

**MOVING ON**  
**in**  
**MISSION**  
**and**  
**MINISTRY**

**The final report of the working party exploring  
future patterns of ministry**

The Diocese of Exeter, 2003

## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Preface                                       | 2  |
| 1. What are we aiming to do?                  | 4  |
| 2. The principles that guide us               | 4  |
| 3. Some background                            | 5  |
| 4. Help from our consultations                | 7  |
| 5. Keeping the church local                   | 8  |
| 6. Our main suggestion: the mission community | 10 |
| 7. What would a mission community look like?  | 12 |
| 8. What about ministry?                       | 13 |
| 9. Where are licensed ministers best placed?  | 18 |
| 10. What happens next?                        | 20 |
| 11. Further recommendations                   | 21 |
| 12. Some practical considerations             | 23 |
| 13. Moving On                                 | 23 |
| Appendix 1: Terms of reference                | 26 |
| Appendix 2: Membership of the working party   | 28 |
| Appendix 3: Summary                           | 29 |

## PREFACE

The Church faces many challenges today – as in every age – and the working party set up to explore future patterns of ministry in the diocese has had to grapple with some difficult ones. We hope that those reading the report, and considering how to respond to it, will understand some of the principles that underlie the work that has been done.

- Two aspirations must be held together, and patterns of ministry deployed which will reconcile the two, namely:-  
that every human community in Devon should have within it a praying, worshipping and witnessing Christian presence, working to make disciples of Jesus Christ and to bring that community's life into the kingdom of God; and that everyone should have the opportunity to engage with the fullness of the Church's life locally.
- Whatever structures are put in place, and patterns of ministry proposed, these should create conditions for growth in the local church.

It is common in some quarters to speak of “managing decline”. The working party does not believe it was being asked to engage in such a process. It believes its central proposal - mission communities - to be a dynamic concept that will meet the above criteria. They will provide for the Church to be truly local, whilst having the ‘critical mass’ to overcome inertia and effectively to engage in mission. They will provide a flexible context in which ministry can be developed and expanded without having to re-invent structures. In its interim report the working party set forward the notion of mission communities. In the light of responses made it developed this idea, and set out the characteristics of such a community, and the resources needed for it to be operate effectively.

This report is addressed to the people of the Church of England in Devon, because it is they who can respond to it. It is addressed *to* them – but is not *for* them. Readers will find that it is written with all the people of Devon in mind, because the Church has at its heart the gospel imperative to proclaim salvation to all. Similarly, the report is not addressed to our ecumenical partners, since it is not they who have commissioned the work. From the outset, however, we recognise that “the Diocese is part of the Christian Church, and shares (Christ's) commission together with our ecumenical partners. We need to work together with them to enable this vision to be realised”. It is our hope that wherever the report is being carried forward, the ecumenical dimension will be explored fully.

The report has – in response to its terms of reference - a good deal to say about ordained ministry, It is important that we do not confuse ordained ministry with stipendiary ministry, or think of the two as being ‘normally’ one and the same, making self-supporting ministry unusual or exceptional. During most of the Church's history, and globally today, the majority of clergy have not/do not rely totally on the Church for their livelihood. When people are asked, therefore, to consider what provision of priestly/presbyteral ministry is needed in their mission community, the starting point should not be that they are thinking of stipendiary ministry, but simply ordained ministry. The question as to what elements of this ministry should be stipendiary or self-supporting is a ‘second order’ matter.

The working party concludes by saying it “unanimously commends this report with enthusiasm for the consideration of the diocese”. It does so in the knowledge that it is proposing a huge amount of work by a great many people. First and foremost, the proposed methodology requires that every parish – and this will mean in particular every Parochial Church Council – addresses the report's proposals to discover how they might best be implemented in their own locality. Each mission community as it emerges will be unique, and it is from within its own borders that the vision must emerge, and the sense of ownership develop. At the same time, the Bishop's staff and

Councils of the diocese will need to decide how best they can offer support, encouragement and guidance to the parishes, and facilitate the ongoing process. We believe all this work is not only necessary but will prove to be immensely worthwhile. The prize is a church fitter for God's service; one that will encourage everyone in their journey to the ultimate prize:

"I strain ahead for what is still to come; I press towards the goal to win the prize which is God's call to the life above, in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3.14/15)

Tony Wilds

## **1 What are we aiming to do?**

The members of the working party which produced this report have spent their time together addressing two fundamental questions:

### **1.1 What is God calling the Church of England in Devon to become in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

The vision which we have developed together in response to this question is:

**Every human community in Devon should have within it a praying, worshipping and witnessing Christian presence, working to make disciples of Jesus Christ and to bring that community's life into the kingdom of God.**

The whole Church is commissioned by Christ to preach the gospel and make disciples (Matthew 28.19-20). We recognise that the Diocese<sup>1</sup> is a part of the Christian Church and shares this commission together with our ecumenical partners, of other denominations or none. We need to work together with them to enable this vision to be realised.

We also recognise that there are many kinds of human community. We want to affirm the continuing value of the parish-based geographical way in which the Church of England has been organised. We also want to encourage the Diocese to develop further its support for mission in other human communities and networks, such as those which exist in education (in which church schools already play an important part), employment, leisure, and among other groups of people who share a common interest.

The answer to the question is therefore that God is calling us to become a body which enables this vision to be realised. As a Diocese our patterns of ministry may change, but this must be in order to fulfil the purpose to which God has called us.

### **1.2 How do we work towards making this vision a reality in the way in which our ministry is ordered?**

The rest of this report answers this second question by setting out the principles and structure by which the Diocese can work towards making this vision a reality. Our expectation is that this will, indeed should, continue to develop, locally and across the Diocese. We are pilgrims on a journey, not builders of boundary walls.

What might this vision look like in practice? Some examples are given in section 13.

## **2 The principles that guide us**

There are three main principles on which this report is based.

### **2.1 The primary calling of the Church of England in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that of mission. We need to put the mission of the kingdom of God, in all its varied forms, at the heart of what we are and do. This includes evangelism, worship, prayer, and social involvement, for all ages and in as many places as we can. It also includes working together with ecumenical partners: the Gospel of Jesus Christ doesn't belong to us, but to all the baptised. The task of the church can never be simply to be there on a Sunday for those who want to worship: our faith in our risen**

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<sup>1</sup> In the Report references to church are as follows: 'Church' means the universal Church of God; 'Church of England' the Anglican Church in England; 'local church' the Christian community in a local place, often a parish or a group of parishes, and often with an ecumenical reference; 'Diocese' the structure of the Anglican Church in Devon.

Saviour is far more important and urgent than that. The task of the church is to make disciples of all nations – and for us, that means leading the people of Devon, and their community lives, into the kingdom of God, into relationship with Jesus Christ our Lord.

- 2.2 Because we believe in mission, we have proposed **a structure which can support it**. Church buildings are a spiritual focus for their parishes; we aren't looking for rationalisation, church closure, or a radical move away from parish-based mission. We have set out a way of enabling there to be a praying, worshipping and witnessing Christian community in the human communities of Devon.
- 2.3 The structure we're proposing is **locally determined and based on an enduring partnership**. Responses to pastoral re-organisation have up till now generally been centred on full-time clergy: to add more parishes to one vicar. One reason for this report is that this approach can't go on indefinitely. Instead, we set out how to organise the mission of the church around a local **mission community** - a congregation, a parish or parishes or other Christian groups with enough resources to carry out the task of mission in their area. A mission community over time may have more or less in the way of paid or self-supporting ministry; but its brief will remain the same. Thus, if the numbers of full-time clergy available to the church declines, a mission community may have less than full-time clergy ministry, but it won't be added to an ever-larger group of parishes centred on a stipendiary minister; if numbers increase, the mission community may have more resources within its existing structure.
- 2.4 The report continues by setting out the process by which it has been written, the working party's analysis of the present situation of pastoral organisation and clergy deployment in the Church of England in Devon, and its recommendations as to how these should develop in response to the Church's visionary calling into the future.

### **3 Some background**

- 3.1 The Guidelines for deployment of stipendiary clergy by which the Diocese has worked for the past quarter of a century issue from a Commission set up in 1975. The Commission characterised its task thus: "*the main concern of this report is with ways and means of providing an adequate pastoral ministry to the laity with fewer full time clergy: priests who should be assured of a fulfilling sphere of work; a realistic income and support from trained auxiliaries*". Meeting in 1975, the Commission had before it the findings of the Bishop of Sheffield's working party which had been set up to advise '*on the formulation of a scheme for the fairer distribution of manpower, whereby the number of those engaged in full time ministry in each diocese may be determined on a basis that takes account of the differing needs of individual dioceses*'. This scheme continues to give us the Sheffield allocation within which we have been working ever since. In its report, the Exeter Commission commented that the implementation of the Sheffield report would mean that Exeter Diocese would face a reduction in clergy of 63. It continued: "*if the overall situation does not improve – in other words, if the present trend continues – by 1980 we shall have to lose 119 priests (a reduction from our present 412 to 293)*". The yardstick which the Commission adopted was that urban areas should have 1 priest to 5-7,000 population, and rural areas 1 priest per 1,500 – 1,700 population. It declared that if the lower limits were applied the total number of stipendiary priests in parochial posts would be 259. Interestingly, this figure is rather less than the 265 in post at the end of 2002.
- 3.2 It is clear that the driving force behind both the Bishop of Sheffield's working group and the Commission was the falling numbers of Ordinations and the lack of money. The Commission concluded its introduction thus: "*in the absence of new money there must be widespread pastoral reorganization: many more parishes must be held in plurality or joined in groups. We hasten to say however, that in certain respects the pattern of ministry envisaged for the future is*

*not only more fitting – better suited to the present situation – but preferable in itself: a genuine improvement on the old*". The fact is that in the intervening 25 years there has indeed been a great deal of new money: that is to say, the giving of church members and contributions from parishes to the Common Fund has increased very substantially. However, more new money has been needed than was anticipated in 1975 for two reasons. Firstly, the requirements to sustain stipendiary clergy have increased beyond recognition. Examples are: the standard of clergy housing, which has improved dramatically during those years, at very considerable cost; and that the money needed for clergy pensions has not only increased hugely, but the burden has fallen on the parishes for the first time. Secondly (and this is illustrated by the point just made) new money has been needed because most of the 'old money' has disappeared. In other words, the inflow of funds to the Diocese from the Church Commissioners is at a much reduced level, and the present reduced level is in no way guaranteed for the future.

