

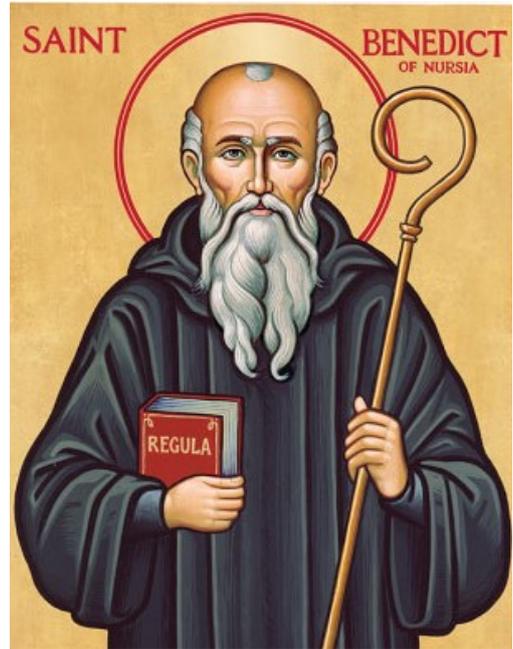
The Benedict Partnership News

April 2018

Welcome to the first edition of the Benedict Partnership Newsletter

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A **partnership** is an arrangement where parties, known as partners, agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests. The partners in a partnership may be individuals, businesses, interest-based organizations, schools, governments or combinations. Organizations may partner to increase the likelihood of each achieving their mission and to amplify their reach.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (sic)

Partnerships

(Jesus wasn't associated with a particular parish!)

One thing is certain... this Newsletter would never have been produced a year ago. Actually, another thing for certain is that Jesus wasn't actually associated with a particular parish.

In January 2014 Bishop Seamus met with the Trustees of our Diocese. He was looking to the future and wondered how we could use the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us to look to the future of our diocese when there would be fewer parishioners worshipping in our churches and fewer priests to live with them and minister with them. He decided the best thing we could do was look right across the diocese and ask everyone possible about the best way forward.

It was a really courageous decision. One of the results was to move forward from Deaneries to parishes working in Partnership.

In February last year he said that he hoped that parishes working together in Partnership would begin to share all kinds of resources: like Eucharistic ministers, Catechists, Liturgy, Finance, communication, information, administration, Celebration and Formation.

It is pretty incredible what has happened in this area, the Benedict Partnership, since February last year.

We have had a Mission involving a number of churches in the partnership. I'd only been here about a month when one Saturday afternoon in November at 4.00pm about 100 people arrived to mark the end of a Pilgrimage from Easington Lane, Houghton-le-Spring, Sacriston, Birtley, Chester-le-Street, Penshaw, and Washington. This was the beginning of our Partnership Mission – with serious Partnership implications. As the new boy (!) on the block, it was wonderful. Both Primary Schools and St Robert's were involved and every parish participated in different ways. I just couldn't believe that people from all over the place (like 60

people) would come to St Bede's to join in the celebration of Mass at 7.00 am. I secretly believe that the promise of a nourishing and calorie free breakfast of sausage, bacon, mushrooms and scrambled or fried eggs may just possibly have been an added attraction.

Over the last few months we have done exactly what Bishop Seamus asked. We have begun to look at ways that parishes can work more closely together. We have celebrated Reconciliation and Healing in Houghton-le-Spring. We have been part of a Lenten programme in Birtley. We have elected Michael Davison from St Joseph's Birtley as our Chair, and Joan Formosa from St John XXIII as our Secretary. Fr. Mark Millward is our Partnership Dean and we've had a couple of Partnership Development gatherings, the last one over 24 hours at the Youth Village with the excellent Jo Boyce as our leader... you might not know Jo herself, but I'll bet you know her music, I can't believe I'm saying this... just Google her and find out about what she does.

There's no doubt that the sharing of gifts and talents and resources of every kind is the way forward, and the fact that 15 were welcomed into our Church community at our Easter Vigils across our Partnership after a joint RCIA (basically a programme of welcome for people who want to become part of our Catholic community) can only be a wonderful pointer to the future.

Jesus never belonged to a specific parish... they never existed in his day. But he did invite everyone to follow him and share the gifts that His Father has given us. That is exactly what Partnership is about.

Fr Jim O'Keefe



The Benedict Partnership consists of the following parishes and churches within those parishes:

Birtley:	St Joseph
Chester-le-Street	St Cuthbert
Easington Lane	St Mary (served from St Michael)
Houghton-le-Spring	St Michael
Sacrison	St Bede (served from St Cuthbert)
Washington & Penshaw	St John XXIII - the four churches of: Our Lady Queen of Peace Our Blessed Lady Immaculate St Bede St John Boste

Current List of Priests and Deacons:

St Joseph	Fr Anthony Duffy Deacon Peter Lavery
St Cuthbert & St Bede	Fr Christopher Jackson
St Michael & St Mary	Fr William O’Gorman Deacon Richard McLaughlin
Residing at St Mary	Fr Paul Tully (Durham Hospital Chaplain)
St John XXIII	Fr Mark Millward Fr Jim O’Keefe Deacon Frank O’Neill Deacon Chas Ferguson

Have Your Say

Let us know what you think of Partnership, this newsletter or any other concerns, comments, suggestions you would like to share. Hand your article to a member of the PDG or send by email to: markchurchit@btinternet.com

What is the Partnership Development Group (PDG)?

