

Diocese of Hereford Review of Local Ministry 2016

A covering letter from the newly-formed Diocesan Ministry and Mission Staff team

Bishop Richard in his commissioning as Bishop of Hereford was charged by the Archbishop to review the provision of ministry within the Diocese with the overarching aim of addressing numerical and spiritual growth. That charge required him to review all our mission and ministry including the working of our support officers and the working of the long established Local Ministry Scheme. As a consequence the support officers are now developing new patterns as a newly formed ministry and mission staff team under my oversight as requested by Bishop Richard. Regarding the long established Local Ministry scheme Bishop Richard asked Jacky Sewell to undertake a review of Local Ministry. Their report represents the combined prayerful thinking, discernment and deliberation of the seven members of the review group. It was written as a public document: that is, with the expectation that it would be made widely available within the diocese and beyond including the Local Ministry staff in other dioceses who provided contributions.

This report is both from those consulted to those with oversight and authority for future prioritised action and vice versus. The goodwill and good faith of all those who shared their stories; both the contributions of those in the benefices and those amongst diocesan staff is respected. With this in mind, we commend this report to the clergy and laity of the diocese.

The Diocesan Synod recently endorsed the Diocesan MAP. The MAP gives strategic focus to the vital task of how our limited diocesan resources can best be harnessed to enable benefices and parishes in their own MAP processes and mission. The purpose is to enable us all, as best we can, to promote numerical and spiritual growth. In turn the Local Ministry report makes a series of recommendations. As Bishops we very much hope that these recommendations will be considered in the light of the three shared priorities as set out in the MAP document agreed by Synod. Therefore the findings that have implications for spiritual and numerical growth will be given priority, both by the benefices and by the Diocese. These include:

“...whilst we are not recommending one exclusive model become the template for all, the missional element we found to exist in those LMDGs who operated according to a “Spearhead” model is critical if Local Ministry in any neighbourhood is to move from maintenance to outward-facing engagement and mission.” (p.6)

“By operating across the local PCCs, and with the consent and support of those PCCs, an LMDG can facilitate local mission and ministry initiatives unique to a particular village but with the resourcing by the whole; and mission and ministry initiatives across all, in ways that benefit the whole.” (p. 7)

“The flourishing of lay ministry is not peculiar to Local Ministry. In many [places], lay people’s gifts and skill are recognised and nurtured and sometimes lead to publicly-

recognised licensing to specific areas of ministry. Nevertheless, Local Ministry is particularly well-placed to encourage the growth of non-ordained vocation.” (p. 18)

“We recommend that collaborative ministry per se should be an explicit part of each Ministerial Development review, as the diocese seeks to respond with imagination and vigour to the challenges facing the Church of England at this point in time.” (p. 24)

To these ends, the practical outworking of the recommendations of the report need to be weighed and considered:

1. We commend the first set of recommendations to the benefices for their consideration
2. Local Ministry staff are digesting the second set of recommendations and will look to take action
3. The newly formed Ministry and Mission Staff group, chaired by me, will oversee the third set of recommendations

With every blessing for your work in building up the Body of Christ

+Alistair

The Right Revd Alistair Magowan