- 3.3 The 1975 Commission first concerned itself with Episcopal teamwork. This has not figured in our terms of reference. It went on to look at parochial teamwork, concluding that the Diocese should aim at larger units with clergy working much more closely together, using both Team and Group Ministries. The Commission further encouraged a development of ministry teams, understood as parish priests and 'auxiliaries' working together. There were to be both ordained and lay auxiliaries: the ordained would become 'non-stipendiary priests' with the passage of time; the Commission confined its thinking on 'lay auxiliaries' to full-time people such as Church Army officers and deaconesses, and to Readers.
- 3.4 In 1997 the Diocesan Synod adopted a "*Ministry Policy Statement*". This came out of a reflection on the 1975 Commission, particularly in the light of development in lay ministry, and also addressed the fact that at some point in the intervening years the Diocesan Synod had voted for a 10% increase in numbers of stipendiary clergy. The main thrust of the ministry policy's statement was threefold:
- It affirmed that the main focus for the mission and ministry of the Church is in the parishes.
  - It recognized that, far from being able to look forward to a 10% increase in the number of stipendiary clergy, the Diocese would have to expect a reducing number in the future. In the Statement, the expectation was that there would be a reduction of stipendiary clergy to 251 in 2001. (This has not been the case: there were 265 at the end of 2002, though the budget for 2003 is based on there being a reduction to 252 stipendiary clergy in that year.)
  - It sought to encourage collaborative ministry both within parishes (through the use of local ministry teams) and within the larger units which were being created by pastoral reorganisation.
- 3.5 By the end of 2001 it was apparent that the pressure to fill vacancies in stipendiary posts based on the 1975 criteria was matched neither by the available clergy nor by the finance required. The 1975 Commission envisaged a reduction in numbers of stipendiary clergy which has been achieved, but we still face a difficult situation, with current yearly increases of 8% in the Common Fund assessment, and a reducing number of available stipendiary clergy. The Bishop therefore through the Bishop's Council set out terms of reference for the present working party (see section 13) which require us to have regard to the maximum number of stipendiary posts likely to be available to this Diocese in 10 years' time. We also have to ask how far the reorganisation carried out as a consequence of the 1975 Commission makes for an effective ministry to carry us through the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and whether other patterns of ministry might be both more effective and more satisfying for those who engage in them. We also note that the recommendations of that Commission were concerned with '*providing an adequate pastoral ministry to the laity*' – and did not focus on what we now regard as essential, which is the priority of mission. The working party had its first meeting in July 2002, and met 10 times in full session before submitting its Report to Bishop's Council in November 2003.

## **4 Help from our consultations**

- 4.1 The working party produced an Interim Report and Consultation Paper which was sent out to all 503 parishes and 25 deaneries in the Diocese for response by July 2003. This was supported by a presentation to each deanery and a number of other benefices and groups. Over 200 responses to the consultation were received, including some from individuals.
- 4.2 There was much in the responses to the consultation exercise that was hugely encouraging and heart-warming. Inevitably, there were some replies that were discouraging for the working party. For some people the interim report contained nothing new and for others it was very radical. For many 'the local church' in its normal form was thought to be 'as it is in our parish.'
- 4.3 Respondents were not entirely clear about the characteristics of the local church, but a word that emerged more than any other in response to this was the word 'welcoming'. If the church is to move from a model of maintenance towards one of mission, its ministry of welcome is surely of paramount importance.
- 4.4 A significant number of responses were unable to articulate ministry beyond ordained ministry. Many responses set out what they believed were the tasks of a parish priest, and we have drawn on these in section 8 of the report. There was a plea for ministry amongst young people. There was a perception that clergy are bogged down with administrative tasks and therefore need freeing up to give pastoral care and spiritual leadership. In terms of equipping others to minister, there was recognition that there are people around to undertake this, but that training is needed. There were many requests that training for new ministries should be local and accessible. Delivery of that training will form a significant part of implementing this report.
- 4.5 Many respondents indicated that they worked in partnership with their own team, benefice or group. The other denomination mentioned most was Methodist, cited by one third of respondents from the Barnstaple Archdeaconry and rather less in Exeter and Plymouth. Totnes Archdeaconry used the phrase 'Churches Together' more than any other, and we assume that Methodists are included in that.
- 4.6 A majority of respondents seemed to be saying 'yes' to the proposed mission community structure as the way forward. However, many parishes said 'yes, mission communities are a good idea and yes, we already are one'. An important issue in implementing this report will therefore be concerned with how people are helped to develop further the reality that they already perceive. It seemed that the interim report had not been clear enough about the concept of a 'mission community' and its hallmarks, and in this final report we have gone much further in exploring this central proposal. It seems that many people had understood this exercise as being solely about clergy deployment rather than a vision for how the church might be resourced for mission. Many people said that the level of clergy support they already had was what was needed.
- 4.7 A clear concern was expressed about the accountability of the diocese. The perception is that there are a lot of people in the 'centre' of the diocese using up money and resources, and that they should be sent out into the parishes. One frequent comment was that there were 'too many Chiefs and not enough Indians' and that any reduction in stipendiary clergy should be matched by cuts in senior posts. Some respondents appeared not to realise that the Diocese now has relatively few resources beyond what parishes give through the Common Fund.
- 4.8 It was clear to the working party that much more work needed doing with the proposal in the interim report of a 'link person', and there needed to be a clearer vision of what was proposed here as to how the local church might be accessible to the community. On reflection, it has



seemed to the working party that this is a local matter, and not one that can be proposed in our final report.

- 4.9 There were frequent references to buildings, and the considerable drain on resources that these could be. It is clear to the working party that questions about ministry, mission and maintenance cannot easily be separated from questions about historic buildings and the opportunities and problems that they present. We have however tried to encourage the development of patterns of mission and ministry which come out of the vision of the Church's calling before God. The question of how this relates to our inherited pattern of buildings is a hard question, but a subsequent one. Our view is that buildings are generally a valuable spiritual and community resource, but that this needs to be locally determined, as does finding ways forward with other partners for their upkeep and development.

## **5 Keeping the church local**

- 5.1 The impetus for the 1975 Commission was the question of how to provide ministry with a decreasing number of stipendiary clergy. A quarter of a century later the assumptions behind this are questionable: that ministry is clergy-centred, and that the main issue is how to maintain pastoral ministry (rather than to develop the mission of all God's people).
- 5.2 This Report has been developed, not by first calculating how many stipendiary clergy are likely to be available, or indeed what other ministries are required, but by asking: what constitutes the Church in any locality? How do we describe this body of believers called to be "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation" – and what is their task, their vision, their purpose under God? Our answer to these questions must shape our approach to the ministry of all the baptised, and then to that of those called to be public ministers as Readers or clergy (paid or unpaid).
- 5.3 A local church is called to be a microcosm of the whole Church – one, holy, catholic and apostolic. It is to be a community of Christians amongst whom the Word of God is faithfully proclaimed and the Sacraments are celebrated. It is a community in which the love of Christ is demonstrated by pastoral care for its members. It is a community of faith which brings the challenge of the Gospel to the wider community in which it is set. It has a care for unity, both within itself and with the wider church in the Diocese and beyond, ecumenical as well as Anglican.
- 5.4 Every member of a local church has been called to ministry through baptism: the Church can never be effective if it is perceived as consisting of those who minister and those who are ministered to. All need to be ministered to in some situations; all, by baptism, are commissioned for a life of ministry and service. The main ministry to which most Christians are called will be 'in the world' – living a life of service and witness which proclaims the good news of Christ in the household, the workplace, the wider community: a proclamation which carries forward the Church's task of challenging the world to respond to God's love in Christ. This is a sacred and consuming ministry, and those who engage in it wholeheartedly need to be affirmed and supported. They must be able to look to the local church for help in understanding the faith, and for encouragement in commending it. They need the opportunity to join in worship and prayer, and to be strengthened by the Sacraments. They will require pastoral care to be shown to them – though part of their ministry must extend to showing pastoral care to others within and beyond the Christian community, so that it models divine love through the mutuality of loving care.
- 5.5 The nourishment of the local church, in Word and Sacrament, is not, then, the task of all – or even the majority – of Christians. Never, however, is it the task of only one in the community. There will be those who are called to share in sustaining the life of that community in a variety of

different ways (liturgically, pastorally, administratively, educationally etc.). This is reflected in the New Testament accounts of the church, where ministry is exercised corporately – no one ministers alone.

