

Re-Imagining Ministry in the West of Stroud Deanery

A report of the Review Group following consultations Nov/Dec 2015 (DRAFT)

Introduction

This report focusses on how ministry may be re-imagined in the geographical area under review. Re-imagining ministry starts with the opportunity before us, to work from the existing strengths in these communities and to build on what is good and fruitful. A key underlying question has been, 'How do people in these communities encounter God and come to faith, through the church?' It is not the time to spread traditional forms of ministry more thinly. It is the time for thinking creatively, to understand the role of the stipendiary minister in a new and different way, and to make changes for the good of all in these communities that will be fruitful and sustainable for the future.

The Western area of Stroud Deanery included in this review has a total of 16 parishes, 16 church buildings and a total population of approximately 15,000 people, mostly living in and around Stonehouse (7,300 in Stonehouse. King's Stanley, Leonard's Stanley and Eastington add another 5,500). There are plans for a further 1,000 homes near Eastington, therefore the population could increase by approximately 3,000 in the near future. As the area stretches westward the communities are much smaller and more rural. The area is approximately 8 miles North to South and 9.5 miles West to East. The total Usual Sunday Attendance across all 16 parishes is approximately 260. There are five church schools in the area and at least three wedding venues with a serious implication for the number of weddings in some parishes. The total parish share expected for 2016 across the area including Rodborough is £174,242, excluding Rodborough is £142,842 (ie Rodborough parish share for 2016 stands at £21,400). Discussions have been taking place regarding the joining of Rodborough with Woodchester and Brimscombe and there will be a separate paper and scheme for this pastoral re-organisation. Until recent vacancies, the stipendiary provision across the area has been 3.8 stipends (ie 3FT, 1HT, 1 HfD).

The review group met for the first time on 20.10.15 to discuss the terms of reference and to determine a process for consultation.

Terms of reference (Drawn up by Archdeacon Jackie 16.9.15)

The Task

I. The group is tasked with reviewing the present arrangements for mission and ministry in the westerns side of the Stroud deanery including:

- The Cotswold Edge benefice
- The Severnside Group
- Stonehouse
- Rodborough/Selsley/The Stanleys

Also taking into account Woodchester and Brimscombe and the deanery plan regarding the inclusion of Rodborough within that benefice.

2. These benefices are being reviewed together so that the limited resources of stipendiary clergy can be placed effectively to meet the priorities of mission and evangelism.

3. Following the review the group is to make recommendations to the Deanery and Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Groups.

The group is charged to take particular note of:

- 'Journeying Together' and our core purposes as Christians and Church.
- The priority of mission, not simply maintenance.
- The implementation of 'Effective Ministry in Every Parish' and
- The need to ensure effective and strategic use of both financial and human resources.

Membership

The membership of the group comprises:

- The Ven Jackie Searle Archdeacon
- The Rev'd Malcolm King Area Dean
- Mrs Margaret Sheather Lay Chair
- The Rev'd Mike Smith Assistant Area Dean
- Mr Alec Jeakins, Cotswold Edge
- The Rev'd Anne Spargo Severnside Group
- Ms Olga Gibbons, Stonehouse
- Mr William Douglas The Stanleys and Selsley

Methodology

This paper will be shared with all clergy and PCCs (via PCC secretaries and Churchwardens) concerned with the review. This paper will be presented to the Deanery Synod, with background information on 14th October 2015. During the remainder of 2015 the members of the review group intend to meet with groupings of clergy and churchwardens from the benefices concerned.

The group will write up what is heard and if possible make initial recommendations/a draft proposal to be discussed by the relevant PCCs, Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group and Deanery Synod between December 2015 and February 2016.

The written initial report/draft proposal will go to the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Group on 28/1/16.

The final report/proposed scheme will go to the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Group on 14/4/16

Between these two dates there will be time for PCCs to make further comments or suggestions.

It should be noted that changes that require a formal Pastoral Scheme, which we anticipate, will be subject to consultation with the Church Commissioners. It is expected that the formal consultation (ie the final part of the process) will take place during April/May 2016, but this is subject to change depending on the feedback received.

Consultation Process

The deanery synod were given information regarding the review on 14.10.15 and terms of reference were distributed to all clergy and PCCs.

It was agreed that the Review Group would consult with licensed clergy and church wardens of every parish in the benefices concerned. The Archdeacon wrote to licensed clergy and churchwardens on 21.10.15 inviting them to the consultations.

