

**FORWARD IN FAITH
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY 2019**

ITEM 3: FAREWELL TO DR COLIN PODMORE AS DIRECTOR

DR PODMORE'S RESPONSE

It's seven years since I embraced the role of Director of Forward in Faith, and seven years is a season. Now it's time to move on. It was a vocation, and I remain very grateful to have been given the opportunity to make a difference to the future of the Catholic Movement in the Church of England. Of course, I'm also very conscious of the mistakes that I've made a long the way: I hope I have learned from them. The work of taking Forward in Faith into a new era has not just been my work but a team effort, involving staff colleagues, trustees, Council members, bishops and a few key individuals beyond those circles as well.

Indeed, many of you have been involved in that work across the country. In the end Forward in Faith is you, our members, and it is what you make of it. One of the very enjoyable and rewarding aspects of this work has been visiting Forward in Faith branches in a large number of dioceses, north, south, east and west. I have received a very warm welcome and great kindness, and found a lot of enthusiasm and commitment, in so many places. One of my regrets is that, though quite a few branches that were dormant have been revived, that work of reviving the branches everywhere is not yet complete: it will fall to my successor to complete it. Where branches do function, they are an essential link between what is inevitably a somewhat remote national office and individual members in the dioceses and parishes. There are many branch officers here today: we couldn't do our work nationally without you, so thank you very much indeed.

If I may, I'd like to leave you with a final message. When I started working for the Church of England 31 years ago, I worked in what was then called the Board for Mission and Unity in Church House. I'd like to encourage you to focus on those two words: mission and unity.

First, Unity. Part of our identity as Forward in Faith is that we are, in part, a campaigning body. We are a movement that has things to fight against and things to fight for. We are something of an insurgent movement. A fundamental principle of any insurgent movement is the need for discipline and unity. Anything that undermines that unity, any occasion when the troops start firing at their own officers, or at each other, can only result in weakness, damage and defeat. Let's direct our fire outwards, and devote our energies to attacking forces that threaten catholic faith and order. Please guard the unity of our movement.

And secondly, Mission. A lot of my work, and our work in my time, has been about structures and politics. A lot of that work is done. What is essential now is that we use the opportunities we have won, and been given, in order to bring people to Christ, to build up Christ's Church in our parishes, and build up the sees of each of our Society bishops – spiritually, but yes, also numerically. That is the task for the future. It will be my successor's task to enable and support that mission. I wish him, and all of you, every success.