

# City Deanery Strategy Development

## 'Breaking the cycle' –a strategy for growth not decline

### **Note to reading this report;**

*This report summarises the work of the Deanery Strategy team to date. It is not the 'final word' but a big step towards the development of a Deanery Strategy to enable growth across the whole Deanery.*

*The Deanery Strategy Team offers this as part of the conversation, and looks forward to receiving comments, questions and suggestions at the Deanery Summit on **Wednesday October 13<sup>th</sup> 7.30 at St Luke's Barton Hill**. This meeting is **open to all** not just Deanery Synod. After that meeting an action plan will be formulated taking on board this report and the comments made. We hope you will each engage in the conversation. Do feel free to circulate this report to others in the congregation and encourage conversations in your PCC's and churches.*

*Rev Mat Ineson. Area Dean Oct 2010*

## **Background**

In 2009, Bristol Diocese launched their strategy to 2015 – Releasing the Energy. The Strategy introduced a number of changes including:

- Delegating responsibility for deployment of stipendiary resources to the Deanery level; and
- Replacing the system of asking parishes to pay a calculated sum as Parish Share, with a process of parishes pledging what they feel able to give. These pledges would then be used to agree an overall budget and therefore level of stipendiary deployment for the Deanery.

Recognising these new responsibilities, in April 2010 the Deanery Leadership Team and Deanery Synod approved the formation of a Deanery Strategy team under the leadership of the Area Dean. The Deanery Strategy Team set out to develop a deployment strategy for City Deanery. The team comprises of Beverley Charles, Rev Debbie Frazer, Rev Mat Ineson, Rev Joe Hasler and John Goodgame.

We wanted to involve all the churches in the deanery and a number of workshops and other events were held to provide opportunities for church communities to have conversations about growth, priorities and the use of stipendiary resources.

This reports summarises our findings and makes recommendation for consideration at the Deanery Summit on 13 October 2010. The recommendations are a mixture of specific action that can happen quite quickly and opportunities for us to learn and grow together over the next few years.

## **Approach**

We approached the development of the Deanery Strategy through a number of stages:

April – Kick off workshops

June / July – facilitated conversations with churches in partnership groups

August – working groups\* considered key themes

September – report writing

October – Deanery Summit to review and debate findings

November / December – finalise and approve Deanery Strategy

The whole process was supported by prayer. Thank you to Rev Michael Selman for facilitating this.

The following churches contributed to developing the strategy:

All Hallows	All Saint's	St Aidan with St George	St Ambrose
St Anne's	St Bartholomew's	Cotham Parish Church	
Easton Christian Family Centre		Good Shepherd	St Gregory the Great
Holy Trinity	St John's	St Leonard's	St Luke's
St Agnes	St Mary's (F'ponds)	St Matthew's	St Michael's
St Michael's and All Angels		St Paul's (Clifton)	St Mary's (Lockl'ze)
Pip 'n' Jay	Southmead	St Stephens in the City	Redland

# Breaking the cycle

## Some principles

‘The task of the church is to proclaim and embody the kingdom of God by making disciples and being Christ’s body in the world. Churches will grow through God’s grace.’  
*(said by someone at the consultation stage)*

