



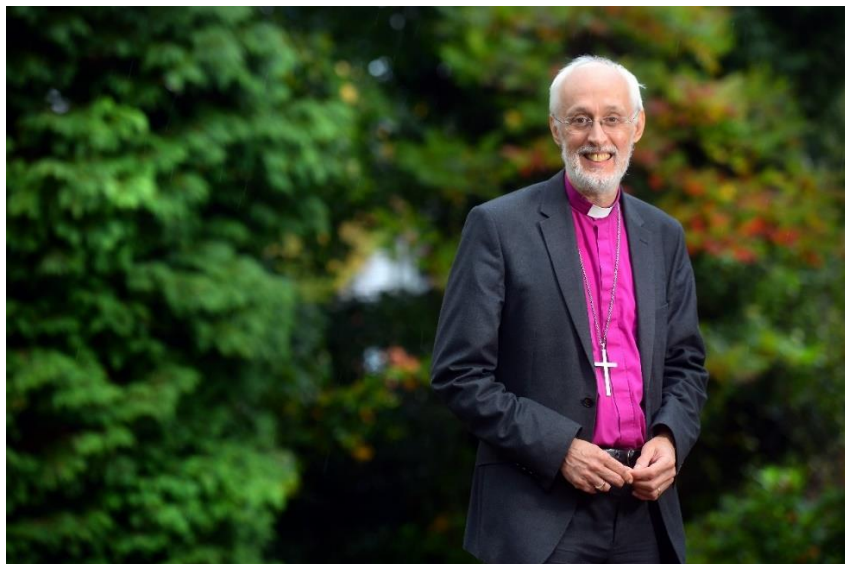
THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Manchester

CHURCH
FOR A
DIFFERENT
WORLD

Transforming Manchester **Diocese** Feedback on Proposals for Mission Communities and Next Steps

March 2021

Message from Bishop David



Dear Friends

The proposals for mission communities that we shared with you in October 2020 set out an exciting way forward so that we can live out our vision for the Diocese of Manchester. They demonstrated our clear commitment to supporting and strengthening the parish system, and also to ensuring that our lay leaders are central to achieving that vision, working alongside our ordained leaders.

While the challenges we face are considerable, I am confident that the opportunities opening up to us are even greater. We have known for many years that we need to face up to and make major changes to ensure a healthy and vibrant future for our church here in Manchester.

We asked for your feedback on our preliminary proposals and I have been overwhelmed by the positive engagement with them and by the number of responses we have received.

In probably the biggest consultation exercise ever held in the diocese, we have heard the views of more than 1000 people. All your opinions are important to us and are helping us to discern the way forward as we continue to develop and refine the proposals over the coming months.

Alongside the consultations, we have moved ahead with the appointment for seven full-time Area Deans who will take up their posts in June 2021. The Area Deans will be crucial to laying the groundwork in our new deaneries and, working with Lay Chairs and other ordained and lay leaders, in delivering the diocese's transformation programme at local level.

I remain convinced that to achieve our goals, we need to be intentional, focused and supportive of each other. These are challenging times, but from what I know of all your work and commitment throughout the pandemic, I am sure that we will be able to rise to those challenges and emerge stronger in our ability and commitment to do all that God is asking of us in our diocese.

I ask you to remain prayerful and to join us in our monthly prayer meetings for the diocese as, under God, we discern the path before us together.

With every blessing,

+David Manchester

Introduction

In October 2020 we shared preliminary details of our proposals for mission communities which we believe will enable us to achieve our inspiring vision for local ministry across the Diocese of Manchester. The proposals can be found in [Transforming Manchester Diocese: Briefing document on the proposals for Mission Communities](#).

We invited a wide range of people to study the proposals and give us their feedback to help us reach agreement on the principles that should apply to the creation of mission communities.

We asked:

- What inspires you about the proposed vision for mission communities?
- Do you have any concerns about the key principles for mission communities?
- What are the opportunities and challenges of the proposed approach for your church community?

This report summaries the feedback that was received following an extensive consultation exercise between October 2020 and March 2021.

