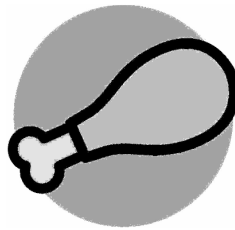
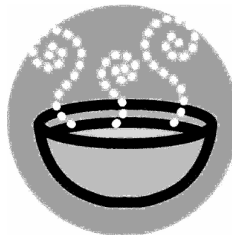




# Church21

## A Preparation Course



Food for thought...

## Church21 Preparation Course

### PURPOSE

This course has been designed to help prepare parishes participating in the Church21 Conference to be held from 11-13th September 2009 in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin. We very much hope that other parishes will also find it helpful.

Church21 is for churches and parishes wanting to meet and address the challenges of ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To get the best from the conference it will be helpful for parishes to have identified beforehand their particular needs.

So, this course invites you to reflect on where you are now and where you feel God is calling you to be. Are there key areas of parish life you need to focus on?




### BEFORE THE COURSE

- The conference participants are asked to meet initially to plan the running of the course and, in particular, to compile the statistics needed for the Preliminary Session (page 7) "An Overall Look at Our Parish". In some cases exact figures will be hard to come by but all that is really needed is a broad brush stroke portrait.
- Your initial findings should be communicated to the parish through as many channels as are available.
- Please take care not to let the discussion be driven by them. We want the process to be as open as possible.
- Your findings will be made available to Ian Coffey, keynote speaker at the conference.
- The conference participants should then attend the main sessions primarily in a listening role.
- There is no correct number for the course but those participating should reflect age and gender. It would be a good idea to have vestry members, leaders of children's, youth and adult organisations, some "ordinary" members and some new members.
- It is probably better to invite other people as well, as giving an open invitation.

## COURSE CONTENT

- The course explores six key areas of development.
- It offers a range of options, taking into account the variety of parishes taking part in the programme.

It takes a **MENU** approach:

- **STARTER**  ***Suggested timing 10 minutes***  
Designed to open up the issue and get people thinking and talking.
- **MAIN COURSE**  ***Suggested timing 40 minutes***  
The focus of this is a reflection on and unpacking of scripture using a series of questions designed to help people explore the topics in a deeper way. Don't feel you have to use all the questions.
- **DESSERT**  ***Suggested timing 15 minutes***  
This aims to help people respond to God through prayer.

- Please use at least one option from each section with the focus on the Main Course.
- For those who prefer to prepare their own material an alternative scripture passage is suggested.
- You may not want or need to do every session.

## CONDUCTING THE COURSE

- If possible the course should be led by two or more people and the ideal is that the primary leader should be a lay person.
- For discussion divide the participants into groups (probably between 5 and 8 works best).
- Each group should have a leader to chair the discussion, encourage participation from all, keep to the subject and involve everyone.
- Please exercise sensitivity in the prayer exercises. Most of them will work well if people simply pray quietly but if the group is comfortable to pray out loud please encourage that. At any rate it's probably a good idea to discourage long prayers.
- Each group is asked to appoint a recorder. The report should be **brief**, should be agreed by all the members of the group, and should highlight no more than one or two points from each question. This is passed on to the conference participants at the end of each session.
- Some parishes may feel it is best to use an outside facilitator, someone who has no vested interest in, or pre-conceived ideas about, the outcome of the discussion.
- At the end of the day we want you to run the course in a way that you feel happy with, so please use as much or as little of the material as you find helpful. That's not an excuse for playing safe, so please be as creative as possible!

## AFTER THE COURSE

- Following the final session, the four conference participants are invited to meet again to review their initial response to the "Overall Look" in the light of all that they have heard and if necessary amend their responses before sending them to the Working Group.
- The purpose of this course is to open up possibilities which can be explored at the Church21 Conference.
- A brief report should be given to the parish at large, perhaps in a small booklet or in the parish magazine.

## VALUES

As you run the course please bear in mind the values of Church21: respect, listening, gentle challenge, encouragement and careful listening to one another and, above all, to God.