- 5.6 For the Church to express the fullness of its life locally, there needs to be the provision of a variety of ministries shared widely amongst its members. With the whole people of God bearing witness to those around them and coming together for worship and to deepen their faith and understanding, those called to a leadership ministry within the Church will enable and facilitate the life of the Church. A priest will be a focus for the shared life of the local church, and will underline the essential unity not only within it, but of the local with the Diocese and the world-wide Church. An example of this is the Eucharist, where the priest presides, where various other ministries are exercised, and where all are spiritually fed and strengthened for the ministry and mission to which they are called in the world.
- 5.7 For centuries the Church of England has assumed that the majority of people in the local community are also part of the local Anglican parish church, thus requiring it to be stronger in its pastoral work, putting less emphasis on the missionary task of proclaiming and challenging, and largely ignoring the work and witness of other Christians. It has become ever clearer during the past hundred years that “the Church exists for those who are not members,” and that the missionary aspect of the Church’s life – especially locally – is vital.
- 5.8 The reality is that it may be beyond the ability of the parish church to live out the fullness of the Church’s life and ministry. Where six or more parishes in a benefice share a single priest, that priest will be more often absent than present within the community. Where the number of people who meet together as a local church is very small – sometimes in single figures – it may be impossible for the necessary variety of ministries and gifts to be found. Where that small number is burdened with the huge task of maintaining a building which is deemed to be an important component of the nation’s historic heritage, there may be no energies left for the vital task of mission to the community around them.
- 5.9 This is not a new problem in the Church’s life: over the last fifty years a large number of parishes have been linked together in teams or united benefices as a way of enabling the local church to be larger than the parish, while maintaining the existence of the parish church as a worshipping centre. This report proposes a more systematic way of basing the structure, development and deployment of ministry of the Church of England in Devon on this principle, using the term ‘Mission Community’ to denote the sustainable unit of the local church.
- 5.10 What are the marks of the fullness of the Church’s life locally? The local church – the Mission Community – should be large enough to demonstrate these, and should have the resources to provide the necessary supporting organisation, administration and funding. There should be:
- worship
  - prayer
  - pastoral care
  - evangelisation
  - opportunities for learning and teaching
  - nurture for disciples of all ages
  - youth and children’s work and worship
  - equipping members for ministry in the community and the local church
  - connecting with the local community, especially in service to the poor

## **6 Our main suggestion: the Mission Community**

- 6.1 Community is about how we live in relationship with other people. People live in a variety of different communities, such as family, friends, work, leisure, economic, religious, cultural and so on. Our membership of these communities is not exclusive. For example, those we are related to in our families might also be those we relate to in a religious community. We may socialise with those we work with. But not everyone we socialise with would know those who are members of the religious communities we belong to. These communities might be thought of as circles, and in our own case, we are included within many different circles, some of which overlap.
- 6.2 The Church worldwide operates rather like this as well. If we say that we belong to the Church of England, it implies that we belong to a particular parish simply by being resident within it. Yet we might also choose to attend the church in another parish as well, and would be welcomed as having every right to be there. Our membership of this church also implies that we are members of a particular diocese, a province, and the Anglican family of churches. That family has sister and brother churches, and we can meet with them, pray with them and find a common faith in Jesus Christ with them, even if we might give our families different names. In short, belonging to one community does not exclude us from others.
- 6.3 As the working party has thought about the way our churches in the Diocese are organised, we have been very aware of the strong ties which people rightly feel in connection with belonging to a particular church community. Churches really do belong to villages, and members of the village community express particular allegiance to both a building and a community of prayer. The expression of our love for God finds a voice within our praying communities, and those may be organised within small groups such as a home group or 'task' group, like the church choir or guild of servers. The praying community of which we are part might be a large urban or suburban church, meeting in a modern or re-ordered building. Or it might be a tiny village church which is part of a united benefice with neighbouring villages. If it is a large suburban church with, say, 200 members, many of those might gather to pray in smaller groups of 10 or so, enabling each member to find and express their voice more clearly. There is no right or wrong size for a community of prayer; but we might want to say that the significant mark of a praying community is that it is always open to those who are outside its circle. Some of the praying communities might be led by a priest, and others might be led by a lay person.
- 6.4 The working party spent a long time looking for what we felt would be a good enough term to describe the local church in all its variety in different places and social contexts. We came up with the term 'mission community'. 'Mission' because the calling of the Church is to mission, to look beyond itself and make disciples of Christ. 'Community' because of the richness of that word itself, related to the New Testament word *koinonia*, fellowship, sharing, participation, being in common: it refers both to our own common life in Christ, and drives us outward to the human communities in which we participate and among which we live.
- 6.5 In effect, the mission community might not be just one community. It might be a collection of community circles, and members of the mission community might belong to one or more of these circles. So, a village church and its associated parish, themselves a distinct circle of community, could belong to a mission community along with other parishes. Other local praying communities might also belong to this mission community. For example, the local Methodist church in a village might be part of the mission community, but this would by no means imply that they would cease to meet together as members of their own distinctive praying community.
- 6.6 In setting forward future patterns of ministry, our aim must be to enable the local Christian community to express the fullness of life of a local church in a mission context. We therefore suggest that the question be asked:

## **What, in our locality, could be the basis of a Mission Community?**

We use this term to indicate an effective unit for mission and ministry as described above. It could in some cases be a single parish. It might be a formal Team or Group Ministry. It might be an informal grouping of benefices, or even a whole Deanery. It might be an ecumenical partnership. It might include a church school or a hospital or educational chaplaincy. Its legal status would not be the overriding factor, but its fitness for purpose.

- 6.7 A mission community is a dynamic grouping of smaller communities. The working party have considered what size this dynamic grouping might have, and although it is impossible to arrive at an exact figure, we conclude that 150-200+ people would usually make up a mission community. This should be sufficient to provide the ministry needed, the giving required, and be the maximum number a stipendiary priest can work with at any depth. Some churches might have that number alone. In rural areas, 20 small parishes might comprise such a mission community. It is vital to stress that the working party are not advocating that a small parish would be subsumed into a mission community. Take the analogy of a number of families living in community, such as at Lee Abbey: the family groupings that makes up the social gathering do not cease to exist within the framework of a larger community. The parish would continue to exist, and would continue to meet to as a praying community. In the same way, a large single church of 200 people would not stop having a collection of smaller home or prayer groups, and indeed we would want to encourage this way of meeting together in small groups as a way of strengthening the mission community. There is also no need to specify when the small parish or group should meet to pray together. They may meet during the week rather than on Sunday. However, what we are saying very clearly in this report, is that we cannot expect to sustain and resource every small community of prayer as if it were a mission community, nor expect it to do everything a local church should do. That is neither desirable nor possible.
- 6.8 A mission community would need to be sufficiently cohesive to demonstrate unity, and have sufficient resources of ministry (lay and ordained; paid and voluntary) to carry through the various facets of the Church's task. It would normally be expected to be financially self sustaining. It would need to budget realistically for the costs of stipendiary ministry, including expenses of office, and for the costs involved in other ministries (particularly administration). Where a mission community reached the conclusion that it could not fully resource itself financially, it would need to explain why other mission communities should see it as a mission opportunity, and how they could support it while it aimed to become a giving rather than a receiving community.
- 6.9 One of the issues which our consultation highlighted was whether a mission community could be made up of parishes or other bodies which were not physically linked by some kind of boundary. The most obvious example would be in urban areas where churches define themselves (though not presumably the parish which they serve) in a 'gathered' way as representing a particular theological position or churchmanship, and would want to work together with similar churches in other parts of the larger area. Our considered view was that this kind of link was not necessarily impossible: but that the argument needed to be well made as to how the mission of the kingdom would be furthered through it. The question, 'Is this for ourselves, or for the mission of the gospel?' is a question which all mission communities need to ask of themselves.
- 6.10 It has been carefully noted that some small parishes find the present system of having to provide officers for each parish quite oppressive. One solution might be that the parishes in a mission community should become a United Parish, with one PCC, one treasurer etc, though with a number of parish churches, each having its Churchwardens. We commend this for further and careful exploration in appropriate situations.

