

Aim of BCS and Mission Department: To catalyse spiritual and numerical growth, through holistic mission and evangelism, as part of the Diocese of St Albans Living God's Love strategy.

Living God's Love Strategy

We supported development of the ten signs of growth within the three strands of Going Deeper into God, Transforming Communities and Making New Disciples, and desired outcomes. We are actively engaging with the key signs of growth indicated for Making New Disciples through fresh expressions of church, improving the quality of worship, developing our youth and children's work, and Mission Action Planning.

Fresh Expressions of Church – 'Reaching New People in New Ways' Project and MSM St Albans

During 2017 a huge amount of work was dedicated into acquiring a mission-focused grant from Church Commissioners – this was finally approved in June 2017. These funds will be used to resource our diocesan fresh expressions of church project, Reaching New People in New Ways (RNP). The aim of this project is to make new disciples of Christ by developing fresh expressions of church and equipping leaders.

It is a 'people-focused' project, which necessitates the setting up of the Reaching New People (RNP) Team and Office within the existing Mission Dept. To this aim, a number of key staff appointments including two of the three FX Development Officers (Mark Dunwoody - Senior Officer and Revd Alison Jackson), FX Project Coordinator (Revd Dave Jones), FX Training Coordinator (Susan Hughes) and FX Team Administrator (Linda Watson) were made by the end of last year, leaving the 3rd FX Development Officer post still to be filled to complete the RNP Team. The RNP Governance Group has also been established, which had met a couple of times by the end of 2017, and plans were well underway for the diocesan launch event of this significant project to take place on 17th January 2018.

The first Mission Shaped Ministry training course, 'MSM St Albans', was set up and started running in October. This year-long training journey equips lay and ordained leaders to set up and develop fresh expressions of church which reach new people, help them grow in faith and embrace them into the life of the church.

Plans have also been finalised for the first of what will be a rolling programme of 3D Coaching Transforming Conversations courses to equip leaders to more effectively enable those they support in mission and ministry. The first course will begin in January 2018.

During the autumn work began with the cohort of churches that the RNP Project Team will engage with to develop maturing fresh expressions during 2018. These include the 3 flagship / hub churches which the FX Development Officers will work with for 25% of their time in order to provide a hub for learning for fresh expressions in each archdeaconry.

Staffing

In order to make major savings within the BCS budget, difficult choices regarding staff posts needed to be made. Following a period of consultation, two within the BCS team were made

redundant during 2017, namely the Mission Resourcing Officer and the Interfaith Adviser posts.

Church Growth Team

A decision was taken to restructure the Church and Community and Parish Development Officer posts, resulting in a new Church Growth Team being agreed as the way forward, to catalyse effective mission action planning and mission resourcing and stewardship. The team will be made up by a full time Church Growth Officer (CGO), two 0.5 CGOs combined with 0.5 parish priest posts, and a 0.6 Church Growth Team Administrator. Revd Kate Peacock was appointed to the full time CGO post and will begin after Easter 2018.

Change in Diocesan Board Structure - BCS merger with CfDM

The final meeting of the diocesan Board for Church and Society took place in November 2017. Going forward, there will be a new Board for Mission and Ministry, which is a merger between BCS and CfDM (Council for Discipleship and Ministry).

Christmas Welcome – ‘Welcoming Visitors at Christmas’ Campaign

Participating in the national Christmas Welcome campaign, we piloted a project to enhance the welcome offered to parishioners at Christmas. This included the ‘helpful hints’ sent to all parishes. These hints included: invitation, welcoming and relating to visitors, and were accompanied by the Christmas 2017 diocesan film. The film was shared widely via social and viewed by many thousands of people unconnected to church.

Pioneer Active Diocese

We participated in this initiative, which seeks to support and develop lay and ordained ministry. It provides an excellent opportunity to explore how we might support, deploy, train and supervise our pioneer ministers more effectively. In 2017 it has been encouraging to see our first Licensed Lay Pioneer Minister, Luke Lerner, commissioned for mission and ministry in the parishes of St Mary’s and St Matthew’s in Luton.

Leading Your Church into Growth - LYCiG

This 4 day conference was planned jointly with CfDM, and held in Swanwick in September 2017. A strength of the course was the engagement of parish teams who attended. Follow up with attendees of the course is ongoing and will include a further day in March 2018 to enable further engagement on the priorities for each parish to enable growth.

Thy Kingdom Come

This global focused prayer initiative was promoted in our diocese last year, culminating in a celebration on Pentecost Sunday (June 4th) at St Albans Cathedral. Plans are under way for promoting engagement again in 2018. This will again include a period of prayer between Ascension Day and Pentecost and culminate in a celebration in the Cathedral on Pentecost Sunday at 6.30 p.m.

Youth and Children’s Mission Strategies

These strategies have been refined to focus on intentional development of youth and children’s work in benefices and parishes where currently work with children and young people is limited and needs to be developed to grow the faith of young people. This work will involve intensive collaboration with a number of parishes / benefices each year to enable faith-growing activities for young people to develop. The ‘Voyage’ conference, exploring

inter-generational church, was organised in November and was attended by leaders from across the diocese and beyond.

Interfaith Work

In response to enquiries and demand, a factual and resourceful booklet, 'Refugees Welcome in St Albans, was produced and distributed to all parishes in our diocese.

Parish Dashboard Reports

The first annual report of this nature was posted to key individuals within parishes, to encourage them to review and use reported statistics for mission and finance in their mission action planning.

Caribbean Links Group

A visit to Antigua was made by Bishop Richard, last August (21st – 30th), to attend the 125th Anniversary Celebration of the Diocese of North Eastern Caribbean and Aruba.

Europe Group

A second renewal of the Covenant with Linkoping, Sweden, was signed at Diocesan Synod on 30 September 2017. (Signing in Sweden will take place on 21 January 2018).

Sharnbrook parish twinned with Calpino, Urbino, Italy, and in January a visit was made to Italy.

A successful visit took place between Kimpton parish and their twinned (celebrating 26 years) parish, Schonemark, Germany.

Bishop of St Albans' Harvest Appeal 2017 – 'Full of Beans'

In 2017 we partnered with USPG, to support their Community Development work in The Philippines. This work involves assessment of local assets and establishing new initiatives to benefit the local community; in these rural regions of The Philippines the soil is excellent for growing great quality beans!

Ethnic Minorities Concerns Group

Achievements include:

- Collection of data to celebrate and affirm current make-up of congregations, so be in a position to bring challenge to our building a more diverse church.
- Agreement to implement in the diocese a programme of Unconscious Bias Training.