

**Appendix A contd**

- Currently no way of recording how many coming to church outside normal services eg Messy Church across groups of parishes and ecumenical.
- Need to engage with people who see themselves as spiritual but not religious.
- Congregations need to be challenged to accept lay ministry. Congregations need to be enabled so that confidence grows so they can do church differently.
- Sharing of skills, communication, networking across deaneries/ diocese
- Did Birmingham Diocese increase young people in congregations?
- Better resources to follow up occasional offices
- Let us not be afraid – whatever happens – there is still and always a gospel to proclaim.
- We have to stop being scared of change.
- What happens if the bid fails?

**Additional resources that you may find useful:**

- **Evangelism Way Ahead  
Mission Action Planning Guide**  
Published by Diocese of Newcastle: Evangelism Task Group  
[www.newcastle.anglican.org/evangelism](http://www.newcastle.anglican.org/evangelism)
- **from Anecdote to Evidence**  
Published by Church Growth Research  
[www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/](http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/)  
Hard copies available from Church House, North Shields
- **from Evidence to Action**  
Published by Church Growth Research  
[www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/](http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/)  
Hard copies available from Church House, North Shields
- **Programme of Reform & Renewal in the Church of England**  
Archbishops' Council and the General Synod  
[www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org)

## Responding to Reform & Renewal 'good news afresh to our generation'

Diocesan Synod  
28<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Disturb us, Lord, when  
We are too pleased with ourselves,  
When our dreams have come true  
Because we dreamed too little,  
When we arrived safely  
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when  
With the abundance of things we possess  
We have lost our thirst  
For the waters of life;  
Having fallen in love with life,  
We have ceased to dream of eternity  
And in our efforts to build a new earth,  
We have allowed our vision  
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,  
To venture on wilder seas  
Where storms will show Your mastery;  
Where losing sight of land,  
We shall find the stars.  
We ask you to push back  
The horizons of our hopes;  
And to push into the future  
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

*A prayer by Sir Francis Drake*

#### Appendix A contd

- Pilgrimage by Andrew Jones which says that Pilgrimage is born out of exile as in OT Babylon and asks where have we come from and where are we going to?
- The Kingdom statements were incredibly ambiguous. It talked of transformation but lacked sense that this involved spiritual transformation or growing faith. I never thought I would find myself voting against the Kingdom but I have today! Kingdom is a massive term – a biblical term – but the way it is expressed here is far from how I understand it. I am not convinced that the 60% who voted for these statements knew what they were voting for.
- It is easy to vote for new ideas, structures etc because it has no impact on us. Voting if it would affect us would be very different.
- Dangerous to force grant dependency on parishes and communities – always leaves people feeling let down.
- Kingdom Statement reads like an advert for a community development officer many of which are already employed through the community and voluntary sector – worker with social conscience not necessarily faith based
- Grow effective use of technology – engage – BE SOCIAL – BE MOBILE
- There is far too much superfluous admin in regard to topics which have little to do with its mission. These ought to be overseen by administrators to free up church for mission
- Be careful not to set Kingdom against Church as an either or. Most committed are often most committed to 'kingdom' priorities.
- Christianity not Churchianity
- Doing different does not have to mean increasing Share. We need to be more smart in how we do it.
- Better us of volunteers – redeploy the (fewer) professionals
- Events – worship – visibility in the community – build confidence – community integration
- Our traditional liturgy doesn't scratch where it itches for those outside
- My experience is that many local home-grown Christians simply have no knowledge of wider church approaches. They are not anti-change – simply unaware!
- Really pleased to see example from Birmingham. I think Newcastle Diocese needs to look much more widely – beyond local.
- How do 'meetings' on a Sunday with coffee, newspapers, croissants link eventually to tradition/Eucharist?
- Creative presentations to introduce topics – thank you.

