

A Resource Church in Exeter

Making new disciples

Growth is an outcome of our relationship with God. Our three Diocesan priorities are inter-related: we seek to deepen our relationship with God through worship and prayer, and this releases the mission energy of the church and our capacity to serve the people of Devon with joy. As part of a concerted drive to make new disciples we have launched several initiatives in the Diocese, among them a Diocesan Mission and Growth Fund to stimulate growth at grass roots level, 'Growing the Rural Church' project, and the 'Plymouth Partnership in Mission' to help renew the life of the church through a series of estate plants in Plymouth. For the latter two projects we secured significant financial assistance from the national Strategic Development Fund (SDF). We are now working on future SDF-funded projects. These include the funding of resources and ministers for projects in Christianity and Torbay deaneries: a Resource Church for Exeter and full time youth and community resources for parishes spanning our traditions in Torbay. We are also planning to apply for resources to support both Evangelical and Catholic churches in Exeter. We are currently ready to submit a bid to the SDF for a Resource Church in Exeter, and the rest of this paper covers this bid. We plan to submit a further bid in the spring of next year in relation to the other projects. These will be presented to Synod in March 2019.

The story so far

It is proposed to submit a bid to the Strategic Development Fund to finance the establishment of a Resource Church at St Matthew's, Lower Summerlands, Exeter in the autumn of 2019 with the support of Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB).

The key details are as follows:

- In 2016 Bishop Sarah began a process of consultation with members of Christianity Deanery, principally with the clergy serving the city of Exeter, to review our provision for the city. The consultation had two foci: our engagement with the expanding student population attending Exeter College and Exeter University, and how best to reinvigorate the churches serving the outer estates of Exeter.
- One aspect of this strategy was the creation of a Resource Church for Exeter. A number of potential venues were explored and St Matthew's Church was identified as the ideal location.
- The initiative has the support of the Bishop of Exeter, the Archdeacon of Exeter, the Diocesan Secretary, HTB and the PCC at St. Matthew's church.
- A curate has been identified to lead the project. He is currently working with HTB in London, but was originally an ordinand sponsored by this Diocese. Early in the consultation process he met with both the Bishop of Exeter and Bishop Sarah. He has since been interviewed by the Bishop of Plymouth, the Archdeacon and EBDF senior staff for the post of Incumbent. He and his family are willing to relocate to Devon and to lead St Matthew's for a minimum of five years should we get Synod approval and SDF funding.

- The Resource Church will be led by the Incumbent, and staffed by an assistant curate/ordinand, worship leader, youth leader, social action worker and administration staff.
- The SDF bid process involves two bids. An initial 'Stage 1' bid which consists of a summary of the proposed project, and if this is approved by the Church Commissioners, a more detailed 'Stage 2' bid outlining the project and budget in detail.
- The Stage 1 bid is due in the last week of October and the Stage 2 bid will be due in late March or early April 2019.
- The EBDF will be requesting the funding required from the Strategic Development Fund and HTB. They do not expect to be asked to fund any costs over and above the normal clergy stipend, relocation and housing costs that we would cover in normal circumstances.
- The total funding the EBDF will be requesting from the SDF and HTB will be in the region of £1.1 million over a period of three years. This covers staff expenses, equipment, resources and church refurbishment.

Synod is being asked to approve the submission of a Stage 1 SDF bid in October 2018 and, if this is accepted by the Church Commissioners, the submission a Stage 2 SDF bid in the spring of 2019.

Aim

The aim of the Resource Church is to establish a large, thriving church which, working in partnership with neighbouring parishes and churches, will become a blessing to the city of Exeter and beyond. Once established, it aims to resource others locally and, working with the Bishop and senior staff, will sponsor plants and grafts to help reinvigorate and re-evangelise the Diocese.

Under the leadership of the Reverend Tors Ramsey, the previous Parish Priest who has recently moved to a new position, St Matthew's has already laid the foundations of renewal. Their worship is evolving and now includes a 5pm contemporary service and a monthly 10.30am family service. These accomplishments can be built upon and developed to create a dynamic Resource Church to be launched in September 2019. This will be a new chapter for St Matthew's, as part of an ongoing process of change and transformation.

The aim is to increase and strengthen the current congregation whilst also doing innovative work amongst the growing youth and student population of Exeter. In company with other Resource Churches nationally, St Matthew's will be primarily outward-focused and built upon a strong foundation of passionate corporate worship and prayer. In addition to the Sunday gathering, it is hoped that St Matthew's will gradually establish a pattern of mid-week worship, courses, events and, in partnership with others, will engage with local businesses and schools.