We want to thank everyone who considered the proposals and gave us their thoughts. We value enormously all the feedback that was received from more than 1000 people who took part in a range of consultation meetings (mostly over Zoom), and who emailed us either as individuals or on behalf of their PCC.

The proposals have been largely well-received, mainly because of a shared and growing understanding of the serious challenges – both missional and financial – facing our diocese. There is an acknowledgement that fundamental changes are needed to achieve our vision for 2030 – for there to be a 'growing, worshipping Christian presence at the heart of every community'.



There are also understandable concerns and questions, and requests for further information about how the proposals will work in practice and in a variety of different local contexts.

We are listening to what you tell us, and in response to your questions and comments we are continuing to develop the proposals for mission communities. We will provide more detail over the coming months, as set out in the timetable in this report.

We are also surrounding the transformation programme in prayer, and we invite you to join monthly prayer meetings hosted by Bishop Mark Davies as we bring our requests and concerns to God. Details of each prayer meeting can be found on the diocesan website (www.manchester.anglican.org/prayer), in the weekly e-news bulletin and on social media.

Stakeholder engagement so far

We published our high-level proposals for mission communities in October 2020. The following stakeholders were asked to feed back on the mission community proposals, as of 1 March 2021:

- **Bishop's Council** - 22 September 2020
- **DBF/DBE Staff** - 23 September 2020
- **Leadership and Development Training** – 8 October 2020
- **Synod** - 10 October 2020
- **All 20 Deanery Synods** (or equivalent) – 14 responses received so far
- **All 20 Clergy Chapter meetings** (or equivalent) – 12 responses received so far
- **Area Deans, meeting** - 16 November 2020
- **Lay Chairs, meeting** - 19 November 2020
- **DMPC** - 26 November 2020
- **Ecumenical Leaders Trustees Meeting** – 16 December 2020
- **Archdeaconry events** – 12 to 29 January 2021 – 700+ in attendance
- **Readers' Conference** – 6 February 2021.

There has also been a general invitation to respond to the proposals via email. So far we have received 18 responses from PCCs and 22 email responses from individuals.

A summary of the responses is included in the Appendix.

In this first stage of the engagement process, the proposals necessarily have been high level and broad brush to enable us to introduce the basic principles and avoid overwhelming people with detail.



In any case, the nature and spirit of the proposals is that we are not seeking to impose a detailed blueprint for mission communities. It is important to strike the right balance between top-down and bottom-up decision-making. The mission community proposals deliberately provide for a high degree of flexibility and every opportunity for local engagement and local choices. Mission priorities and operational detail will vary between communities and must be determined locally.

That said, the wide discussions on the proposals have also surfaced the key issues which now require further clarification, to ensure there is a solid, shared understanding of the vision for mission communities and how best to implement this. Our approach to addressing these issues is set out below:

Summary of responses received



The positives:

- Mission communities will provide opportunities for sharing the gifts and talents and clergy and laity, and also resources.
- Change is timely and needed.
- The opportunity for different church traditions to work together is seen by many as being a positive thing.
- Mission communities will provide new and exciting opportunities for our ordinands and lay leaders.
- We can be confident about our ability to manage change, given our experience of lockdown.

Understandable concerns and questions:

- The request for more transparency about church closures and clergy numbers.
- The structure, boundaries and geography of the proposed mission communities.
- A possible negative response from congregations, in particular older congregation members, and the need to engage them in a positive way with the proposals.
- The impact on the wellbeing of clergy and lay leaders and the implications for their workloads, in particular concerns about increased administration and bureaucracy.
- Concerns about different traditions working together.
- The process for appointing mission community leaders.

Some important themes emerged from the discussions that we will want to take into account as we move forward:

- Support with good communication about the need for culture change
- The building of good relationships and trust, which will take time.
- Investment in the development and training of clergy and laity to support this change of culture.
- How to proceed at a manageable pace, particularly as we come out of the pandemic, while maintaining momentum and enthusiasm.
- The need to make clear decisions about closing churches if we are to be successful and not spread ourselves too thin – and corresponding concerns from some about the future of their churches.
- Remaining outward-looking and not getting distracted by internal matters.

