

Diocesan Synod, Saturday 21st March 2015

Stimulating Growth: Local Growth through Local Vision and Action

This document will provide your group with some contextual information around local growth through local vision and action, and will outline briefly some ideas and comments linked to this theme that have been put forward during initial consultation. This document should be considered a **stimulus for discussion**. You may wish to explore and develop aspects of the ideas presented, or you may come up with different ideas: all of this is helpful as we seek to discern how our resources can be used most effectively to stimulate Church growth.

Impetus

Our congregations have the potential to be a resource for mission and, if tapped, will give us the opportunity for much bigger and wider outreach than we have now. Whether it be mission to young people, Back to Church Sunday, healing services, clown services etc. congregations are ready and keen to become involved, but may benefit from resources, support and inspiration.

Context

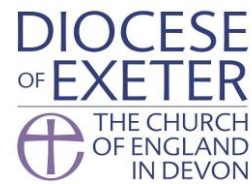
Enthusiasm for evangelism, mission and outreach already, and unarguably, exists and the need is well understood by the majority of Christians in Devon. However, ideas, support and facilities (resources) are limiting factors for most congregations; whether the result of overstretched clergy, absence of relevant training for Readers, lack of cash (and its inevitable and consequential inward focus on raising money to keep the church running), or the absence of appropriately skilled and experienced people to get initiatives off the ground. There are other significant factors such as confidence, a sense of urgency and a preparedness to take individual and collective responsibility for the future.

Local people, including the unchurched, are quick to become involved in effective local mission activity, especially when this serves the local community. Mission Communities and Parishes are already motivated to serve in a missional way, but new ideas, support and resources should be able to increase effectiveness and impact. The Million for Mission Fund brought out a wonderful range of new and exciting schemes for mission. We can draw upon this experience and the ideas it derived to be a stimulus for local activities.

Possible initiatives

- To provide the new Diocesan Mission Enabler, supported by four Archdeaconry Mission Activists, with resources to undertake specific projects across the Diocese. These would include funded and self-funding projects run by local people but resourced by a team of specialists and advisers who would also be prime movers in the creation of the projects. Sustainability and portability would be essential ingredients of these projects, and an experience database would be built to be available to other mission communities and parishes. Projects would have light touch monitoring, but access to support as well as financial resources. It would be important for the Diocesan Mission Community Resource Advisers to be involved in this work, perhaps providing guidance as to suitable mission community and parish candidates for a project.

Growing in prayer
Making new disciples
Serving the people of Devon with joy



- To make available one-off equal matched funding¹, up to £ ----² times the Participant number in the Parish³. The grant would be offered to every PCC in pursuit of part of a recognised Mission Action Plan (MAP)⁴ with an expected outcome⁵ of growing the Participant number by at least 10% per Parish⁶ within 5 years through that specific action. PCCs could choose to request and use this funding in the same year locally towards an action agreed as part of the Mission Community MAP⁷, or pool the money collectively with the grants to other Parishes for a central action which would grow every part of the Mission Community.

Comments

- As with Million for Mission, considerable attention will need to be given to the quality of the projects and the feedback from them.
- Mustard Seed grants⁸ should not be “over-vetted”. They should be open to all.
- Match funding could be used.
- Accountability is important.
- ‘There is a real need to beef up MAPs as living documents that describe *how* the aims of the MAP are to be achieved and *who* is going to do what.’ Suggested references: *How to do Mission Action Planning: A Vision Centred Approach*, by Mike Chew and Mark Ireland (SPCK); *The Healthy Churches Handbook*, by Robert Warren (Church House Publishing).

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1. Requests for grants of up to half of expected costs should be by simple letter from the PCC secretary (see also 7) to the Mission Community Development Team, which will approve the funding if the project links to an action in the Mission Action Plan (see 4). The letter would quote that action and describe the project (with costings), and assumptions made in the growth strategy. Grants would NOT be made against existing expenditure. Parochial Annual Reports must identify the funding received and continue to report on its impact. Parishes (or Mission Communities) could opt to apply once in either the year the initiative is launched, or the following year.
 2. X = total sum agreed by Diocesan Synod (suggest £250,000), divided by the Participants in the Diocese.
 3. The Participant number for the Parish would be the last figure used as the three year average for common fund purposes. This would slightly favour Parishes which have recently been in decline.
 4. The MAP used would either be one by a ‘Celebrated’ Mission Community revised within the last two years, or approved by the Mission Community Development Team as “fit for purpose”. This might include a local Mission Action Plan from a Parish, if there were (as yet) no unified MAP for the whole Mission Community.
 5. Progress towards the target(s) would be reported also in the annual review of the Mission Action Plan.
 6. This is an average of one person per year in an adult, regular (at least once a month) congregation of 50. Using a Parish based growth measure would avoid disadvantaging small parishes, or those Mission Communities which are undergoing a change in the composition of their Parishes or do not have a sufficiently developed shared MAP. It would encourage such parishes to be active in local mission rather than waiting for a new Mission Community to form, or perhaps provide inspiration to other partner Parishes.
 7. To encourage local ownership, and the choice of a project that would lead to growth in every Parish. Where Parishes within a Mission Community present a combined bid, each PCC secretary should indicate their PCC’s agreement. Growth targets would still be assessed and reported for each Parish in the Mission Community.
 8. The Biblical parable of the mustard seed reminds us that great things often have small beginnings. Mustard Seed funding encourages local churches to engage in mission and outreach, giving them the opportunity to apply for one-off grants to aid the development of a particular project.