



# COME & C

## REPORT OF THE DIOCESAN PARISH SURVEY 2014

*Christian Course Fund Raising Hall Music New Rector ... Diocese  
Organisations Outreach ... Children Church Committees  
Parish Centre RC Church Senior Citizens Enthusiasm Heart Little Parish Hall Parishioners  
Wider Community Resources School Select Vestry Talent  
Day of Prayer Worship Process Rector Regular Remit Review School Worship*



The Discovery Gospel Choir

# COME & C

## REPORT OF THE DIOCESAN PARISH SURVEY 2014

*'And God saw that it was good.'*

GEN 1:12



## FOREWORD

I should like to congratulate and thank all those who made time, in the midst of busy and often overstretched lives, to address the Questionnaire that I sent to all parishes in the United Dioceses earlier in the year. The range of information that you have supplied to me is both honest and informative. It gives me great grounds for hope as together we seek to address the call of God to serve as members of these United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough. We have been placed by God in our day within a broad and diverse urban and rural community of some one and a half million people. The sophistication and the complexity of contemporary Ireland are very clear to see in all the places where we live. God asks of us that we respond in faith, in hope and in love to the people of whatever tradition inhabit this space with us.

The words parish and diocese have at the heart of their meaning the word house or household (in Greek *oikos* or *oikia*). Meeting to worship God in God's house and concern for the community as the household of God are, therefore, pivotal in our understanding of the work to which God is calling us. This shared recognition combines with that wonderful encouragement which rings down the ages from Old Testament and New Testament alike: Love God and love your neighbour as yourself.

The material which you have shared with me gives voice to the aspirations and the achievements of parish communities the length and breadth of the Dioceses. At the same time, you raise from within your own parishes warning signs and areas of concern. I should not have expected it to be otherwise. The pulsating question always is: Where do we go from here? or, What do we do next? It has been my privilege to listen to you speak in your own voice. You may be interested to know that in excess of 79% of the parishes responded, and a significant proportion of them happened to be without a rector at the time. This is, therefore, truly a voice of the laity of the diocese and for that reason precious.

On receiving the completed questionnaires, I engaged the services of an expert to analyse them. This work was done at no cost to the diocese. The summary analysis of your responses is presented in three separate parts. Section 1 (pages 3–10) analyse response to questions about present activities in the parishes. Section 2 (pages 11–14) focuses on three questions about future developments. Section 3 (page 15–16) focuses on the Vision Statements. There is a ‘word cloud’ showing the most frequently used words in all of your responses. The different sizes of the words in that cloud indicate the frequency of their use in all the responses received. Below that you will see samples of the anonymised responses organised thematically.

I trust that you will find this as useful as I have in engaging with the outcomes of your own ideas so generously shared with me before the summer. I am delighted, as your bishop, to share your findings with all of you in this booklet which, for good reason, based on your words I have called: **Come&C**. I will be very interested to hear all of your responses to this material in order that all of us in these united dioceses can better support the vision and work of parishes.

**+Michael Dublin and Glendalough**

October 2014

# SECTION 1

## OUR PARISH COMMUNITIES TODAY

*'I have said to the Lord, you are my Lord;  
from you alone comes the good I enjoy.'*

PS. 16:2

## Briefly describe up to three things about your parish of which you are especially proud.



### Community Spirit: care and welcome

- “ A sense of community, inclusion and welcome.
- “ We are proud of the welcome given to new residents and visitors.
- “ Sense of welcome and acceptance.

### Parish personnel, liturgical and social activities

- “ Our Rector's energy in both the parish and the community.
- “ Dedicated lay readers and visiting clergy.
- “ Friendship and fellowship with sense of belonging and team work.
- “ Variety of worship at church services.
- “ Choir and music.
- “ Range of services and supports.
- “ There is a broad range of all-age activities.

