# Ministry Strategy – feedback from parishes and others

*Feedback was received from over 100 churches, gatherings and individuals. Over 100,000 words of feedback were received, so clearly these six pages are a summary.* **These gathered comments are designed to inform Synod as it debates the Strategy**.

*There are three sections – Strengths, Concerns and Suggestions – which follow the sections on the feedback form. A number in* **bold** *at the end of a sentence means more than one person or group gave this feedback. Inset sentences (in blue) with a square bullet are quotes.*

## Main strengths

- Working, planning and sharing ecumenically. x **49**
- A sensible and forward-looking approach to the future. x **24**
- Encourages more lay involvement and releasing people's gifts. Ministry for/by all. x **22**
- Welcome the 'mission community' approach of churches sharing together. x **10**
- Will encourage alternative ways of doing church, and may attract (younger) others. x **10**
- Could make the maintaining Christian presence in each community more sustainable, and increases interaction and sharing of resources between churches. x **9**
- Helps people see Church as a community, not just a building. x **9**
- Faces up to realities, including fewer paid priests in the future. x **9**
- Gives smaller churches more critical mass and keeps them alive for the future. x **7**
- The provision of administrative support as part of these proposals. x **5**
- Flexibility and retains final decision-making in parishes. x **5**
- A wake-up/shake-up, fresh awakening for the Church. x **4**
- Rural and urban are encouraged to look at these issues together, and share resources. x **2**
  - "We valued an outward looking approach that works with others to reach those missing from the church." (x **11**)
  - "An attempt to honestly face up to the realities of where we are, and do something." (x **16**)
  - "It is good to have a whole-county vision."
  - "Please don't spend forever consulting etc – get on with it." (x **3**)
  - "We liked the clear documentation and consultation process. The Strategy seems to have already been thoroughly thought-through." (x **2**)
  - "Paid clergy are not good at everything so can use lay people to cover their weak areas."
  - "Some traditional church members are fearful of change – other can't wait!"
  - "We support authorised lay leaders as shepherds of individual congregations". (x **3**)
  - "Against the background (of a steady decline in clergy numbers and declining interest in organised religion among the young) we cannot see any better way of retaining a strong and inclusive Christian church in the diocese." (x **3**)
  - "The emphasis on sustaining pastoral ministry is welcome." (x **2**)
  - "If the principal plan for the future is for the whole baptised community to be carrying out the ministry of the local church, then that needs to be the No 1 headline."
  - "We know we have to change and are supportive, but it frightens us too!"

# Concerns and issues

- Labelling these 'Mission Communities' does not make them all about *mission*. How, <u>in practice</u>, will Mission Communities be more missional than what is currently happening? How will these proposals help grow disciples across Cumbria? x **7**
- Changing the style and pattern of church (for some/many churchgoers, particularly in rural areas) may lead to disenchantment and a decline in numbers. x **6**
- Is there really "no Plan B"? There must be alternatives. People need intelligent choices. x **5**
- Paid (stipendiary) clergy will become even more remote and apart from our communities. x **3**
- Even with this strategy will there not be still too many small (rural) churches? x **2**
- The proposals seem to assume that most parishes have moved from 'survival to revival' and have embraced a mission approach to what they are doing. That assumption is optimistic.
- Introducing new Mission Communities may mean a reversal of good existing relationship.
- How will disputes between parishes (or ecumenical issues) be resolved? Who will have the authority to do that, and how?
- Where/how do larger churches fit into this pattern?
  - "If there were a move from pastoral to mission in our community this could do great damage to the existing faith of involved Christians." (x **3**)
  - "There is a danger that this is a survival strategy, not a growth strategy."
  - "We are very concerned that this is a vision which is unachievable."
  - "We were not very enthusiastic, with a lot of concern about the levels of research, detail and realism of the proposals, and hesitation about the assumptions of the whole process."
  - "The strategy might work better in urban areas but in rural there is more need for pastoral care than for mission."
  - "We fear that, even with these arrangements, we may still close because of a lack of commitment or finance."