## **PRELIMINARY SESSION**

### **An overall look at our parish**

Parish Development is about looking at our churches from a different angle and as objectively as possible. Later in the process there will be an element of external facilitation, but we begin by asking as representative a group as possible of parishioners to address some basic questions:

#### ***To Start Off (15 minutes)***

The four Church21 conference participants will have compiled some information about the parish. They should try to give a brief overview:

1. A thumbnail description of your parish - not everyone in your parish will know.
2. a) Total numbers – individuals and/or families  
b) Age breakdown:  
    under 4  
    4 – 12  
    13 – 17  
    18 – 25  
    26 – 60  
    60 +  
  
c) Number of churches and number of services  
d) Average attendances at church services  
e) Who attends? What gaps are there?  
f) Organisations and membership  
g) How your financial situation might be rated on a scale of 1-10  
    (10 is comfortable, 1 is precarious!)

Please don't spend too much time presenting this factual information or allow much discussion of it. Emphasise that it is simply to provide background for a more informed discussion of the following questions.

#### ***Questions for discussion***

In the Bible we find God asking four questions:

- Where are you? Gen 3: 9
- What is in your hand? Exodus 4: 2
- What are you doing here? 1 Kings 19: 9
- What do you see? Ezek 8: 15

For us as church today these questions may be interpreted as:

- What are the challenges and opportunities faced in the local community?
- What is your current state as a parish?
- What resources do you have?
- What is your calling?

These are big questions. They are, in a sense, the very questions we will be addressing in Church21 and we will keep coming back to them time and again through the programme. We make no apology for doing so, for we cannot develop in the way God wants unless we are constantly reassessing our priorities in the light of God's will amidst changing circumstances.

***The following questions may help:***

- What has encouraged you in the life of the parish in the last six months?
- What are our hopes and dreams for this parish in the next 3-5 years?
- What strengths and skills are there within this congregation?
- What are the things which could hold us back?
- If I had one wish for this parish it would be.....
- To get to where we'd like to be, what 3 key areas would need to develop?

***Now what?***

It would help us if, preferably, the conference participants or someone else designated by the meeting, would do three things:

1. Communicate your analysis to others in the parish. Start in a way that is appropriate to you eg. through the church magazine, leaflet, website, in church etc. It would be helpful if you could do this before the main sessions start.
2. After attending the main sessions of the course please revisit what you have written. In the light of what you have heard what might you want to change?
3. Record your responses on the form below and return to:

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44 Manse Road  
Kilkeel  
Co Down  
BT34 4BN

[annette@church21.org](mailto:annette@church21.org)



# Church21 Preparation Course

## Session 1: WELCOME



**Choose one of the following options as a discussion starter:**

1. First impressions count! Many are looking for a friendly and welcoming place in which to worship. What first impressions do newcomers get when they visit your church?

*Jesus came to church one day  
And sat down in a pew.  
The Rector preached, the people sang  
And no one ever knew.  
He wasn't dressed in special clothes,  
Nothing fashionable or new,  
No shining light above his head,  
So no one ever knew.  
The service done, the people left,  
They'd other things to do.  
And Jesus also left that church,  
And no one ever knew.*

2. Invite someone from outside the parish to visit and give some feedback on the welcome they received.
3. Invite someone new to the parish to share some of their insights. Encourage honesty.
4. Imagine you have been asked to go to a betting shop and place a bet for a friend. How might you feel? Why? What might help you feel more comfortable? Turn the situation around: how might someone unused to church feel about coming to worship?



**Read Acts 9: 10-20 Ananias welcomes Paul**

**Focus discussion on Ananias as a welcomer.**

(It may be helpful to point out that it is the person rather than the context that is the focus of this study. Hopefully, no parish will ever regard the people outside with quite the same suspicion as that which met Paul!)

- What negative factors might make genuine welcome difficult?
- What qualities made Ananias suitable as a welcomer?
- How can we improve the warmth of our welcome?
- What specific steps can we take to make people feel welcome – without frightening them away!
- What are the first things a newcomer sees, or who are the first people a newcomer meets?
- What ways have we of integrating into the life of the parish new people who have joined the church?
- What should be our 3 priorities in this important area of ministry?

**Alternative passage for study:** Matthew 25: 31 – 40, Hebrews 13: 1,2 and 1 Peter 4: 8,9



1. Invite those present to imagine they are going to a church they've never been to before. Imagine that the welcomer is Jesus. What does he say? How does he act? What do you see in the background? Take time to explore how you feel.

