



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

TRANSFORMING PRESENCE:

Mission & Ministry Units

A simple guide



Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Chelmsford

This document has been produced in consultation with nearly half the Area Deans and Lay Chairs of the diocese. I am very grateful for their helpful contributions to this first attempt to map the way forward for Mission and Ministry Units.

- Bishop Stephen

“ Mission and Ministry Units are our way of ensuring that every community is served, that resources are deployed strategically and that there is room and incentive for growth. ”

www.transformingpresence.org.uk

Section I

What are we trying to do?

Our aim is to be a transforming presence in every community.

We want to see more church for more impact in the lives of our communities.

Our ministry strategy is our way of ensuring this can be achieved.

Ministry belongs to everyone. Every Christian has a vocation.

We need priests to lead and serve the people of God.

Mission and Ministry Units are our way of ensuring that every community is served, that resources are deployed strategically and that there is room and incentive for growth.

- It is not about cutting clergy numbers. It is about ensuring that the clergy we have are deployed in the best possible way, that benefices are not left in longer and longer vacancies, and that we have plans to grow more clergy and more lay ministers.
- It is not about closing churches. It is about ensuring every church flourishes and that we plant more churches. However, in some cases there will be a few church buildings that are no longer needed.
- It is not about spreading limited resources more thinly or simply amalgamating churches together in ever larger teams. It is about ensuring that no priest has to work in isolation. It is about growing and nurturing local ministry. It is about a huge flourishing in authorised and licensed lay ministry.
- It is not about managing decline. It is about being realistic about the challenges and constraints we face and then ensuring every church has a plan for growth.

Section 2

How do we make it happen?

- 1** Look at a map of the area your deanery serves, and where appropriate look at the parishes over the border in other deaneries.
- 2** Mark on the map the natural communities in which people live, i.e. a market town, a cluster of villages, an inner city or suburban estate.
- 3** Mark where your churches are.
- 4** Mark where the schools are and other key points where people gather and meet. Church schools are particularly important. Not only do we have a responsibility to minister in them, they are key strategic places where new communities of faith could develop. Look at where there are hospitals, prisons and workplaces with chaplaincies.
- 5** Decide upon the 'Mission Priority Areas' for your deanery. A Mission Priority Area could be one of—
 - a planned (or existing) housing estate that isn't really being served by any of the parishes or one that straddles several parish boundaries.
 - a people group such as young people or men or families that many churches struggle to attract.
 - a social need that is particular to your deanery and that could be met in some way if the churches worked more closely together.
 - a community drawn from a different cultural or ethnic background, some of whom may be Christians
 - a church which is really struggling, perhaps unable to pay its share and with an ageing and dwindling congregation, or making a low impact in terms of average attendance relative to the size of the population.
 - a successful church on the threshold of break-through to higher numbers or planting out.

Mark these on the map or make note of them for future reference. These are your deanery Mission Priority Areas.

- 6** Your deanery will have been given an allocation of what is called the 'minimum sustainable' number of stipendiary clergy. Don't think of this as the number we cut to, but the number we grow from. (We face a very large number of clergy retirements in the next ten years, so we have to be realistic about how many clergy can be deployed).¹ Keeping this number in front of you, arrange the deanery into a number of units, that is rough geographic areas which make sense on the ground.
- 7** Give each of these units at least two stipendiary priests. At the moment don't worry about where actual parish or deanery boundaries are. As far as possible go with the natural flow of where people live and travel.
- 8** If, having done this, there is some stipendiary clergy resource remaining, consider how these should be deployed. Is there one unit with a greater need than another: perhaps one which has a Mission Priority Area in it? Or perhaps a unit with a very large population? Or a church with a larger than usual congregation? Or the unit with the most individual churches in it? Or are there other ways of using ordained ministry across the whole of the deanery?
- 9** If you don't have enough clergy to give two stipendiary priests to each unit, then you will need to look again at the way you have drawn the boundaries between units. If the units are too thinly resourced, they will struggle.
- 10** Identify one post/priest as the unit leader. This person is not necessarily the Incumbent of each parish in the unit (though this could be the case) but is the person who oversees and helps develop the ministry of every church and in each of the Mission Priority Areas in the unit. It could be a self-supporting minister.
- 11** Each church, worshipping community or fresh expression needs ministry. In your plan does each church have a minister? What pioneer ministers do you need to nurture and train so that you can plant

