

Diocese of Carlisle: Exploring the shape of Mission Communities

1. Introduction

The creation of Mission Communities is one of the primary recommendations of the Strategy for Ministry report which has been presented and discussed by the Methodist, Anglican and URC synods across Cumbria. At the Anglican synod in October, the Strategy for Ministry “Better at being Church in every Community” was welcomed as an important contribution to our vision for growing disciples and Synod requested the Deaneries, in dialogue with parishes, the Bishop and ecumenical partners, to explore the implications of the strategy, including the shape of Mission Communities.

This guidance has been produced to help explore the shaping of Mission Communities in Cumbria.

2. The Mission Community

It is envisaged that a Mission Community will contain several local church communities (Anglican, Methodist and URC where possible) who will develop a relationship with each other and will be served by a variety of ministry. We are thinking there might be between 40-50 of these across Cumbria and they will never have less than three different churches. They should aim to have an absolute minimum of 100 active members between them, but will normally have more.

2.1 Their Task

The primary task of the Mission Community is to worship God (not just in Church on Sundays!) and to engage in mission by making and growing new disciples of all ages.

2.2 A possible Mission Community should:-

- promote the objectives of the Diocesan Vision and Strategy, “Growing Disciples”. In drawing up plans for Mission Communities deaneries should consider how individual local churches, along with the church’s work across a wider area, can best be resourced and supported to grow disciples.
- as part of growing disciples, meet our objective of ministering to every person in the county. This ministry includes: pastoral care, a diversity of styles of worship, baptisms, weddings, funerals, teaching and preaching, discipleship support and opportunities to be introduced to the Christian faith. This objective means that the plans should show how ministry can be provided to all our communities – especially through greater non-stipendiary or lay ministry or other innovative ways of providing ministry. Within a Mission Community there must be a willingness to call out members from the congregations to train as leaders.

- encourage collaborative ministry. Although there will be many ministers who are effective in several areas, others will have particular gifts and specialisms, including e.g. working with children and young families, musical gifts, liturgy, evangelism, ministry in the workplace etc. Plans can encourage clergy and lay people to share their gifts across deaneries, with each focusing on particular areas that they are good at to the benefit of all.
- be based on a commitment to giving in the spirit of financial generosity and sacrifice so that ministry can be provided in all parts of the county. Plans will obviously have cost implications. The figures for the costs of local ministry set out in Annex 2 can be used to make sure that plans are financially realistic.
- begin with the assumption that in most cases the Mission Communities will be based initially on informal collaborative arrangements, with formal pastoral reorganisation taking place once patterns of ministry within Mission Communities have become shaped and agreed. A menu of legal structures will be available for the Mission Community when the time is right.
- have the agreement of all the different church communities to be included.
- plan for at least one new style of church community within the MC. e.g. church plant, fresh expression, pioneer ministry.
- plan for administrative support.
- plan for the effective, creative and financially realistic use of buildings.

3. Deciding what Mission Communities we might have and which church communities will be in which.

3.1 Who will be involved?

Involvement in planning for Mission Communities will happen at four different levels.

- **The local churches** who will have discussions about the Mission Community to which they would like belong, what this might mean for them and how they can work together.
- **A newly formed Mission Community Shaping group** which may evolve out of **The Deanery Pastoral Committee** which is already an existing structure in the Anglican Church. There are 11 of these Committees across Cumbria. This Mission Community Shaping group will need to include partners from each denomination and their

relevant archdeacon, it will be important that someone from each benefice in the Deanery/District area is included in this group.

- **The Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee** (3 across Cumbria): another already existing Anglican structure which will also be enhanced by ecumenical leaders. They will carry a brief for monitoring progress and moderating deanery plans. They will consider any request from churches who wish to move to a different areas say Deanery, Circuit or Archdeaconry.
- **The Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee** will hold the bigger picture and ensure that issues such as resourcing are handled fairly across the county.
- A “Feedback and Advisory Group” (FaAG) see Annex 3) will be established to resolve issues; facilitate the flow of information between the different groups involved in the process; collect and report information on progress; and provide advice/make recommendations to the Anglican Bishop’s Council. Mission Community Shaping Groups should raise issues for resolution with the FaAG who will categorise and respond to them. Information on issues that have been raised will be available on-line to members of the Shaping Groups and to other parishioners and local clergy.

4. The Work of the Mission Community Shaping Group

4.1 Planning: The Starting Point

Different areas of the county and different denominations are at different stages in their exploration and planning. The Mission Community Shaping Groups will need to establish where the church congregations in their local area are up to in this process. In many of the Anglican Deaneries this kind of planning has been happening in recent years and now is the time to build on or maybe refine the thinking as a result of the decision of our synod to explore the shape of Mission Communities across Cumbria.

