

Annual Report 2018

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 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 Committee is required:

- *To review arrangements for pastoral supervision and care by the effective deployment of clergy and ministry resources*
- *To prepare strategies or proposals that identify and support missional structures, and to share good practice*
- *To maintain an overview of matters relating to church buildings and their use.*
- *To make every endeavour to find a suitable alternative use for churches proposed to be closed or which have been closed for regular public worship under a pastoral church buildings scheme.*

The Committee met four times during the year. We are very grateful to our staff for their timely work on our behalf.

Matters covered during the year

- **Deanery Mission Action Plans** have been used to focus the work of deaneries in support of the priorities of Living God's Love. During the year, five deaneries presented plans showing a wide variety of responses to these priorities:
 - **Dunstable** included the development of a Mission Support Plan with the Deanery as a support and a bridge to resources and sharing;
 - **Watford** involvement in transformational town centre development, with a new Team Ministry post combined with a chaplaincy role;
 - **Buntingford** considering responses to new housing developments;
 - **Sharnbrook** active and varied outreach activities developing from a faith-filled attitude in the deanery;
 - **Hitchin** reinvigorated its MAP as a series of visionary conversations about what 'fantastic' would look like for its churches and deanery.
- The Committee promoted appropriate **models of ministry** to support mission in each part of the diocese:
 - Recommendations arising from a review of **The Stodden Churches** made changes to the administration and governance framework of the Joint PCC under the *Church Representation Rules*
 - Contacts established in relation to **Luton churches** (arising from the 2017 Luton Deanery MAP) and with local authorities such as Luton Borough Council and the NHS through the One Public Estate Partnership enabled the churches to explore the potential use of all forms of church buildings.
 - The DMPC explored the potential for **small parish churches** to become chapels of ease, united with a neighbouring parish, as an alternative to formal closure. One such scheme was in consultation at the end of the year.
 - During 2018, there were 9 sets of **pastoral reorganisation** proposals (*10 in 2017*) under discussion to consider team ministry, unite parishes, change a benefice name, and deal with churchyard land and access issues.
 - At the end of 2018, the patrons' **right of presentation** to 20 benefices was suspended (*2017 = 18*). This small annual increase was against the general trend, and demonstrated how pastoral reorganisation continued to be needed to support mission in local contexts. Changes in deployment and parish boundaries would also be generated by the growth of new housing developments in the diocese.

- The Committee considered the publication of *A New Framework for Local Unity*. The **ecumenical** principle underlying the framework was that the denominations would work ecumenically at a local level, and that there would be covenants, rather than law and contracts, to be managed at the local level.

Making new disciples

The DMPC discussed a wide range of mission initiatives and Fresh Expressions of Church, including:

- The DMPC heard about success factors for church growth in the benefice of **Broxbourne with Wormley** and what had been done in the parish to underpin the growth process.
- The DMPC learned that **The Stodden Churches** Café Sunday at Yelden Village Hall had emerged as a **Fresh Expression** from the perceived need for new patterns of worship.
- The DMPC was inspired by **The Phase Project, Hitchin** which delivered self-help and group work support for teenagers struggling with their mental health. Based across 3 secondary and 12 primary schools, Phase had built strong and trusting relationships with Hitchin schools. The Committee received a testimonial from a young participant in Phase about how her 'faith confidence' and leadership skills had been encouraged.

Transforming Communities

- The **Development Plans Monitoring Group** enables senior clergy and officers to come together 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.
 - In two meetings during the year the Group discussed reports from Bidwells Planning on current and potential new housing developments throughout the Diocese.
 - This included consideration of which very large new developments were likely to be appropriate locations for the **deployment of ministers**, including Pioneer Ministry and **additional Church of England schools**.
- The **Closed Churches Uses Committee** is charged with finding uses for churches closed for regular worship. Transfers by sale were completed for St Giles, **Upper Gravenhurst** and **Minsden Chapel (St Ippolyts)** concluding negotiations over several years. At **Thundridge, St Mary Old Tower** preliminary discussions and pre-application advice were taking place anticipating potential marketing of the site.

Future Plans

In 2019 the structure of the DMPC will change, and some DMPC statutory responsibilities will be aligned with Bishop's Council in order to more closely position mission policy with strategic policy. A DMPC Executive Committee will be appointed to carry out the detailed work to be ratified by Bishop's Council. To give a wider audience to mission stories and good practice, some functions will be redistributed through the Diocesan Synod agenda, and to Deanery MAPs through an archdeaconry-based peer review model.

Deanery planning already includes mission planning, support and resourcing and new legislation will strengthen the purpose of deanery pastoral planning where appropriate. From January 2019, where proposals need to be considered by the Church Commissioners' Pastoral Committee, there will be a presumption in favour of changes recommended in the context of an agreed deanery pastoral plan. This optional new way of working will inform the work of deaneries and the DMPC Executive Committee in 2019.