

## Newman Assembly Oct 2015

### OUTCOMES and SUMMARY of MAIN THEMES

#### 1] OUTCOMES

Broad agreement was reached to commit to the following

- i] to examine the possibility of changing the membership rules to enable all members to be full members
- ii] to establish working group/s made up of Council and non Council members to consider changes to
  - a] the mission of the NA
  - b] methods of communication between Council and Circles and the NA and the Church
  - c ] financing the NA
- iii] to modernise the membership form, make it available online and delete the requirement for sponsors and the word profession

#### 2] SUMMARY of MAIN THEMES

**NB.** Any attempt to summarise the main themes has to take into account the wide variety of views expressed on the majority of the themes discussed below.

The need for the Newman Association to remain in existence was undisputed. Many expressed the view that the Newman Association occupies a unique place in the Church by providing an independent forum where the laity meets freely to discuss topics of their choice. Also, with near unanimous support, was the view that the Newman Association should remain a Catholic organisation. More than one speaker described the Association as a “safe” place for discussion and learning to take place. The Assembly did not debate the role of ecumenism with regard to the future development of the Association to any great extent.

#### a] The Mission of the Newman Association

Much debate centred on the mission of the Newman Association and whether a new image stemming from a renewed vision for the Newman Association for the 21<sup>st</sup> century might be a significant move forward which could impact profitably on increasing the membership numbers and age profile of the Association. One member suggested applying a business operating model to rebranding the Newman Association and applied business “speak” to an analysis of how we might take the Association forward. This could include identifying our USP [unique selling point], deciding on our target audience, product marketing, developing up to 5 year business and financial plans on a yearly basis and possibly having a new logo, to mention just some of the points. For some members such jargon did not seem to fit with the culture of Newman, however it was agreed that these ideas could be used as a framework for relooking at how we promote Newman and many thought the

establishment of a working group to look at these ideas in more detail a clear and positive step forward. The general consensus was that it might be more sensible to make our target audience the 40/50 plus age group rather than young people.

b)Methods of communication between Council and Circles and the Newman Association and the Church

Communication as a general theme was much discussed with varying opinions expressed. Some members felt that much good work following the last two Circle Officers Conference had improved communications considerably between Circles and Council and that the website was an invaluable source of information. Others argued for still more and better communication between Council and Circles. Should there be a greater awareness of how Council makes decisions? Should the minutes of Council meetings be circulated to all members?

There was more of a consensus concerning the need for much better communication from the Newman Association not only within the parishes, but specifically with the hierarchy and the Bishops. A definite need for more active promotion of the Newman Association across the Church was identified and ways of achieving this could possibly be the remit of another working group or form part of the scope of the working group looking at the mission of the Newman Association.

There was near unanimous approval for and appreciation of the Newman Journal both as a means of communicating Newman Association activities but also as being a valuable benefit of Newman Association membership.

C] Financing the Newman Association.

Here again many differing and opposing views were expressed. Some members were quite happy with maintaining the status quo, others suggesting root and branch change largely emanating from the idea of a bottom up organisation rather than a top down, which in terms of financing the organisation might suggest Circles retaining more monies than is at present possible. The questions of funding university bursaries and membership of other Catholic organisations also elicited differing opinions with equally passionate views being expressed for and against. The formation of a working group to consider how the Newman Association uses its finances was suggested and generally agreed upon.

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