***Pray that Jesus' ministry of welcome might be a reality in your church... and in you.***

2. Ask people to use the letters W-E-L-C-O-M-E to express what they would like the welcome in your church to be e.g. Warm, Encouraging, Loving etc. Write the words on large pieces of paper and place on the floor around the room. Invite people to move around and quietly to pray that these qualities might be reflected in their own lives and in the life of the parish.
3. Invite those present to think of one or two people they know who currently do not attend worship (it could be family members, friends, colleagues, neighbours, anyone) but whom they would like to welcome to church. Play some quiet music. Invite those present if they wish to write the names of those they have identified on a piece of paper and in silence to bring them forward to a set point (eg. a cross on a table). Stress that the pieces of paper will not be identified. It is confidential, between them and God. One person concludes with a spoken prayer e.g. St Patrick's prayer (p.450 BCP). This can be used first in "me" form for the welcomer and then "them" for those to be welcomed.

# Church21 Preparation Course

## Session 2: FELLOWSHIP AND CARING



### 1. THE HAT TRICK

Just as the organ began to play at the crowded morning Communion Service, a man wearing a brown hat was ushered into the front pew. Since he continued to wear the hat, one of the sidesmen came to him kindly suggesting that he take it off. "No", he said, "I prefer to keep it on."

There was some consternation at the back of the church as the churchwardens discussed what they should do. The Rector's warden was enlisted to make another appeal, which he did, only to have the man under the hat reply, "I have every right to keep my hat on, and I intend to do so!" The warden retreated and then had a bright idea, he would ask the Enrolling Member of the Mothers' Union to try and have the hat removed, but alas, she also failed.

The service went ahead, the preacher was distracted by the sight of the man with the hat in the front seat, and his sermon suffered accordingly. Yet through it all, even at the communion rail, the hat still sat glued to the head of the unknown man.

After the recessional hymn, while the people were being greeted as they left, the Rector begged the hated man to stay for a few moments. When all the hands were shaken, the minister approached the man, and in a friendly way, said, "It's nice to meet you, sir. It has been a great pleasure to have you worship with us this morning, and I hope that you will come again. However, it is the custom in the Anglican Church for men to remove their hats during the service. I hope that you might conform to this practice in the future."

The man under the hat replied, "Thank you very much. I enjoyed today's service. It is good of you to invite me to become part of the congregation. In fact I joined three years ago and have been coming regularly ever since, but today has been the first time that anyone has paid any attention to me!"

### ***What issues might this story raise for your parish?***

2. Share with the person beside you one thing that has encouraged you recently in the life and fellowship of your parish.

3. In a TV documentary on "Faith in the Future", a growing church was featured. The programme focussed on one young couple who had started attending church. A couple of things drew them to that particular church:

- a. The worship was lively and sincere and the teaching was relevant.
- b. The friendliness they encountered.

Someone has said that the most effective form of evangelism is friendliness, something we can all attempt.

The threshold of a church is sometimes a bigger barrier than we realise.

A survey in America found that 83% of those who started going to church for the first time did so because they were invited and brought along by a friend.

### ***How did you begin attending this church?***

4. We often end a meeting by saying “The Grace”. Why not begin this session by saying it together? If appropriate suggest keeping eyes open, then unpack what it means, especially the word “fellowship”.



### ***Look at Acts 2: 42-47***

- What were the values of these early Christians as they formed themselves into church?
- How might ours compare?
- What is the fellowship that is talked about here?
- Whose job is it to care for people?
- In what ways can we become a more caring parish?
- What can we do to improve the quality of fellowship in, and identity with, our parish?
- Are there areas of fellowship and caring in our parish that are being neglected and which need attention?
- What ways have we of integrating into the life of the parish new people who join?

### ***Alternative passage for study: James 2: 1 – 4***



1. Play a CD of Graham Kendrick’s song “Peace to you” (Church Hymnal 508). Encourage all present to share the peace without using words, then to pray quietly for someone who is not present.

2. Plant a fast growing flower bulb in a pot. Place it somewhere that people can see it grow week by week. Encourage them to ask each time they see it, “How am

I growing in my faith? How am I contributing to a growing fellowship within this parish?"

3. Use sections 4 and 5 of the Litany (p.176 BCP) to pray for increased fellowship within the parish.

## Church21 Preparation Course

### Session 3: WORSHIP AND NURTURE



1. After a complete visitation of his diocese of Bath and Wells, the then bishop, George Carey, wrote to clergy and churchwardens:

“Bishops and archdeacons spend a great deal of their time worshipping in many different types of churches. They vary a great deal from a High Mass to a low communion. It might be the old Book of Common Prayer, or the revised services, or a free form of Family Service... I don't want to make judgements on what we see going on, but I will tell you this – the quality of what is offered has a significant bearing on the growth of Christianity in that place....I am convinced that worship needs more attention, not less, by congregations, if they are concerned to make it available to others. The better we prepare, the better we hone the human skills of love and devotion, the more it will come from the heart”

#### ***Do you agree? What is the essence of worship?***

2. Encourage those present to share with each other an experience of worship they have had outside their own parish and which made an impression them. What impact did it make and why?
3. Run the Nooma DVD “Sunday”. Ask, “Why do we worship?”

