priests, religious and lay people share the care of the Christian family.

All this presents us with a twofold challenge. On the one hand, parishes need to be supported in putting these new leadership structures in place and in initiating lay people into new forms of ministry and leadership in their own communities. This is not just a matter of structures but also of engendering a new mindset.

On the other hand, priests will need to be supported. Collaborative forms of ministry are new. The challenges of mission are unfamiliar. This, together with the increasing age of priests and their declining numbers, means that priests themselves need renewal and formation, care and support, as well as practical forms of back-up and co-operation.

The Wider Christian Community

While ‘Church’ is a local affair, it is also bigger than the individual parish. Today we are increasingly aware of our diocesan family, of the diocese as a community of communities, with a responsibility to work together and care for one another. We are called to commit ourselves both to our local parish and to our diocesan family.

A major part of this is learning to work together in groupings of neighbouring parishes, to share experiences, to pool resources and to work together in mission. A grouping of parishes strengthens rather than weakens the local parish. Their focus is on drawing strength from co-operation, in a way that enhances the life of the individual community.



12th century relic of the True Cross.
(Treasures of Waterford)

Groupings of parishes have become urgent because of the declining number of priests. They are necessary in order to maintain a quality of service and they are necessary in order that priests feel supported rather than isolated. But they are not just a necessity. They are also opportunities that will bring a new richness to our experience of community and of mission.

We also need to build up diocesan forms of collaboration. Corresponding to the parish pastoral council, we need to work towards a Diocesan Pastoral Council, where clergy, laity and religious share in the care of the whole diocese. We need to develop diocesan resources, such as the Diocesan Pastoral Centre and the various Pastoral Committees, to resource local efforts.

Finally, commitment to the wider Christian community also includes working with other Christian Churches. We are aware today that there is more that unites us than divides us. We are especially united in the challenge of mission, to proclaim the Good News and to build God's Kingdom amidst the sufferings and injustices of our world – a world that is growing ever more materialistic.

Communication

Building vibrant Christian community – both locally and across the diocese as a whole – depends crucially on communication. With good communication, people have the information that enables them to feel they belong and to assume ownership. Good communication makes for the openness and accountability that allows trust to flourish.

This means we must commit ourselves to a new quality of communication both in the parish and in the diocese. We will need to make this one of our main concerns and to develop resources that enable parishes to give communication the priority it deserves.

“ Good communication makes for the openness and accountability that allow trust to flourish. ”

In building vibrant Christian community, the goals of the *Pastoral Plan* are;

- To develop the sense of community and belonging in every parish.
- To cultivate a collaborative style of leadership in every parish.
- To increase co-operation between parishes and within the diocese as a whole.

Specific objectives for each of these goals are listed below. From among those objectives, we propose that the following be addressed as a matter of priority;

PRIORITIES FOR THE PARISH

- Setting up a Pastoral Council in each parish.
- Initiating a Welcome/Outreach ministry in each parish.

PRIORITIES FOR THE DIOCESE

- Establishing leadership structures in Parish Groupings
 - Establishing a Diocesan Pastoral Council.

GOALS OF THE FIRST PILLAR

PILLAR ONE: LIVING AS A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

GOAL	SPECIFIC TARGETS	RESPONSIBILITY OF
To develop the sense of community and belonging in every parish.	1. A ministry of welcome and hospitality will be set up in each parish	Parish Pastoral Council, assisted by the Office for Pastoral Development.
	2. A programme of outreach to those who may feel excluded will be set up in each parish	Parish Pastoral Council
To promote a greater sense of the call and giftedness of all the baptised	3. The vocations strategy for the diocese will continue to be developed.	Director of Vocations
	4. A team for the ongoing care and support of priests will be set on a firm footing, with a view to organising a programme of renewal and training for priests, in collaboration with the Priests' Fraternities.	Senate of Priests
To cultivate a collaborative style of leadership in every parish.	5. A trained Pastoral Council will be established in every parish	Committee for Pastoral Councils
	6. A programme of ongoing training and renewal for those involved in parish ministry and leadership will be developed	Office for Pastoral Development
To increase co-operation between parishes and within the diocese as a whole.	7. A proposal for the setting up and training of a Diocesan Pastoral Council will be presented.	Committee for Pastoral Councils
	8. Leadership structures in Parish Groupings comprising clergy and lay representatives from the Pastoral Councils in the Grouping area will be established	Committee for Pastoral Councils
	9. A Diocesan Communications Committee, with the tasks of developing a communications strategy for the Diocese and of resourcing communications ministry in parishes will be set up.	Director of Communications

Section Two

Growing in faith

CHRISTIANITY IS ABOUT Good News. It proclaims the good news (or 'gospel') of God's coming close to us in love in Jesus. Being Christian is about sharing in that experience, about growing into it, about communicating it to others.