### Church buildings: heritage and resource

- “ Three beautiful church buildings which reflect a long Christian heritage.
- “ Beautiful restored church and lovely grounds.
- “ A well-maintained church and parish centre facilitates our worship and outreach.



## Are there things that currently define the parish which you do not want to lose in the future and as you develop?



### Community Spirit: care and inclusion of all

- “ Caring community, non-judgemental witness.
- “ Caring for one another.
- “ Openness to change, new initiatives and people from diverse backgrounds.
- “ Inclusive and open to all comers, to grow in faith.
- “ Involvement of the laity.
- “ Inclusion of children and youth as valued members of the church. Care for and outreach to the elderly and isolated.

### Parish personnel, liturgical and social activities, buildings

- “ Our rector puts people first above all else.
- “ Quality of worship and musical tradition.
- “ Children’s and youth ministry.
- “ Our parish churches and buildings are maintained to a high standard.
- “ The parish should focus on families, greater investment in people as opposed to bricks and mortar.

### Good relationships with, and witness to the wider community

- “ Being open and welcoming to the local community.
- “ Ecumenical relations and contact with members of other Christian traditions.
- “ The Christian ethos in the primary school.
- “ A visible Anglican presence in the local community.

## Explain the importance of these aspects of your parish.



### Community Spirit: care, friendship, growth

- “ All newcomers to be embraced.
- “ The openness and friendliness within the parish.
- “ Our work together, especially on Select Vestry.
- “ Children’s and youth ministry is important to sustain and grow the parish.
- “ All ages are very important to us and we want to maintain and grow this ministry.

### Church as an inclusive place of worship and prayer

- “ Worship and praise of God is at the centre of our parish.
- “ The church is a central meeting place for worship and socialising.
- “ All parishioners can worship together in a way which is appropriate to them.
- “ Being able to ask people to pray for us or for others we know and knowing that they will do so.

### Gospel witness in the world

- “ Allowing everyone to know they are ‘seen’, ‘belong’ and are people valued by God.
- “ The parish provides a Gospel-centred reason for our continued existence and identity.
- “ Christ’s example of compassion and forgiveness; his reaching out to those on the margins and those in need. Living out the Great Commandment.

## What are the people of the parish willing to do to maintain these important parts of the parish life?



### Enabling discipleship

- “ Parishioners are very supportive and encouraging and prepared to take risks if they see it is for the Kingdom.
- “ Be trained and educated from Scripture so that we are a biblical functioning community.

### Lay voluntary activity

- “ Large numbers of parishioners who help with BB, GFS, Sunday Club, Messy Church, Toddlers, Youth group and Holiday Club.
- “ Parishioners' generous giving of time and talents.
- “ Parishioners volunteer to maintain open church and lead daily office.
- “ There are many dedicated and loyal parishioners who give tirelessly of their time and other resources. We need to broaden the resource base.
- “ We would like to encourage a new generation to take on leadership and responsibilities in worship and in parish organisation.

### Financial generosity and building up of resources

- “ The parishioners give excellent support when asked – like building the hall.
- “ The building of a new Parochial hall is a conscious effort to grow the parish and to build identity, belonging and community.
- “ Perhaps be able to accompany other parishes who might be in need and engage in meaningful mission contact and outreach.

## What parts of the Christian faith does your parish do well?



### Worship and preaching

- “ Celebration of the Eucharist at the heart of what we do as a Christian community.
- “ Preaching and teaching about Jesus and relating Biblical passages to all ages in church.
- “ Weekly worship, healing services.
- “ Worship: special services annually including service of remembrance for departed family members and parishioners, open-air service, pets' service.