## Mission Communities

- What confidence is there that there are sufficient clergy who are willing and able to be mission community leaders – leaders in <u>*mission*</u>, not simple managers of churches? x **10**
- The name 'mission community' is not helpful or clear. How, in practice and in plain English, will these be <u>communities</u>? And will they actually, in real life, be about <u>mission</u>? x **7**
- Mission Communities should not be too large. If they are too large then people will lose a sense of belonging and travel becomes dificult and expensive. x **5**
- What will happen to parishes that are unwilling to try this approach? Can they opt out? x **4**
- Will these proposals mean there are even more meetings and bureaucracy than at present, thereby distracting us from mission? x **4**
- How will the individual Mission Communities be agreed? Each PCC needs to have the opportunity to be actively involved in any proposed arrangements? x **4**
- Mission Communities need to be respectful of the different traditions within them. x **4**
- What will be the process of deciding which church will be in which Mission Community, and in particular how will this be sorted for churches of other denominations? x **2**
- How, *in practice*, will leadership and authority flow in a Mission Community?
- Mission Communities need to be based on history and geographic relationships.
- Who will have authority over Mission Community Leaders – to ensure they are fulfilling their role? Do Bishops or Archdeacons have capacity for such in-depth work and encouragement.

**Ministry and vocations**

- The aspiration of 100 additional ordained ministers and 50 to 150 additional lay ministers by 2020 is too ambitious. Where are all these vocations coming from, and how will they be recruited? x **28**
- Some laity will welcome additional responsibility and involvement. But many laity are already tired or overworked. Do these proposals expect too much of the laity? Will those already working hard decide enough is enough and step back? x **15**
- In small (rural) churches there are simply not enough people to take more responsibility. x **5**
- Danger of clergy drifting (or being attracted) into increased 'managerialism'. x **4**
- In many areas of society volunteering is diminishing. These proposals assume a massive increase in volunteering. Additional volunteers will need extra support. x **4**
- How will local leaders be trained and monitored? What will be the role of the local leaders? x **4**
- The strategy seems to enormously add to the workload of existing clergy. x **4**
- What confidence is there that clergy will want to work in the Mission Community set-up? x **3**
- How will new local ministers, lay and ordained, be selected or called out. Will a process of selection create friction or tension within congregations? x **2**
- What happens to churches that cannot raise their own leaders? Will they fade away? x **2**
- How can clergy and lay be inspired and enthused for these new roles and opportunities? x **2**
- How can we ensure that people are in the right roles? Not all clergy are good pastors or managers.
- Some lay people will be put off by the need for training and the focus on 'mission'.
- (Some) Readers will welcome being deployed across a wider area.
- Clergy who have less contact with their congregations will struggle to discern and encourage new leaders.
- Can our diocesan training plans cope with all these additional people to be trained?
- Re-introduce Local Ordained Ministry.
- Will there be sufficient and suitable 'training incumbents' for all these additional vocations?
- Will clergy approaching retirement (and other clergy) have the necessary enthusiasm to approach the challenges of the Strategy?
- This pattern of ministry is not what many clergy signed-up to.
  - "Baptism, not ordination, is the primary authority for Christian ministry. For most types of lay ministry, baptism is sufficient authority".
  - "The capacity and sustainability of aging PCCs is limited. We are expected to do more and more with fewer and fewer."
  - "To grow as disciples we don't need 'training'. We need development and enabling."
  - "What happens to these proposals if these additional clergy are not recruited?"
  - "In rural communities lay leaders will not be accepted. Only 'the vicar' is 'the church'."
  - "It is necessary to inspire the laity (and clergy!) with a vision of the ministries to which the laity might be called and to consider carefully how those ministries will be authorised."