Each consultation followed the same pattern:

- Welcome and opening prayer
- Introduction and purpose of consultation including terms of reference
- The presentation of a possible scenario for discussion
- Questions put to consultees for discussion and feedback.
- Reference to the Pastoral Re-organisation booklet, closing remarks and prayer.

The questions asked were:

1. What works well for you at the moment? If nothing changes how do you expect things to be in five years' time?
2. What are your current priorities for mission and evangelism and your hopes for the future and how do they relate to 'Journeying Together', the diocesan mission statement?
3. How can the benefices of this review make the most effective use of financial and human resources?
4. How can lay leadership be developed and supported?

Notes were taken at each consultation, a summary of these is included at Appendix A.

To summarise:

Team Ministry: There is broad support for the creation of a team ministry for the purposes of mission and ministry across the West of Stroud area of the Deanery. Such a team ministry would build on all that has been good and fruitful in the past and present. It gives a new opportunity for spiritual and inspirational vision across the whole area, with the aim of growing the Church both numerically and spiritually. Concerns focussed on the risk of change and possible losses eg in patterns of services, loss of people, availability of clergy or use of church buildings. These fears and concerns are recognised and acknowledged.

Ministerial provision: The scenario put forward at each consultation proposed ministerial provision of a Team Rector and 2 Team Vicars, one of these having a 'Pioneer' brief. This is one option, but the review group recognised that with this level of provision the Team Vicar Pioneer would still need to take on occasional offices and the pioneer role combined with many traditional aspects of ministry. Stonehouse and the nearby centres of population would benefit from having a pioneer minister in the true sense (someone able to focus on mission and evangelism amongst those who currently have no contact with church or interest in the Gospel; a minister who can start fresh expressions of Church without the responsibility for parish ministry that most clergy carry) and so the review group would like to argue the case for a Team Rector and 2 Team Vicars, with an additional Pioneer Minister (funded through the New Ministries fund) based in Stonehouse. There are four houses

available in the area. There are a number of questions about where the Team Rector, Team Vicar(s) and Pioneer Minister would live and how responsibility would be shared which would need to be worked out in more detail. The provision of SSM ministry and the appreciation of retired clergy were also mentioned.

Administrative provision: A communication hub which is also a centre for administration is considered essential. This would be a creative post, enhancing joint working and planning, as well as communication and administrative tasks. A post of 15-20 hours would be ideal, plus a suitable and well-equipped venue. It is envisaged this would need to be financed locally by the parishes.

Lay ministry: The consultation has confirmed the extent of lay involvement and ministry, the admirable commitment of many in the churches and the willingness for further involvement both in the mission and ministry of the benefices, and in practical tasks. The significance of Readers and appreciation of their ministry was noted. The proposal of a team ministry could bring benefits for Reader ministry, and may grow such ministry further, with the opportunities to minister across a wider team. If the proposed team ministry is to be effective it will rely on lay leadership, gifts and vision. The existing ministry of LMTs and worship leaders was also affirmed and welcomed. Diocesan courses for Worship Leaders and Pastoral Assistants will be especially relevant for the proposed team ministry.

Issues and Items to be Addressed or Resolved

Decisions regarding the scheme:

- The number of clergy posts (This item will be discussed by the Bishop's Staff, recommended by DMPG and needs to be agreed by Bishop's Council)
- Where clergy will live (Deanery and Diocesan MPGs)
- The timing of appointments and transitions, including working with existing post holders (NB the priority of appointing a Team Rector, who in turn can appoint 1 Team Vicar as soon as is reasonable.)
- The financing of posts including a Pioneer post
- The involvement of patrons
- Governance: The Review group recommend that the formation of a Team Council is part of the scheme.

Some decisions/tasks for the Team Ministry when established:

- The joining together/amalgamation of PCCs for smoother administration
- The covering of Occasional Offices
- Growing lay ministry, and considering best use of all gifts and resources: human, financial and buildings.
- The changing clergy role: being clear about expectations.
- Establishing the communication/administration hub: person, venue, finance.

Recommendations

A draft scheme for a team ministry as outlined above is drawn up for circulation and informal consultation **Action: Rebecca Philips**

This paper and the draft scheme is taken to Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Group for informal discussion on 28.1.16 **Action: Archdeacon Jackie**

Applications for New Ministry funding begins **Action: Area Dean/Lay Chair**

Archdeacon Jackie 23.12.15