

**Executive Summary of**  
**Notes of the Meeting to Discuss Pastoral Re-organisation**  
**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2019. Held at The Beacon, Kilmington**

**Present:** *PCC Members of the 8 churches and parishes involved in the discussions : All Saints, Axmouth, Axminster, Chardstock, Combpyne with Rousdon, Holy Cross, Membury and Uplyme.*

*Ven. Christopher Futchter - Archdeacon of Exeter,*

*Penny Doe – Diocese of Exeter Mission Community Adviser,*

*The clergy and readers licensed to the parishes – Rev'd Clive Sedgewick, Rev'd Cate Edmonds, Rev'd Mary Harding, Su Clark, Ernie Fox, Roger Grose, Lesley Gubbins, Hilary Harron, Tony Nixon, and Tracey Voysey – Ordinand in training in the AVMC.*

43 people were present

Following preliminary **welcomes and introductions** members met and considered the potential for the creation of a new Mission Community to include all of our 8 churches. Opportunities for small group discussions and consideration of the questions people wished to be addressed, were followed by an open question and answer session.

### **Question & Answer Session**

The gist of these questions and responses can be accessed on line and in the full notes circulated to Churchwardens.

**The key outcome**, voiced by a number of those present, was a request for any reasons why this process should not go ahead. No-one voiced strong concerns or suggested that any individual church would not feel potential benefits from progressing and working as a new Mission Community of 8 churches.

**What next**– Clive explained that in preparation for the new Mission Community there would be a range of activities: informal planning meetings and development of the working agreement, a Mission Community Action Plan to capture how the vision would be translated into practice, the preparation of the Mission Community profile and person specification for the advert to fill the vacancy, and preparations for the interview process.

Penny asked if there were any fears – and invited everyone either to voice these as the meeting drew to a close, or privately with herself, Christopher or Clive.

Clive explained that notes of today's meeting would be circulated to support the discussions of PCC meetings, thanked everyone for attending the meeting and wished them well.

**Detailed notes of the meeting follow ...**

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**Present:** PCC Members of the parishes of All Saints, Axmouth, Axminster, Chardstock, Combyne with Rousdon, Holy Cross, Membury and Uplyme.

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**Welcome** – Clive welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained minor changes to the agenda. He introduced the Archdeacon and Penny Doe.

**Prayers** - The Archdeacon opened the meeting in prayer.

**Introduction and rationale for Mission Communities** - Christopher Futcher spoke about the purpose and vision for Mission Communities with their essential language of active engagement and sense of purpose across a group of parishes, and communities. He described how in rural areas there has been a change from full-time resident clergy working with single parishes to groupings. In some of these has been the attempt to continue everything with a fraction of a priest, but 16-17 years ago came different thinking and a new sense of purpose for the clergy and communities to grow and serve each other through sharing connections, work and resources. This is exemplified through shared approaches to particular areas of work, e.g. elderly care homes or work with schools – where skills are best used in working together - through better conversations, shared ministry and growth so that areas can flourish. Opportunities to share administration can free time for churchwardens and the clergy – held together by regular, good communications.

In this way, the vision for Mission Communities is that they are mission orientated, community focussed and locally rooted. Christopher explained that Bishop Robert sees that the ethos of Mission Communities as beyond a structure, and in the purpose of how we're going to be Christians and how we're going to 'Be Church' in our local areas.

**A summary of present considerations** – Clive outlined the considerations, opportunities and challenges of forming a Mission Community of eight churches using the strengths of new partnerships in a route map for the mid and distant future. He reflected that change doesn't mean that things weren't right before, and that once a vision for where we want to be in the future is agreed, what we need to look for is a way to get there. The key consideration is what PCCs see as the opportunities for mission in the future and be convinced that how we are travelling will get us to where we want to be – this means that we may need to move out of our comfort zones to do some new things. The re-organisation if it goes ahead is a decision for each PCC. It will be a long-term process, but there are some short-term opportunities - for example the appointment of a joint full-time stipendiary post can be achieved by the amalgamation of two existing part-time vacancies.

He explained that the role of the clergy and lay team is to serve the PCCs and to work with them. Clive said that the hope is that today's meeting will help to develop a clarity of vision for the future to benefit everyone across the area and provide a framework to enhance the mission of all

churches. He summarised the schedule of meetings which had happened so far and that if the decision was to go ahead, one of the next steps would be to draw up a working agreement of practicalities and ways of working. The Archdeacon added that there will in due course be a legal process to create a United Mission Community once things were bedded-in, and that working together would precede this – giving the parallel of a betrothal of marriage.

