

Annual Report 2017

Chair: The Bishop of Bedford

Statutory Functions

The Mission and Pastoral Committee is a statutory body whose functions are set out in the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011. The Committee's primary work lies in making better provision for the cure of souls in the Diocese and in considering proposals for pastoral reorganisation.

The Committee is required:

- *To review arrangements for pastoral supervision and care in the diocese or any part of it.*
- *To prepare strategies or proposals for carrying out the Committee's functions for submission to the bishop and the diocesan synod for their approval.*
- *To maintain an overview of matters relating to church buildings in the diocese and their use.*
- *To make every endeavour to find a suitable alternative use or suitable alternative uses for churches which were proposed to be closed and buildings which have been closed for regular public worship in the diocese under a pastoral church buildings scheme.*

DMPC Mission Action Plan

*The DMPC has adopted a Mission Action Plan. The Plan is set in the context of the diocesan vision of **Living God's Love** and the three strands of Going Deeper into God, Transforming Communities and Making New Disciples. The Plan takes account of the priorities and steps identified in **Living God's Love 2020**.*

The Committee's three aims are:

- *Resourcing for mission - the effective **deployment** of stipendiary clergy and other ministry resources and*
- *Identifying and supporting missional structures - by ensuring that the **pastoral organisation** of the places and communities in the diocese is appropriate to meet the three themes of Living God's Love; and*
- *Sharing **good practice**.*

Matters covered during the year

The committee met five times during the year. We are very grateful to our staff for their timely work on our behalf. The Reverend Christopher Ferris was welcomed as a new member onto the Committee.

Deanery Mission Action Plans

The Committee received Mission Action Plans from **Wheathampstead; Bedford; Hemel Hempstead; Hertford and Ware** and **Stevenage** deaneries. The MAPs reflected the deaneries' consideration of challenges and opportunities, and included 'Moving from Siege & Survival to Mission and Growth', opportunities to use social media (following experiences in new housing developments), the development of Lay Chapters, creating spirituality networks and developing a shared understanding of the structures and relationships between the diocese, the deanery and the parish.

Updated MAP guidance including a section on planning for pastoral reorganisation was brought to the Committee in summer 2017. The guidance strengthened the focus on the cultural, spiritual and numerical growth of the MAP process and linked it in with Diocesan Mission Initiatives. As a result we developed diocesan website resources on deanery MAPs and pastoral reorganisation.

Models of ministry

The Committee continued to respond to flexible appointments under Regulation 29. **Interim** posts were approved for two benefices. Other appointments involved Plurality Orders and the appointment of a Priest in Charge with a curate to work missionally on the ground for a limited period.

In respect of PCC Schemes under the Church Representation Rules the Committee noted an update on the draft Church Representation, Ecumenical Relations and Ministers Measure and considered and approved four templates for the Scheme documents required under the Church Representation Rules for team and group councils, joint councils and districts.

Pastoral Reorganisation

During 2017, there were 10 sets of proposals (2016 -10) under discussion to unite parishes, change parish boundaries etc, and deal with churchyard land and access issues. These were at various stages of consultation throughout the year.

Consultations and public notices were completed and the following schemes came into effect:

- Marston Morteyne with Lidlington – pastoral re-organisation to unite the two parishes.
- Layston with Buntingford and Throcking – alteration of the parish boundaries to take account of the new housing development and alteration of the name of the parish to Buntingford with Layston.
- Ouzel Valley Team Ministry - transferring areas of the parishes of Egginton (in the Ouzel Valley Team) and Stanbridge to Leighton Buzzard to bring the planned further housing development within scope of the Pioneer Team Vicar role with responsibility for the Church of the Good Shepherd Conventional District.

The primary purpose of all pastoral re-organisation is to *make better provision for the cure of souls* and to support mission in each place. The DMPC has researched the outcomes of pastoral re-organisation cases completed over the past few years. Feedback so far indicates:

- The reallocation of parishes from the Aldenham deanery to deaneries of St Albans, Barnet and Watford strengthened geographical/civic connections and enlarged the Chapters to provide more effective forums for collaboration and joint action.
- The small alteration of parish boundaries in Bedford means residents of a new housing development are now included in mailings from their local parish church and the parish has a better sense of serving the local population.
- The establishment of the Ouzel Valley Team Ministry allowed for greater flexibility in the ways that clergy exercise responsibility for the parishes. Despite the issues involved in working together, the challenges posed by the planned expansion of the town make essential the need for greater cohesion and closer clergy collaboration.

Ecumenical Working

The Committee encourages Deaneries to consider ecumenical co-operation initiatives. The Committee noted guidance from the Diocesan Registrar regarding safeguarding policy for Single Congregation LEP Constitutions, and approved safeguarding policies for the **Thurleigh** LEP Constitution.

