

## Change and transformation - a theological reflection

Similarly, as a diocese, and particularly as we emerge from the pandemic, we recognise that this is the time for change – a time to re-imagine how our church could be different. We have gained new wisdom and new understandings of what it is to be the people of God. It is important for us to celebrate this, as well as to support each other with our grief and our loss.

We need to take responsibility, individually and collectively, for building on that learning and for finding new ways of moving forward - to ensure that our own faith grows and deepens, and that we reach out so that spiritually-open people are able to find their home in our church.

Over the last year we have been experiencing an exile from our usual lives. This has not been a geographic exile, but an exile in our own homes. As we return from that exile and engage together in the outside world, we need to rebuild our assumptions in order to be able to move on and create a new future.

Neither can we, here in the Diocese of Manchester, expect simply to return to pre-pandemic times. It is more important than ever for us to continue with the transformation programme that we have already started.

At their heart, the mission community proposals are about us finding new ways of working together and inspiring each other.

They will help us overcome the challenges of coming out of lockdown by releasing energy and supporting new ways of working. The focus is on developing specific ministries and skills to meet the needs of local people, bringing clergy and laity together in teams to serve their communities.

They will encourage a variety of expressions of church within a given locality and ensure our leaders and congregations reflect the diversity of our local communities.

They will enable us to build on all that is already good and fruitful in our churches, and also help us be dynamic and focused on the future.

Published July 2021

## OUR VISION FOR LOCAL MINISTRY

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### What will Mission Communities look like?

Responses to the mission community proposals can be sent to: [DifferentWorld@manchester.anglican.org](mailto:DifferentWorld@manchester.anglican.org)

## Our Vision

The mission community proposals first published in October 2020 outline **radical and exciting** changes to our approach to local ministry in the Diocese of Manchester.

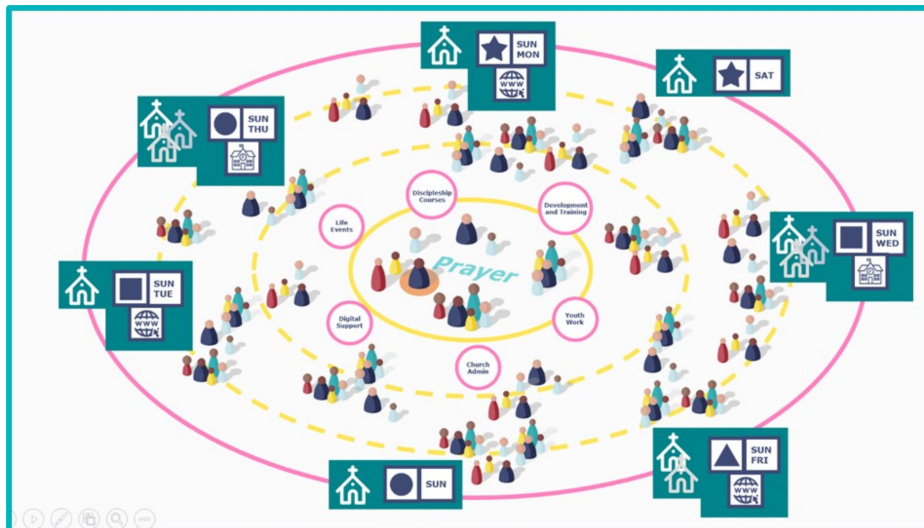
We have known for many years that we need to face up to and make major changes to ensure a vibrant future for our church. Mission communities offer a way forward, enabling us to live out the vision for our diocese – which is to be **'a worshipping, growing and transforming Christian presence at the heart of every community'**.

This handout has been produced to help **the people who attend the churches here in our diocese**, to explore these proposals and aid conversations about what they will mean for them.

We want to encourage local discussions on mission communities in the second half of 2021, to help build a good understanding so that everyone is involved in the decisions about the future shape of the mission communities in their area.

Our new Area Deans will be in contact with all parishes during this period to discuss the proposals and listen to your views, before putting forward a final set of recommendations for the new mission community boundaries in **November 2021**.

The aim is for us to start this new way of working from **January 2022**, as we bring parishes together in the new mission communities for the first time.



The corresponding video for this document can be found on our website at [www.manchester.anglican.org](http://www.manchester.anglican.org)

## Theological reflection Isaiah 61 v.1-3

**The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me;**

**he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release the prisoners;**

**to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;**

**to comfort all who mourn;**

**to provide for those who mourn in Zion**

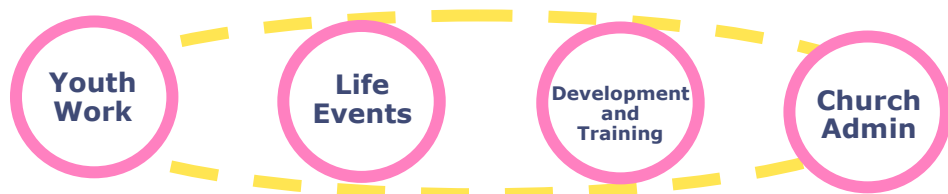
**—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.**

**They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.**

The Book of Isaiah focuses on the people of God in Jerusalem as they enter and then leave exile. The experience of exile challenges them beyond belief. However, Isaiah 61, written after the exile, promises great things to the people of Jerusalem and records the rejoicing that they will experience on the fulfilment of those promises. However, on their return, the former exiles find that God, who made possible their return, has not seen fit to make their task easy.

