



## 10. Bishops Mission Orders in the Diocese of Bristol: A note on current process

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1. The last Diocesan Synod asked for information about the current Bishops Mission Orders (BMOs) in the Diocese of Bristol. It also asked for a description of how new BMOs come into being and the role of the Bishop's Visitor.
2. To remind members of Synod, a BMO is a means of supporting a mission initiative that is distinct from parish ministry. They can be made to support existing initiatives or made to start a new initiative. They provide support by providing a means by which the initiative is accountable to the bishop, and allow members of the mission initiative access to the representative bodies of the Church of England, including this Diocesan Synod.

### Current and Planned BMOs in the Diocese of Bristol

3. Currently there are five BMOs in the Diocese of Bristol. These are listed below, together with the date of the start of their BMO.
  - Emmanuel, Bristol (1.1.2016, renewed 1.1.2021)
  - St James, Lockleaze (5.6.2017)
  - St Nicholas, Bristol (24.9.2018)
  - Pattern Church, Swindon (29.11.2018)
  - Shine Pinehurst (29.6.2019)The list, together with a link to the BMO and the scheme for Deanery Synod representation can be found on the diocesan website at <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/churchlife/resourcesforparishes/mission/bishops-mission-orders.php>
4. In addition to these five, Hazelnut Community Farm is in the process of having a BMO issued, and will be presenting to this Diocesan Synod.
5. The Well, Swindon and Concord Church, recent church plants, are both expected to move toward a consultation for a BMO in the near future. I am not

aware of any other mission initiatives that are considering a BMO at the moment.

### The process of forming a new BMO

6. The formation of BMO is governed by legislation in the form of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011, and a Code of Practice issued by the House of Bishops (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, July 2018).
7. As each mission initiative is different, the process varies in order to take account of the nature of the initiative. However the following elements are always included:
  - a. The agreement of the Bishop, usually in discussion with the Bishop's Staff Meeting;
  - b. The appointment of a Bishop's Visitor to the initiative;
  - c. A consultation of interested parties, including:
    - i. Any 'sending church' for the initiative;
    - ii. Any parish in which the initiative will operate;
    - iii. Any deanery in which the initiative will operate;
    - iv. The leader of the initiative;
    - v. The Bishop's Visitor to the initiative;
    - vi. Others, including ecumenical partners.
  - d. Consideration by the Bishop's Council;
  - e. A scheme for representation to be approved by the Diocesan Synod.
8. In the case of the forthcoming church plants, this work is additional to work already done in planting the churches. Prior to beginning the process of obtaining a BMO, these churches have had to go through a rigorous process to establish the validity of planting the church. This process has included:
  - a. Completing a 'Church Planting Questionnaire' which asks about governance, finances, safeguarding, mission, team, training, consultation and other factors;
  - b. Providing a budget that looks ahead and is realistic and sustainable;
  - c. Working with a Planting Panel, normally comprising the Director of Mission and Ministry Support; the relevant Archdeacon; the Area Dean of the proposed area for the plant; the local clergy of the proposed place for the plant; the lead minister for the plant; those involved in operational support for the plant.
  - d. Obtaining the support of the Bishop, through the Bishop's Staff Meeting;
  - e. Consideration and agreement from the Bishop's Council.
9. I hope that members of Synod will be able to see that this is an extensive and demanding process, which can take a good deal of time to complete. Consultation is done widely and appropriately. For Concord church, to take an example, three parishes, three deaneries and two archdeaconries were involved in the area of the plant. Considerable effort was made to ensure that

all were engaged in the consultation. When Concord come to the process of obtaining a BMO, all of these groups will be consulted again.

### The Bishop's Visitor

10. The Bishop's Visitor is a crucial role within the BMO. Every mission initiative that has a BMO must have one, and the Visitor has to be identified prior to consultation about the establishment of a BMO can begin.
11. The role of the Bishop's Visitor is to ensure the good governance of the mission initiative; to support and assist the leader(s) of the mission initiative; and to ensure that the Bishop is kept informed about the mission initiative's progress. If a BMO is time-limited, then the Visitor will lead the review of the BMO prior to the end of the trial period.
12. The Bishop's Visitor is appointed by the Bishop, following consultation with the mission initiative. As every mission initiative is unique, so the requirements on Bishop's Visitors differ in every instance. Normally, Bishop Viv asks that new Bishop's Visitors should be lay people, sympathetic to but not involved in the mission initiative, who have some expertise and experience in governance matters. However, there are situations in which ordained people are best suited to the role.

### Conclusion

13. I commend the work of BMOs to the Diocesan Synod, and hope that this paper will have provided some reassurance that consultation, accountability and good governance are at the heart of the processes by which new BMOs are formed. I will be happy to answer any questions at the Synod.

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