## **7 What would a mission community look like?**

The working party have thought carefully about the marks of mission communities, and recommend that each mission community should have the following characteristics:

- 7.1 A clear vision and sense of purpose. This requires a process of discernment under God, to establish the vision which provides the direction and purpose for the work of the mission community. We encourage the development in each community of a rolling five-year plan for implementing this vision. The plan should be reviewed annually by the mission community; it should be reviewed at least every five years by the Bishop or the Bishop's authorised representative.
- 7.2 Identifiable boundaries - which should be open to the inclusion of communities within those boundaries. This may involve geographical boundaries, or ones based upon existing human networks.
- 7.3 Sufficient sustainable human and physical resources to undertake the following:
  - daily and other regular public worship and prayer in every community
  - leadership and envisioning / animating the mission community
  - work to enable a worshipping and witnessing Christian group in every human community in its area of responsibility, with someone who can act as a link with the wider mission community
  - the provision of priestly / presbyteral ministry
  - the provision of most of the ministry required within a local ministry team
  - teaching, preaching, training, nurture, growth, and lifelong learning for Jesus' disciples of all ages
  - evangelism and mission in the community as a clear priority
  - involvement in and service to the local community, with a particular care expressed for the poor, after the example of Jesus Christ
  - youth and children's work and worship
  - effective pastoral care available to all in the community who need it
  - being partners in mission with other groups / churches inside & outside the Diocese
  - Christian stewardship of time and resources
  - the provision of appropriate and realistically sustainable buildings
  - the necessary administration to support this work
- 7.4 It should be financially self-sustaining and viable. In addition to sustaining themselves, mission communities should through the Common Fund contribute towards a 'mission opportunities budget' for work within the diocese (see section 9.9). The working party would also hope that mission communities would give a further amount to the work of mission in God's world. Such giving will also involve resources and ideas other than finance.
- 7.5 It should strive to work ecumenically wherever possible.
- 7.6 In order to achieve these hallmarks, a mission community might expect to have the following norms:
  - An average regular attendance of between 150 and 200+ people
  - An annual income of at least £50,000 (in 2003 terms) for Common Fund, plus local costs (training, expenses, administration etc), plus whatever is needed for the maintenance of its buildings: a mission community may be below this financial norm and have part-time / self-supporting ministry which it can sustain, plus a mission plan
  - At least 50 hours per week of licensed ministry, whether paid or voluntary
  - At least 20 hours a week of administration, to include provision for:

- Child protection.
- Health and safety
- Disability provision
- Financial returns
- Annual returns
- Newsheets and worship sheets
- Letters, photocopying and communications
- Churchyard issues
- Faculties
- Banns
- Minutes, agendas, planning

These marks and figures need to be regarded as 'norms' rather than 'rules', and each mission community would clearly regard itself as unique within these parameters.

- 7.7 Taking all the factors mentioned in this section into account, including the most up to date usual attendance figures available, we believe that the number of mission communities likely to be sustainable in the diocese will be approximately 150.
- 7.8 Section 13 develops some examples of mission communities.

## **8 What about ministry?**

- 8.1 In its terms of reference the working party is bidden to *“(have) regard to the maximum number of stipendiary posts likely to be available to this Diocese in 10 years’ time”*. In considering the size and shape of mission communities, the working party began by considering that this size was a determining factor. Our discussions and consultations however have led us to the opposite conclusion: that setting up mission communities is the first and most important task. This is for two particular reasons: that the local church has historically survived for most of its life throughout the world without the benefit of full-time paid clergy; and that the number of stipendiary clergy available is likely to fluctuate, and should not be the determining factor for the shape of the Church’s life. We have had years of adjusting the configuration of the local church in response to changing clergy numbers, which has not proved an effective strategy for mission.
- 8.2 Nonetheless, reasonable assessment of likely available stipendiary ministry is important in enabling good planning and management of our resources. It does however need to go alongside the question of how many part-time and fully self-supporting ministers will also be available for deployment within the Diocese – at present some 170 Readers and 30 non-stipendiary clergy. There are also large numbers of Readers and clergy with Permission to Officiate, but we have excluded these from our thinking as being technically, though not always in practice, undeployable. The offering of public ministry in retirement made by many laity and clergy is of enormous value to the Church, but cannot be the basis of a sustainable mission strategy.
- 8.3 We find it very difficult to come to a judgement on these questions, not least because future trends in ministry depend in part on how the Diocese and its local churches respond to the challenge to call, select, train and deploy new ministers. However, we seek below to share our thinking and our ‘best guess’ at some answers.
- 8.4 **Stipendiary clergy.**  
There are two key questions here:

- How many priests will be available to take up stipendiary posts in the Church of England in ten years’ time, and of that number how many might be deployed in the Diocese of Exeter?

- How many stipendiary posts will the Diocese be capable of funding in ten years' time (since a stipendiary post cannot be said to be 'available' unless the finances are in place to pay the stipend)? We need to bear in mind here too that a paid post may not be best filled by an ordained person, but rather by, for example, a youth worker or a Church Army evangelist.

8.4.1 With regard to the first question: long-term projections can be made about the likely retirement dates of those presently engaged in stipendiary ministry. Figures are, of course, available of those presently in training, but these only allow projections over a shorter time-scale. The Ministry Division, therefore, makes projections for those likely to be available in the Church of England only over the next five years. In 1999, however, it calculated that, if the current number of ordinands remains static over the next 20 years, there could by 2020 be approximately 1300 fewer stipendiary clergy than the Church has at present, which is currently about 9000.

8.4.2 In terms of the share of available stipendiary clergy allocated to the diocese, this is governed by the "Sheffield Formula" (explained in section 9.2). This projects a continuing gentle decline in numbers of 1 to 1.5 per annum over the next 5 years. In the light of the 1999 report, however, this might be considered optimistic and it might be prudent to expect that, by the end of the next 10 years, the reduction could be 25-30 rather than 10-15.

8.4.3 There are considerations which make this uncertain figure even more hazardous! Some dioceses (like our neighbour Truro) are expecting to cut numbers of stipendiary clergy drastically. This could mean that more will be available for deployment in dioceses ready to use them, and that we would be allowed (even encouraged) to take on more. On the other hand, the fact that some dioceses are cutting back may lower morale amongst those considering offering themselves for ordination, so that numbers in training might fall further, and the figures noted above prove to be over-optimistic. Given that these two arguments cancel each other out, a reasonable estimate is that the number likely to be available in ten years' time will have fallen from the present 'share' of 258 to 228-233.

8.4.4 A further factor is that over half of non-stipendiary ministers transfer into stipendiary ministry at some stage after serving their title. If the Diocese were to encourage larger numbers of younger non-stipendiaries, this could produce a pool of potential stipendiaries for the future.

8.5 If the question of numbers likely to be available in 10 years' time is difficult, that of the finances likely to be available for stipends is virtually impossible to calculate! There are, though, a number of facts which can be considered.

8.5.1 The 2003/4 cost of maintaining a full time stipendiary priest in post consists of:-

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Stipend  | £17,940        |
| 2. Employers ENI                                    | 900            |
| 3. Pension Contribution                             | 4,873          |
| 4. Council Tax (average)                            | 1,200          |
| 5. Housing – water, maintenance & repairs (average) | 2,971          |
| 6. Administration – payroll etc                     | 186            |
| 7. Support (C.M.E., Pastoral Care & Counselling)    | 750            |
| 8. Discretionary grants available (average)         | 96             |
|   | <u>£28,916</u> |

- 8.5.2 With regard to the stipends of full-time curates in training: it is well-established that the allocation of deacons to their title posts is made on the basis that the place where they serve and their training incumbent provide them with a suitable post for their continuing ministerial formation. A stipendiary curate could not therefore be fairly seen as a cost for the mission community in which s/he served, but would need to be a charge on all mission communities – for all of them will need a future supply of clergy. In effect, this cost would be a training cost levied on every mission community, ensuring the future supply of trained stipendiaries. We have assumed 25 stipendiary curates in training. If the cost of maintaining these curates is spread amongst 150 mission communities, then the cost for each mission community would be £4746. The projection for 2004 is that this Diocese will only be able to take up five out of a possible eight stipendiary curates, because of financial constraints: if this trend continues, the number of curates' stipends to be added to overall clergy costs will be lower. Our own view however is that this would be a false economy, given the need for highly trained and able stipendiary clergy to enable mission and change in the Church.
- 8.5.3 The costs mentioned above still do not include the overall cost of training public ministers before their first licensing. A married ordinand at college can cost up to £20,000 per year, and a single candidate a third of that; on the South West Ministry Training Course each candidate costs about £6,000 a year; Reader training costs about £900 per year per candidate. Costs for ordinands are largely pooled and paid centrally – in 2003 the total cost was £306243, which would add a further cost of £2042 for each mission community.
- 8.5.4 Looking at income rather than expenditure, there is a need to bear in mind that the current trend of falling church attendance will have the effect of reducing the Diocese's financial base. The proportion of church attenders in paid employment is also likely to shrink in line with the national population profile. On the other hand, showing a clear link through the mission community between money offered and the provision of stipendiary ministry locally will encourage a higher level of giving among committed church members: income has already risen considerably over the last ten years, and may continue to do so, though at a slower rate than in the past.
- 8.5.5 In planning the number of mission communities it would be possible to sustain, and the number of stipendiary or part-stipendiary clergy to be allocated to them, we should expect to find the necessary finances from the giving of church members. It is, of course, a fundamental expectation of our diocesan life that we seek to share one another's burdens, and some mission communities will have the financial resources to support others in less favourable financial situations. However, our view is that in principle mission communities should be self-sustaining in terms of their regular ministry, even if this means that they will have more self-supporting than stipendiary ministry. Additional financial resources should be used, not to maintain unrealistic levels of paid staff, but to deploy mission posts with a specific task over a period of time: for example, aiming in seven years to grow the local church to the point where it can realistically take on the funding of full-time ministry.
- 8.6 We think it reasonable to assume that the common fund contribution for ministry will remain static in real terms over the next ten years. Given that the cost of maintaining a full stipendiary priest in post is about £29,000, that a mission community's share of the training cost for ministry will be approximately £7500 (including Reader training), and that the common fund assessment for 2004 is £7.5 million, the common fund will be able to support 205 stipendiary clergy plus 25 curates who are included in the training costs – making 230 stipendiary posts in total. If further



money is available, or fewer clergy, or there is clear need for more specialist lay paid posts (administrators, youth workers etc.), then this number will have to be revised.

