

Re-imagining Ministry - Mission & Ministry Units (MMU's) and Principles of Commitment in a time of strategic change

Some familiar words from Bishop Stephen

When Transforming Presence was launched in 2012, it was mostly a set of questions. We knew we couldn't carry on as we were. Our world was as muddled as ever. Thousands of people were growing up in the communities we serve knowing little or nothing about the Christian faith and having little or no contact with the Church. Some Churches felt beleaguered, unsure of their role or mission. Nearly half our clergy were due to retire.

Following a large conversation around the diocese, which culminated in our first Time to Talk consultation, we identified four priorities:

- Inhabiting the world distinctively
- Evangelising effectively
- Serving with accountability
- Re-imagining ministry

At that point none of us were entirely sure what these priorities meant nor where they would lead. But there was a great deal of consensus around the idea that the Church needed to be transformed, and that this was part of God's great work of bringing transformation to the world. This idea has stuck and given us a title: Transforming Presence. We, the Church of Jesus Christ, are called to be a transforming presence in every community. For this to happen we need to change and grow and allow God's Holy Spirit to shape and transform us.

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 (MMUs) 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.

Principles of Commitment in a time of strategic change

The Deanery Standing and Pastoral Committee acknowledges that working together for growth will mean different things to parishes of very differing traditions, mission and ministry priorities, size and experience. As such, we would like to offer some basic principles as to how we might make this significant strategic change a shared and collaborative concern for all parishes in the Colchester Deanery.

Principle of Commitment to a mutual flourishing within the breadth of the Anglican Communion

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. 2: Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1

That every parish in the deanery would be part of an MMU formation and share in the aim of being a transforming presence in every community, open and welcoming to everyone, and serving all people.

Principle of Commitment to support one another in friendship and mutuality

Jesus said "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Luke 12:34

That in every MMU there would be a shared desire for friendship, mutual help, encouragement and support of one another, which are practical expressions of our Christian commitment. This being shaped by an attitude of selfless generosity and the heartfelt sharing of treasures together.

Principle of Commitment to collaboration in mission and ministry

Jesus said "Therefore go and make disciples" Matthew 28.19

That we will seek to work together for the extension of Christ's ministry and the building of His kingdom. We do this through the work of effective evangelism, mission and ministry in deanery, parish and re-imagined structures of MMUs.

Principle of Commitment to praying together

Jesus said "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7

That we would be faithful people in prayer taking opportunity to gather together seeking God's wisdom and vision for the deanery, parishes and MMU formations of which we are a part.

Principle of commitment to love one another as God loves us

Jesus said "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35

That we would seek to serve one another mindful of Jesus' command to love in a way that enables us to authentically celebrate the diversity of the church and its purpose to share the gospel with all people.

We commend these principles to you.

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