

A Strategy for Ministry in Cumbria

Explanatory Memorandum

Introduction

1. In October 2013 Diocesan Synod resolved that the Diocese should commit to a process of examining, at the local level, the Ministry Strategy that had been presented to the Synod and how it might be applied. Synod's stated goal in this was to see a ministry strategy presented at its meeting in October 2014 with a view to it being formally adopted.
2. The Synod also called for the setting up of a body to receive feedback from across the Diocese and provide advice to the Bishop's Leadership Team and the Bishop's Council.
3. Following feedback, both formal and informal, from the deaneries and discussions within the Diocese and with our ecumenical partners a revised version of the Ministry Strategy has been drawn up.
4. This Explanatory Memorandum seeks to:
 - a. summarise feedback from the process and how it has impacted on or is impacted by the strategy that is now presented,
 - b. clarify aspects of the strategy and the intent behind it,
 - c. consider aspects of the implementation of the strategy.
5. The explanatory memorandum is primarily written in terms of guidance to members of the Carlisle Diocese. It supports the ministry strategy '*A Strategy for Ministry in Cumbria*' being presented to Synod in October 2014.

Context

6. There are four main drivers for the strategy:
 - a. the *Diocesan Vision and Strategy* and its call to **grow disciples**,
 - b. the recognition that the number of stipendiary clergy will drop significantly over the next few years as a greater number of clergy retire than are replaced by ordination,
 - c. the need to devote considerably more effort to outreach through pioneering forms of ministry and fresh expressions of church in order to bring church to the people that we currently do not reach,
 - d. the desire to sustain, grow and strengthen traditional congregations and new forms of church.
7. The strategy has an ecumenical context; it is a strategy shared by the United Reformed Church, the Methodist Church and the Anglican Church across Cumbria under the **growing together** banner and calls for the denomination to actively work together at the local level. It does not call for integration or a loss of diversity.
8. The implementation of the strategy, if adopted, will also require us to look at our buildings (in line with the *Buildings Strategy*).

9. This strategy is definitively not a strategy for managing decline – an attempt to stretch declining resources more and more thinly. The clear intent is to mobilise and equip an increasing resource for mission and ministry across Cumbria, but in the recognition of a drop in the number of stipendiary clergy and in the knowledge that we have to live within our means (albeit that some additional financial support may be available from external sources such as the Church Commissioners).
10. Although the strategy is very much concerned with growth and not decline there will be situations where we will need to determine what to stop doing and what resources we should no longer retain, but in the spirit of pruning the dead wood to encourage growth.

Feedback received

11. A separate report from the *Ministry Strategy Feedback and Advisory Group* details much of the feedback received about the draft strategy, together with the issues that have been raised and responses to them.
12. The revised Ministry Strategy and this document take into account significant aspects of that feedback.

The strategy

13. Two key principles are being adopted in this strategy:
 - a. *empowerment/devolution* – the Diocese is not seeking to impose a particular model, rather it is up to deaneries and parishes to determine the appropriate form for their mission communities, their forms of ministry, mission and outreach and their patterns of worship and to play a major role in determining who their leaders will be
 - b. *contextual flexibility* – the strategy recognises the need for mission communities to be shaped by and for the local context.

Mission communities

14. The hope is that every Anglican parish and its churches, every Methodist church and every United Reformed church should fall under the umbrella¹ of a mission community.
15. It is anticipated that the parishes in a mission community will, in most cases, be geographically adjacent to one another. However this is not a fixed requirement and neither is it the case that all the parishes in a mission community must currently be part of the same Deanery.

Mission community leaders

16. A job description and person specification for mission community leaders has been drawn up. This will be contextualized locally depending on the circumstances and needs of the particular mission community.

¹ The term 'umbrella' is used in the sense of an 'umbrella organization', an organization that provides a sense of community and support, shared activities, economies of scale, a better pool of expertise and experience, shared 'apprenticeships'.