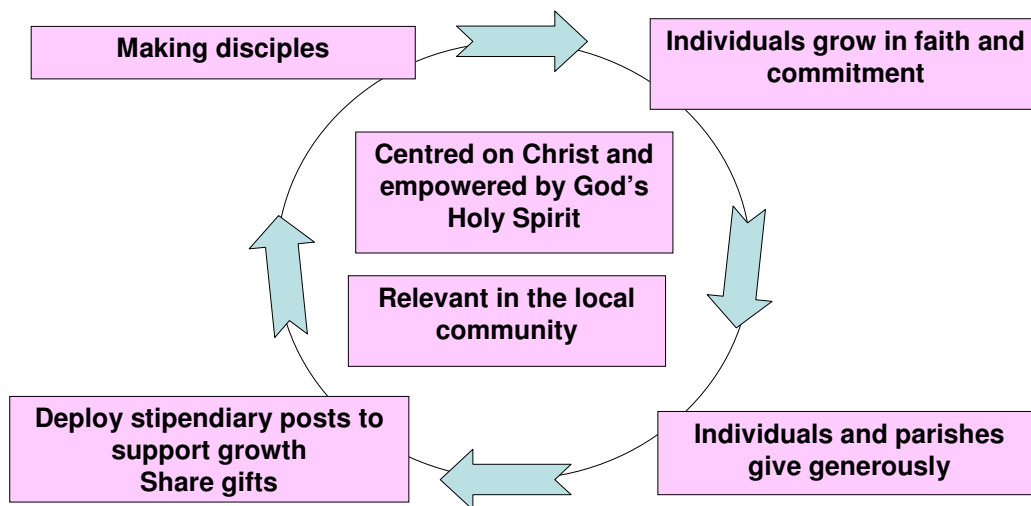
God has a bias for the poor. Jesus was above all concerned for the poor, the outcasts, the rejects of respectable society; and he turned the values of that society upside down.

## Our current reality

The reality of the current situation is that the larger and better resourced churches are in the wealthier areas of the Deanery. The larger and better resourced churches currently (and rightly) contribute more towards the financial costs of deployment of stipendiary ministers through the share payment. Overall we have limited financial resources and a reducing number of stipendiary ministers.

This Deanery strategy seeks to challenge the status quo, to break out of the common cycle of declining church numbers, leading to declining resources, leading to declining mission and outreach, leading to declining church numbers and so the cycle goes on.

We will do this by supporting individuals and congregations to grow; making new disciples, enabling both new and existing church members to grow in faith and commitment. As they grow in commitment, part of that commitment is to Christian Stewardship and generous giving of experience, time and money. We will then use these resources to support further growth in the places and communities where it is needed across the Deanery.



We asked those who attended the kick-off workshops, to identify the things that they thought would help to break out of the cycle of decline. These were grouped into four areas and working groups setup to explore them further:

- Reaching out to the community
- Sharing between churches
- Giving generously
- Deploying stipendiary resources to support growth

The findings of each of the working groups and the partnership meetings are summarised below along with recommendations for how we might change the cycle of decline to a cycle of growth.

\*Membership of the working groups was as follows:

Reaching out to communities – Susan Allman, Vicky Wright , Joe Hasler

Giving generously – Bob Bell, John Goodgame, Paul Rowlands

Deployment of ministry resources – Rev Rod Symmons, Rev John Hadley, Anne Isles, Rev Barrie Green, Tim Snowdon, Rev Mat Ineson, Gerry Nicholls.

Sharing between churches – consolidated from Church discussions.

## Reaching out to the community

Community engagement is about out-reach and not about in-grab. It is the mark of an Apostolic Church.

The important question is not just ‘how will the church engage with the community?’ but ‘how will the community receive such an engagement?’ Jesus’ ministry was based on relationships. He met with people where they were and shared the gospel in ways that were relevant to them. The days of the church relating to people as an institution, may be coming to an end. Increasingly we need to identify points of common interest, person to person: child to child, parent to parent, neighbour to neighbour, train-spotter to train-spotter.

We need to focus less on specific programmes and initiatives and more on encouraging one another in more person to person ministry. As members of our churches get more involved in community affairs, we are presented with more opportunities to share the Good News through the relationships we build. But, how do we persuade our congregations that this kind of community engagement is a good thing? Especially, when community engagement is unlikely to rapidly break the cycle of declining Sunday attendances.

We need to understand the hurdles that prevent individuals, congregations and communities from really engaging with each other:

- The **number of meetings** and institutional structures that *need* to be supported encourage church members to stay ‘inside’ rather than connecting with ‘outside’.
- **Growing can disrupt things**, congregations may be full of charity and full of friendliness but feel very comfortable with the base (congregation) they are working from. The suggestion that the base could grow might disrupt this. So there may be a desire to engage but defer growth.
- **Church as one**, is there too much emphasis on uniformity rather than unity? Making space for dissenters and disagreement gives a different face to the world and leaves it more open for new people to join.