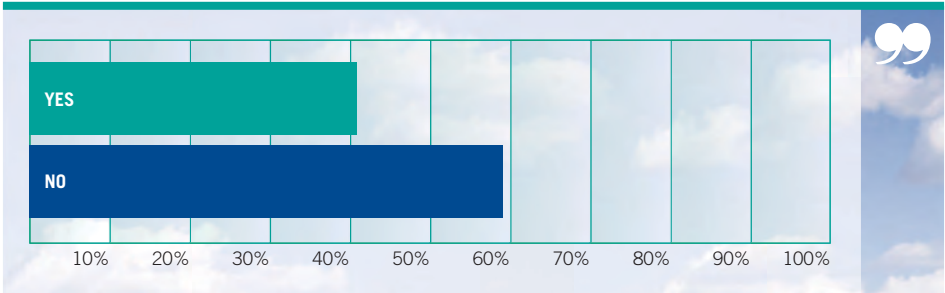
### Hospitality, care and outreach

- “ We prioritise hospitality as foundational.
- “ Pastoral ministry and prayer ministry is extremely important to us. We have a very dedicated Healer Prayer Group and lay visiting team.
- “ Strong and active Mission-Links with Rwanda and Romania.
- “ Care of the Body by the Body. Parishioners look after one another.

### Enabling the discipleship of all

- “ Opportunity for the body to serve and develop their gift.
- “ Encouraging everyone to be a minister.
- “ Educating and encouraging young parishioners; youth service and Sunday Clubs.
- “ Our school and the encouragement of children's development is very integrated with parish life and worship.
- “ 20 consecutive Alpha courses have been run in the parish.

## Does your parish currently have a Parish Forum?



### Those who have a Forum:

- “ The Parish Forum consists of 5 members and the rector. It meets every month and looks at various spiritual matters.
- “ Eight members meet monthly. A survey of all parishioners was conducted in 2011 followed by a facilitated Open Forum.
- “ The parish has held several ‘Forums’ in the past twenty years with discussion focused on several areas.
- “ Our Forum was a recent once-off event and we have a development committee working with the suggestions of the forum.

### Those who do not currently have a Forum:

- “ Most parishioners are on vestry so is a forum needed?
- “ Endeavouring to establish a Forum with great difficulty.
- “ We don’t have a Forum but we do have a programme of renewal which is evolving.
- “ Vacancy in parish. We hope this may happen when we have a new rector and we get to know each other.

## What kinds of engagements does your parish have with the community around it?



### Ecumenical services and teaching

- “ Ecumenical engagement in week of prayer for Christian Unity, World Day of Prayer, Lent Group, annual Remembrance services, Graveyard Blessing.
- “ Joint Bible study groups.
- “ All major Christian festivals are marked ecumenically.
- “ Harvest festival is very popular in the village to all in the community.
- “ Seems to be good although it was felt too much contact with RC church at the moment.

### Use by wider community of church, parish facilities and events

- “ The Parish Centre is a major means of engagement with the wider community, being used by over 1,000 adults and children per week.
- “ Heritage week.
- “ Local Arts festival.
- “ Numerous organisations use the church for concerts.
- “ The Parish Fete attracts up to 2,000 people.
- “ Cyber Café which offers senior citizens one-to-one tuition in computer skills.

### Engagement by parish members in local community activities

- “ Support local charities and specific African missions that we have personal connections with.
- “ On a personal level there is a lot of interaction with other local Christian denominations but nothing organised at parish level.
- “ Parishioners are to the fore in important local institutions.

## SECTION 2

# OUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

*'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion,  
then were we like unto them that dream.'*

PS. 126:1

## What plans does your parish currently have for a development?



### Developing discipleship

- “ We are hoping to be able to base our life on the model of the Early Church.
- “ Collaborative ministry with new rector.
- “ The children to be appointed as ‘curates’ to take the children’s service with the rector.
- “ We have trialled the Café Church model.
- “ Alpha Course to be offered.
- “ Looking at small groups/link groups.
- “ Daily opening of the church for daily prayer and contemplation maintained by a large team of volunteers.

### Extend the range of church activities and engagement

- “ There is a strong expressed desire for greater involvement of Church of Ireland children/ youth and a desire for services which would be attractive to younger people.
- “ Developing and expanding youth services since 2013.
- “ Outreach to teenagers possibly in conjunction with neighbouring parishes.
- “ Becoming the heart of the local community.