17. Initially, when a mission community is being established, any suitably qualified person already in post in the mission community may apply to fill the role of mission community leader. Subsequently, as vacancies arise in the community, the role will also be open to suitably qualified people from outside the community.
18. The Bishop will be involved in the appointment of a mission community leader; there will also be, where appropriate, ecumenical involvement.
19. It is anticipated that an ordained mission community leader will also normally play a ministerial role with respect to one or more of the parishes, churches or congregations in the mission community.
20. The role is seen as encompassing more than parish ministry, in particular:
 - a. oversight of the mission community as a whole
 - b. identifying potential among church members
 - c. leading and developing the ministry / leadership team
 - d. promoting outreach and mission
 - e. a key role in determining vision
21. Mission community leaders are charged with bringing about a transformation within their community and as such will need to be equipped for and supported in that role by people with the requisite expertise and experience.

The form of a mission community

22. The strategy does not attempt to mandate precisely what form a mission community should take.
23. One pattern for a mission community that has a long and established history is the 'minster model'. In this model one church acts as a focus for a number of church communities and as a base for a team involved in mission and ministry across the wider area².
24. Whilst the minster model provides a good pattern for some contexts it is certainly not applicable everywhere and we expect a number of different patterns to evolve.
25. A key requirement of the strategy is that each church or congregation will be led by a designated, dedicated church or congregation leader – who might well be a lay person – as part of a local leadership team. This is seen as a really key requirement of the strategy, in part to overcome a recognised shortcoming that is frequently found to apply to Team Ministry and is associated with spreading ministry too thinly across multiple parishes. It is also intended to allow a greater focus on outreach and mission by ordained ministers and to facilitate more specialised forms of ministry.

² An example of such a mission community is being developed across the benefice of Lanercost, Walton, Gilsland and Nether Denton coupled with the benefice of Bewcastle and Stapleton and Kirklington with Hethersgill, with Lanercost Priory acting as the minster church. This initiative began before the introduction of the current ministry strategy but is a good example of one form that a mission community might take. It encompasses six parishes, eight churches, a House of Prayer and has ecumenical involvement.

26. A mission community is also expected to have dedicated administrative support in order to substantially reduce the administrative overhead on stipendiary and self-supporting ministers and local church leaders.

Forming a mission community

27. During the period following on from the October 2013 Synod shaping groups in each Deanery have been exploring the possible forms of mission communities in their respective deaneries in conjunction with ecumenical partners and have begun the process of discussion with individual PCCs, churches, congregations, Network Youth Church standing committees, etc. If the strategy for ministry now being presented is agreed it is anticipated that this work will form the basis for defining prototype mission communities.
28. The primary agreement to work towards forming a mission community needs to come from the bodies that will become part of the community – in the case of the Diocese that will be the individual PCCs.
29. In working towards forming a mission community it is important that ecumenical partners, where appropriate, are involved in the discussion – even if the outcome is an agreement about joint working rather than shared ministry and strategy.
30. The agreement to work towards forming the mission community needs the support of the Deanery. In the case that a mission community will cross existing Deanery boundaries the support will be needed of all the Deaneries involved.
31. Before a mission community can operate as such it will also need the support of the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee (it is assumed that those committees will have ecumenical representation).
32. When the structure of a prototype mission community has been agreed it will need to form a leadership team and plan the work of the community in more detail in order to be able to meet the criteria detailed in the *Archway* document (see next section).

What needs to be in place?

33. In order for a Mission Community to be celebrated and commissioned certain things must be in place³:
- a. The shape and size of the Mission Community has been agreed by the local congregations and the Mission and Pastoral Committees.
 - b. There is evidence of ecumenical discussion and involvement as appropriate.
 - c. A Mission Community leader has been appointed.
 - d. A leadership team consisting of all authorized leaders in post is in existence.
 - e. A first year plan has been prepared, including:
 - i. Time and process line for establishing the Mission Community,

³ These are set out in more detail in a document entitled *Mission Community Archway*, a draft of which may be found at <http://msfag.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/docs/archway.pdf>.

- ii. How the discernment and appointment of local church leaders will happen,
- iii. Identified priorities for Mission (gleaned from local MAPs, etc.),
- iv. Planning for pioneer ministry (which should already have begun),
- v. How an administrator is to be appointed.