In today’s more mobile society we need to recognise that people may have different perceptions of community. Some communities are still governed largely by **place**, people come together because they live or work in the same place. Others come together because they share **interests**. They are prepared to travel to be with people who they want to share with. A possible third, less well understood type of community is emerging, the **virtual network** of people. In the City Deanery we have churches that fall into both communities of place and communities of interest e.g. Pip’n’Jay and St Paul’s, Clifton where less than 10% of the congregation live within the parish boundary and churches in Southmead and Fishponds where over 80% of the congregation live within the parish. We

would encourage each congregation to look to understand the nature of the community they believe they are called to serve. We need to organise our outreach in the context of that community.

Throughout the Deanery we can see many examples of successful community engagement, although as we said earlier this has not always led to immediate and significant increases in church attendance. We need to share our experience, the stories of our successes and the things that haven't worked to help and encourage each other.

#### Proposed Strategy objective

Throughout the Deanery we will recognise *community engagement* as an important aspect of the apostolic calling of the church. We will seek to equip each congregation with the understanding and skills to engage with the community they are called to serve.

We will seek to make sure that each community within the City Deanery has access to church, whether that is based on location or interest groups.

**Through teaching, training and access to resources, the Deanery should support congregations in understanding the role and nature of outreach in the life of the individual Christian and the Church community.**

**Each congregation should be encouraged to:**

- **Examine the hurdles to community involvement presented to the members of their congregation and address them;**
- **Make an assessment of the social network behaviour of the communities it contributes to; and**
- **Reduce the number of formal meetings and other distractions to free people to engage in settings and directions not normally pursued.**

**The Deanery should identify:**

- **those churches that provide an important link to place, either through the nature of the local community e.g. inner city estate, or because they occupy a prominent public site.**
- **Those communities that may not currently have access to 'church' either because they cannot physically easily access one or because they represent a community of interest that is not currently well served by our existing churches.**

**In time, as we understand the nature of community and place better, there may be a role to plant churches and / or relocate others to better meet the needs of the communities we seek to serve.**

## Sharing between churches

The facilitated conversations we held with partnerships were a great opportunity to share the things that are exciting us and the things that are challenging at the moment. We found a wealth of experience and successes in some areas that others were finding a challenge. We have identified seven areas where particular opportunities exist for sharing, learning and developing new services together:

**Making disciples** – moving new Christians on in faith and commitment.

**Mission** – society has a crisis of faith, how do we make faith attractive? And relevant? How do we make church more than just Sunday? Can be difficult for small, aging congregations.

**Children and young people's work** – particularly teenagers and young families.

**Younger adults** – many churches have few of this age group.

**Community** – how do we understand and interact with the community around us? How do we remain open to new people, particularly from other cultures?

**New services** – fresh expressions such as Messy Church can bring new people, how do we integrate these various congregations?

**Premises** – more flexible use of worship spaces, upkeep of buildings and possibilities for community use.

There was a genuine desire to work across churches but even within partnerships, people struggled to turn desire into practice.

Proposed Strategy Objective:

The Deanery will increasingly become a conduit for church communities to share experiences, learn together and help each other to support God's mission through their churches.

When gaps can be best met on a pan-partnership or deanery basis, the Deanery will seek to facilitate and encourage these.

**To achieve this we will:**

- **create a forum for churches to share their hopes and dreams, to share experience and best practice with others and to ask for help;**
- **support a pan partnership / deanery focus for youth and younger adults;**
- **explore the possibility of a shared maintenance and repair team for the deanery;**
- **along with the Diocese and other partners, consider a programme of discipleship and mission training.**

## Giving generously

Individuals and churches give in many ways: money, time, energy and expertise. However this group focussed mainly financial giving.