**Discussion / Break** – Clive introduced this as a time to talk about the pros and cons of the proposal with a couple of 10-minute slots for PCC members to move between groups to meet and explore one another's views – an 'ecclesiastical speed-dating' session.

Penny asked if during the break, people might like to suggest a name for the new Mission Community should it go ahead.

**Questions and Answers openly raised and shared with all 43 people present** – Penny chaired this session.

1. How soon would a definite decision be made – this is of particular relevance for Uplyme and Axmouth?

*The proposed timetable has been circulated; a discussion paper with practicalities will be produced by the 17<sup>th</sup> June for PCC members. Normal or extraordinary meetings need to have been held and votes formally recorded by 4<sup>th</sup> July. The vote needs to be a yes/no to move to a new Mission Community of eight members. From 1<sup>st</sup> August we could then begin to operate as a Mission Community. At this stage we would work together on the profile and documentation for the appointment to vacant positions.*

2. We need to know what will change, for example, will there be the same amount of services?

*Clive answered that decisions remain with each PCC as legal bodies in the governance of each parish. The Churchwardens Council will continue. Churches will continue to work as they do now. any change will be gradual. Christopher confirmed that the legal frameworks which exist for PCC decisions will continue and added that hopefully there will be a warmth and regard for other churches, for example not looking to change a worship pattern which may adversely affect other churches.*

*Comment was added that a once-a-fortnight service pattern has been introduced in peripheral parishes and that attendances have risen rather than fallen. Christopher added that it will continue to be PCC who determine number of services and whether they are priest or lay-led.*

*Cate added that there need be no fear that any church would be asked to drop to two services per month as the self-supporting clergy, the retired clergy and the readers would all continue to lead services across the eight churches.*

*Mary added that the discussion paper will need to include information about the worship patterns and staff arrangements covering eight churches, as PCCs need more detail to inform their votes. Clive assured everyone that services would continue to be covered by the clergy and lay team and that any change would be a gradual process.*

Comment was made that in the profile it will need to be made explicit that this is a collaborative ministry – with the view that not all clergy are experienced in working with lay teams. Tony added that two clergy working together as part of a leadership team can strengthen a unit of one or half a clergy role. There was discussion about the language of 'strong leadership' as this might be inappropriately interpreted as code for a male leader.

3. What is the alternative to the proposal - is this to stay as we are?

*Christopher answered that the staff allocation to the AVMC is for a full-time stipend and a 0.3 FTE house for duty post; and that for Axmouth and Uplyme a 0.7 FTE post. The vacancies have not yet proceeded to advert and if the decision is to come together, this could create a full-time appointment to bring a higher level of staffing to the new Mission Community.*

4. What is the timetable for the appointment?

*Christopher answered that this will depend on the decision about the new Mission Community. Once this is decided the profile for one Mission Community of eight churches can be drawn up and its priorities agreed in order to inform the job description for the advert.*

5. Why is there a need for the staff allocation for Uplyme to drop from a 0.7FTE to a 0.5 FTE post – and how would the job description for the new post set out particular responsibilities? How would the appointment be made?

*Christopher answered that there will still be heavy involvement of each parish in the appointment process, with clear PCC representation, patrons and the Rector. He assured everyone that the Bishop and Archdeacon listen carefully to local voice in making appointment decisions. The profile will include a description about the calling of a priest to the work in this Mission Community and will relate to the whole Mission Community of eight churches. The skills being looked for will enhance the diversity of the team, and Uplyme's charismatic and evangelical nature will be part of the profile.*

*He explained that the Diocese have set deployment figures until 2024 and the change from 0.7 to 0.5 allocation is linked to the 'Common Fund'. The Diocese needs to reduce the allocations for financial reasons. Also, full-time posts are much easier to recruit than most part-time posts.*

*In answer to a further question as to why there can't be a 0.7 allocation to separate mission communities, Christopher repeated his previous answer, adding that the preservation of full-time posts is critical to drawing clergy into the south-west and rural areas.*

6. Regarding the Deanery Plan, will we be first in moving to a larger group and will this affect others?

*Christopher answered that at this time it is a 'draft' plan and 'work in progress'. It must be consulted upon locally and at Diocesan levels to assess how realistic it could be. It will take time to consider the implications in the Honiton area. The move towards bigger groupings allow more people to be gathered to support one-another. This Pastoral arrangement has no bearing upon the 'Deanery Plan'.*

7. There are a number of vacancies across the Deanery and cross-border, so how can we be competitive? This is an interesting post for someone – we need to think creatively.