8.7 Dividing the current common fund assessment into 150 mission communities gives an average contribution of £50,000 per mission community. We recommend that the DBF do further work on the detail of how the current common assessments can be fairly applied to a mission community structure with particular reference to the principle already accepted by Diocesan Synod that there should be socio-economic weighting of contributions. For example, a very rural area will have higher travel and administrative costs and much less potential for developing income than an urban parish – the question of potential income is one which could be examined as is the case in some other dioceses.

8.8 Our terms of reference also ask us to recommend the minimum number of stipendiary priests needed for this pattern to be sustained. We need to rephrase this in the light of the rest of our report: how can the necessary amount of priestly ministry the Diocese needs be provided for? Much of what stipendiary clergy do does not have to be done by a priest; but the reason for the development of stipendiary ministry is that time needs to be set aside to do it. A mission community will need a basic amount of priestly ministry, which could be provided by a self-supporting priest, and rather more time given to prayer, study, pastoral care etc, which could be done by a team of self-supporting ministers who could give appropriate time. It may be the case that larger urban churches would be more able to provide such self-supporting ministry than scattered rural churches. Because of the uncertainties around this issue, we recommend that the Diocese work for now with the expectation that each mission community needs a stipendiary priest, bearing in mind that this may change in future. The minimum number would therefore be around 150.

#### 8.9 **Part-time clergy.**

The figure for full-time equivalent posts may include part-time stipendiary posts, which may include provision for housing. We believe that there is scope for further developing part-stipendiary posts. This could be done by combining them creatively with other functions, as has been done to some extent already (with part-time specialists in ministry development being also part-time parish clergy), or by using local ministers in existing housing. As noted above, this is in line with historic practice, where the parish priest earned a living farming the glebe or teaching in the school. A more creative idea might be to have the post of part-time administrator in a mission community or deanery combined with a part-time stipendiary post, for an ordained person with administrative gifts. There are also people who would like to serve in part-time ministry after full-time jobs in other professions.

#### 8.10 **Self-supporting public ministers.**

By this we mean clergy and Readers who receive no stipend or remuneration for the work of ministry, either in kind or financially (except for out-of-pocket expenses).

8.10.1 The number of non-stipendiary clergy in the Diocese has gradually declined over the last ten years from nearly 40 to around 30. Part of this has been due to some years with fewer NSM vocations, but there has been overall a net gain in clergy entering ordained ministry as non-stipendiary. The main change has been increasing flexibility in the categories and deployment of ministers, with more NSMs entering part- or full-time ministry earlier. This is also due to greater acceptance of the vocation of women to stipendiary ministry. We believe that encouraging permanent non-stipendiary priests is neither desirable nor possible, as there will always be some cross-over into stipendiary ministry (and back again). We do however believe that all mission communities should be encouraged to foster vocations to ordination for local ministry – while remembering that priests belong to the whole Church, and need to satisfy criteria for selection. We do not feel as a working party that it is necessary or desirable to

create a separate Ordained Local Ministry scheme, but we would encourage the Diocese to work closely with SWMTC and the emerging Regional Training Partnership on ways to foster local public ministry. We believe that we should aim for a self-supporting priest to be available for every mission community in ten years' time, which means training ten candidates a year for this, on top of candidates for stipendiary ministry.

8.10.2 The number of Readers has grown over the last ten years from 150 -180, and they make an indispensable contribution to parish ministry. They undertake many of the functions of a permanent diaconate in the Church of England. We do not see the need to spend resources on recreating a permanent diaconate in the light of this reality. We do however believe that more Readers should be encouraged to come forward for training, not only to replace the number lost by transfer, retirement or ordination (about 14 per year over the last three years), but to increase the number of self-supporting ministers deployable across the Diocese. We recommend a target of training at least 15 Readers a year.

8.10.3 We therefore recommend that mission communities should be encouraged to work together with the Bishop, DDO and Reader Co-ordinator to encourage and plan for an increase in vocations to self-supporting ministry. The financing of training will be an important consideration in this, and the cost of it may need to be shared between the mission community and the wider Diocese. The cost of training on SWMTC is about £6,000 per year, and for training Readers about £900 per year, which means that we will need to budget for up to £70,000 per year plus the cost of training stipendiary candidates. This also raises the question as to the numbers we should aim for in this latter category, and whether we will need to cap numbers in training for any kind of ministry on financial grounds. We commend this question to the consideration of the Board of Finance.

### **8.11 Local ministry teams.**

8.11.1 Most ministry in the local church is done informally by lay church members, such as in visiting, catering, participating in worship, or youth work. It is the responsibility of the mission community to order this. But there are situations in which wider commissioning within the mission community, or even licensing outside it, under the authority of the Bishop, would be helpful in encouraging the acceptance and authority of the ministry offered. We think it unnecessary to go down the road of some dioceses in creating categories of individual ministries – evangelist, pastoral assistant, worship leader etc – who then have their own individual training and authorisation. In our view it is more true to the corporate nature of New Testament ministry to encourage the forming and commissioning of local ministry teams, where training, support and assessment takes place in a supportive, local and corporate way. These teams could include a variety of ministries within them, and there could be more than one team within a mission community.

8.11.2 We recommend that the Diocese review and develop policies to encourage and support such teams where they are felt by the mission community to be helpful. Training and support will need to be given by Diocesan Councils with relevant expertise – e.g. evangelists supported by the Council for Mission and Unity. This would clearly have cost implications.

## **9 Where are licensed ministers best placed?**

9.1 We have stated (7.7) that we believe the number of sustainable mission communities will be approximately 150. What kind of deployment pattern might this give for public representative ministry?

### **9.2 Stipendiary clergy.**

Allocation of stipendiary clergy to dioceses is managed by means of the 'Sheffield Formula'. This seeks to make allocation fairly by taking into account four factors, namely: the population (because we have a ministry to all in that area); the land area (to allow for travel); the electoral roll (to indicate church membership); the number of licensed places of worship (which need servicing). The criteria we have set out for the formation of mission communities are not quite the same as these, but we believe that setting up mission communities first is the correct way to proceed. Stipendiary posts can then be allocated as required.

9.3 We have suggested that the number of stipendiary clergy is likely to fall from about 262 at the beginning of 2004 to around 230 in 2014. 25 of those are stipendiary curates and therefore not part of our establishment number of posts. An initial way of allocating stipendiary posts would therefore be to have the equivalent of one stipendiary post in each mission community – 50 hours or so of paid ministry. This might be of one person, or more than one part-time person, perhaps combined with other roles. Initially this would make the transition to a mission community structure easier to manage, as the task of the Diocese would be to concentrate on setting up stipendiary mission posts (see 9.9 below).

9.4 One of the important parts of the consultation process for this Report was hearing what church people see as the task of the clergy. Applied to mission communities, these include:

- Preach the gospel
- Lead worship
- Be charged with a ministry of oversight, facilitating the mission community and being the advocate for it
- Be responsible for seeing that adequate teaching, training and enabling of the ministry team was undertaken
- Preside over and make provision for the celebrating of the sacraments
- Engage in regular study, teaching and reflection and enable this to take place within the mission community
- Oversee pastoral care and occasional offices
- Be an example and leader in prayer for the mission community
- Be the leader of mission for the community
- Be the focus of unity
- Foster links with schools

Saying that these are the task of the clergy does not mean that only clergy can do them, or that they must be done by stipendiary clergy, or that all clergy will have the required gifts to do them. We need to keep clearly in mind that the payment of a stipend is not according to gifts, or the job to be done, but in order to ensure availability. There are a number of tasks in particular – including, for example, administration – which require specific gifts which not all clergy may have.

9.5 Therefore, in order to deploy stipendiary clergy within a mission community, it would be necessary for those with responsibility for deployment, and those who were receiving the priest, to understand what the role of the particular priest in that community would be. To this end, the mission community would be asked to draw up a 'job description' of the role that the priest would undertake in the mission community, bearing in mind the Bishop's statement that a full-time

priest should work no more than fifty hours per week. This would form part of a mission audit, and be an essential element in considering the work of the mission community.

9.6 It would be helpful for every public minister, whether stipendiary or not, to agree with the members of their mission community the aims and scope of their work in relation to that of the mission community or mission post to which they are called, together with expectations of themselves and others about their working pattern including their time off and support structures. We would encourage the adoption of a working agreement for all public ministers: at present all except full-time stipendiary clergy are required to have one, and we can see real benefits for stipendiaries themselves in following the example of their colleagues.