**Vocations and training – suggestions**

- Training for different ministries needs to be adapted so it is practical, or modular and/or 'on the job' and 'student-friendly', while still retaining the necessary standard. x **13**
  Could training for various lay ministries be deanery-based, or home-grown? x **4**
- A strategy is needed to promote vocations, particularly to self-supporting ministry.
  Is there sufficient diocesan capacity to encourage, identify and equip new leaders? x **5**

- In order for people to imagine what this might be like in practice can there be different examples of: (a) where ecumenical co-operation is working well; (b) where a pioneer minister is bearing fruit; (c) where a Fresh Expression has become financially and numerically self-sustainable. Examples need to be relevant to the diversity of rural/urban Cumbria. x **4**
- Lay people need to be adequately and theologically trained for ministry and leadership. x **3**
- Can the ministry of the distinctive Diaconate be developed? x **2**

**Pioneering and fresh expressions**

- ▪ "Good that there is a positive emphasis on Fresh Expressions." (x **6**)
- There is a danger that the benefits of existing parochial structures will be ignored at the expense of an emphasis on pioneering. Help *existing* parish patterns become more 'pioneering' rather than create a parallel pattern. One third of ministers involved with 'pioneering' is too high. (x **4**)
- Although 'pioneering ministry' sounds exciting and positive what will it look like <u>in practice</u>? What evidence is there that this will be fruitful, to make the allocation of resources worthwhile? x **3**
- Pioneering ministers must not be independent of church structures and must quickly become financially self-supporting.
  - ▪ "Too much emphasis on evangelism and 'pioneering' is going to put people off."
  - ▪ "We simply do not have more money (for pioneering ministry)."

**Process**

- More time is needed to consider the Strategy at local level and to examine and pray about some of the issues raised. x **19**
- This is not a *strategy* showing how this will be achieved. A strategy needs a clear process showing <u>how</u> this will be achieved as well as what is hoped for. What? When? Who? How? x **16**
- The Strategy is complicated and overwhelming, and not easy to understand. Can it be re-written without jargon, in plain English and with simplicity? x **9**
- What level of confidence can Synod have that all this can be achieved by 2020? x **8**
  What evidence is there that these proposals will 'work'?
- People need to be kept informed, and need to feel consulted. Keep consulting. x **7**
- This feels like a 'top down' initiative in a diocese that has sought to value local ideas and participation. Therefore the Strategy may struggle to get local ownership. If this strategy is imposed from above then it implies a 'lack of trust' in locally-led evolution and development. x **4**
- There should have been more lay people involved in producing the Strategy. x **2**
- It feels like those who wrote the Strategy are out of touch with rural churches. x **2**
- Have people <u>outside</u> church been consulted about this strategy? x **2**
- Does the Bishop's Leadership Team have the capacity to deal with the many complex issues that this strategy (and the other two key strategies) will raise?
- Should Diocesan Synod be voting on this without inviting each PCC and Deanery to vote first?
  - ▪ "Leave local churches to develop their own projects at grass-roots level rather than impose something from above. Growing together is an organic process that cannot be managed." (x **8**)
  - ▪ "If feedback is returned by 30 September and Synod meets on 12 October how can there have been time for the feedback to be considered and the proposals modified accordingly?" (x **5**)
  - ▪ "Little is known about whether this 'strategy' is practical and outcomes are feasible." (x **2**)
  - ▪ "These proposals appeared 'out of the blue' without any prior consultation." (x **2**)
  - ▪ "These proposals seem to be about changing structures, not changing attitudes." (x **2**)

**Finance and resources**

- These proposals need to be properly costed and assessed. x **8**
  Are all the new vocations and training affordable? Will these proposal save money or cost more? x **14**
- Will churches be willing to financially support these proposals, given that they could appear to give them less 'vicar' and request churches to support pioneering work from which they may see little benefit? Will these proposals reduce Parish Offer? x **10**
- How will costs (and income) be shared ecumenically? x **4**
- The main thrust of the Strategy is 'finance and management'. Where is God in all this? x **3**
- New financial resources for mission will need to come from 'the centre' because traditional church is already too stretched… Will the Church Commissioners give additional support? x **2**
- How will the cross-over period between now and the plans being operational be funded?
- Money should only be spent on church (buildings) where the Strategy has been implemented.
  - "People are generous in giving when they are clear about what their money will be spent on and where it will go. 'Fuzzy' concepts such as 'pioneering' will need to be clearly explained."

