**Weybridge Deanery Change Management Programme**

**Advisory and Communications Group Meeting, Tuesday, January 20, 2015**

1. The meeting opened with a reading of Mk 1.14-20 (Gospel of the next Sunday)
2. Fr. Rob offered a summary of the main presentations by Fr. David Smolira SJ and the outcomes of the deanery clergy gathering at Coolham from November 10-12, 2015:

Introducing the report, Fr. Rob pointed out that in many ways, Pope Francis’ radical call to become missionary disciples (*Evangelii Gaudium*) was anticipated by Pope John Paul II in his letter, *Tertio Millennio Ineunte* (2001), in which he called on us both to ‘Put out into the deep’ (Lk 5.4) and to ‘Contemplate the face of Christ.’ Fr. Rob also cited the Pope’s recent letter to open the Year of Consecrated Life. Like members of religious orders, we too should ***look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion, look to the future with hope.***

David Smolira is a psychologist by training and an expert in change-management. He brought this and his pastoral experience (formerly head of the Jesuits in South Africa) to our meeting. His reflections on change included the following: Change is inevitable in any living organisation – but organisations naturally resist change! Change may be **reactive** (forced on us) or **proactive** (freely chosen). Change may be **incremental** (presuming existing structures) or **transformational** (the result of ‘blue-sky thinking’). In dealing with change we need to distinguish between **Management** (seeking to do things right) and **Leadership** (seeking to do the right things): we need both! Change involves **bereavement** – leaving behind – and is inherently unsettling/disturbing.

If we wish to deal with change positively we should look to the positive. Our rationale has to be a better way of being Church, NOT reducing number of clergy. This is a **Kairos-moment** (a crossroads, involving both **God’s grace** and **our decision**) as we await ***New Bishop*** in our ***Golden Jubilee year****.* Note thatresistance costs energy, whilst alignment increases energy – so when we feel resistance LISTEN and seek to convert resistance into alliances. ***Everyone*** shares in the task of Discernment, while a particular task of the Clergy is to empower the baptismal vocation of all and guide our communities through this time of change.

Among reasons for change noted were: the **Freshness of the Gospel** (‘New Wine, New Wineskins’) and the **power of the Spirit**; the fact that our broken world is in **need of salvation**; a call to be **Christ-like** and **prophetic** (like Pope Francis); belief that the **Nature of the Church** is to undertake transformational mission; a desire to **Reach out** to the hurting, to those not touched by existing models (‘resting Catholics’); using the gifts of all to build community; all of these fits also within the pragmatic desire to make more efficient use of resources.

When moving through a change process we need to be **attentive to emotional dimension** (honesty about feelings, hopes/fears), asking: What **empowers us** (or dis-empowers us)? We need to articulate **a clear and compelling vision** for the future (a critique which encourages improvement: ***‘even better if ...’*).** We need to ask: **what steps are required** to achieve that? We need to acknowledge and value difference – our aim is ***alignment of energies***, not uniformity.

1. In the light of this, participants were asked to reflect on these questions: What are we hoping for? What are we passionate about? What is the most appropriate response to our situation? The following answers were noted: retaining a local Catholic Community; empowering outreach both to the poor/vulnerable and to those disconnected from the Church; building community within and between parishes; empowering laity (requiring leadership training); ensuring the existence of some appropriate form of parish council (whether leaders from groups within the parish or a more reflective group); involving the younger generation; offering welcome so that all feel valued – hosting and enabling clubs and groupings – of young mums, pensioners, etc..
2. **Obstacles to progress** in developing the life of the Deanery that might be thrown up as we moved through change were noted: **issues of distance** (an assumption of the ability to travel further– true for many but not for all, including the most vulnerable, elderly, frail and poor) if (with the passage of time) it were decided to create larger parishes concentrated on fewer sites or, more immediately, if events be held either on a deanery basis or across several communities); **limits of what can be expected of volunteers** – ***What is a reasonable ask?*** (This in turn raises the question of whether we need to budget for **paid-for staff and resources** – perhaps pooled across several parishes - and the financial consequences of this); How to **build the spiritual knowledge to give confidence** **to discuss change** – equipping the laity for this – in parishes as a whole (and in the younger generation in particular): how to get people to gather is always a challenge in our culture!
3. Participants then considered the **Draft Vision Statement** which was put together by a small group as a result of the Coolham meeting on the basis of the clergy’s reflections:

***As members of Christ’s Church, reading the signs of the times and listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, we respond to the call to proclaim the joy of the Gospel to all, most especially the marginalised and the broken hearted. We commit to creating an inclusive community where the gifts of all are used for God’s service.***

In discussion some of the ‘ecclesiastical language’ was questioned and a desire was expressed to simplify the form of words in a way which might add ‘punch’, a statement that would encourage and empower members of our communities.

As a result this **Revised Vision Statement** was written and accepted by all present as a useful summary of what we are trying to do through our Deanery Change Management Programme:

***As Catholics we are called to share the joy of the Gospel with all and especially those around us who suffer in one way or another and those who feel rejected by the Church. We commit to creating a community where all are welcome and where everyone’s gifts can be used for God’s service.***

This text is now offered to the wider Deanery (clergy and laity alike) for approval.

1. **Working Together Across the Deanery** – Fr. Con Foley gave details of meetings planned for Feb 24 for particular groups and ministries – all at Christ the Prince of Peace parish, Weybridge: the parish secretaries and administrative staff are invited to meet at lunchtime to get to know each other and to discuss possibilities for cooperation and mutual support, while in the evening (at 7.30pm) there will be three parallel meetings – Youth Ministry (for those involved in youth-work, together with lead catechists for confirmation programmes; Adult Formation (for RCIA leaders and others involved in this field; Social Action (for those coordinating this area of parish life).
2. **Developing Communications** Across the Deanery: Andy Robertson, our webmaster spoke about our new website [**www.weybridgedeanery.org/**](http://www.weybridgedeanery.org/), the links already on this and its possibilities. The most important need is for parishes to (a) make use of it to publish newsletters and information; (b) to advertise its existence (perhaps by including details on the masthead of our parish newsletters).
3. **Growing Together in Ministry and Mission:** Jackie Foster gave a brief report of the group (formerly called ‘Empowered Church’) working on this area of shared action in ministry and witness. Many of the items mentioned covered the same issues dealt with above – the need to develop good communications; the need to foster both prayer and reflection to deepen people’s knowledge of their faith.
4. Finally, **the next meeting of the Advisory and Communications Group** was set for **xxx**