34. Certain other things are also desirable:

- a. The Mission Community leader has begun the training provided for the change of role.
- b. A consultant for the Mission Community has been identified and appointed.
- c. An agreed worship timetable across the Mission Community has been drawn up.

Resourcing a mission community

- 35. During the formation of a mission community there will a real need to discern the people who will play key roles, determine the roles that they will play and to appropriately develop and equip them for those roles. Significant hands-on support will be required from Archdeacons and other church leaders.
- 36. Once a mission community has been established there will be an ongoing need for mentoring and for continuing ministerial education for clergy and laity. The mission community leaders will play a key role in ensuring that such ongoing resource is in place and, indeed, will provide some of it themselves.
- 37. In the case of Anglican ordained and lay ministers it is anticipated that many will be licensed across the mission community rather than just for an individual parish or benefice, although in practice some may principally serve only one church community.

Pioneering ministry

- 38. Pioneering ministry is a key strand of the strategy for ministry; the forms of that ministry⁴ need to be determined for the local context rather than being centrally mandated. Every mission community is expected to make a substantial investment in genuine pioneering ministry and outreach – the figure of 30% of ministry resource being directed at pioneering ministry has been used as the level that mission communities should aspire to.
- 39. Each mission community will be expected to work with deanery-wide initiatives, including Network Youth Church.

Lay ministry

- 40. The strategy envisages a significant increase, over a period of time, of self-sustained ordained ministers. Nevertheless, for a number of reasons, it anticipates that the role and scope of lay ministry will increase significantly and will be accompanied by a

⁴ A useful resource when considering forms of pioneering ministry is the Fresh Expressions website <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/>.

substantial increase in the numbers of the laity actively involved in mission and ministry.

41. It should be emphasised that much greater lay ministry is seen as a desirable aim in its own right and not simply as a reaction to the decrease in the numbers in stipendiary ministry.
42. Lay ministry is seen as important not only in terms of leading existing churches and congregations but also in terms of mission; across the country the majority of pioneering ministries are led by unpaid lay ministers.
43. For the strategy to be truly successful and scalable it is key that the discernment, development and equipping of lay ministers and leaders must be a priority for of the local mission community and largely its responsibility.

Implementation of the strategy

44. If the strategy for ministry is approved at the October 2014 Synod the practical implementation of the strategy can commence.
45. The aspiration⁵ is that every parish should be a part of a mission community by 2020.

Legal status

46. At the outset a mission community will not exist as a separate legal entity, it will simply be the aggregation of its component elements. Over time individual mission communities might well decide that they wish to pursue a more formal arrangement.
47. Within a mission community the Anglican parishes might decide that they want to come together in a more permanent way as a combined parish or benefice by means of a suitable pastoral re-organisation scheme.
48. A mission community might also determine that the way forward is by joining a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area (see <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/work-other-churches/england/methodists/covenant-partnerships-in-extended-areas.aspx>) in order to allow ecumenical sharing of facilities and ministry.

The strategy as a growth strategy

49. This is a strategy whose clear focus is on **growth** and particularly **growing disciples**.
50. If the strategy is to be successful in our aim to grow God's Kingdom in Cumbria we need to carefully heed the lessons to be learnt from the evidence that has been gathered about the factors that lead to church growth and those that lead to decline. A key resource is the *From Anecdote to Evidence* report containing the findings from the *Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013* available at www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/report; it provides a useful yardstick against which to view and assess the plans for an individual mission community.

⁵ This is deliberately expressed as an aspiration and not a target or requirement. The explicit intent is that a mission community should not come into operation until the necessary *archway* conditions have been clearly and freely met, irrespective of the 2020 date.

51. A key finding of that research is that Team Ministries have not, in general, led to growth. It is important to recognise those key features of the mission community strategy that are aimed specifically at overcoming the aspects of the team ministry approach that have hindered growth, in particular the key importance of having a recognized dedicated leader for each church and congregation, the need to nurture vocations and the need to properly tap the gifts of the laity.

16 September 2014