Isaiah's words address a people who are no longer exiles and whom God wants to bless with every good thing. However, to take hold of this life lived on God's promises, they will need to rebuild and, more than that, rebuild and regrow the community in the face of real challenges. The good news is that God will provide. It should come as no surprise that at the outset of Jesus' adult ministry, in Luke 4, he takes words from Isaiah 61 and treats them as his mission manifesto.

People across the mission community will be able to develop resources that will be of value to everyone and meet the needs of the local area. For example, **online discipleship courses** for people from different churches across the mission community. Or a youth leader **bringing together a group of 16-18s** across the mission community. The churches in the mission community will be able to set up **joint administrative arrangements** for responding to life events, such as weddings, christenings or funerals. **Development and training**, for example on giving or discipleship could be delivered for the whole mission community.



By bringing clergy and lay people together in teams, we will be able to release new energy and focus on the goals we have always wanted to achieve for our churches and for our communities. There will also be opportunities to **plant new churches** and congregations so that we become a growing church, which is **younger and more diverse**, appealing to all sorts of new people.

The Diocese of Manchester is already wonderfully varied – in the places and people we serve, the **variety of expressions of faith**, and the type of buildings we call ‘church’. Mission communities will reflect this diversity and will be able to grow to meet the missional and pastoral needs of every part of our diocese.

**Every mission community will look different, but each one will be underpinned by the same principles and values of trust and collaboration, and a culture of prayer, discernment and positive expectation.**

## What our mission communities will look like in practice

Imagine for a moment that this is your church in your parish. It might be a single church in a parish, or part of a united benefice or even a team ministry.



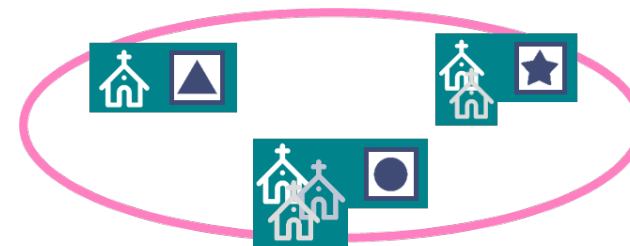
The Mission Community proposals are inviting **you to join with your close neighbours** and other churches in the vicinity to support each other with new ways of working.



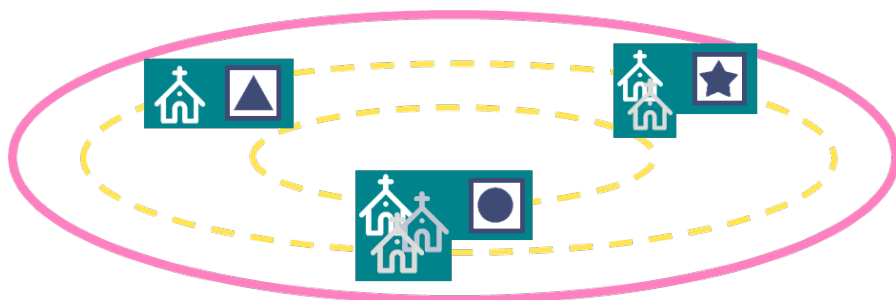
Each mission community will be made up of a variety of different traditions and expressions of church, each with their own strengths and ideas about how to focus on mission.



Different church traditions



In the newly-formed mission community, the aim is for all church members to **work together**, to encourage each other in the **deepening of their faith** and to build a culture of **support and accountability** to each other.



A diverse leadership team from across the mission community will be responsible for developing these new ways of working together. The leadership team will represent all the parishes within the mission community. It will include all stipendiary priests as well as Readers, Self-Supporting Ministers and other ordained people, along with a range of other roles filled by lay people.



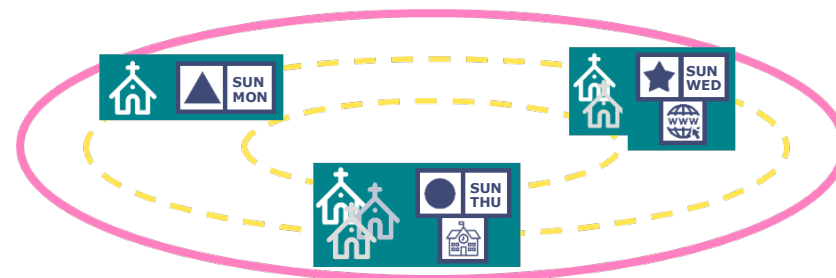
This process of discernment and formation will be guided by a **mission community leader** – a stipendiary priest who is appointed to the role and who is familiar with the area and the mission already taking place there, as well as being able to see future missional opportunities, inspire others and ensure the mission community is grounded in prayer.



Within the mission community, every congregation and ministry will have a named **focal leader** – either a stipendiary priest (who may also be the mission community leader), another ordained minister (such as a Self-Supporting Minister or an Ordained Lay Minister, OLM), or a lay person (such as a Reader or Authorised Lay Minister, ALM, or any other suitable lay person) who is appointed to the role. There will be a focus on developing specific ministries and skills to meet the needs of local people.

Between them, the ordained and lay members of the team will cover all the necessary roles and functions across the mission community – including liturgy and worship, mission, social action projects, links with schools, chaplaincies and administration.

The team will understand and **develop the pattern of worship** across the mission community – so that it takes place on **different days** and at different times, in **different venues** and also **virtually**, to meet different needs. Each place of worship will be attractive to different people for different reasons, creating a wide range of options in the local area.



Where churches and parishes are already engaging with **key local partners** - such as **schools** and **ecumenical partners** - there will be new opportunities to work together across the mission community. There will also be opportunities to link up on local social action projects, such as **foodbanks** and **places of welcome**, or missional activities such as **messy church**.