Note: This DVD is widely available. It is stocked by the Good Bookshop, Belfast, and Scripture Union, Talbot St, Dublin. In case of difficulty please contact the Church21 administrator, Annette McGrath ([annette@church21.org](mailto:annette@church21.org)).



#### ***Read Ephesians 5: 15-20***

- Who is worship for?
- What is the connection between worship and life?
- What do you think God would want to say to us about the worship offered in our parish church?
- How accessible are our forms of service and how relevant are they to the lives of our people?
- How might lay people participate to a greater extent in worship?

- What opportunities are there to develop and nurture the faith outside of church services?
- What else should be available?

**Alternative passage for study:** 1 Corinthians 14: 24 – 26, 40



1. Use the Late Evening Office - led by a person or team of people who would not normally lead worship.
2. Thank you/Please prayers. Seated in a circle pass a lighted candle around the group twice. As each person receives the candle they are invited to say "Thank you God for...." (perhaps something in the life of the parish) then, second time round, "Please.... ". Give permission for those who might find it intimidating simply to pray inwardly. Give examples before you start.
3. Pray some quiet instrumental music on CD. In the silence invite each person to pray for three things:
  - a. For one thing for their parish and its worship
  - b. For one other person in the church
  - c. For one thing they'd like to receive for themselves.

Allow several minutes on each topic. One member of the group could conclude with an appropriate spoken or liturgical prayer.

# Church21 Preparation Course

## Session 4: SERVICE TO OTHERS



One of the great 18<sup>th</sup> century evangelists, George Whitefield, went to America. In addition to Bibles and prayer books, he carried medicine for the sick and provisions for the destitute. As well as preaching, he established orphanages and engaged in social action.

A recent conference on Evangelism reported, “The Church faces a clear challenge to be involved....We must change from being maintenance people to those who have outreach as a priority”.

“If we as Christians are out-loved by those who profess no faith in Christ, then our discipleship is seriously questioned”, Rev Jack Burton.

“Churches which put themselves out to meet social needs grow”, Canon Michael Green.

St Francis of Assisi once said to his followers, “Go and preach the Gospel, with words if you must!”

*Find a need and fill it.  
Find a hurt and heal it.*

### ***How are we as a parish serving the wider community?***

There are different kinds of restaurants:

#### **Self-service, Waiter-service and Take away**

1. Can you think of ways that churches might approximate? Which kind of restaurant might our church most resemble?
2. Play the song “The Servant King” (Church Hymnal 219). Look at the words. What kind of service ought to be at the heart of the church? How do we compare?
3. Share examples of good or bad service that members of the group have experienced in everyday life. What’s the worst? The best? What impact did good service have on them? What kind of service is the church called to give?



**Read Mark 10: 35-35**

- Is the church still prone to make the mistake James and John made?
- What kind of service did Jesus envisage for the church?
- What would it mean for us as a church to serve our community?
- What are the real needs in our local area?
- Which of them do you feel God might be asking our parish to address?
- What resources of people, property and expertise has God given to meet these needs?
- With whom can we cooperate?

**Alternative passage for study:** Romans 12: 1 – 10



1. Go for a prayer walk. Take a short walk around the parish or community. Stop at key venues such as schools, factories, places of entertainment and pray (quietly) for those who meet there.
2. Cut out newspaper articles featuring events that have happened recently in the community and world. They can be big or small scale. Place them on the floor. Invite people to read them, pick up one, read it out and either pray for it or ask others to pray quietly into the situation.
3. Read the story of the woman anointing Jesus' feet with expensive perfume (Mark 14: 1-9). Invite people to reflect on this extravagant act of service. Make the point that we are called to serve others extravagantly by passing round a bottle of perfume and invite people to sprinkle the person beside them with some of the perfume as a kind of "commissioning" to go out and put this into practice. The lingering smell can be a powerful reminder.
4. Use all or part of the Renewal of Baptismal Vows (p.398 BCP).

# Church21 Preparation Course

## Session 5: COMMUNICATIONS



1. Ian Coffey, in a seminar on Growing Churches, remarked how much of an impression is given by our service sheets, magazines and other communications.