**Ecumenical**

- Making ecumenical integration and shared ministry such a core area of the strategy massively adds to the complexity, fragility and controversy of what is being proposed. Keep/start this Anglican. x **12**
- What about interaction and involvement with other denominations and churches, in addition to Methodist and URC? x **8** Have they been consulted about the strategies?
- If there is more ecumenical involvement that must not diminish variety of styles in worship. x **3**
- How can the substantial theological and ecclesiological denominational differences be resolved?
- Many Methodist and URC churches are facing serious decline. Why link to such ailing churches?
- The ecumenical commitment needs to be sustained into the future. If new county-level denominational leaders are appointed how can we be sure that they will sustain this commitment?
  - "A 'merger' of denominations is a step too far."
  - "What is proposed in the Strategy seems to move a long way beyond what was affirmed in the Covenant in autumn 2011." (x **2**)
  - "Do we know enough about the strengths and weaknesses of the partner ecumenical churches?"

**Anglican style, emphases, pattern, ecclesiology and tradition**

- Some are Anglicans because this is their natural home. Any shift to becoming more like other denominations would be unwelcome or mean church attenders go elsewhere. Traditions and beliefs risk being diluted by ecumenical integration. x **10**
- Will there be enough ordained ministers to sustain the sacramental life of our churches? x **4**
- Clergy or congregations with a particular view about priesthood or woman's ministry may find that view compromised by ecumenical or other appointments, particularly to the role of Leader of Mission Communities.
- Can Extended Communion be used more frequently to solve the problem of less priests?
  - "We need to develop less dependency on the Eucharist."
  - "Aiming to have a service in each church each week (Communion) is a positive step."
  - "Will we lose our style or tradition…"
  - "Will these proposals result in us having less services? If so then, even though we support the general ideas, we are cautious."
  - "We fully support the ideas but need reassurance that we will not disappear."

**Legalities**

- Complex legal issues… particularly patronage and appointments, governance, authorised (ecumenical) ministry, Listed Buildings, forms of worship, Canon Law… The Strategy documents give little indication that these matters have been considered. x **20**
- New ministry patterns need to relate to the rest of the Church of England. Don't 'go it alone'.
- Currently many legalities are the responsibility of the vicar. Can these be moved away from the vicar and passed to others (parish officers, for example). This would free-up clergy for mission and ministry.
  - "There are many legal responsibilities attached to being an Anglican priest. It is unlikely that these can be transferred to a minister from a different denomination."
  - "The removal of Deaneries will diminish representation within the diocese."

## Suggestions

- Adopt a closure programme for failing, weak or duplicated churches, and encouraging churches to combine into larger and more sustainable Christian communities. x **7**
- The need for flexibility of approach. Across Cumbria one size cannot fit all. x **8**
- The importance of (church) schools needs to feature in the Strategy. x **3**
- Lay presidency should be explored and introduced. x **3**
- Dissolve existing Deanery boundaries, or dissolve deaneries to remove an administrative 'layer'. x **3**
- Can there be a pilot scheme so that we can learn lessons from setting up and working a Mission Community? x **3**
- Do more work to discover why we are in this situation, so we address those causes and problems. x **2**
- Is there scope for centralising or coordinating lay administrative roles, eg Treasurer, PCC Secretary, church building oversight etc, so reducing lay time spent on PCC's etc? x **2**
- Involve young people in the Strategy, it's development and leadership. x **2**
- The Strategy needs more detail about deanery structures and overall management systems.
- Allow churches to cluster themselves, if they wish, and give them greater autonomy to determine their structures, role and finances – in other words be more independent.
- The Strategy proposes that all churches will have an identifiable leader. In some small churches it will be difficult to get one person to do this, particularly where people are already used to working with others. Could local leadership be focused on a small *group* of people?
- Rewrite the Strategy so that instead of 'Mission Community' it reads 'congregation' and expects each *congregation* to work out how to access the activities and enthusiasm of the other congregations.
- Request deaneries and local circuits (and the URC where relevant) to plan locally for how resources should be used for mission, with the diocese/circuit offering the structures so those local arrangements work and encouraging groupings to aspire to a 'mission community' level of sharing. Each local area looks at what pioneer ministry could work in their area, and put resources into it within their planning.
- Get things moving… Avoid endless talking… Start now…
  - "Regular joint prayer meetings to discern where God is leading, and for revival." (x **2**)
  - "Effective change requires: vision, skills, incentives, resources and an action plan. If any elements are missing change will not be effective."