Do we know where the appointed person will live – in Uplyme or Chardstock?

*Clive answered that the intention is that the appointed person will live in Uplyme. The house in Chardstock could be made available to a clergy in training post (Curate) as this would not be counted in the staff allocation to the Mission Community and would bring resource and skills to share across the eight churches.*

8. Comment was made that the vicarage in Uplyme is too big, needs to be sold and something smaller purchased in the centre of the village.

*Christopher answered that this matter has been referred to Diocesan Property Services, but that there is a formula of rooms and ground floor space for Vicarages which must include a study and lavatory facilities without accessing the rest of the house. In response to further questions as to a) whether the Diocese are*

*actually looking at this at the moment, and b) if not could it be looked at once someone had been appointed and for them then to move elsewhere - Christopher answered that a)Property Services are 'not actively working on this at the moment due to other priorities' and b)that it might be possible for an incumbent to move at a time in the future once in post.*

9. Comments were made that people out in the community care most about our message and how we send it, rather than about the buildings, about paid priests or about what PCCs are doing – it is our outreach work which should be the priority. Also, that we should be clear about 'where the ship is going'. Would we have a consensus across eight churches about this and a similar feeling to recruit to? There are very few people under 40 and this will continue without change. What would the priorities be for the job description – this will be difficult if everyone has a different view.

*Penny assured the meeting that she and the Archdeacon would help with the profile for a new Mission Community to support this. Christopher added that they have experience of writing profiles with Mission Communities of 8 – 9 and 11 churches and that there have been no difficulties agreeing priorities in line with hopes, needs and aspirations.*

*Cate added that the profile could definitely include work with young people and families to come together with the same needs.*

10. It appears simplistic for Axmouth and Uplyme to gain a share of a new full-time priest, and obvious choice to go ahead, and for the Axe Valley to go ahead in a structured way – so is there anything against the proposal?

*Everyone is getting their services at the moment – Uplyme with a PTO priest, and with SSM and readers in the team – so this is not a change but finding another priest for a full-time role. People will not be forced to change ways of worship. But working together in a collaborative way could support outreach, for example through the Uplyme Youth Worker who might be able to advise and support across eight churches. There are lots of potential positives.*

11. With regard to PCC votes – does it need to be all eight or could it go ahead with yes votes from seven of eight?

*Christopher answered that this would depend on location and the potential geographical disruption. None of the churches can be staffed on their own. If a consensus could not be gained, then the status quo would continue.*

12. Are there examples of successful practice in large Mission Communities?

*Christopher and Penny gave the examples of Mid-Exe, Exe Valley, Holyford, the Otter Valley and Crediton and explained that his PA would be able to give profile examples of these. In answer to a question about why these are successful, he answered that across Devon we are seeing growth – not only in large evangelical churches but also in towns and villages. This is happening where there are good, strong leaders with collaborative leadership, where the church is seen as a vibrant community – modelling the love of Jesus.*

13. The engagement of communities and congregations was raised. Christopher answered that this is not required as PCC members have been elected to govern for their churches and decisions rest with them – and that it will be important to keep this process going in order to get to a decision. Each PCC will need a majority vote – not 100%.

It was asked if it would be possible to replicate the Uplyme style of worship for other churches – maybe monthly. There may also be opportunities to share a music group or choir in different churches, and to hold annual Mission Community events : also, to have a shared Mission Community magazine rather than single ones. Clive answered that this would be one of the joys of joining together.

It was asked if there could be more use of the Minster for shared events, for example, a regular evening service, and for more flexibility where congregations don't see shared events as 'leaving our church' but as 'joining together' as a body of Christ. Cate added that it should not feel as if you are a visitor elsewhere – but a member of the Mission Community at home everywhere. Mary added that it should be possible to attend a eucharist service in any of the churches on days when there is a lay-led service.

**What next** – Clive explained that in preparation for the new Mission Community there would be a range of activities : informal planning meetings and development of the working agreement, a Mission Community Action Plan to capture how the vision would be translated into practice, the preparation of the Mission Community profile and person specification for the advert to fill the vacancy, and preparations for the interview process.

**The next formal requirement will be a recorded vote by each PCC to agree to set up and work as a new Mission Community possible from August 2019.**

**PCCs are requested to make arrangements for this recorded PCC decision once documentation is provided.**

Penny asked if there were any fears – and invited everyone either to voice these as the meeting drew to a close, or privately with herself, Christopher or Clive.

Clive explained that notes of today's meeting would be circulated to support the discussions of PCC meetings, thanked everyone for attending the meeting and wished them well.

Notes taken by Andrea Sedgewick.