Making new disciples

The DMPC heard about a wide range of mission initiatives and Fresh Expressions of Church, including:-

- **The Hub Church, Hitchin**

This is a youth-focused church based in Hitchin and led by a Pioneer Minister, the Reverend Dan Drew. The Committee heard that the Hub Church moves quickly to explore issues with people who are

interested in joining the Church, as younger people in particular move out of the area very quickly to go to University or with a change of job.

- ***Bedford Deanery MAP***

The challenge of recognising the pastoral and mission opportunities of Messy Church and other Fresh Expressions and how to move people on in faith.

- ***The Bishop's Stortford Winter Night Shelter***

The Reverend Mandy Brown (Vicar, Bishop's Stortford Holy Trinity) described the prayer-led development of the Night Shelter and its future plans. This inspiring demonstration of the power of Christian regard for the unseen in society has established an excellent model in responding to a local need through research, prayer, partnerships and good groundwork.

- ***Working with older people***

- ***Dementia-friendly church services***

The Hertford Team's mission to older people has developed from the input of several families with relatives living with dementia, and a member of the congregation with professional expertise in dementia care. The afternoon 'Church at Three' service has been developed after consultation with a number of organisations to be 'dementia friendly'.

- ***Delivering Messy Church in a local residential home***

The Parish of Letchworth is running Messy Church ("Messy Vintage") in the context of a local care home and shared the difficulties and joys of this initiative.

- The Committee heard that the bid to the **Church Commissioners Development Fund** to create a team of Fresh Expression Mission Enablers had been granted. The FX project 'Reaching New People in New Ways' began recruiting staff in late 2017.

Suspensions of Presentation

At the end of 2017, 18 benefices were suspended (2016 = 19). While the number of suspended benefices continues to drop as the Committee reviews cases individually and on a deanery basis, pastoral reorganisation will continue to be needed to support mission in local contexts. Changes in deployment and parish boundaries will also be generated by the growth of new housing developments in the diocese.

Transforming Communities

Development Plans Monitoring Group

The DPMG brings together senior clergy and officers to co-ordinate planning for major housing developments across the diocese. The group monitors information from public sources about housing developments, including their likely size and timescale. It makes recommendations to diocesan bodies such as the Bishop's Council, the Diocesan Board of Finance and the Diocesan Board of Education about the strategy for mission in each development, in conjunction with the local churches. The Group also flags up related issues of housing, school and worship space provision and funding needs.

The Group met twice during the year and received and discussed reports from the Reverend Dr Tony Barker (Regional Development Officer – Church and Community) on current and potential new housing developments throughout the Diocese. Dr Barker retired at the end of 2017 after fourteen years working with the Diocese.

The Group's discussions included consideration of which new developments were likely to be appropriate locations for the deployment of ministers, including Pioneer Ministry and additional Church of England schools. The Archdeacon of Hertford led a Gilston Park project working group which brought together a number of people from churches to discuss the implications of the development and to be part of the planning without creating another layer of meetings.

The Group instigated the conference 'Planning for New Communities' which took place in November 2017, bringing together parishes wishing to respond to new developments and considering the role of the church in building new communities. Resources and an online forum would be progressed as outcomes from the conference workshops.

The Committee continues to monitor the progress of a number of sites, providing background information to enable other groups such as the Bishop's Staff and Bishop's Council to develop an appropriate missional strategy in each case.

Closed Churches Uses Committee

Current cases are progressing. At **Holy Trinity, East Hyde** (the church is in the ownership of the Greek Orthodox Community of St Charalambos) licence variation negotiations are concluding. At **Thundridge, St Mary Old Tower** marketing of the site is expected in 2018. Sale completion is anticipated in the next few months for St Giles, **Upper Gravenhurst** and **Minsden Chapel** (St Ippolyts).

Future Plans

The Committee will seek to implement or take account of the priorities identified in its Mission Action Plan. These are:

To embed engagement in God's mission in all its work.

To encourage vocations to all forms of lay and ordained ministry in all places and encourage every worshipping community to identify role models among its clergy and lay leaders.

To make recommendations about proposals for pastoral reorganisation which make better provision for the cure of souls in a particular part of the diocese, or more widely, and which intentionally provide ministerial resources appropriate to the needs of each place.

To work with a range of formal and informal structures to provide the appropriate missional structure in each context.

To support and encourage emerging mission initiatives, considering issues of financial support and financial responsibility; staffing and associated housing; legal and administrative structures; and representation in the life of the Church of England.

To seek ways to share good practice in parishes and deaneries.