Handing on the faith and growing in faith seem to have happened more easily in the past. Today we wonder, will our children have faith? We see more young people and young adults grow distant from the Church. We can identify with the late Pope John Paul speaking of the 'new evangelisation' – the new challenge of communicating the gospel to people who are *already* baptised!

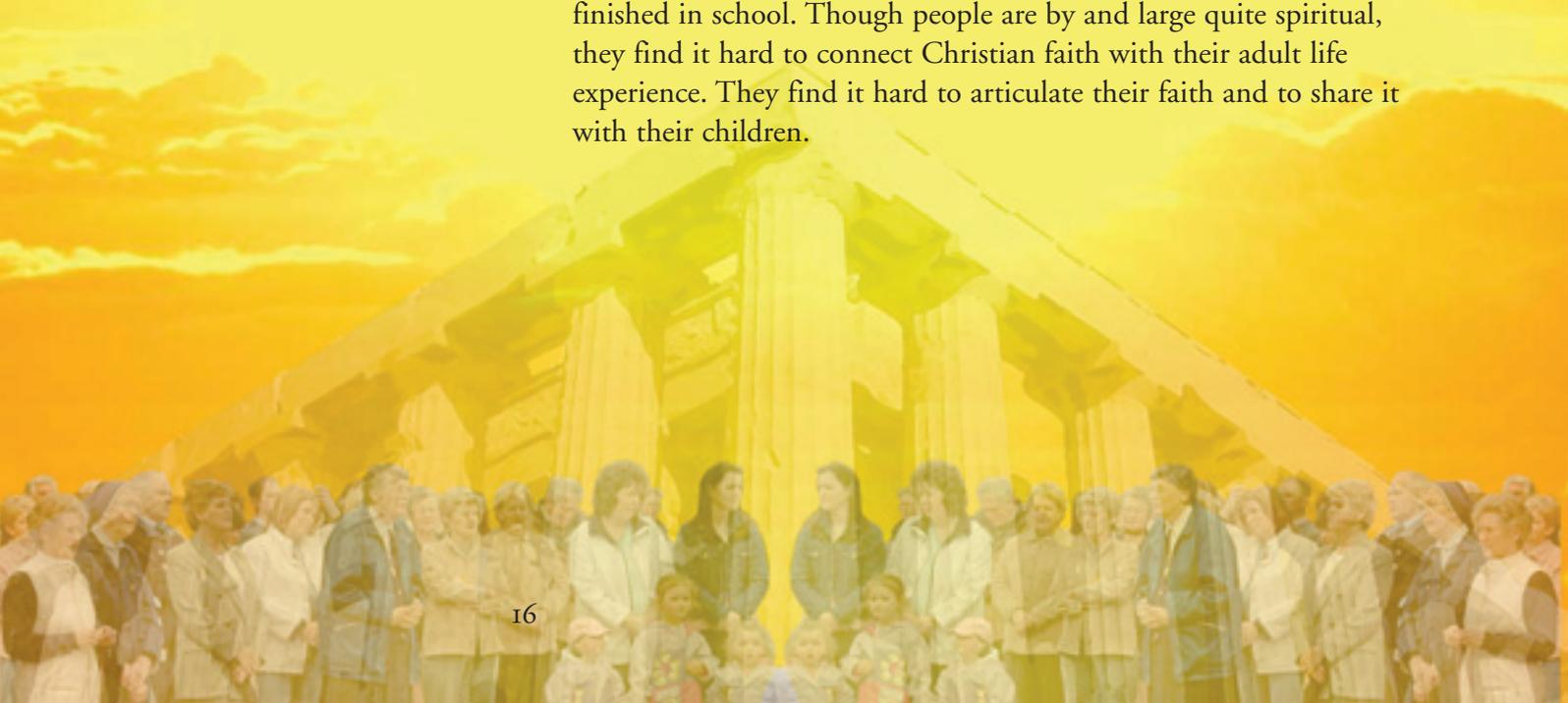
But we are beginning to see the way forward. In the past we invested vast resources in the faith formation of children, particularly through school religious education. Today we see that the focus needs to be broadened. We need to prioritise the formation in faith of adults, as well as young people. We need to focus anew on the family as a place where people grow in faith.

