

Minster Communities – Why?

As a Diocese, we are committed to seeking 'the Kingdom of God' through growing in depth of discipleship, the number of disciples, and loving service of the world. To understand how we could best equip every church, fresh expression, worshipping community and Christian to do that, we undertook an extensive consultation exercise on the theme of 'Everyday Faith' in Autumn 2020. Through that, we heard that our inherited models and frameworks for "doing" and "being" church are no longer supporting our mission and ministry.

Some of the 'gaps' we heard about were around:

- Engaging with younger people - those in our schools, colleges and local universities
- Our diversity and representativeness
- The difficulty fresh expressions sometimes have in becoming sustainable and the vulnerability of church plants
- Our environmental responsibilities
- The sustainability of our leadership models with many leaders at risk of burnout

During that consultation process, and increasingly so since, it has become clear that the ways we have been operating are also financially unsustainable, with a growing gap between income and expenditure on ministry.

There is a widespread recognition that to reach the 93% of people in Britain who don't have regular meaningful contact with a church or Christian community will require new adventures in imagination and innovation. We are committed at the same time to honouring the lifelong commitment of the people in our churches, our shared faith, and making the most of our strengths.

We have prayerfully identified five diocesan priorities. Some of these have been a consistent approach over the years, while others have emerged more recently. These are:

- To develop new communities
- To be reconciling communities
- To be intercultural communities
- To be intergenerational communities
- To be ecological communities

Not every church community or school will embody all five of these priorities, but each one, and all of us, are being asked to consider how they are paying attention to them.

The process of forming Minster Communities as a framework for our life together and our witness in this world, is more than simple organisational change. It is a deep-rooted process of discernment, of seeking God's guidance as we seek to use the resources God has given us to the best of our abilities. We want, and indeed are called, to be a diocese in which every member is equipped in discipleship and released for ministry - in the workplace, the home, the school, college, pub or neighbourhood. To do all this, we need to continually be 'Shaped By God Together' - to travel together as we are shaped for the future through conversation, worship and prayer.