**Responses received from:**

Allithwaite, St Mary
Allonby, Christ Church
Arthuret, St Michael and All Angels
Asby, St Peter
Bampton, St Patrick
Barrow Island, St John the Evangelist
Barrow, St James the Great
Barrow, St Mark
Barrow, St Paul
Burgh-by-Sands, St Michael
Carlisle, St John the Evangelist
Clifton, St Luke
Colton, Holy Trinity
Coniston, St Andrew
Crook, St Catherine
Crosscanonby, St John the Evangelist
Dacre, St Andrew
Dalton-with Furness with Ireleth, St Mary
Dean, St Oswald
Dearham, St Mungo
Distington, The Holy Spirit
Egton-cum-Newland, St Mary the Virgin
Finsthwaite, St Peter
Grange-over-Sands, St Paul
Grasmere, St Oswald
Great Broughton, Christ Church
Haverthwaite, St Anne
Helsington, St John
Holme, Holy Trinity
Ireby, St James
Kirkandrews on Eden with Beaumont and Grinsdale
Kirkandrews on Esk, St Andrew
Levens, St John the Evangelist
Lorton, St Cuthbert
Lowick, St Luke
Mealsgate, All Hallows
Mirehouse, St Andrew
Morland, St Lawrence
Nicholforest, St Nicholas
Orton, All Saints
Penrith, St Andrew
Renwick with Croglin, All Saints
Seascale, St Cuthbert
Selside, St Thomas
Setmurthy, St Barnabas
Shap, St Michael
Skelsmergh, St John the Baptist
Tebay, St James
Torver, St Luke
Uldale, St James
Ulverston, St Mary with Holy Trinity
Waberthwaite, St John
Workington, St Michael

**Benefice/Team responses**
Allonby, Crosscanonby and Dearham staff team
Beacon Team
Binsey Team Ministry
Broughton & Duddon
Cartmel Fell, Crosthwaite, Winster and Witherslack
Clifton, Dean & Mosser
Dalston with Cumdivock, Raughton Head and Wreay – Anglican and Methodist churches
Hawkshead with Low Wray, Sawrey, Rusland and Satterthwaite
Heart of Eden Team Ministry PLUS Kirkby Thore, Temple Sowerby and Newbiggin Parishes
Holme Eden and Wetheral with Warwick
Houghton with Kingmoor
Inglewood Group of Parishes
Kirkby Stephen with Mallerstang and Crosby Garrett with Soulby
Maryport and Flimby Team Ministry
Old Hutton & New Hutton
Pennington and Lindal with Marton and Bardsea
Solway Plain Team
United Benefice of Kirkby Stephen with Mallerstang and Crosby Garrett with Soulby
West Cumbria Theological Seminar

**Deanery responses**
Appleby Deanery Synod
Barrow and Furness Chapter
Brampton Deanery Chapter
Carlisle Archdeaconry Diocesan Synod Members
Carlisle Deanery clergy
Derwent Deanery Chapter
Penrith Chapter
South Archdeaconry Diocesan Synod Members
Windermere Deanery Synod

**Individual personal responses**

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|---|---|
| Andrew Parkinson | Lily Hopkins |
| Barbara Petecka (Setmurthy) | Keith Teasdale |
| Beth Smith | Margaret Robb |
| Chris Casey | Mary Webster |
| David Craven | Michael Manley |
| David Kemp | Nigel Holmes |
| Dawn Bruin | Nigel Priestley |
| Derek Cannon | Peter Wood |
| Donald Leighton | Rod Allon-Smith |
| Geoffrey Ravalde | Roger Latham |
| Gillian Massiah | Sheila Summerscales |
| Gordon Cartmell | Stephen Griffiths |
| Jonathan and Sheila Falkner | Stewart Fyfe |
| John Parratt | Tony Bontoft |