Adult Faith

An adult faith is one that is filled with the joy of the Good News. It is a faith that is integrated with daily living. It is a faith that makes for participation in the community and its liturgy. It is a faith that witnesses to Christian values. It is faith characterised by a deepening prayer life and relationship with Christ.

Such faith is a lifelong journey. Yet, for most adults, faith formation finished in school. Though people are by and large quite spiritual, they find it hard to connect Christian faith with their adult life experience. They find it hard to articulate their faith and to share it with their children.

“ Handing on the faith and growing in faith seem to have happened more easily in the past. We see more young people and young adults grow distant from the Church. ”





Faha Church

Experience suggests that adults grow in faith when they have a welcoming experience of being accepted and respected in the Christian community. They grow in faith when they have the opportunity to link faith to life experience in a meaningful, relevant way. They grow in faith when religion connects with their real needs.

If growing in faith is a lifelong journey, then faith formation is a need for all adults. Each stage of adult life, from young adulthood to middle age to old age, has its own issues to be negotiated. Each stage represents a new challenge in integrating faith with life. Each stage represents a new challenge to accompany and support adults on the journey.

The Family

We believe that the family is the main place in which people – adults as well as children – grow in faith. The family is the basic Christian community, where people have a sense of being lovable, where they pray together and learn the values that matter. Their forgiving one another and their meals together are the basis for appreciating the sacraments.

We see the sacraments of initiation – baptism, communion and confirmation – as key moments in the faith journey of the family. Through them, children are gradually initiated into Christian living. At the same time, parents find a new sense of belonging and a deepening of their own faith.

The School and The Parish

The sacraments are also key moments of renewal and outreach for the whole faith community. On the one hand, they are meant to be communal celebrations and an experience of renewal for all. On the other, they are a challenge to the whole community, school and parish, to affirm and support the family in its unique and irreplaceable vocation.

Formal religious education begins in primary school, continues in secondary school and is a life-long process. In a secular culture, schools need support and assistance in nurturing the faith response. The work of the school must be complemented and supported at parish level in order to ensure an ongoing participation in sacramental celebration and continuous growth in faith.

Thus today we see home, parish and school as working in partnership. We welcome the creative new parish programmes that are being developed to make this partnership a reality, by actively involving family and parish in children's preparation for the sacraments.

“ We see the sacraments of initiation – baptism, communion and confirmation – as key moments in the faith journey of the family. ”

“ Today we see home, parish and school as working in partnership. ”

“ We want our parishes to be places where young people would feel they belong, feel valued for who they are and cared for in their needs. We hope that they would feel invited to contribute from their gifts and their energy, so as to minister to one another and to the whole community. ”



Harry Clarke window, Dubhill church

Young People

The absence of young people from Church life is a great concern in our parishes. At the same time many recognise the spiritual hunger and the social commitment to be found among young people. But there is a fear that our contemporary culture does little to support this hunger and commitment.

We want our parishes to be places where young people feel they belong, feel valued for who they are and cared for in their needs. We hope that they would feel invited to contribute from their gifts and their energy, so as to minister to one another and to the whole community. We see that listening to and dialogue with young people is the way forward.

At the same time, the parish cannot do everything. Ultimately we see youth ministry as a trans-parish affair and a diocesan concern. It is at diocesan level that personnel and resources need to be supplied, in order to devise creative programmes and to resource parishes in their local efforts.

We also need to find new ways for parish and diocese to link in with and support the faith formation programmes of our second-level schools. For many young people, school is their parish and their natural point of contact with the Church.

In responding to the challenge of 'growing in faith', the goals of the *Pastoral Plan* are;

- To develop effective forms of faith formation for adults.
- To develop partnership between home, parish and school as agents of growth in faith.
- To develop a culture in our Church of welcome and participation for young people.