***“They should be of good quality. “Casual is not spiritual!”***

Presentation is important and reflects the ethos of the parish.

### ***How well do we communicate?***

2. Your church has decided to produce a welcome leaflet to give to people new to the area. What would you want it to say about your parish church to someone who knows nothing about it?

3. Imagine that in five years time a headline in the local newspaper reads, “(The name of your) Parish Church Makes Big Splash!” What message would you want it to give about the church to someone who knows nothing about it?

4. The organisation ADMINISTRY has identified 3 categories of essential church communication:

1. The occasional leaflet/invitation to major events, eg. Christmas, Harvest, Weeks of Renewal, Flower Festivals etc., which will be circulated beyond the parish membership.
2. The monthly Parish Magazine which has 3 basic aims:
  - a) To inform church members of activities about to take place and to report on past events.
  - b) To present what the church means to members and to teach about the faith.
  - c) To present the parish as lively and involved fellowship to visitors and to those with only a tenuous link.
3. The weekly service sheet/announcement sheet.

***Would it be a good idea to do a survey of what parishioners think about communication and how it could be improved?***



**Read Matthew 13: 1-7, 34-35, 51-52**

- What evidence is there that Jesus was a good communicator?
- What methods did he use?
- What implications might this have for the way we communicate as a parish?
- What did Jesus want to communicate?
- What do we want to communicate?
- What message do our buildings, both outside and inside, give, and are they easily identified and accessible?
- Are announcements in church really the best way of informing parishioners about what's happening?

**Alternative passage for study:** 1 Corinthians 14: 7,8



1. Get a string of Christmas tree lights with one bulb blown. What effect does this have? When the bulb is replaced read Matthew 5: 15, "Let your light so shine..." Use the bulb as a stimulus for prayer. Invite the group to share with God their longing for his light to fill the dark places of the community and the world.
2. Draw a map of the local area and highlight meeting places for significant numbers of people. Pray that the message we seek to communicate might permeate those places.
3. Use Thursday Weekday Intercessions (p.142 BCP)

# Church21 Preparation Course

## Session 6: MINISTRY



1. A former Archbishop of Canterbury is reputed to have been asked by a reporter on a tour of Lambeth Palace, “How many people work here?” to which he replied, “About half of them!” Many churches would be happy if anything like half of those who claimed membership were active in working for the parish.

### ***Why is it so hard to get people involved?***

2. A Church of Ireland parish church has listed on its noticeboard the times of service, the names of the clergy and contact details. Then, right at the bottom, it says: “Ministers - the Whole Congregation”.

### ***What would the reaction be if this was included on your church noticeboard?***

3. In a seminar on Church Growth, Ian Coffey identified the DNA of growing churches. One of the common factors was that members were encouraged to discover their gifts and then given opportunities to use them. They were not only given responsibility but were also trained and resourced.

### ***Is this a weakness in our church (nationally and locally)?***



### ***Read 1 Corinthians 12: 4-13, 27***

- What words come to mind when listening to Paul’s description of the church?
- What are the principles on which a church should operate?
- Are there parts of the body that think they are not needed?
- In what ways do you think ministry can and should be shared?
- What is needed to make collaborative ministry a reality?
- In Ian Coffey’s analysis of growing churches, huge resources were poured into ministry for children and young people. Is our church child-friendly and family friendly? Are children the forgotten people? How can they be integrated into the worship and life of the parish?
- A ministry to children and a ministry to young people are two distinct areas. What are we doing in both?
- What is your vision for the ministry of your church?

**Two useful quotes:**

“The “omni-competent cleric” does not exist! But an omni-competent congregation is very biblical.”

Hans Reudi Weber has written, “The laity are not there to help the clergy do their job. The clergy are there to help the laity be the church.”

**Alternative passage for study:** Ephesians 4: 4-16



1. Use Wednesday Weekday Intercessions (p.141 BCP)
2. Go into the church building. Invite people (together or in small groups) to pray for those who regularly sit in certain areas of the church, that each person, of whatever age, would find opportunity and encouragement to use their gifts.
3. Ask those present to form into a circle. Invite each member of the group in turn to stand in the middle of the circle. As the group gathers round in prayer and blessing, a designated person reads some words based on 1 Corinthians 12: 27. The following are suggested:

“Now all of us together are Christ’s body and you (name...) are a valued and necessary part of it. May God equip and strengthen you do his will. Amen.”