4.2 Planning: How to Begin

The Mission Community Shaping Groups will be asked to meet and agree a process for working. In the first instance these will be convened by the Anglican Rural Deans. Circuit Superintendent and URC personnel will be asked to identify the names of representatives in their area.

In each area the partners will be then invited to a meeting of the new Mission Community Shaping Group and agree a process for working.

The task of this newly formed group will be to shape possible Mission Communities in the Deanery/District area.

- They will share together the thinking and planning which has already happened in their area.
- They will need to establish if the right people are on the group and who else may need to be invited.
- They should appoint a chair person
- They should keep notes
- They should agree dates for the next few meetings with a realistic time line for their work.
- As soon as possible they will need to speak with all the churches in the area sharing the possible numbers of MC's they are thinking about and inviting the church councils to consider which makes most sense to them.
- They will need to identify a date by which the individual church conversations are fed back to the group.
- Members of this group may need to be willing to go and speak with individual church communities and listen to their fears, hope and anxieties.
- They will need to keep in close touch with the Archdeacon and the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee

4.2 Exploration : Analysis of the Local Situation

The Mission Community Shaping Group may want to start the exploration process by analysing the existing situation and working out what that means for the future. The results of that analysis need to be agreed within the group/deanery/district – avoiding the situation in which an individual or parish can opt-out of the plan because they dispute the underlying thinking. The groups may want to consider the following in their analysis:

- current parish structures and deployment of clergy including retired clergy and NSMs
- existing lay ministry and existing plans for its development
- existing ecumenical relations
- trends in attendance
- state and use of church buildings (building on the recent Church Buildings survey)
- changing demographic and economic situation
- significant organisations and institutions such as schools, hospitals and major employers
- developing realistic plans and opportunities for mission and growth that can be taken up by the Mission Community
- any particular pressures or constraints that are felt
- what skills currently exist and what are required

This analysis should be done at a fairly high level to avoid it prolonging the timescale unnecessarily through “paralysis by analysis”.

In their work, the Shaping group may want to refer to the Diocesan Vision and Strategy, Growing Disciples and in particular the five marks of discipleship which are crucial building blocks in our task of growing disciples, ie:

- Maturity in faith
- Prayer and Worship
- Community service and engagement
- Evangelism/outreach sharing the Good news
- Quality of relationships

Many churches are now actively Mission Action Planning (MAPping) or something similar. As part of exploration for Mission Communities, churches should be consulted about their MAPs in order to ensure that the plan for Mission Communities supports parishes in implementing their MAPs.

Once this initial research has been undertaken, each area should then begin to identify its staffing needs in very general terms. The long term plan is one full time stipendiary minister who has oversight of a Mission Community and a leader for each of the church communities who may be ordained stipendiary or self-supporting, a reader, elder, lay preacher or an authorised lay minister. In addition the possibility of a pioneer minister to help grow disciples can be factored in for church plants, new churches, fresh expressions etc. These pioneers could be shared with other Mission Communities, especially if the people they are working with (eg teenagers) are part of networks that do not fit exactly within Mission Community boundaries.

Plans should show all posts that will be paid centrally along with self-supporting posts where they are leading churches/congregations. There is no requirement for plans to show the whole range of other unpaid ministries within churches or congregations, but these may be shown if the planning group wishes.

4.4 Assumptions and Parameters

Plans should take account of the following:

- i. the expected very significant reduction (at least 20%) in paid ordained ministers as a result of the national falling numbers in stipendiary ministry and financial constraints caused by recent trends in C of E Parish Offer.
- ii. the level of funding that the local churches will contribute towards the costs of local ministry.
- iii. the cost of the ministry that an area plans to deploy. These costs must be realistic in the light of the local financial contributions (in CofE terms this means the level of Parish Offer). Annex 2 gives indicative figures for the costs of different forms of ministry to help inform this. This does not mean that every Mission Community or "deanery area" must cover its

own costs, as generous mutual support between churches and deaneries will continue to be an important part of the way local ministry is funded. At the same time however, the budget has to balance across the Diocese as a whole. If money for ministry is not raised locally, it is coming from other churches or areas who may equally be struggling financially. Planning groups must therefore feel comfortable that the level of mutual support implied by their proposals is “right” in the context of resourcing the Christian church across the county as a whole.

Diocesan financial planning for the period up to 2020 is based on a 1% cash increase per annum in local contributions (i.e Parish Offer) towards the costs of Ministry. Once the plan for Mission Communities has been drawn up, every Deanery area will be expected to provide an average annual 1% increase in contribution until 2020: if this increase is not achieved it will trigger a review of deployment to assess affordability and reduce costs. Beyond 2020, the contribution will need to increase in line with changes to the costs of local ministry.

iv. an expectation that 30% of available resources, time and energy in Mission Communities (including the resource of full and part-time paid lay and ordained people) will be focused on breaking new ground in order to make and grow disciples. This goes significantly beyond the current good work being done by lay and ordained people within their communities and institutions. It will mean connecting with people who currently have little or no involvement with church and particularly feature projects and initiatives that could be labelled ‘church planting’, ‘fresh expressions’ or ‘new ways of being and doing church’.