Specific objectives for each of these goals are listed below. From among those objectives, we propose that the following be addressed as a matter of priority;

PRIORITIES FOR THE PARISH

- A Baptism Team in every parish or grouping of parishes;
- Programmes for Communion and Confirmation, which involve parents and parish personnel, to support the formal training in Catholic schools.

PRIORITIES FOR THE DIOCESE

- Establishing a Diocesan Committee for Adult Faith Formation.
 - Appointing a Diocesan Director of Youth Ministry.

GOALS OF THE SECOND PILLAR

PILLAR TWO: GROWING IN FAITH

GOAL

SPECIFIC TARGETS

RESPONSIBILITY OF

To develop effective forms of faith formation for adults.

1. A Diocesan Committee for Adult Faith Formation will be established.
2. Each parish (or grouping of parishes) will have a trained Baptism Team.

Bishop Lee and the Office for Pastoral Development

Parish Pastoral Council, supported by the Office for Pastoral Development

To develop partnership between home, parish and school as agents of growth in faith.

3. Programmes for First Holy Communion and Confirmation that involve parents and parish personnel, will be promoted at parish level to support the formal training being undertaken in Catholic schools.

Diocesan Advisors

To develop a culture in our Church of welcome and participation for young people.

4. A Diocesan Director of Youth Ministry will be appointed.
5. Diocesan / Parish Plans will be developed and implemented to achieve defined objectives in relation to youth.

Bishop Lee

Committee for Youth Ministry

Section Three

Celebrating who we are

LITURGY AND prayer are central in the life of the Christian community. In gathering for the Eucharist we celebrate our deepest belief that in Christ we share God's saving and liberating love. We are transformed into the Body of Christ and sent to be his body in the world.

Our Eucharistic worship spreads out into other forms of prayer and liturgy – the other sacraments and the various forms of communal and individual prayer. A renewal in these forms of worship is key to all our efforts at renewal in Church and parish today.

Sunday Eucharist

The Sunday Eucharist remains significant in the lives of our people. At the same time, as the Listening Process indicated, many people do not experience a connection between the Eucharist and the concerns of their daily lives.

In responding to this need, we can learn from the initiatives that are succeeding in making liturgy more meaningful, relevant and participative. For instance, the family Mass or children's Mass has been a source of new life in parishes, giving young parents and young families a new sense of belonging.

We know that the celebration of the Eucharist can be greatly enhanced by music and community singing; by having a variety of people involved in the liturgy; by proclaiming the Word of God more effectively; by a creative use of silence and of movement; by prayers and homilies that touch people's lives. There is much that we can do.

This will not happen by accident! It requires the formation and training of groups of people who will dedicate themselves to the creative transformation of our experience of liturgy. All the evidence tells us that, when this kind of work is put in, people do respond.

“ The Sunday Eucharist remains significant in the lives of our people. At the same time, as the Listening Process indicated, many people do not experience a connection between the Eucharist and the concerns of their daily lives.”

“ Parishes are beginning to appreciate the potential of creative liturgies on special occasions for touching people at important moments in their lives. People feel recognised in their life-situations and are helped to find God in a way that nourishes and sustains them. ”

“ People are searching for meaning and thirsting for something to satisfy them at a deeper level. An important area to attend to here is that of family prayer. We believe that much can be done to help parents to pray with their children in simple and enjoyable ways. ”

Special Liturgies

Besides the Sunday Eucharist, there are many other occasions and opportunities during the year when liturgy can connect with people in a life-giving way. The obvious times are Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter and, of course, funerals. These are times when people come to church who might not do so otherwise.

There are also other possibilities; for instance, examination time, anniversaries of bereavement, blessing for young children, harvest festival, blessing for expectant parents, celebration of the Autumn years, affirming teachers and community builders...

Parishes are beginning to appreciate the potential of creative liturgies on special occasions for touching people at important moments in their lives. People feel recognised in their life-situations and are helped to find God in a way that nourishes and sustains them. Again, there is great potential for outreach to people who have little other connection with the Church's liturgy.

Prayer

We know that there is great interest today in all kinds of 'spirituality'. It reflects the truth that people are searching for meaning and thirsting for something to satisfy them at a deeper level. The interest of younger people in meditation is one example of this. All this is telling us that we need to find new ways to help people to pray.