Next steps

Subject to the mission community proposals being agreed, the governance and implementation timetable is set out below:

March 2021 - May 2021

- The principles for mission communities will be further developed in the light of the feedback received so far and agreed at Bishop's Council on 26 May 2021. They will also be shared with Diocesan Synod on 12 June 2021. The key issues to be addressed at this stage are:
 - The governance and legal arrangements for the new mission communities
 - Roles and responsibilities for each mission community
 - The principles underpinning the proposed groupings
 - The further communication of our vision for mission communities.

June 2021 – November 2021

- The new Area Deans will lead local discussions with clergy and lay leaders and their parishes, to agree a final set of proposals for the mission community boundaries. Other issues to be addressed at this stage are:
 - The process for selecting and appointing mission community leaders
 - Deployment proposals for stipendiary posts and other leaders – lay and ordained
 - Development and training for clergy and laity to support the changes
 - Good practice guidance to support the formation of mission communities
 - The implementation programme for mission communities.

- Mission community boundaries will be reviewed at Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee on 4 November 2021 and agreed at Bishop's Council on 18 November 2021.

January 2022 onwards

- New mission communities will start to be implemented as a set of informal arrangements from January 2022. Parishes will start to come together to build their shared vision and plans from this point.
- Formal governance structures will be adapted as appropriate through a five-year change programme.

A Mission Community Task & Finish Group has been set up from March 2021, with members from the different church traditions and clergy and lay representatives, to provide a steer on the issues set out in this paper. The Task & Finish group is being headed up by a member of Bishop's Leadership Team – Archdeacon Jean Burgess.

We are still open to receiving feedback on the proposals. Please email your comments to: differentworld@manchester.anglican.org

Prayer

A PRAYER OF LONGING AND HOPE IN A TIME OF DISCERNMENT

Living and Loving God,
as your pilgrim people in the Diocese of Manchester,
we thank you for the great commission
with which you have entrusted us:
to love and serve, and to bring
our parishes, schools, chaplaincies and all our communities
into new life in Jesus Christ.

As we prepare for all you call us towards
in the months and years to come,
grant us hopeful and honest discernment;
meet our anxieties, griefs and fears
with your tender and comforting Spirit;
and help us to greet the promise and challenge
of each new day with openness, grace, and trust.

Teach us to pray in faith, hope and love,
that we may go out into your world
confident in your mission,
and full of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Amen

APPENDIX: Summary of responses

	Total	Bishop's Council / DMPC	Area Deacons and Lay Chairs	Deanery Synods	Clergy Chapters	Arch-deaconry Events	Parishes	Readers	Other Responses
What inspires you about the proposed vision?									
Opportunities for using the gifts, skills and talents of many	49	4	4	8	1	26	5		1
Opportunities to collaborate, share and pool resources and experiences	46	3	1	14	3	15	7	1	2
Enables stronger Mission/ Action Plans	5					2	3		
Change is timely and needed	43	5	6	6	3	10	12	1	
A more sustainable model than what we have currently	16	1	3	4	2	2	4		
Adaptable / responsive / resilient model	14	3		3	1	5	2		
Opportunity to further nurture ordinands and lay leaders	20	2		6	3	6	2	1	
Learning from lockdown (e.g. Online) installs sense of confidence in change	20	2	1	3		9	3		2
Collaborative mission is something that is proven to work in other areas/ pilot deaneries/ diocese	19			2		14	3		
Opportunity to take advantage of lay gifts	14	2	1	4	3	3		1	

	Total	Bishop's Council / DMPC	Area Deacons and Lay Chairs	Deanery Synods	Clergy Chapters	Arch-deaconry Events	Parishes	Readers	Other Responses
What inspires you about the proposed vision?									
More opportunities to work with young people	13				1	10	2		
The missional focus allows us to be responsive not reactive to community needs	15	1	1	5	1	3	3		1
Different church expressions and traditions working together	29	2		5	2	9	9		2
Training, support and accountability between churches	13			4		4	4		1