### Developing facilities, planning and resources

- “ New Church Hall being built beside the church which will provide opportunities to develop fellowship within the church and within the community.
- “ The upgrade of our facilities.
- “ Development of sanitary facilities.
- “ The Select Vestry has approved the setting up of a parish renewal committee.
- “ Appoint a rector!



## What three fresh and sustainable developments would you like to see happen in your parish?



### Fostering discipleship

- “ Development of a children’s programme in order to allow the children to be more comfortable with their faith and their church, pre and post Confirmation.
- “ Establishing a working model of Youth Ministry.
- “ Planning to launch link groups with four dimensions – social, practical, pastoral and spiritual.
- “ Possible retreats. New courses for mid-week group.
- “ Lunchtime scripture club.

### Reaching out to those who are not attending church

- “ More listening to people who don’t go to Church and try to have a church to suit them.
- “ More interaction with people who have left mainstream churches and looking for a worshipping community.
- “ Greater outreach to New Irish, further work with young adults and young families.
- “ Variety of times and styles of worship. Occasional alternative style worship services, music, youth services, evening services.
- “ Young people more involved in worship and parish activities. Perhaps a trained youth worker, working together with 3–4 adjoining parishes.

### Care and support

- “ I would like to see us beginning to trial initiatives based upon caring for people in our local community, beyond the church walls.
- “ Develop a welcome process for new parishioners.

## What resources do the people of your parish have to enable these developments to continue or to commence?



### The people of the parish

- “ Committed and gifted people in many areas of ministry along with a servant heart. We see our people as one of our greatest assets.
- “ Young diverse congregation, support of the Select Vestries, great talent in the congregation. Good anchor in community through the school.
- “ Dedicated team of lay readers.
- “ Rector, Parish Reader and Needs Group (sub-committee of Select Vestry). Dedicated, enthusiastic and capable volunteers.

### The importance of good facilities, financial stability

- “ We have a new parish centre opening in September which will provide more space and facilities.
- “ The Select Vestry are willing to set financial resources aside – particularly in the area of youth work.
- “ Have to do annual fund raising, we are always seeking new fund raising ideas and have been very successful in the past arranging these events.
- “ Very limited financial resources. There is a challenge in not letting this define us.

### Prayer and faith in action

- “ Just ourselves. No money but we can pray.
- “ A heart to be involved and doing these ministries.

## SECTION 3

# VISION STATEMENTS

*'I shall give praise to you, Lord, with my whole heart.'*

PS. 9:1

## Describe the vision that you have for your parish. Please give this vision a name.



### Spirit-led witnesses to Christ in the whole community

- “ To provide a Christian witness to the growing and diverse community.
- “ Spiritual centre for the whole community. That we be led and guided by the Holy Spirit.
- “ Our parish vision is a broad one i.e. building up God’s Kingdom in our time and place.
- “ Led by the Holy Spirit to serve our city, make disciples, heal the broken, plant and renew churches.

### Ministry and discipleship of all

- “ To develop the ministry which we believe every individual Christian has and is called to exercise.
- “ Encouraging greater involvement of all ages in personal and corporate faith development and community involvement in the widest sense.
- “ A community of people who worship together, pray together, grow together, learn together and care together. A parish that makes a difference, where the Lord is central to all we do.

### Caring communities of faith

- “ Continuing to be a witness of unity and a genuinely caring community.
- “ A place for all to belong that reaches out and welcomes in.
- “ We are a group of people who are like family, caring for one another, meeting each other’s needs and who love God and show that love to their neighbours.

## PROSPECT

**T**hree things in particular emerge as priorities in the life of the parishes who have responded to the Questionnaire. They fit in with a number of my own perceptions as I have made my way around the parishes in the dioceses. I have at this point visited every parish grouping at least once and have greatly enjoyed the sense of warmth and welcome I experienced.