Again, possibilities already exist. Different methods of meditation and contemplation; different kinds of prayer groups, (such as The Charismatic Renewal Movement, Eucharistic Adoration, Divine Mercy etc.): lectio divina (a prayerful way of reading Scripture); imaginative new forms of 'retreat' time. Many people are finding their spiritual life refreshed or reawakened by the experience of such prayer.



Saint Mary's Cistercian Abbey, Glencairn



Mount Melleray Abbey

An important area to attend to is that of family prayer. We believe that much can be done to help parents pray with their children in simple and enjoyable ways. The Alive-O primary religion programme has been a great resource here in helping families to pray. But the parish needs to become more involved in this resourcing of family prayer.

Reconciliation

We want to make a serious effort to renew the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Many parishes find that the using Form II (communal celebration of the Sacrament with individual confession and absolution), particularly during the seasons of Advent and Lent, to celebrate Reconciliation can be meaningful for people. The fact remains that many, if not most Catholics no longer have any experience of this sacrament in any of its forms.

Yet reconciliation is a considerable issue in our daily lives and a significant part of all our relationships. We deserve the opportunity to celebrate it sacramentally. As Christians we deserve to bring our daily experience of failure and forgiveness to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to celebrate the compassion and healing of Christ that is at work there, often without our realising it.

Looking Ahead

Looking to the future, we do not know if there will be priests to preside at school liturgies, funerals or weddings. We do not know if there will be a Eucharist in every church every Sunday. A future with fewer priests is facing us with further challenges in the area of liturgy.

In responding to the challenge of 'celebrating who we are', the goals of the *Pastoral Plan* are;

- To revitalise the celebration of Sunday Eucharist as a participative, meaningful and nourishing spiritual experience.
- To put in place effective resources for nourishing the spiritual lives of people outside the Eucharist.

Specific objectives for each of these goals are listed below. From among those objectives, we propose that the following be addressed as a matter of priority;

PRIORITIES FOR THE PARISH

- A trained liturgy team to be set up in each parish

PRIORITIES FOR THE DIOCESE

- To provide on-going support for the Diocesan Liturgy Committee.

GOALS OF THE THIRD PILLAR

PILLAR THREE: CELEBRATING WHO WE ARE

GOAL	SPECIFIC TARGETS	RESPONSIBILITY OF
To revitalise the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist and the liturgies of Advent/ Christmas and Lent/ Easter as participative, meaningful and spiritually nourishing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A trained liturgy team will be established in every parish 2. Workshops on the liturgies of Advent/Christmas and on Lent/Easter will be organised annually in different venues in the Diocese. 3. The Diocesan Liturgy Committee will resource parishes for the celebration of the principal liturgical seasons. 	<p>Diocesan Liturgy Committee</p> <p>Diocesan Liturgy Committee</p> <p>Diocesan Liturgy Committee</p>
To put in place effective resources for nourishing the spiritual lives of people outside the Eucharist.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The Diocesan Liturgy Committee will resource parishes in availing of opportunities for special liturgies during the year 5. The Diocesan Spirituality Committee will study and resource possibilities for enriching individual, family and group prayer. 	<p>Diocesan Liturgy Commission</p> <p>Diocesan Spirituality Committee</p>

Section Three

Celebrating who we are

‘Love of neighbour, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the community, but it is also a responsibility of the entire ecclesial community at every level: from the local community to the particular community and to the Church universal in its entirety.’ (Pope Benedict xvi)

“ We believe that the parish is a community where people strengthen each other, in the power of the Spirit, for living these values and giving this witness. ”

‘If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet’ (John 13:14). Following Jesus is about doing. It is about doing as he did, in order to bring about the Kingdom, its healing and inclusion, its care and compassion. It is about fighting against the inequalities and discrimination that block the Kingdom from coming about today.