The PDG is made up of a group of people who have been invited to represent their parish, church, school or group within the Benedict Partnership. The group meet on a regular basis to plan for the future of the partnership, discuss ways in which the members of the partnership can work more closely and decide on actions that may need to be taken to enable us all to fulfil the mission of the church. It is intended that membership of the PDG will last for two years.

Members of the Partnership Development Group

Mick Davison, St Joseph - Chair

Joan Formosa, St Bede (Washington) - Secretary

Clergy

Fr Anthony Duffy, Fr Chris Jackson, Fr Mark Millward,
Fr William O’Gorman, Fr Jim O’Keefe

Deacons

Rev Chas Ferguson, Rev Peter Lavery, Rev Richard McLaughlin,
Rev Frank O’Neill

Lay Members

Maria Ashburner (Our Lady Queen of Peace). Hannah Bartlett (Young People). Maria Byrne (Our Blessed Lady Immaculate). Andrew Cox (St John Boste). Catherine Davison, (chaplain - St Leonard). Ros Elliott (St Cuthbert). Mark Harris (St John Boste). Ian Hunter (St Bede, Sacriston). Jim Taylor (St Robert of Newminster). Tony Joy (St John Boste). Anne Marie Lavelle (St Cuthbert). Joe Lavelle (St Cuthbert). Hannah Mitchell (Children’s Ministry). Chris O’Neill (Our Blessed Lady Immaculate). Barbara Reilly-O’Donnell (Primary Schools). Jim Taylor, (Chaplain - St Robert of Newminster). Sophie Taylor (St Joseph). Lorraine Thompson (St Michael). Emma Waldoock (St Bede, Sacriston). Ian Willis (St Michael)

Sub-groups within the PDG

PDG Mission and Vision Statement group

Aim - to produce the PDG Mission and Vision Statement

Pastoral care group

Aim - to establish pastoral teams within parishes

Communication group

Aim - to improve communication within the Partnership

Youth Group

Aim - to work with a group of young people to develop their involvement in youth ministry.

Opportunities within the Partnership

Ministry of Consolation Training

The diocese are developing a training course for those involved in pastoral care. It is envisioned/planned that the course will consist of 5 group sessions over 10 weeks - core skills for people involved in a range of pastoral areas.

It is planned that this course will be run within the Benedict Partnership. If you are interested in this training then please look out for more information in your parish newsletter over the coming weeks.



Rejoice with others when they rejoice, and be sad with those in sorrow. Give the same consideration to all others alike.

Romans 12:15,16

Other Partnership Opportunities

In planning for the future the PDG are looking at organising:

- ◆ A Day of Recollection for Special Ministers
- ◆ Development of Music Ministry.

By doing this together we can learn from each other, provide a network of support and bring in external experts by sharing the costs. An example of this was the recent PDG sessions lead by Jo Boyce.

Message from Mick Davison, the Chair of the Partnership Development Group

I was the Forward Together in Hope representative from St Joseph's Birtley and when our partnership was set up I was asked to represent the parish on the Partnership Development Group (PDG).

I was very surprised to be asked to be the lay chair of the PDG and more than a little apprehensive but after our first few meetings, while I am still concerned about the scale of the task that faces us, I am excited by the prospects of working together with people across the partnership.

To help prepare ourselves for the challenges we face members of the PDG spent twenty-four hours together at the Emmaus Youth Village looking at what it means to be disciples in a missionary church. Our time together was led by the inspirational Jo Boyce and my abiding memory of our time together is captured in the words we sang together,

“Open our eyes to see, Open our ears to hear, Open our eyes to live your calling, Open us Lord to love”

As we face the challenges of developing our partnership as part of a missionary church with fewer priests we all need to be open to God's calling to use the talents we have been given. There is information in this newsletter about a number of sub-groups that have been set up by the PDG, these groups are not just for the members of the PDG but are open to everyone, please consider joining one of these groups.

I look forward to working with people from all parts of the partnership as we work together in developing our partnership. If you have any thoughts or comments please feel free to contact me on mdavison.1953@gmail.com.

Future Challenges for the Partnership

Of course we will face many challenges in the future of the Benedict Partnership and hope to explore some of them in the next edition of the Partnership Newsletter.

A Prayer For The Way Ahead

Our Lord God, we have no idea where we are going.

We do not see the road ahead of us.

We cannot be certain where it will end.

But we believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.

And we hope we have that desire in all that we are doing.

We hope that we will never do anything apart from that desire.

And we know that if we do this you will lead us by the right road,
though we may know nothing about it.

Therefore we will trust you always, though we may seem to be
lost and in the shadow of death.

We will not fear, for you are ever with us,
and you will never leave us to face our perils alone.

Amen.

Based on Thomas Merton - Thoughts In Solitude



Every journey begins
with the first step

For the Next Edition

Introduce your church or parish to the rest of the partnership!

In 100 words or less describe your church or parish and how it fits into the Benedict Partnership.

Hand your article to a member of the PDG or send by email to:
markchurchit@btinternet.com