9.7 This relates particularly to the question of the gifts of individual clergy. Many priests are clearly gifted with the leadership ability to animate and preside over a varied local church. Other priests are pushed into this role by the expectations upon them, but do not have such leadership gifts: instead they can offer depth of prayer, pastoral sensitivity, preaching gifts, etc. We should not assume therefore that a stipendiary priest will be the person who leads and enables the vision of the mission community. There may well be a Reader or self-supporting priest or churchwarden or other lay person who has the gifts to do this. Very few priests have all the gifts necessary on their own to undertake the breadth of tasks expected of them. The stipendiary priest is however likely to be the person who acts as the focus of unity, by virtue of their role at the Eucharist. Handling the realities of people's gifts, and of working together, is not easy, and we recommend that appropriate consultancy support be made available by the Diocese for it. Nonetheless, being open about this would set the gifts of many stipendiary priests free to acknowledge who they are and what they do well. Assessing this as part of the process of building a mission community – by relating the gifts of the stipendiary priest to those of the other members of the mission community – will make for strong and committed team working.

9.8 We have a further note of caution here. All ministers, whether lay or ordained, working in a parish, a mission community, or across a larger area, should be working together with at least one other minister. Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs (Mark 6.7 etc), and on this pattern no minister should work alone. We need the fellowship, encouragement and breadth of fellow-workers in the gospel. This is a proposal that runs contrary to the Church of England pattern of an individual vicar being in sole charge of 'my' parish, and will therefore need working at to implement. It would be disastrous however to see mission communities as simply a re-run of traditional parish churches, with a vicar in charge doing the ministry on his or her own.

#### 9.9 **Mission posts.**

If we allow up to 150 or so stipendiary posts to be allocated to mission communities, and 25 stipendiary curates, then we will have up to 50 stipendiary clergy available for allocation to mission posts. This is nothing like as radical as it may sound: for years now clergy have been given particular tasks for a period of time under licence, within teams or other contexts. Our proposal is that the Bishop in partnership with the Bishop's Council as the Pastoral Committee should be able to allocate posts strategically across the Diocese. The kind of deployment we have in mind is, for example: to go for five years to a failing church to build it up; to assist a stipendiary in a mission community to develop youth work; to plant a church; or to build links between a church school and its surrounding mission communities. The hallmarks of a mission post will be that it is for a specific purpose and has a time limit, and agreed ways of reviewing how the purpose is being achieved and how the post will come to an end. There might be scope for financial partnership between the Diocese and the mission community involved, or even for external funding. We encourage the Bishop and Bishop's Council to consider this proposal and draw up criteria by which it might be consistently implemented.

#### 9.10 **Self-supporting public ministry.**

Until recently there has been a presumption that non-stipendiary clergy and Readers were in effect local ministers: they ministered in the church which had called them. The Diocese has been making more explicit the expectation that offering for public representative ministry involves the concept of offering for deployment. This may well result in being affirmed as a local minister; but in partnership and consultation with the Bishop it may mean ministering in a different place, where the minister's gifts are needed more urgently, and where the minister her or himself will be able to grow and develop. We recommend that this flexibility of deployment be maintained. We also recommend that the Diocese, in consultation with mission communities, consider setting up deployed self-supporting ministry posts, either as part of the 'regular' mission community ministry or as mission posts in those communities, to which self-supporting ministers can be invited to go after completing their initial training period. We also recommend that the diocese reviews clause 7.3 of the Regulations for Reader Ministry which assumes a 6 month period before ministry can commence in a benefice: this assumes that Readers are local ministers, which is not necessarily the case.

#### **9.11 Diocesan posts.**

As part of deployment of ministry, the Diocese needs to consider how to use stipendiary clergy and (normally lay) salaried posts which are not based either in mission communities or in mission posts. There has been considerable criticism in the consultation of what is perceived as an overweight 'centre' in terms of staffing and expenditure. It is not part of our remit to make recommendations about the level of Diocesan staffing. However, it is clear to us that Diocesan staff will have a part to play in enabling the formation of mission communities, and in building up and sustaining their life. We recommend that the Councils of the Diocese and the Bishop's staff team consider how they could support and sustain the process, and that they make known the ways in which, and the extent to which, they can do so. Experience shows that this would need to be communicated clearly and effectively. As plans for the formation of mission communities are laid, those making the plans would need to indicate what resources they had available to implement them, and what support they would need from diocesan staff. In addition to developing the mission communities, this exercise should promote a greater understanding between those communities and diocesan staff.

## **10 What happens next?**

- 10.1 We have considered how the Diocese as a whole might move towards implementing the recommendations of this Report. The responsibility for doing this lies with the Diocesan Pastoral Committee (BCSC) & Bishop's Staff under the authority of the Diocesan Synod. Our belief is that it will take ten years to work this report through, but that a shared vision of where the Diocese is heading will enable proper planning and use of resources. The process in outline would be:
- 10.2 The BCSC commends the report to the Diocesan Synod.
- 10.3 The Diocesan Synod accepts the report (and may amend it).
- 10.4 The Bishop meets with lay chairs and rural deans to plan how the process of developing mission communities will be managed.
- 10.5 The Bishop meets with all the clergy of the diocese in 4 or 5 regional meetings to share with them the vision of the report and to discuss with them their role in it and concerns about it.
- 10.6 Deaneries pray, consult, and draw up a draft plan for their area (including cross-deanery planning where appropriate). This will take account of what works on the ground for human communities there, bearing in mind the list of hallmarks and norms, and be done in close

partnership with every PCC. Time needs to be given to ensuring that every PCC understands the proposals and agrees that it has been consulted. Help can be given in this process by bishops, archdeacons, rural deans, lay chairs and diocesan officers. We envisage that this process could take up to two years – it needs to be done carefully if it is to be effective.

- 10.7 The draft plans are assessed and co-ordinated by the Diocesan Pastoral Committee, and where necessary discussed further with the local area in order to clarify or amend them. We recommend that the patrons of parishes are involved in this process in order to encourage long term stability.
- 10.8 Mission communities are formed appropriately, as far as is possible. Where there are legal or personal obstacles to such formation, interim plans will need to be made. There will also need to be consideration of questions such as freehold, Teams and Groups in this process.
- 10.9 The mission communities then need to be related together to develop a manageable unit of support and oversight, by amending & overhauling the current deanery and archdeaconry structure. Rather than deciding on a pattern of episcopal/archidiaconal oversight, into which mission communities are grouped and fitted, we recommend that the BCSC should work with mission communities to discover what local clusters will resource their work, and then derive an episcopal and synodical pattern from this.
- 10.10 An ongoing plan with regular review should be developed by the BCSC/Pastoral Committee to resource of mission communities – relating the number of mission communities to currently available ministers, whether self-supporting or paid, part-time or full-time; and setting out the use of mission posts for specific full-time mission tasks to be undertaken in the diocese.

## **11 Further recommendations**

### **For Diocesan Synod**

- 11.1 That Synod reaffirm that the costs of training and of curates in training should fall on all mission communities (8.5.2)
- 11.2 That Synod should agree that 150 stipendiary clergy would be the minimum number to sustain the pattern of ministry envisaged; that 25 posts for curates in training is a realistic provision; and that 50 stipendiary mission posts should be allocated. (8.5.2; 8.8)

### **For Bishop's Council**

- 11.3 That a study be made of the possibilities for mission to human networks other than geographical (such as in education, employment, leisure) with a view to promoting such mission as an integral part of mission communities or distinct from them. (1.1)

### **For the Pastoral Committee**

- 11.4 That the Pastoral Committee be aware of the possibility of developing more part-stipendiary posts. (8.9)

### **For the Board of Finance**

- 11.5 That the Board consider the consequences of implementing the report for the assessment of Common Fund and address, in particular:
  - a) how each mission community should be responsible for its basic costs;
  - b) how the costs of stipendiary mission posts should be allocated amongst mission communities;
  - c) what diocesan costs fall outside a) and b) above, and how these costs should be apportioned. (8.7; 7.4)

11.6 That the Board consider the financial implications of fostering more vocations to local ministry, ordained and lay. (8.10.3)

### **For Diocesan Councils**

11.7 That arrangements be made to respond to training needs for a variety of lay ministries (especially in administration) on a local and accessible basis (4.4)

11.8 That Councils review and develop policies to encourage and support such local ministry teams where they are felt by the mission community to be helpful. (8.11.2)

11.9 That Councils consider how they could support the process of setting up and maintaining mission communities. (9.11)

11.10 That consideration be given to the best use of the diocese's housing stock, so that possibilities are available for allocating mission posts and part-stipendiary posts.

