



**PASTORAL AREA
COUNCIL BULLETIN**
- April 2011

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE PASTORAL AREA

The Catholic churches and schools of:
Shefford, Biggleswade, Flitwick, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard

“WALKING HUMBLY - What Has Happened & Where Are We Now?”

You may remember that in 2009 Bishop Peter announced his vision for “Walking Humbly With Our God”. This initiative was launched to promote a period of reflection on the key challenges facing the Northampton Diocese and the opportunities that exist for the future. As part of this, the previous Deanaries were disbanded and replaced by Pastoral Area Councils. In most cases these covered new geographical areas. Central Bedfordshire is an example of this where the parishes of Biggleswade, Flitwick, Shefford, Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable joined together to form our new Pastoral Area.

The Pastoral Area Councils were created with a specific remit of creating a local team which could represent parish views back to Bishop Peter in the form of a Local Area Groundplan. The Central Bedfordshire Pastoral Area Council was formed with local clergy, plus an individual lay person representing each parish.

Following a period of consultation, at Pentecost last year, the Central Bedfordshire Pastoral Area Council presented the Groundplan for the Pastoral Area to Bishop Peter. All 13 Pastoral Areas did likewise, which gave Bishop Peter much to consider over the period to November when our Pastoral Area Council met with him to gauge his feedback and agree key priorities.

What did the Groundplan cover?

In broad terms this covered an individual Parish review of existing resources including buildings, finance, Ministries and volunteers. It also aimed to set high level, realistic and achievable targets for our Pastoral Area including areas such as:

- Our Vision for the Future.
- Practical Action in the Year Ahead.
- Sustaining all of the current strengths and good work.

- ❑ Looking ahead to 2012 and beyond.

Copies of the Groundplan were made available in parishes during the summer of 2010. However, if you have not seen a copy and would like to, please contact your parish priest.

What were the Key Priorities of the Groundplan?

At the meeting with Bishop Peter, it was agreed that the Groundplan was ambitious in its scope and that it was important to focus on some practical priorities that parishes could work together to deliver locally. These included:

- ❑ New Training for Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.
- ❑ Finding ways for meeting our needs regarding catechesis and young people.
- ❑ The parishes of Shefford, Biggleswade and Flitwick looking towards a time in the future when they could reduce from three priests to two, if there is a greater need of a priest in another part of the Diocese.

Where are we now?

Under the “Walking Humbly” initiative, the Central Bedfordshire Pastoral Area Council officially completed its remit when it submitted the Groundplan to Bishop Peter. However, it was agreed with the Bishop that this group would continue to meet and have a mandate in order to work on delivering the key priorities of the Groundplan.

The “Walking Humbly” process is now the responsibility of local Pastoral Areas to take forward as they wish. However, it might be said that Bishop Peter’s vision when speaking about the history and challenges for the Diocese in the future is just as valid today as when he launched the process. We are reminded of this with his central “Walking Humbly” message of the need for “Three C’s” -

- ❑ Confidence in God, our faith, and ourselves,
- ❑ Conversation with God, with each other and with the world, and,
- ❑ Connections, the outworking of “love God and love your neighbour” whereby the Church engages with its members and with the world.

What has the new Pastoral Area Council been doing?

The new Pastoral Area Council met in December and January this year to begin the work on the key priorities. This has commenced with a review of the current practice and experience for Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Communion. In

our Pastoral Area there are 153 regular Readers and 141 active Extraordinary Ministers of Communion (67 of whom make frequent home visits). This shows what a positive position we already have from which to build in Central Bedfordshire.

The review has also focused upon formation in the parishes; including developing spiritual awareness, personal preparation, recruitment and retention of both Extraordinary Ministers of Communion and Readers, plus training and refreshers.

The Pastoral Area Council met again in late March to check on progress made on the key priorities, with focus initially being on:

Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Communion

The consensus of the Council is that it would be better if training for Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Communion continued to be based in each parish. Part of the reason for this is that the layout of each Church influences practice. It is believed that Readers could be trained at a course or with support at the Pastoral Area level, as the technique and preparation tends to matter more than the style of Church.

The Council also recognises the importance of General Instruction of the New Roman Missal. Here it is felt that what was important was to determine what the Church instructs and then incorporate the instructions into any training that might be developed. It has been proposed that Days of Reflection could be held jointly in the Pastoral Area, but none of the plans to co-ordinate activity should preclude individual parishes from holding their own. The Council's focus is simply to ensure that additional training and support becomes available and that by working together, the parishes in our Pastoral Area can benefit as a result.

As a result of this, Deacon Philip Pugh has kindly agreed to put together a Reader and Extraordinary Ministers of Communion training pack for the parishes in the Pastoral Area. It was felt that there should be two Days of Reflection offered each year to take place in different parts of the Pastoral Area. Deacon Pugh's work will look at the content and organisation involved.

The Central Bedfordshire Pastoral Council has also been considering a number of other issues:

New Missal

The Pastoral Area Council also intends to continue work which began in January regarding the new translation of the Roman Missal, which will be used in churches starting in September 2011. DVD's highlighting the changes have been circulated to each parish and whilst clergy will be working hard to communicate these changes within parishes, the Council is keen to find ways to support this activity.

Justice and Peace

Bishop Peter Doyle would like each Pastoral Area in the Diocese to take a lead in this field. Consideration is to be given to asking a single nominee to liaise with local Justice and Peace groups to report on progress and activity across the Pastoral Area so that the Bishop may be better informed as to Justice and Peace activity across Central Bedfordshire. It has been encouraging to learn of the efforts being made by parishes locally. Some are particularly active working with a variety of other groups such as Cafod and Fairtrade. Groups are also working against poverty and have involvement with the homeless and the SVP.

Micah Conversation

Bishop Peter has been stressing the need for us all to engage in conversation, the Micah Conversation provides us with an opportunity to do this locally. Facilitators trained by the diocese, from our own area, are in conversation with Shefford and Flitwick parishes as to how best to present the programme in each location. It is hoped that a large group will take part - giving us the springboard to bring this conversational approach to faith sharing to people across the whole pastoral area.

Parish feedback and support is vital

The Central Bedfordshire Pastoral Area Council will meet at least quarterly as it seeks to develop and deliver upon the key priorities of the Groundplan. Bishop Peter already has a date in his diary for this coming November to return and check on progress achieved! It is vital that parishes are kept informed regarding the Council's activities and that parishioners can feel able to contribute their ideas, thoughts and talents. If there is a particular point that you wish to raise please contact your local parish priest, deacon or lay representative. In the meantime please look out for the bulletin which will be circulated to parishes every couple of months or so.

Central Bedfordshire Pastoral Area Council Representatives

The Council consists of all clergy within our area, plus the following lay representatives: Don Perrett - Flitwick, Cecilia Brand - Dunstable, Tony Falcon - Leighton Buzzard, Neil Taylor - Shefford, Liz Carey-Sheill - Biggleswade.