

The Way Forward

FORGING LINKS BETWEEN SCHOOLS, PARISHES, AND HOME, ENABLING
YOUNG PEOPLE TO FORM A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

2024-2027

Introduction by Bishop Ger Nash

The Way Forward is a collaboration of youth initiatives by our clergy, lay parishioners, teachers and young people. In the first few years of my time in the Diocese of Ferns, I have always been keen to explore with **The Way Forward** committee ways in which we can enable our young people to form a personal relationship with God.

In recent months, the people and priests of the Diocese have worked together on a Pastoral Plan '**Our Future Church**', which envisions 12 pastoral areas within our Diocese, each consisting of three to six parishes. Within each pastoral area, people and priests will collaborate closely in mission and ministry.

*A thorough review of **The Way Forward** was conducted in May 2024, which found that much had been achieved in the previous three years in terms of youth pilgrimages, the JP11 programme, Religious Education support, school retreat provision and Spirit youth development. Many projects were either completed or are ongoing. Several medium-term projects are also in the initial stages of development.*

*Given the release of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan '**Our Future Church**', it was necessary to explore the next phase of **The Way Forward** in the context of the eight themes of the pastoral plan. While all the themes are relevant, it was found that four of the Diocesan themes had special relevance: 'Form & Lead', 'Pray & Journey', 'Love & Serve' and 'Empower & Flourish'. Various youth projects were identified under these four themes.*

*Given the scale of the work of youth ministry, the review also found that (i) recruitment, (ii) training and (iii) team building are critical to the continued success of **The Way Forward**. Several processes were collaboratively identified to promote recruitment, training and team building in the year(s) ahead.*

The Way Forward opens doors for our young people to the possibility of Jesus in their lives. I encourage everyone throughout the Diocese to support this document and the people involved so that more and more of our young people in the Diocese of Ferns can experience the peace, hope and joy that a relationship with God brings. This is **the way forward** not just for our youth but for each one of us who labours together in God's vineyard.

+ Ger Nash



The Way Forward

Opening doors to schools, parishes & homes to enable our young people form a relationship with God.

Open Doors	Green Shoots	Nurture	Critical Success	Priority
Religious Education Seminar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers open to Faith Formation. Positive Relationship Building with Teachers Increase in Teachers attending each year. Positive Feedback 	Director of RE plays a facilitative role for leadership team.	Leadership Team of Clergy & Lay Team Leaders	Identify people to key leadership roles in leading this project.
JPII Programme i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion in schools Badges & Brochure Awards Night 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steady increase of Schools participating. Young people engaging with Parish Positive Relationship Building with Parents Positive Relationship Building with Teachers. 	Identify key Volunteers to work with Director of RE in engaging with schools.	Faith Reps/Volunteers to take active JPII leadership role within schools. Build relationship with Clergy	Train volunteers to work with schools. Ensure key Faith Reps accompany to schools. Visit all non-denomination schools.
Pilgrimage Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people open to their faith. Young people experience joy and peace on pilgrimage. Young people continuing on the faith journey Positive Relationship Building with Parents Schools and Parishes supporting through funding. 	Director of RE plays a facilitative role for leadership team. Open doors to young people in all age groups to enable them to continue the journey i.e. other pilgrimage opportunities.	Leadership Team of Clergy & Lay Team Leaders put in place.	Identify key people to take on key roles on leadership team.
Trip to Knock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people are open to experience. For 99% of the group it was their first time in Knock. 	Director of RE plays a facilitative role for leadership team.	Recruitment & Training of Spirit Leaders	Spirit Leader led with Clergy.
Diocesan School Retreat Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools engaged with process. Young people open to the opportunity. Teachers and Schools rebooking the team. 	Director of RE plays a facilitative role for leadership team. Enhancement of the programme delivered each year.	Build on existing team.	Recruitment & Training of Spirit Leaders
Spirit Youth Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key highlight of TY experience in schools. Friendships formed. Self-value & confidence of young person increased. 	Director of RE trains and supports Spirit Leaders to run Spirit in Wexford, New Ross, Enniscorthy, Gorey & Bunclody.	Recruitment & Training of Spirit Leaders	Recruitment & Training of Spirit Leaders
Liturgical Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers identify it as a top support/resource. Teachers using ideas in the classroom. Teachers open to more resources like this. 	Build on information template each year and enhance resource.	Development of a strong liturgical group to enhance the current resource with lesson plans and faith formation opportunities.	Liturgical Scoping Exercise
Way Forward Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unification of Diocesan Youth Activities Collaboration and support process 	Director of RE places a facilitative role to enable subgroups to take leadership of projects.	Implementation of next stage of the Way Forward 2024-2026	Continue to develop contacts and connections with relevant groups.

Additional Way Forward Projects

Completed/Ongoing Projects

Visits to Schools by Bishop Ger

Prayer Pouch for 1st Years

Box of Hope (Covid 6-week session)

Exam Prayer Cards

Retreat Booklets for Teachers

School Library Project

Mary's Meals Project

Pilgrim Path of Churches

Parish Hall Promotion

School Visits to Diocesan Centre

Youth Matters Website

PR & Social Media ie. Newsletter/Radio/Articles

Medium Term Projects

- Leadership Course for JP11 Students
- Exam Prayer Pack
- Course on Human Sexuality by Fr Chris Hayden
- Handbook on Classroom Activities for RE Teachers.
- Catechism Classes/Faith Programmes
- Diocesan Camino
- Eucharistic Miracles Tour of Schools/Parishes
- Handing on the Faith – Support for Parents

THEMES WITHIN THE DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN



CHALLENGES TO THE WAY FORWARD

- Changing mindsets from apathy to hope.
- Building Capacity & Recruitment
- Reviewing Priorities
- Keeping Focus
- The How? How can we best achieve the priorities.



The How?

Recruitment, Training & Team Building



Recruitment

Faith Reps/Member of Way Forward Committee

Advertisement & PR Strategy

Public Meetings

Progressive Training of young people

Parents – both Primary & Secondary

Access diocesan participants of other Catholic events

Past JP11 participants

Shared roles and dual roles

Redirect existing talent into emerging roles.

Lay Ministry discernment outcomes



Training

Training programme to include meeting skills, leadership skills and specific skills

Spirit Leadership Course

Facilitative Leadership Course to include public speaking, relationship building, managing meetings, young people, team building and conflict resolution.

Training generic to all projects



Team Building

Regular Pastoral Reflection Group Meetings

Team must be small and local

Each team supporting multiple strands of plan

Pre-pilgrimage encounters

Explore peer networks for info sharing, support and shared leadership and succession planning eg pilgrimage group leaders, spirit group leaders

Prayer for The Way Forward

God our Father, Creator of the Universe,

You prepared Jesus your Son,
through the power of the Holy Spirit
for His ministry here on Earth.

Pour out today Your Spirit
Upon the young people of our Diocese of Ferns,
As they prepare for their future.

Empower them to know You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Open their minds to the Loving Relationship
Which You offer to them, now, while on Earth,
And the everlasting place they will celebrate
With You and all the Saints in eternity.

Through Your grace and their generosity
Empower them to bear a harvest of goodness
In our families, Parishes, Schools, and communities,
For the Spiritual growth of Irish Society.

We make this prayer through Jesus Your Son,
Our Lady of Knock, St Patrick, St Aidan
And all the Saints of Ireland.
Amen.