new churches? What other lay and ordained ministry do you need to enable every church to flourish and to prevent the stipendiary clergy from being spread more thinly across more parishes? For instance the diocese has already stated these aspirations –

- each unit will have at least one Licensed Lay Minister (LLM) someone who, alongside their other responsibilities, will take a lead in training and forming other lay ministers
- each worshipping community will have an evangelist or an evangelism enabler
- most units will expect to have at least one curate in training.

To this we can also add the need for more Pastoral Assistants, Authorised Lay Preachers and Worship Leaders. These ministries are vital. But we will still need more clergy: we need more stipendiary ministry; and we need more self-supporting and locally deployed ministry. We need younger clergy for whom it will be their life's work. We need older, experienced wise heads who will serve in a supporting capacity to sustain and grow the life of each church. We need the clergy and lay leaders of the diocese to reflect the communities we serve. We need many more black and minority ethnic clergy. We need a mix of paid and voluntary ministers. Every church needs to be proactive in identifying and encouraging these vocations. Be aspirational. Write into your plan the ministers you think you need for each church.

Think about the types of resources the unit will need. A unit with a relatively small population but a spread of church buildings might aspire to have more self-supporting and retired priests. A unit with a high population of young people might prioritise a youth, children and family minister. Some units may have a mission priority area particularly suited to a pioneer or someone who can develop a fresh expression to serve an otherwise missed community. Are there units where additional supporting resource could enable growth through a 'glass ceiling' or planting a new worshipping community?

- 12** What programmes of discernment, nurture and support will you need for this to happen? And what help do you need from the diocese? And how long – realistically – do you think it will take you to get there? How will you grow future leadership from within the unit’s own particular cultural or social context?
- 13** What other support do you need, both in the short term as you transition towards the plan, and in the long term so as to enable the churches in the unit to flourish? For instance, what about employing an administrator or manager who will work for all the parishes in the unit.
- 14** How will you develop ministry in your Mission Priority Areas? What additional resource do you need? Money for this could be available from something like the Mission Opportunity Fund, or from the Interim Ministry scheme. Or you could use one of your own posts; or raise money for the post yourselves.
- 15** Now you are ready to write your plan –
- in each deanery there will probably be at least two units, and the largest deaneries may have more
 - each unit will be a defined geographic area containing several churches
 - in each church there will be ordained and lay ministers – and where more are needed the deanery will have plans for how this ministry will be grown
 - each unit will have at least two stipendiary priests and plans to have more as circumstances change and the church grows
 - each unit will have an identified unit leader or co-ordinator with agreed responsibilities. This will probably be a priest, it may be a self-supporting priest and in some cases it could be a lay person.
 - each unit will have identified mission priority areas and some sort of plan for how this ministry will be developed

Section 3

Here are our answers to some Frequently Asked Questions

Will our parish share go down if our clergy numbers go down, and if not shouldn't we be entitled to the number of clergy we pay for?

First of all, very few deaneries cover the costs of the ministry they receive.ⁱⁱ We hope our new share scheme will address this, but even if we were all paying for the clergy we receive, this still doesn't change the fact that clergy retirements mean there will be fewer stipendiary clergy available. However, if the parish share does come in, and if it does cover the ministry costs then it will be possible for deaneries to use the additional money raised to employ other lay ministers in the deanery. Indeed, we actively encourage this sort of creative and entrepreneurial thinking. But, so that such ministers are properly trained and authorised we ask deaneries to include these aspirations in their plans and liaise through their Archdeacon as these new posts come on stream.

We can't do this because some clergy in our deanery have the freehold.