In 2010, the budget for City Deanery allows for nearly 20 full time equivalent stipendiary posts at a total cost of around £1M a year (this does not include three curates and two other posts funded by the Diocese in other ways). The total amount pledged by parishes was about £891,000, so City Deanery is a net receiver. For the Deanery as a whole, our pledged giving in share for 2011 has increased by 2%.

The reality is that if we want to keep the number of stipendiary roles that we have in the Deanery, or even be able to fund more, we need to give out, loud and clear, a coherent message about giving generously.

The Old Testament commands that we give 10% to maintain the temple and the priesthood and thereafter we should give alms to support the sick and needy. In the New Testament, Christ asks for everything to be used for His work and the early church 'gave, each according to their means'. As a church and individuals we are called to give generously.

People need to:

- understand and support the need – what is the money used for?;
- believe that their giving will make a difference;
- understand and accept the principles of Christian Stewardship, it is the right thing to do;
- believe that they are being asked to contribute fairly; and
- understand the consequence of not giving, someone else may not be able to pay either.

It is important that each parish seeks to improve its finances as best it can in order to maximise its resources. This requires communication and leadership with clear objectives.

Proposed Strategy Objective:

What we must do, is to pay our fair share to the Diocese in terms of what has been previously expected of us, plus inflation. This is not being generous this is our duty.

What we could do is to pay our way. That is to pay for the posts that we currently have, an increase in giving of 12% above the 2009 assessment.

And then what if we were to be able to finance more posts, more outreach, building redevelopment,..... This is what generosity could do.

**To achieve this we will make 2011 a focus on giving generously throughout the Deanery. However, the drive, enthusiasm and organisation for any campaign must come from within each parish, only they can make it a success, supported by the Deanery.**

**The campaign needs to:**

- **Excite and motivate communities about current and future growth**

- **Encourage the principles of Christian Stewardship using the Diocese 'Giving for Life' resource and other resources.**
- **Inform people about what the money is used for and why it is needed**
- **Be positive and motivate people that it is worthwhile**
- **Listen to what people expect from the Deanery and Diocese**
- **Explain that all parishes are being asked to contribute fairly, according to their means.**

**It is also critically important that everyone understands the consequences of not giving, It is time to be bold about the possible and inevitable result.**

## Deploying stipendiary resources to support growth

Churches will grow primarily through God's grace working through local leadership, that leadership may be lay or ordained.

We believe that churches will grow by deploying appropriate ministers and other resources to the church and/or the context that the church serves. This means that stipendiary posts may not be shared '*equally*' across the deanery.

All churches in the Deanery currently share ministry between lay and ordained people and all but two have seen new vocations in the last five years. We need to continue this shift away from the culture of church ministry being solely dependant on the availability of a stipendiary ordained minister and encourage more local leadership, lay and licensed / ordained.

We need to better understand the reasons why people come forward to offer for licensed ministry more readily in some churches than in others and find ways to overcome these barriers.

### Proposed strategy objective

We will deploy ministers to resource churches for growth (as defined by Diocese Strategy i.e. PINC) and not to maintain the status quo.

The factors that should be considered when deploying are;

- Identifiable need for deployment demonstrable in the church growth plan
- Church potential including 'Missional context'
- Availability of local leaders or potential to grow them
- Are all our churches '*viable*' as they are?
- Potential partnerships with Anglican and non-Anglican churches
- Benefit of deployment of ministers to the wider Deanery

**By September 2011 we will develop a Deanery Resource Plan – we will review each church within the deanery against the factors identified above and agree with the Bishop a plan for the deployment of the available stipendiary resources over the remainder of the strategy period (to 2015).**

**Each Church would know the future plan for stipendiary resources for their church and could develop their own local plans accordingly.**

**This plan may identify stipendiary roles that operate across churches or partnerships to support particular needs or initiatives and stipendiary posts may not necessarily all be ordained.**

**Deanery Strategy Team  
October 2010**