The paragraphs that follow set out in greater detail the vision for St Matthew's as a Resource Church for Exeter. We believe that what is proposed will complement existing initiatives in the city and Diocese, and embody our three priorities of:

- Growing in Prayer
- Making New Disciples
- Serving the People of Devon with Joy

A vision for St Matthew's

Sundays and Services

Sunday services will initially be the core of the church's activity. The aim of the Resource Church will be to establish three Sunday services in the autumn of 2019: 8am (Eucharistic traditional); 10.30am (family, contemporary, informal); 5pm (contemporary and informal). To achieve this, they will aim at:

- Engaging and relevant worship
- Intentional community building
- Spirit-led prayer ministry
- Relevant and accessible bible teaching
- Lively children's and youth groups

The expectation will be that the 10.30am service will naturally appeal to families and the 5pm service will attract students and young professionals, although this is not prescriptive. The 8am service will continue to provide an opportunity to worship with liturgy and communion every Sunday. All their services will be rooted in the historic traditions of the Church of England and include sung worship, intercessions, bible teaching and communion.

Alpha

St Matthew's will exist for those outside itself and evangelism will be a top priority. Alpha will be the primary tool for evangelism in the church. From year one, Alpha will run three times per year. The Resource Church's aim is to invite everyone in Exeter to try Alpha within 5 years and to establish a sustainable course using the best of Alpha resources.

Social Transformation

Social transformation will be an important part of church life from day one. The Resource Church will partner with local homelessness charities such as St Petroc's and Christians Against Poverty at the Exeter Network Church. Additionally, they will seek to establish a relationship with Exeter Prison through the chaplaincy. Taking materials and ideas from the Church's work with ex-offenders in London, they will aim to provide mentoring for three ex-offenders, through members of the church, by the end of year two. They also have a vision to establish a social enterprise resourced by the church. The employees and beneficiaries will be vulnerable women who have experienced trafficking or are at risk of exploitation.

Resourcing the Church

St Matthews will look to recruit, train and send out ordained church planters and teams to partner with existing congregations and plant new ones.

It is hoped that planting teams of 20-30 people will be sent out every 2-3 years with the ongoing support of St Matthew's and, where appropriate, in partnership with other churches in the city. To

sustain this vision, they will create a leadership pipeline which identifies potential future leaders. The Resource Church will then seek to invest in them and equip them using material from 'God at Work' and 'Leadership College'. In years two and three they will establish a school of leadership to offer apprentice-style leadership experience and training.

Discipleship

The Resource Church will seek to establish a network of small group meeting in homes and offices. To increase the influence of these groups, they will be located throughout the city and encouraged to reach out to friends and neighbours on a termly basis. These groups will form the foundations of leadership development by providing opportunities to practice speaking, praying and leading bible studies. They will work with local parishes to set-up this network, providing them with any resources and assistance they may need to get local groups started and building momentum.

Teams

To embody and resource the missional nature of the church, the Resource Church will encourage everyone to join a team. Each team will focus on a different area that serves the church's mission (e.g. Alpha, Sundays, Children's, Youth and Creativity). These teams will provide a context for friendships to develop, gifts to be expressed and faith to grow.

Rising Generation and Families

The Resource Church will be intentionally multi-generational. Children and young people will be an integral part of the church family. They will establish a children's programme alongside the 10.30am service and a weekly youth gathering. In addition, they will begin a student ministry and be present at Freshers' Fair on campus in mid-September. This ministry will be overseen by a curate or an ordinand and resourced by a youth leader. The redevelopment of the church hall will facilitate these activities.

Prayer and Worship

The Resource Church will seek to appoint a worship pastor to develop and promote a culture of worship by recruiting and overseeing a team of excellent volunteer musicians. This will be based on an ethos of excellence and the opportunity to learn and grow. To support this vision, they will upgrade the production infrastructure in order to provide for the needs of a growing congregation.

Prayer is the foundation of a church. St Matthew's current weekly and termly prayer gatherings will be augmented by a 24/7 prayer space situated in a designated room in the church hall. Over time, they will make this room a place of constant uninterrupted prayer for the needs of the city and its churches. They will encourage personal and corporate prayer through resources like 'The Bible in One Year' and weekly early morning prayer meetings.

Courses and Family Life

Strong relationships are the heart of a strong society. The Resource Church will offer marriage, parenting and single-life courses to help people strengthen their relationships across all walks of life. They also plan to establish a group for parents and toddlers supported by their children and families team.

Co-Working and Collaboration

On the basis that the Church has something to offer society, St Matthew's will seek to establish a co-working space in the city centre. The way people work is changing rapidly and this is especially true of millennials. This space will offer competitively priced office space for freelancers and small businesses and facilitate the cross-pollination of church and society. It will act as the church office and host a number of mid-week small groups. It will also help them generate an income, enabling them to offer more effective pastoral services and ensure sustainability once the SDF funding ends.

Proposed timing

- October 2018: Stage 1 SDF bid submission
- April 2019: Stage 2 SDF bid submission
- August/September 2019: Relocation of curate to Exeter
- Oct – Dec 2019: Preparation of the church, recruitment of staff, purchase and installation of equipment.
- Christmas 2019: Grand Launch.

-The Venerable Christopher Futchter, Archdeacon of Exeter -