Freehold of itself does not prevent Mission and Ministry Units being formed. To begin with (and possibly for ever!) units will be informal groupings of churches, fresh expressions and mission priority areas. Where clergy with the freehold are not able to co-operate with a deanery plan, certain aspects of the plan will have to wait until that person moves on. But the plan itself can still be drawn up. One of the reasons that Transforming Presence is a vision for what sort of church we could be in 2025 is precisely to acknowledge that having a plan and implementing it are not the same thing. Implementation will take time in every deanery. But getting the plan together is something we need to do more urgently.

One of the strengths of the Church of England is our breadth of tradition. Won't Mission and Ministry Units work against this? And how can a unit work with, for instance, some churches supporting women's ordination and others unable to?

Our breadth of tradition is one of our strengths, and we are committed to enabling each tradition to flourish and to respect the integrity of those with whom we disagree on certain identified theological issues. This does not mean parishes of very different traditions cannot live together in a Mission and Ministry Unit. However, it will be essential that priestly ministry of that tradition is provided for the churches that need it. But beyond this it could be a great strength for churches that disagree on some things to be seen working together on others.

Is all this legal?

Mission and Ministry Units can be formed without any need to change the legal status of a parish or an Incumbent. Much can be achieved informally, and there is no particular requirement for a change in legal structure. However there is a range of existing legal measures which could be employed: In some cases a unit may wish to become, for instance, a group or cluster ministry, a multi parish benefice under one Incumbent, or a team ministry, or even use a Bishop's Mission Order. But this is up to the local churches and their decision to be made when appropriate.

There was some research done recently which showed that amalgamating parishes led to decline. In which case why are we doing it?

Yes, there has been evidence that so called amalgamations can lead to decline. There are also plenty of examples of amalgamated parishes growing and of parishes with a single incumbent declining. Well, if it can happen in one place, it can happen in every place. The harder truth is that most of the Church of England has been in decline for quite a long time. In the past we amalgamated parishes by trying to retain a model where every church had a vicar. So the vicar who fifty years ago had one church, thirty years ago had two churches, and twenty years ago had four churches and so on. If we fail to engage with re-imagining ministry, that is precisely the course we will be forced down. Learning from the research available we are trying something different. Each church will have an Incumbent, but that person will no longer be expected to be the sole minister or to have to spread themselves across a number of churches. On the contrary this person will take on a more 'episcopal' role, overseeing the ministry of all God's people in those churches and a vital part of the deanery plan for mission and Ministry Units is to identify and train ordained and lay ministers who can serve and lead in every church. In this way each church will have a ministry and each church will have an Incumbent. This is a new way of developing ministry.

What is a Unit Leader?

A Unit Leader is someone who has been identified as having responsibility and oversight for the churches, fresh expressions and mission priority areas in that geographic unit. They will not necessarily be the incumbent of all the parishes, nor will these churches necessarily form into a team ministry. So in many cases this person's authority will be informal. But their role and position will be recognised by the diocese and this will be reflected in their support and training. This person will lead the Unit and we will work hard to establish networks of support and accountability within the unit. In most cases this person will be ordained. However, there is no reason why this post could not be filled by a lay person.

Do we have to call it a 'Unit'?

No. 'Unit' is a term we have used simply because it is different from all the other terms in use. You need to think about a name that is most appropriate for your context. This might be an existing term such as 'group', 'team', 'cluster' if that's appropriate; some prospective 'units' are thinking about including 'partnership' or 'covenant' in the name. You are welcome to come up with a name that suits you best, and it is pretty unlikely any unit will end up with the word 'Unit' in its title.

So why are other dioceses doing it differently?

Actually many are not. Our vision is for more churches and more clergy. But we have to begin where we are. Plans being developed in dioceses as diverse as Truro, Sheffield, Exeter and Liverpool are very similar to ours. Most of us recognise that the clergy retirement issue is a real one, that the Church is in decline, that simply spreading clergy more thinly can't be the answer, and that we need a new vision of ministry which releases the energy of ordained and specialist ministers (youth workers, evangelists and pioneers for instance) and harnesses and gifts of the whole people of God. That is what we are aiming for, and if some other dioceses have not caught up with this yet, they will.