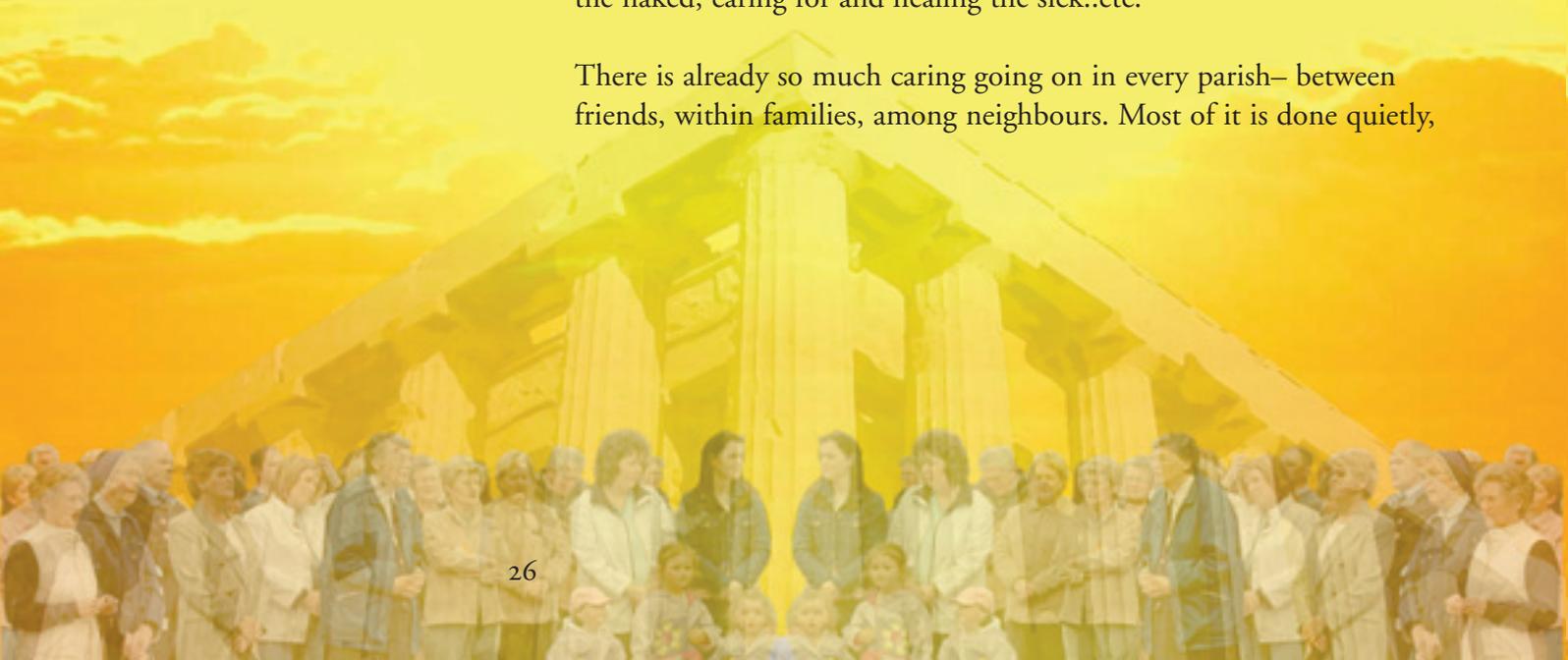
We believe that the parish is a community where people strengthen each other, in the power of the Spirit, for living the values of Jesus and giving witness. In that way it becomes a channel for justice and peace in the world, making God’s creation all that God wants that creation to be.

The Parish, a Place of Care

The Good News of the Gospel is that we are loved by God. The parish is meant to be a place where everybody can feel that love, where everybody feels cared for, where the words of the Acts of the Apostles begin to come true, ‘there was not a needy person among them’.

Pope Benedict, in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) reminds us that ‘Following the example given in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Christian charity is first of all the simple response to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick..etc.’

There is already so much caring going on in every parish– between friends, within families, among neighbours. Most of it is done quietly,



unheralded, untrumpeted. It deserves to be affirmed and celebrated. Many people are washing each other's feet and living the gospel without even realising it.

The caring that goes on includes 'like-to-like' caring, where people have shared the same kind of experience or been through the same kind of suffering. It includes the witness and the gift that those who are suffering bring to others. It includes 'caring for the carers'.

Alongside this, in our communities we must always be looking out for needs that are not yet noticed, not yet responded to – poverty, loneliness, loss, illness, exclusion, isolation. We need to be challenged to reach out further, to expand our sensitivity. We need to be constantly renewed in our vocation to care.