I recognise how stretched from day to day clergy are. I have had privileged insight into the vocational depth of many of the clergy in the dioceses, as more than 90% took up my invitation to meet with me on a one-to-one basis earlier this year. To me this was a series of energising and informative meetings.

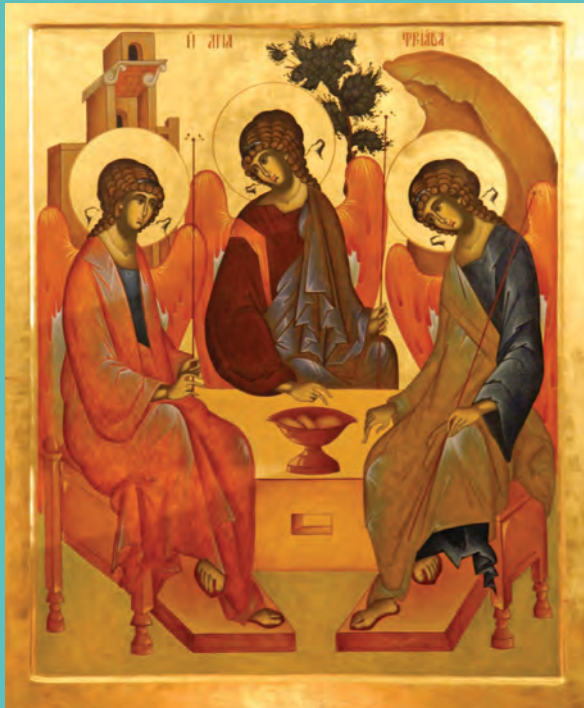
The first thing is the fact that these dioceses put forward the largest number of people for Confirmation in the whole of the Church of Ireland. The majority of these are of school-going age but there is an increasing number of adults also. This fact emerged from the recent Church of Ireland Census and is one of its most important and useful facts. This resonates with an urgent need expressed by you, the parishioners, for youth work in the dioceses as a priority.

The second thing is the hunger for lay discipleship. The repeated discussion and the wide range of examples of community involvement inside and outside the parish marches hand in hand with the expressed need for imaginative equipping and innovative facilitation of discipleship. This is distinct from the valuable and cherished work of Parish and Diocesan Readers. It is a strong thread and theme and in my understanding flows from a deep, if unobtrusive, spirituality of Scripture, Prayer, Sacrament and Creed among those who reflect on these things.

The third is a question begged more than a question answered. It is the engagement with the community at its widest. It is the recognition that those at the margins have a voice with the centre and that this relationship flourishes where there is attentive listening combined with loving action. Both bring about lasting understanding. I quote from Rev. Paul Houston, Rector of Castleknock, the preacher at this year's Ordination to the Priesthood: 'There needs to be a new charity in Christians, a new hospitality, a new searching for the works of the Holy Spirit in people of very different backgrounds and cultures from ourselves – seeking we will find.' Recently at the ordination of deacons in Christ Church Cathedral, Rev. Gary Dowd, Rector of Glenageary, preached. He nailed his colours to the mast with considerable courage: 'Is the Church of Ireland at last ridding itself of the perception that it is little more than a private members' club?' he asked. I applaud him for this, as I am sure you will also. Such a public statement and such an awareness of the challenges already facing us give cause to pause and reflect.

Recognising once again how stretched clergy are, it is clear that the dioceses feel that empowering young people and lay adults ensures proper team ministry and support for the rector. This new relationship will enable the energy that there so clearly is in any small community to take its place in the significant contribution it will make to the wider community, both within and beyond the Christian tradition. All of these people are also our neighbours. This is an exciting challenge for us all.

+Michael



The Trinity Icon, Trinity Chapel, Christ Church Cathedral

*‘The one who sat on the throne said,  
‘I am making all things new’.*

**REVELATION 21:5**