Isn't this what other denominations have tried and it hasn't gone very well?

No. Some other denominations have closed churches and consolidated on a limited number of what they saw as key strategic localities. What happened was that people didn't travel to church in the way that was hoped. In some cases people either stopped going or – in rural areas – started attending the Church of England. Our plan is to keep churches open and to do ministry differently. It is a big ask, a radical change and a big culture shift. It will take time. But it can be done. And it is a model for growth not decline. However, it is God that gives the growth not us. Growth can only ever be an outcome not an aim. So we need to just worry about being faithful. How do we maintain our presence without burning out our clergy and how do we help every Christian to have some sense of their own share in God's ministry? If we achieve this, then I believe God will bless us. But I don't know when.

What if our deanery has already completed our plan and it doesn't quite fit all the criteria in this guide?

That's fine! This is a guide and not a straightjacket. If this guide has raised new ideas, then please don't scrap your current plan. Simply agree the new topics that will need to be considered as you plan in more detail. And if you have reached different conclusions based on your context and mission opportunities, then your Archdeacon and Area Mission and Pastoral Committee will take those things into account.

What help is out there?

If you want help with your plan, please talk to your Archdeacon or Mission & Ministry Advisor in the first instance. While it might not be possible to meet every request, please do ask. Some resources that are available include:

- Statistics and data of all sorts: Chris Copus (statistics@chelmsford.anglican.org)
- Maps: Nathan Whitehead (nwhitehead@chelmsford.anglican.org)
- Facilitators or accompaniers: ask via your Mission & Ministry Adviser
- Graphical design services: Andrea Pannell (printunit@chelmsford.anglican.org)

Area Deans may also ask Archdeacons about the possibility of temporary additional administrative support or help with other costs associated with this process. A modest budget has been set aside from a special fund to support this.

- i This is not about lack of money or even lack of ordinands; it is just that between 2019 and 2024 the number those retiring will not be matched by those being ordained and completing curacies. In the Diocese of Chelmsford our numbers are going up, so we have good reason to be optimistic that once we get through this period, stipendiary numbers will start to rise again. We need to be realistic about this, and fair to the rest of the country in our use of resources. This is also why we are not closing churches, except where we need to anyway, and not simply forming larger and larger team ministries or benefices. We are developing another sort of ministry so that each local church can retain its identity, develop its mission and grow as a transforming presence in its locality.
- ii The total cost of putting a stipendiary priest in a parish is about £60,000 per year. That is not the stipend they receive, but the combined cost of stipend, housing, pension and training. In 2015 the total cost of ministry in the diocese is £18 million; the total parish share requested is under £15 million.

Questions and ideas

***If you have a question or an idea drop us a line at
info@transformingpresence.org.uk***

We look forward to hearing from you.

Stay in touch

***Sign up to our Transforming Presence electronic bulletin at
www.transformingpresence.org.uk/e-bulletin***

Our passion is Jesus. We are passionate about proclaiming and living out God's love for all people.

Our aspiration is to be a transforming presence in every community, open and welcoming to everyone, and serving all people.

Our resources are faithful people, prayer and worship, visionary leadership and liberating gifts.

Follow us!

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Bishop Stephen's website – www.stephencottrell.org

Bishop Stephen on Twitter – @cottrellstephen

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Bishop John on Twitter – @johnwraw

Faith in Action blog – www.faith-in-action.org.uk

Bishop Peter on Twitter - @peterhill92

Pinterest – www.pinterest.com/chelmsdio

Facebook – www.facebook.com/askanarchdeacon

Bishop Roger on Twitter - @BishColchester

Schools, children & young people website – www.cdbe.org.uk

Sparrows childcare website – www.sparrowschildcare.co.uk



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