### **For parishes and PCCs**

11.11 That every PCC engage with the question: "What, in our locality, could be the basis of a mission community, bearing the hallmarks mentioned in the report?" (6.6; section 7)

11.12 That where multi-parish benefices exist, member PCCs should explore the possibility of forming a United Parish. (6.10)

### **For mission communities, as they are established**

11.13 That each mission community considers how best to be accessible to the community it serves, and to maintain good communications within its constituent parts. (4.8)

11.14 That each mission community carries out an audit of its buildings, to discover how best they may enable the work of mission and ministry in their area, and to assess the budgetary implications. (4.9)

11.15 That a five-year rolling plan should be developed, to be reviewed annually. (7.1)

11.16 That mission communities be asked to draw up a 'job description' of the role that the priest would undertake in their community. (9.5)

11.17 That mission communities be aware of the possibility of developing more part-stipendiary posts. (8.9)

### **Vocations**

11.18 Vocations should be a matter of concern at every level of diocesan life, and the report recommends:

- a) that urgent attention be given to the fostering of vocations to ordination for local ministry; (8.10.1)
- b) that encouragement be given to more people to offer for Reader ministry; (8.10.2)
- c) that each mission community should work with the Bishop, DDO and Reader co-ordinator to include a plan for an increase in self-supporting ministry within its five-year rolling plan. (8.10.3)

## **12 Some practical considerations**

Support will be needed in the following areas:

- 12.1 To set up the structures, there will need to be help with consultation and co-ordination. Much of the task will be done locally; some will be assisted by bishops and archdeacons. Ideally every PCC will have a session with a bishop or archdeacon to talk through the implications and ensure consultation. This would mean each Bishop's staff member taking on over 70 meetings in addition to their existing workload. Either other things which they do will have to be postponed, or the process will have to take two years, or they will need assistance from other people whom the PCCs would recognise as their representatives. We commend this issue to the Bishop's Council for consideration.
- 12.2 When mission communities are set up, they will need help to at least assess their vision development and planning, and may need assistance with the whole process of developing their community plan. Experience with stewardship planning suggests that, if 100 communities need substantial assistance, this is likely to require an average of 20 hours of staff time (including travelling, planning etc) each, which means two half-time staff over 18 months being devoted to this.
- 12.3 In addition, practical implications of working together will need to be pursued (combining PCCs and other pastoral re-organisation where appropriate, making finances more local etc). A staged process for this will be required over several years, in order to make it possible for diocesan staff to do the necessary work. In the long-term however, there should be greater stability and less need to undertake pastoral re-organisation. The whole question of what provision is required for housing is another subsequent issue: we recommend that the Diocese should be cautious about disposing of houses, given that the development of part-stipendiary ministry may be facilitated by having housing available in some areas.
- 12.4 Mission communities will need support to develop shared local ministry. The Council for Worship and Ministry has appointed a nearly half-time advisor to support local ministry team development, whose role will be to encourage the setting-up of schemes. The working-out of schemes could require a good deal more support, particularly the provision of local, accessible and flexible training: we commend this issue to the Council for Worship and Ministry for consideration.
- 12.5 There is also support for mission and nurture, particularly among children and young people. The provision in the Diocese of mission posts to enable mission communities to grow will be a key part of this, as well as work with church schools.

## **13 Moving On**

What will your mission community look like? Here are some examples:

- *in a rural area:*

Twenty rural parishes are grouped together, focusing on a market town (the 'minster model'). There is one stipendiary minister based in the town; based elsewhere in the group are three Readers, one part-time, and two self-supporting clergy. They all meet together weekly for prayer and planning, and some meet in different locations for daily offices. There is a local ministry team which operates across the group, enabling worship in every church on most Sundays as well as children's work and local pastoral care. Several times a year there are celebration services at the minster church. Each local church has a small group gathered around the churchwardens which looks after the day by day life of the parish, including its



plans for mission; this group is supported by one of the publicly authorised ministers. There are four PCCs for the group, which handle the finances and paperwork, supported by a part-time administrator who also works with the parishes to enable them to fulfil legal requirements regarding finance, child protection, disability access etc. Youth work is done together with the local Methodist churches in the town, although several churches at the far end of the group run their own satellite youth group because their young people are in a different school catchment area. Major problems with buildings are the responsibility of the whole group. The group raises enough finance to pay for its ministers and support mission work elsewhere, but has a youth worker paid for five years as a mission post to get youth work established.

*- in a seaside town:*

There are two parishes and several other churches in the town. There is a full time stipendiary minister based at one of the parishes, and a part time, self supporting minister based at the other. The other denominations in the area have varying levels of staffing, and a mix of resources for administration. In terms of administration, the churches agree that sharing resources is both viable and sensible, and one of the churches has made a room in their building available which can act as an office for the 'group' of churches. The churches are all able to contribute towards employing a full time administrator to service the needs of the local church. As a priority for their work together, the churches have also agreed to fund a youth worker for three years to enable their work in this area. The Anglican churches have offered their pattern of daily prayer as a resource for all the churches in the group, and mindful of the discussions that have been taking place in their national churches, have agreed to a covenant with the Methodist church to support their work together. Lay people in each of the churches are encouraged in their ministry and a stewardship programme across the whole of the town has focussed particularly on the time and skills of lay people in ministry, regardless of church affiliation.

*- in a large town:*

A large Parish has excellent resources for mission and ministry and a thriving congregation. There is a full time stipendiary minister, a full time stipendiary curate, a self supporting minister, 2 recently retired clergy, 2 Readers and a well established team of lay ministers. There is a part time administrator. There is a church school within the parish and by long standing tradition, the incumbent chairs the governing body. In order to avoid the temptation for a church like this, with an average Sunday attendance well above 300, to 'pull up the drawbridge' and sustain their own life without reference to the needs of other churches, it supports a mission post with its city link parish praying for and supporting youth work in a deprived city area. A way of extending their work and enabling the mission of God in the town has been to extend the work of their Sunday School by offering a second worship centre in the church school, with worship appropriate for those who have children. Whilst this is also offered at the Parish church, the aim is to be more flexible to the needs of those who have young children as well as providing a place of worship in a distinct area of the town. The clergy are very involved in the life of the school and make opportunity to visit and engage with the life of the community there. Resources such as reprographic equipment are shared between school and church.

*- in a network:*

A number of small communities surrounding a large town have church affiliated and/or funded institutions in their midst. These include an FE College, a Territorial Army base, both of which have chaplaincies associated with them. There is also a university chaplaincy and an 'experimental' ministry to the major shopping centre. Christian groups within these 'sector ministries' have indicated that they consider it sensible to share resources where possible and provide a network of support for the mission of the Church.

- *in an inner city:*

Several parishes have indicated that they are not in a position to support themselves and have made a clear case for being a mission community which needs to be supported, whilst having a particular mission opportunity. In order to assist this community in moving towards being self sustaining, a 'mission post' staffed by a full time stipendiary priest has been allocated to the mission community for a period of five years. The mission community already has the support of a part-time stipendiary priest, a self supporting minister, a part time administrator and a half time youth worker. The mission post has a clearly defined scope, which is to work with the parishes in establishing a community centre, which has been partly funded by a local regeneration project. The centre is well placed to provide for the needs of the community, but needs the resources of a full time minister to engage with other agencies and to establish the work of the church in the emerging and developing community.

Our working party unanimously commends this report with enthusiasm for the consideration of the diocese.

## APPENDIX 1

### Terms of Reference

Accepting that all who are called to be in Christ are given gifts for service in the Church and Kingdom, that to some are given particular ministries and that the threefold order of Bishops, Priests and Deacons is part of God's gracious provision for His Church:

- To consider what pattern of ministry is required by the Church in different parts of the Diocese to enable it to be effective in its primary tasks of Worship, Mission and the nurture of discipleship. This may include models for the most effective grouping of parishes or benefices. In making recommendations the working party will be expected to consult widely within the Diocese and have due regard to the developing work of the new Councils.
- Within that pattern to suggest how many priests is the Diocese likely to need over the next 10 years-
- Having regard for the maximum number of stipendiary posts likely to be available to this Diocese in 10 years' time; to consider the particular role of the stipendiary priest, to make recommendations as to the minimum number of stipendiary priests needed for this pattern to be sustained, and to indicate the cost implications for the Diocesan Budget and parish contributions to the Common Fund. Within this to consider the scope for the development of part-stipendiary posts.
- To make recommendations for a policy / strategy for the most effective deployment of stipendiary priests, including a formula for the most effective and transparently fair deployment of a) the minimum number required b) any surplus available to us through the clergy share, and having regard to such criteria as population, electoral roll membership, church attendance figures, centres of worship, benefice area. Consideration may also be given to whether, in any deployment formula, weight should be given to the presence of church schools, other denominations or other factors affecting ministerial demand.
- To suggest a policy and strategy for the development, recruitment, training and deployment of other ministries as required by the proposed pattern, including;
  - Permanent non-stipendiary priests
  - Deacons - whether stipendiary or non-stipendiary
  - Readers
  - Lay Pastors / Pastoral Assistants
  - Evangelists
  - Other lay ministers

Indicating the numbers required and a projected annual cost.

In undertaking this work, the working party should have particular regard to:

- a) The wider strategy for the Church's work and mission, which a strategy for ministry exists to serve. Particular attention will need to be paid to the outcomes of the Bishop's Consultation on Priorities (2001), the Area Conferences (2002) and the priority setting work of Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod.
- b) The lessons to be learned from previous pieces of work in this area especially 'Future Patterns of Ministry' (1975), and 'The Policy Statement on Ministry' (1997). Consideration should be given to the changed context in which a new policy and strategy for ministry needs to be developed.

- c) The experience of other Dioceses, and our ecumenical partners in the South West
- d) Financial projections for the coming 10 years as provided by the Board of Finance.

It is anticipated that the report of the working party is likely to lead to further work, particularly with regard to:

- Patterns of education, training and formation;
- Models of collaborative ministry.

Detailed work in these areas is beyond the remit of this working party, which will report to the Bishop's Council.