	Total	Bishop's Council / DMPC	Area Deacons and Lay Chairs	Deanery Synods	Clergy Chapters	Arch-deaconry Events	Parishes	Readers	Other Responses
What are your concerns about the proposals?									
Care needed in the appointment of the Mission Community Leader role	20	2		6	1	6	5		
Concerns that all responsibility and workload falls on one person/ less people	20	3	1	6	2	4	2	1	1
Speed and timing (too quick or not quick enough)	17	2	1	5	2	4	3		
Not enough information given	18			4	1	6	7		
Significant time needed to implement cultural change	9			4	1	1	3		
Concerns about collaboration between lay and clergy	8	3	1	2		2			
Maintaining communication and relationship between all levels of leadership	11	2		3		3	2		1
Concerns about losing individual identity of a church community	13	1	1	3	1	6	1		
Challenge in supporting and providing opportunities for lay involvement	10	2	1	2		2	3		
Not feeling as if they can make real contribution to the proposals process	11	2		1	1	3	3		1
The culture of 'one priest, one church, one parish' inhibiting growth	14	1	1	5	2	4	1		
Concerns about different churches working together - negative history/ small churches overwhelmed by large churches	15	1	1	3	1	3	6		

	Total	Bishop's Council / DMPC	Area Deacons and Lay Chairs	Deanery Synods	Clergy Chapters	Arch-deaconry Events	Parishes	Readers	Other Responses
What are your concerns about the proposals?									
Concerns about disenfranchising, alienating or losing (older) congregation	21	2	1	5	2	9	2		
Concerns that the proposals are reactive and not proactive	9		1	3	2		3		
Concerns about engaging with/negative attitude from congregations	33		2	8	5	12	5		1
Concerns about finding enough people to fill roles	12			3		6	2		1
Concerns about the structure, boundaries and geography of the current Mission Communities	41	3	4	7	4	8	13		2
Concerns about different traditions working together	22	2	3	5	1	5	6		
Concerns about the increase of meetings/travel	14			1	1	9	2	1	
More transparency needed about church closure/number and allocation of stipendiary posts	48	1	2	8	8	17	12		
Fatigue and general wellbeing of clergy and lay leaders	32	2	4	7	5	10	4		
The proposals feel inorganic/bureaucratic	13			3	2	1	7		
Minimal mention of sacraments/faith/prayer	6			2	1		3		
Minimal mention of children and young people	8				1	6	1		

	Total	Bishop's Council / DMPC	Area Deacons and Lay Chairs	Deanery Synods	Clergy Chapters	Arch-deaconry Events	Parishes	Readers	Other Responses
Further questions									
What will accountability and governance look like?	19	2	1	1	2	10	3		
How do we engage with resistant people/churches and encourage positive collaboration?	14	1	2	3	1	5	2		
Will there be more information about the specific roles of the Mission Community team?	29		1	6	3	13	5		1
How did this work for pilot deaneries/other dioceses?	18	2	1	6	2	5	2		
How does this relate to stepping stones to faith?	2	1		1					
Is there a shorter/condensed/more inspiring version of the proposals in development?/ What will Mission Communities look like?	25		3	5		13	2		2
How do these proposals differ from previous deanery structure/benefices?	7			1	1	1	4		
How will the roles of Readers/ALMs/SSMs etc change?	8		1	1	1	3	2		
How will the Mission Community leader/ team be appointed?	21			5	4	4	7		1
Where do new Area Deans and deanery arrangements fit into this?	7			2	1		4		
Where does ecumenical work fall in these plans?	7			1	1	2	2		1

	Total	Bishop's Council / DMPC	Area Deacons and Lay Chairs	Deanery Synods	Clergy Chapters	Arch-deaconry Events	Parishes	Readers	Other Responses
Further questions									
What is the timescale for the implementation of Mission Communities?/ What are our next steps?	18			4	3	7	3		1
How will current and existing mission planning/partnerships/ Team Ministries work with these proposals?	11			2	2	4	3		
What training and support will there be for lay and stipend?	13			1		11	1		
Where do resource churches fall in these plans?	4				3		1		
What happens if MCs do not work?/ How do we measure their success?	4			1	1	1	1		
How to we maintain pastoral relationship and meet the needs of our local communities?	9			3	1	1	4		