The expected growth of this pioneering ministry could emerge from inherited churches (eg Messy Church, Café Church), or could be deliberately planned as a separate but related initiative (eg Network Youth Church with dedicated leaders).

Where pioneer posts are involved these could be lay or ordained, paid or unpaid. They could also be dedicated posts or form part of posts with other roles.

Plans should indicate what pioneering work is envisaged and how it will be resourced.

The Diocesan Board of Finance hopes to make pump-priming support available from the Diocesan Growth Fund to support the introduction of pioneering ministries.

5. The Role of the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee

This Committee will need to:

- invite ecumenical partners and how to address the ecumenical dimension of this work.
- always ensure the shaping of the Mission Communities is high on the agenda.
- listen to where the local groups are up to and help to promote the sharing of ideas.

- discuss and help to resolve any issues which arise.
- support and encourage wherever they can.
- begin to collate the possible plans for Mission communities in the Archdeaconry area, assess the present staffing and the staffing required for the future and begin to plan how to make the transition.

6. What will happen if churches do not want to take part?

All three denominations are committed to this work and the strategy for ministry has been welcomed by their synods. It is hoped all churches will feel able to take part; although they may need time, reassurance, or more understanding. It is expected they will engage in dialogue about the process and to be encouraged warmly to take part. If, after discussions, they are still reluctant they will be expected to talk this through with their own denominational church leader in the county. The process of shaping Mission Communities will go ahead whatever individual churches decide.

7. What about other denominations in addition to the Anglican, Methodists and URC?

For now we are concentrating on the ecumenical partners who are part of our tripartite agreement. However if, in a particular local context, it is obvious that other partner churches should be invited to the consultations then the Shaping Groups can be hospitable and flexible.

8. Flexibility

The most important goal is to develop proposals that can fulfil the primary tasks of worshipping God and growing disciples in relationship with other church communities. In a county the size of Cumbria it is neither possible nor desirable to try to design one size or model to fit all situations. It will therefore be important that proposals respond to the local situation while working within the constraints of reducing numbers of stipendiary clergy and the current financial position.

9. Timing

The considerations of possible Mission Communities along with their appropriate staffing will take time. We have a commitment to report our findings back to synod in October 2014 when the final approval of the strategy will be considered. This work will need to be completed at Deanery, Archdeaconry and Diocesan level by September 1st 2014 in order that it can be reported to Diocesan Synod in October 2014.

Alongside this exploration work the Bishop's Council have been asked by Synod to set up a time limited working group to consider all the information and feed back to inform the Synods further discussions. One of the roles of that group will be to consider and respond to issues that are raised in the Mission Community Shaping Groups.

January 2014

Annex 1: Checklist for the “Shaping Mission Communities” groups

Getting Ready. Have you:

- √ identified a group to do the work?
- √ agreed clear reporting lines for this group?
- √ produced a timetable?
- √ agreed how to involve the Bishop/Archdeacon?
- √ decided how to consult parishes/benefices/other denominations?
- √ decided how to meet any costs of planning (e.g copying, hire of meeting rooms)?

Information for the Proposals. Is your proposal based on:

- √ facts about the area – population, settlements, schools, church attendance
- √ local Mission Action Plans
- √ needs not currently being met
- √ opportunities for growth, including pioneering work
- √ people including stipendiary, NSM and retired clergy, and lay ministry
- √ existing skills and expertise among clergy and lay people
- √ skills and expertise needed
- √ costs of ministry and levels of parish share/offer requested and paid
- √ buildings, their cost, and existing and potential use
- √ pattern of other Christian denominations and opportunities for collaboration

Annex 2: Annual Costs of Local Ministry 2014, with Strategy for Ministry Implementation (ie including expected costs of recruiting and training additional SSM, lay ministry)

Type of Ministry	Approximate Full Average Cost
Full time, stipendiary ordained ministry including provided housing	£58,000
Half time, and other part time stipendiary ordained ministry living in own home/paid housing allowance	£32,000
House for Duty ordained ministry including provided housing	£18,000
Full time paid lay minister (eg Reader ministry) living in own home	£41,500
Half time stipendiary lay minister living in own home	£22,500
Lay Deanery Network Youth Church Leader living in own home (expected role and responsibilities following 2013-14 review)	£41,500
Intern (nb Parishes are responsible for hosting interns, including providing accommodation, food and pocket money)	£2,100

Annex 3: Feedback and Advisory Group

The Terms of Reference of the Feedback and Advisory Group are:

[insert following FaAG's initial meeting]

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