In recent times we have come, painfully, to realise the priority of caring for and protecting our children in parish settings. We are committed to putting practices and procedures in place to ensure that children are always adequately protected whenever they are involved in any way within the parish.

Collaboration in Care

Caring is not the preserve of the Church. There are many people who promote community development, who challenge marginalisation, who care for the earth. We can recognise a common concern with them for the human person, for a just society and for a sustainable world – for the values of the Kingdom in fact.

So we believe that the parish should be looking outwards. It should be entering into dialogue with others who are also trying to build a better world. It should be building trust. It should be seeking ways of working in partnership.

“ in our communities we must always be looking out for needs that are not yet noticed, not yet responded to – poverty, loneliness, loss, illness, exclusion, isolation. We need to be challenged to reach out further, to expand our sensitivity ”



The Waterford & Lismore Diocesan Pilgrimage to World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany, 2005

In collaborating with such individuals and groups, the parish may well find itself challenged by their witness. It may come to realise that God's work is being done outside the Church also! Thus, collaborating may have the effect of helping Christians connect better with their own vision and calling.

Looking Beyond

The call to care reaches beyond the borders of the parish. This is particularly true when we are a relatively prosperous community ourselves. This sense of outreach is already evident in the generosity of support for organisations such as Trocaire, which provide emergency relief towards disasters and famine in other parts of the world. It can also be seen where parishes have entered into a 'twinning' relationship with a community in the developing world.

We believe that we can build on this. There is an instinctive longing in people for justice, for peace, for respect for the earth – a longing that resonates deeply with the Gospel. We need to further develop this mindset in ourselves as part of our faith. We need very much to support one another in witnessing to it in the world.

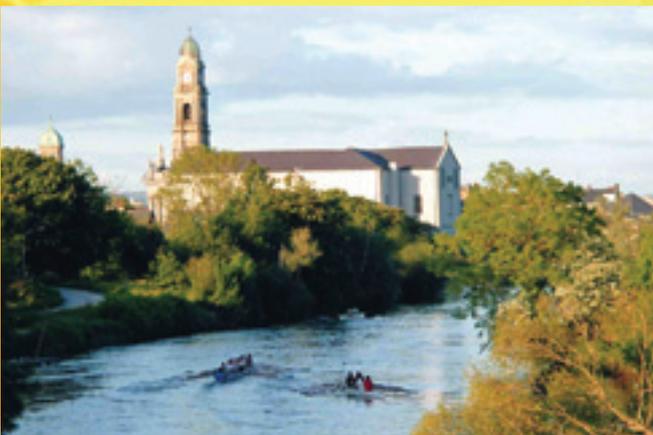
There may be a special role and calling for young people here. It is often remarked that young people feel this passion for a just and sustainable world more strongly than anybody. If that is so, their sense of God is being reflected in a most authentic and challenging way.

If we can find ways of engaging with young people in these areas, not alone are we acknowledging their gifts, their vision and their energy; we are also inviting them to lead the rest of the Christian community into a deeper realisation of what it means to say that following Christ means washing each other's feet.

“ The parish should be looking outwards. It should be entering into dialogue with others who are also trying to build a better world. It should be building trust. It should be seeking ways of working in partnership. ”

“ There is a instinctive longing in people for justice, for peace, for respect for the earth – a longing that resonates deeply with the Gospel. We need to further develop this mindset in ourselves as part of our faith. ”

St Mary's Irishtown, from the river Suir



In responding to the challenge of 'caring for one another', the goals of the *Pastoral Plan* are;

- To develop the parish as a community of care and outreach in response to all kinds of need and disadvantage in its midst.
- To promote effective forms of collaboration between the Christian community and other community groups.
- To develop the parish's vocation of witnessing in the wider society to justice, peace and the care of the earth.

Specific objectives for each of these goals are listed below. From among those objectives, we propose that the following be addressed as a matter of priority;

PRIORITIES FOR THE PARISH

- To develop strategies to enhance the parish community's care for people who are needy in its midst.

PRIORITIES FOR THE DIOCESE

- To put in place a Diocesan Social Justice Committee.