The Bishop of Exeter  
February 2002

## APPENDIX 2

### Membership of the working party

**Chair** of the working party: The Venerable Tony Wilds, Archdeacon of Plymouth

**Members:** The Revd Lynda Barley – Head of Research and Statistics, Archbishop’s Council; Mrs Hilary Dawson – Lay Chair, Cullompton Deanery; Mr Tim Ewing – Lay person, Exeter Archdeaconry; Mr Christopher Hebron – Lay Chair, Holsworthy Deanery; The Revd Canon Jane Hedges – Team Rector and Rural Dean of Honiton; The Revd Canon Dr David Ison – Director of the Council for Worship and Ministry; The Revd Robin Keeley – Deanery Training Officer, Barnstaple Archdeaconry (until retirement in October 2003); The Revd John Kendall, representing Plymouth and Exeter Methodist District; The Revd Prebendary Nick McKinnel – Rural Dean, Sutton Deanery; The Revd Chris Osborne – Member of Bishop’s Council; The Revd Brian Prothero – Vicar of Goodrington, Member of General Synod; Mrs Margeurite Shapland – Member of Bishop’s Council; Brig. Nigel Speller – Member of Bishop’s Council, Reader and Lay Chair, Honiton Deanery.

**Secretary** to the working party: The Revd Andrew Godsall, Assistant and Chaplain to the Bishop of Exeter

The working party quickly became aware that other dioceses and other churches in England are facing many of the same challenges that caused our work to be commissioned. In addition to having the valuable participation of a Methodist as a member of the working party, we have also been able to consult, either by personal contact or through written reports, the following:-

Roman Catholic Diocese of Plymouth

The United Reformed Church.

The Diocese of Chester

The Diocese of Durham

The Diocese of Lincoln

The Diocese of Liverpool

The Diocese of Oxford

The Diocese of Truro

The Diocese of Plymouth

## APPENDIX 3

### Summary

*[The paragraph numbers below correspond to the chapter numbers in the body of the report.]*

1. This report is based on a belief that **every human community in Devon should have within it a praying, worshipping and witnessing Christian presence, working to make disciples of Jesus Christ and to bring that community's life into the kingdom of God.** There are many kinds of human community. We affirm the parish-based way the Church has been organized, but recognize there are many other kinds of human communities and networks to which the Church is called to relate. Since this is the task of the whole Church, Anglicans need to work in partnership with Christians of other traditions to make this vision a reality.
2. The principle undergirding the report is that **the primary calling of the Church of England in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that of mission,** which will include evangelism, worship, prayer and social involvement. It is the calling of all the baptised, and the structure proposed is therefore based, not on the number of clergy available, but on communities which can be effective for the missionary task – hence **mission communities.**
3. In 1975 a Diocesan Commission recommended norms for the deployment of clergy. The need arose from the decreasing number of clergy and from financial constraints, and was based on the ratio of clergy to population. It advocated team working – but only envisaged those teams as consisting of licensed ministers. These norms have been the basis for deployment until now. With a continuing decline in clergy numbers, and increasing financial difficulties, the Bishop set up a working party to consider “what pattern of ministry would enable the Church to be effective in its primary tasks of Worship, Mission and the nurture of discipleship”. [The terms of reference are set out in full as Appendix One to the report.]
4. In the first half of 2003 an Interim report and Consultation Paper was widely circulated in the diocese. The concept of mission communities was introduced, and was widely affirmed, though it was clear that the final report needed to present greater detail on the proposal. Respondents frequently referred to the drain on resources stemming from the maintenance of heritage buildings, and the working party recognize that this affects mission and ministry. However, we conclude that mission communities themselves are best able to decide whether, in their situation, the buildings they have continue to function as a valuable spiritual and community resource, or are an obstacle to the Church's life and mission.
5. What constitutes the Church in any locality? A local church is called to be a microcosm of the whole Church – one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Every member is called to exercise ministry: for most this will mainly be ‘in the world’; for some (and never for one only) there will be a particular calling to sustain the life of the church, liturgically, pastorally, administratively, educationally etc. **The sharing of ministries is needed to enable the Church to express the fullness of its life locally.** The reality is that it may be beyond the ability of the parish church to live out the fullness of the Church's life and ministry. In seeking to keep the church local, whilst presenting the fullness of its life to its members and to the community it serves, we need to identify the marks of the fullness of the Church's life locally. The local church – the Mission Community – should be large enough to demonstrate these, and should have the resources to provide the necessary supporting organization, administration and funding. There should be:
  - worship
  - prayer
  - pastoral care

- evangelisation
  - opportunities for learning and teaching
  - nurture for disciples of all ages
  - youth and children's work and worship
  - equipping members for ministry in the community and the local church
  - connecting with the local community, especially in service to the poor
6. Community is about living in relationship with others. We may live in a variety of communities, some overlapping, some resembling concentric circles. The same is true of life within the Church. We use the term mission community to indicate a local Christian community expressing the fullness of life of a local church in a mission context. Such communities might consist of a number of different groupings – parishes, benefices, teams, ecumenical partnerships, deaneries – but would require 150 to 200+ people to be an effective unit. It would need to be sufficiently cohesive to demonstrate unity, and have sufficient resources of ministry (lay and ordained; paid and voluntary) to carry through the various facets of the Church's task. It would normally be expected to be financially self sustaining.
7. What would be the hallmarks of a mission community? There would be a clear vision and purpose, and identifiable boundaries. There would be sufficient sustainable human and physical resources to undertake the following:
- daily and other regular public worship and prayer in every community
  - leadership and envisioning / animating the mission community
  - work to enable a worshipping and witnessing Christian group in every human community in its area of responsibility, with someone who can act as a link with the wider mission community
  - the provision of priestly / presbyteral ministry
  - the provision of most of the ministry required within a local ministry team
  - teaching, preaching, training, nurture, growth, and lifelong learning for Jesus' disciples of all ages
  - evangelism and mission in the community as a clear priority
  - involvement in and service to the local community, with a particular care expressed for the poor, after the example of Jesus Christ
  - youth and children's work and worship
  - effective pastoral care available to all in the community who need it
  - being partners in mission with other groups / churches inside & outside the Diocese
  - Christian stewardship of time and resources
  - the provision of appropriate and realistically sustainable buildings
  - the necessary administration to support this work

In addition to sustaining themselves, mission communities should through the Common Fund contribute towards a 'mission opportunities budget' for work within the diocese. They should strive to work ecumenically wherever possible. In order to achieve these hallmarks, a mission community might expect to have the following norms:

- An average regular attendance of 150 to 200+ people
- An annual income of at least £50,000 (in 2003 terms) for Common Fund, plus local costs: a mission community may be below this financial norm and have part-time / self-supporting ministry which it can sustain, plus a mission plan
- At least 50 hours per week of licensed ministry, whether paid or voluntary
- At least 20 hours a week of administration, paid or voluntary

These marks and figures need to be regarded as ‘norms’ rather than ‘rules’, and each mission community would clearly regard itself as unique within these parameters.

**The number of mission communities likely to be sustainable in the diocese will be approximately 150.**

8. Our terms of reference asked us to “have regard to the maximum number of stipendiary posts likely to be available in 10 years’ time” and “to indicate the minimum number of stipendiary priests needed for this pattern to be sustained”. The working party took the approach that we should start with the concept of mission communities, move on to the overall provision of ministry, and from there ask about licensed and ordained ministry, and only then about stipendiary posts. With regard to the latter, questions of overall clergy numbers, and of the finances likely to be available for their provision are discussed. Our conclusion is that the number available is likely to be about 230 in ten years’ time; that the minimum number required is about 150. These figures are for “full-time equivalents” – we believe there is scope for the development of part-stipendiary posts. In addition, there should be great encouragement at all levels for an increase in vocations to self-supporting ministry (recognising that there are financial implications in training candidates for both reader ministry and self-supporting priestly ministry). Local ministry teams, too, should continue to be fostered and encouraged.
9. In the allocation of licensed ministers throughout the diocese, we make a number of proposals. Initially, there could be the allocation of the equivalent of one stipendiary post to each mission community – 150 in all. There is a continuing need to train curates, and we suggest these should number 25 at any one time. A further 50 mission posts could be created. Mission communities would be encouraged to identify specific needs which, over a period of, say, five or seven years, would be met by the appointment of a licensed minister – priest or lay. There is a need for those offering for self-supporting ministry to be ready to be deployed where needed, and not to assume that they will automatically serve in the local church from which they came. The Diocese will need to consider how many posts there are which are not based in mission communities, and how those posts can most effectively support and sustain those communities.
10. The implementation of this report, once accepted by the Diocesan Synod, would be in three stages: firstly, the sharing of the vision as widely as possible; secondly, the drawing up of proposals for mission communities throughout the diocese; thirdly, the beginning of the formation of mission communities.
11. Recommendations are set out in section 11 for action by various bodies in the diocese.
12. The working party is conscious that, for this vision to be implemented, support will be needed for parishes and deaneries in the task. Mission Communities, as they are set up, will also need help in vision development and planning, and in various areas of their work.
13. Some examples are given of what a mission community might look like. They are intended simply to be an indication of the variety and coherence of the pattern under discussion.
14. Membership of the working party is recorded in Appendix 2. The members unanimously commend the report with enthusiasm for the consideration of the diocese.