

St Albans Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee

Options for pastoral re-organisation and structures

This guide sets out some of the possible structures which may be helpful in particular contexts to support mission and growth in each place. In any particular context, it will be important to have an early conversation with the Bishop and Archdeacon, to identify which possibility may be the most appropriate.

Benefice - The traditional unit of geographically-based ministry – a benefice is the area in which a priest exercises the cure of souls and may be made up of one parish or several parishes

Parish – The traditional unit of administration and local identity - a defined geographical area with a parish church, a PCC and churchwardens

Mission Initiative defined by a Bishop's Mission Order – An Anglican or ecumenical mission initiative or Fresh Expression of Church working outside the usual parochial context (not necessarily working in a church building) with local and diocesan recognition

Conventional District – A defined but adaptable structure for a particular geographical area which has a different identity from the main parish(es) because of housing development or a particular missional context – it may sometimes be a stepping stone to the creation of a separate parish later. A CD has a Minister in Charge appointed by the Bishop, rather than being within an existing benefice.

Multi-parish benefice – several parishes grouped with one incumbent – may have a *Joint PCC* or agree that separate PCCs meet at the same venue on the same evening, to reduce the administrative burden of multiple meetings. See also: ***DMPC Guidance – Working with multi-parish benefices***

Non-contiguous benefice – parishes that are not geographically contiguous are linked, with ministry from one priest – often where the parishes share a similar tradition or particular identity

Team Ministry – A defined structure for one benefice, with a ministry team comprising a Team Rector and at least one Team Vicar – ministry is exercised across the team area and individual Team clergy may have specific responsibility for a geographical area or an sphere of ministry (eg youth; evangelism)

Group Ministry – A defined non-hierarchical structure for more than one benefice, where the clergy agree to work co-operatively across benefice boundaries

Plurality – Two (or more) separate benefices are linked together in a defined structure under the ministry of one incumbent, usually as a medium-term arrangement eg where major housing development will alter the need of one or more of the parishes in the longer term

Local Area Mission Partnership – A documented local agreement by clergy in an area to work co-operatively for particular missional aims. See also: ***DMPC Guidance – Local Area Mission Partnerships***

Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) – A defined structure for co-operation with a church or churches of other denominations, either

- A Local Covenant between ministers and congregations worshipping separately
- A Single Congregation LEP where two or more congregations decide to worship together as one worshipping community
- A Sharing Agreement for the use of church buildings for regular worship either by separate congregations or a Single Congregation LEP.

See also: Churches Together in England resources at

http://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/44369/Home/Resources/Local_Ecumenical_Partnerships/Local_Ecumenical_Partnerships.aspx

Missional Communities – Groups of Christians gathering together for study and worship under the auspices of a “sending” church

Some examples...

Example 1 - A town comprises four separate single-parish benefices. The parish populations and Deployment Indicators vary from below-average to significantly above-average. There is a need for the clergy to be able to share resources and assist each other across benefice boundaries. They also want to work together on town-wide mission and outreach initiatives. They could consider:

(a) A *Local Area Mission Partnership* – an informal written agreement to work together, in this case particularly to cover occasional offices and to develop town-wide outreach and mission events.

(b) A *Group Ministry* – a formal agreement that the clergy will meet regularly and will co-operate across benefice boundaries. The agreement gives them permission to minister in each other’s areas as appropriate. The agreement is accepted by each new member of the clergy appointed to serve in the area of the Group. There may be a Group Council, enabling closer co-operation between lay people as well as the clergy across the area of the Group.

(c) A *Team Ministry* – a formal arrangement that unites all the benefices into a single benefice covering the whole town. The four parishes may remain separate, or may be united into one parish. The Team has one Team Rector with a leadership and oversight role across the whole Team and at least one Team Vicar. The team clergy may also have pastoral responsibility for a geographical area within the town and/or for an area of ministry, e.g. town centre chaplaincy or work with older people.

Example 2 – A large housing development is planned on the edge of a town. The local parishes and churches of other denominations want to respond by establishing a Christian presence in the new area. Initially they are looking at the appointment of a minister to work in the area; in the longer term, a new worshipping community would need somewhere to meet. They could consider:

(a) Deploying an additional minister *within the existing adjacent parish* – The minister could be a Pioneer Curate or Associate Minister with special responsibility to work in the new housing development, under the oversight of the parish priest.

(b) A *plurality* - Linking two small parishes in the area of the new development under the care of one parish incumbent whilst the new housing area is being built and people are beginning to move in. As the opportunities to minister to the new residents increase over, say, 5 years, the plurality could be brought to an end so that a full-time appointment can be made in the enlarged parish.

(c) A *Conventional District* agreement – With the agreement of the local parish clergy, this would make the new development a defined area. The Bishop would appoint a Minister in Charge who might be a Pioneer and who would have particular experience of ministry in a new housing area. In the longer term, a worshipping community might become established in the area and as it became sustainable, the area could become a new parish.

(d) A *Mission Initiative* authorised by a Bishop’s Mission Order – This would enable a Pioneer Missioner to work in the new housing area to establish a Christian presence and build a new worshipping community. They would work in partnership with the local parishes and churches of other denominations and might be funded by more than one denomination at local level, but would be supported by a group drawn from both local and wider diocesan perspectives.

(e) A *Local Ecumenical Partnership* – to share the use of premises (owned or rented) in the new housing area for worship as well as for community and outreach activities.

(f) Developing *Missional Communities* – a lead church would seed the development of groups of Christians meeting in homes in the new housing area.

Example 3 – In part of a rural deanery, there is a small market town parish and 11 small, rural parishes in 7 single- and multi-parish benefices. There are currently two full-time stipendiary clergy, one half-time stipendiary priest, two vacancies for house-for-duty posts, several retired clergy and Readers. The clergy feel isolated and over-stretched. They could consider:

(a) Creating (larger) *multi-parish benefices* – uniting smaller benefices to create sustainable units of ministry which can be offered on a full-time stipendiary basis.

(b) A *Group Ministry* – a formal agreement that the clergy will meet regularly and will co-operate and support each other across benefice boundaries. The agreement gives them permission to minister in each other's areas as appropriate. The agreement is accepted by each new member of the clergy appointed to serve in the area of the Group. There may be a Group Council, enabling closer co-operation between lay people as well as the clergy across the area of the Group.

(c) A *Team Ministry* - a formal arrangement that unites all the benefices into a single benefice covering the whole area. The 12 parishes may remain separate, or may be united into one or more parishes. The Team has one Team Rector with a leadership and oversight role across the whole Team and at least one Team Vicar. The team clergy may also have pastoral responsibility for a geographical area (eg a number of parishes) within the Team.

(d) *Joint PCCs* – a structure to enable rural parishes to retain a separate identity, but to share administration and discussion of matters relevant to the whole area, e.g. mission and lay training. Initially each PCC could agree informally to meet on the same evening at the same venue, with a joint session and separate meetings.

(e) *Union of parishes* – some smaller parishes within the same benefice could be united, to relieve some of the burden of administration (multiple meetings) and the difficulty of finding churchwardens, PCC members and other volunteers in each small community.