GOALS OF THE FOURTH PILLAR

PILLAR FOUR: CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

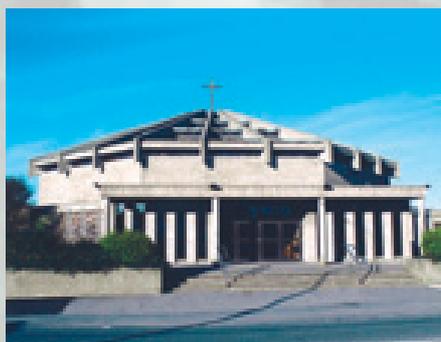
GOAL	SPECIFIC TARGETS	RESPONSIBILITY OF
To develop the parish as a community of care and outreach in response to different forms of need and disadvantage in its midst.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each Pastoral Council will develop strategies to enhance the parish community's care for people who are needy in its midst. 2. Each Pastoral Council will initiate programmes to welcome, support, encourage and value the integration of asylum seekers and refugees into our society. 	<p>Parish Pastoral Councils</p> <p>Parish Pastoral Councils in collaboration with the Waterford Immigration Network, the diocesan agency for the support of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants.</p>
To continue to provide support at Diocesan level for Christian families and individuals in crisis situations precipitated by bereavement, marital difficulties, unplanned pregnancies etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Diocesan agencies such as Accord, Family Ministry, Cura will support whoever needs counselling and help in personal and family crisis situations 4. The Diocese will continue to develop its child protection initiatives to endeavour to ensure best practice in the area of child protection. 	<p>Diocesan Agencies</p> <p>Child Protection Committee</p>
To promote effective collaboration between the Christian community and other community groups.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Parishes or groupings of parishes will develop forms of co-operation and collaboration with community development projects in their area. 	<p>Pastoral Councils at Parish and Grouping level.</p>
To develop the parish's vocation of witnessing in the wider society to justice, peace and the care of the earth.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. A Diocesan Social Justice Committee will be set up to animate a parish and diocesan response to issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. 7. Parishes or groupings of parishes will put in place practical expressions of their outreach to build justice and peace in the wider world. 	<p>Office for Pastoral Development</p> <p>Pastoral Councils supported by the Social Justice Committee</p>

Going Forward

The *Pastoral Plan* attempts to chart directions for pastoral development in the Diocese over the next five years. We are undertaking a journey together in response to the call of the Spirit. It is like setting out on a pilgrimage in that it is daunting, and we are faced with uncertainty. Travelling new pathways inevitably entails some amount of risk. We will not always be clear about the direction we should be taking. We need courage, great faith and trust that the Spirit of the Lord is with us and guiding us.

Appendix 1

OVERVIEW OF THE DIOCESE



Sacred Heart Church, The Folly

- The Diocese of Waterford and Lismore includes all of County Waterford and a large portion of South Tipperary and a small part of County Cork. There are forty five parishes and eighty five churches
- Fourteen congregations of women religious, six male religious orders and missionary societies, and three congregations of religious brothers, have communities in the Diocese. The majority of these sisters, priests and brothers are retired.
- At the beginning of 2006, the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore had eighty eight priests holding diocesan appointments. Thirteen priests are retired and seven priests of the diocese are on assignments outside the Diocese
- The Diocese of Waterford and Lismore has a population of 162,169.
- There are two students from the Diocese training for the priesthood at S. Patrick's College, Maynooth..
- There are ninety nine primary schools, with 16,368 pupils, in the Diocese, and twenty four post-primary schools with 12,132 pupils.
- The main centres of population in the Diocese are Waterford City, Tramore, Clonmel, Dungarvan, Carrick-on-Suir, Cahir, Lismore, Cappoquin, and Tallow.

Acknowledgements

Diocesan Planning Team: Michael Dee, Sr Teresa Fraser, Annette Hickey, Fr John Kiely, Fr Sean Melody, Fr Liam Power, Maria Ronan, Jimmy Ryan, Bernie Twomey and the late Jim Grant.

There are a number of individuals and groups who deserve special thanks for their assistance with the production of this Pastoral Plan:

Donal Harrington, who contributed greatly by reworking and redrafting the text.

All those who assisted with, and participated in, the Listening Process, particularly facilitators and recorders.

Sr Anne Codd, Resource Person, Episcopal Commission for Adult Faith Development and Pastoral Renewal, for her support of the project.

Bill Bolger who designed the layout of the Plan.