## Appendix A contd

- Use church support hub resources (national co-fe) to advertise our occasional offices and keep in touch afterwards.
- What works in urban areas not always appropriate in rural areas.
- Need for being distinctive – dangers of not doing things as well as secular professional bodies – not selling our souls to secular funding bodies – needing not to repeat and duplicate existing comm projects – look at poss of creative and leisure not just social needs.
- Dangers of flying in project idea that has worked elsewhere – need for contextual research and listening.
- Engaging with families via ‘learning to play’ initiatives/groups that help them.
- MASSIVE OPPORTUNITY in YOUTH SERVICES in Northumberland being dismantled by County Council. We need to step in and fill the void.
- Bid for training for those who need help to learn to manage change – ‘who stole my cheese?’ a book, 20 mins to read – Kent County Council
- The results could not be seen on the polls because the Archdeacon was blocking the view – perhaps if he had stood to one side....
- What is the Church’s Mission? We need to keep this first and foremost in any restructuring of strategy and its implementation.
- Communication methods require updating to make more use of new IT Technology in the communication of the Gospel.
- Eliminate all superfluous admin (paperwork) – complex and full health and safety policies – their production and upkeep – similarly Safe-guarding Policies.
- The Church should speak with authority in the conveyance of its mission otherwise it will betray Our Lord’s Commission to his disciples – the Church carries the authority of God which renders its message true and valid.
- Our God is not a God that stands if Jesus is in our boat – still we will not sink – open door!
- Said Church too old, traditional – not attracting young people – Church needs to change – More focused – be vibrant – guide step by step.
- Our faith is your faith – We are all in this together
- Connect where people are not just make people expect people to be as we are – whatever that is!
- The Disciples under Jesus were encouraged to birth the Church – do this in remembrance of me and six – towards citizenship – rather than what Jesus seemed to be advocating discipleship
- I am concerned that the North East will lose out to the rest of the country as far as the money is shared out.

## Finding our way in uncertain times

We live in challenging times ... perhaps we always have! The following quote, used again in our recent Roadshows, is from our November 2008 Diocesan Synod:

“Some say that change is the only thing we are sure of in life today. We live in uncertain times, a fast changing context where uncharted landscapes are always opening before us. Whether we like it or not, the Church is not cushioned from the complexities of our contemporary situation”

In truth, it could probably have been written at many points throughout our history and still have resonated with its contemporary context. In 2008 we responded by developing a Diocesan Work Programme that hoped to facilitate profound change, change not merely in structures but in the culture of the way we live and work out our calling to be God’s people in this place.

Outcomes of the 2008 programme included recognition that we are a living organism and not a machine and so we have enjoyed a relational, whole ‘systems’ approach, to growth and development. Through greater participation in open synods, task group working and initiatives with lay voices and other new fora; we have:

- seen some modest growth, having at least bucked the national trend of serious decline;
- enabled successful mission action planning and deanery development;
- increased vocations to accredited ministry;
- developed our work in schools; and
- continued to improve our finances through a balanced budget and increased contributions to Parish Share.

However, there is no room for complacency. Many of our churches have small congregations; our contact with younger people is becoming harder to sustain; the age profile of those attending church tends to be older and our finances are delicate (and in some respects worse than that).

#### As a diocese:

- we remain reliant on the receipt of funding from the central church;
- the growth in our vocations and our congregations is still not enough to mitigate projected retirements of clergy never mind improve the proportion of people from our population worshipping with us; and
- there are so many needs and opportunities to serve Our Lord that we have not been able to take.

Amid all this in our wider community people face a complex array of what seems like insoluble and worrying issues, such as: the effects of changes to Government funding; the rise of fundamentalism and international terrorism; and migration of epic proportions to name but a few.

### Planning the Church's future

It is therefore no surprise that the Archbishops and the National Church Institutions (NCIs) should seek to bring us face to face with the reality of our calling to proclaim the **'good news afresh to our generation'**.

The programme of **Reform and Renewal** launched at the February 2015 sessions of the General Synod pulled no punches in proposing to use central resources (skills and money) to encourage and facilitate every diocese to:

- be more strategic in its planning,
- aim for significant growth; and most of all
- be confident in facing the future.

#### Appendix A: POST IT NOTE COMMENTS FROM THE ROADSHOWS

- Share ministry: lay and clergy
- What do you mean by projects for Community Development?
- Is worship central to being church? Or discipleship/community
- If a church goes, the community will be up in arms. Should we tell the community this may happen?
- Rural poverty needs to be addressed – if a church goes it is like a tooth falling out
- Costs: income/expenditure: lay leadership and stewardship – three line whip – annual, everyone, growth
- Need to help lay members be confident at work and play about being Christian
- Change for change sake – traditional versus new style?
- If we don't have youth workers because of cost/efficiency what will happen to all those young folk who are training for church youth work?
- Different structure, audit of talents, why should the vicar be all things to all people?
- This generation has an enormous challenge to take on – and a burden which is a responsibility/ with God's help and guidance.
- Need to acknowledge the changing world and that this will continue apace.
- Need to think about our grandchildren being able to recognise the church in its new/changed role.
- Get involved with Sports Clubs
- We need to engage with 30s + 40s: how do we engage with them? Via their schools?
- Use the Laity. Trust the Laity.
- Accepting there is a huge difference in ministry between small new churches and large city parishes.
- Help and encouragement for individuals to discern their gifts (often they don't know they have them).
- Broadband technology in churches for use by young and old ( eg Wooler just got SuperFast Broadband)
- Occasional Offices still wanted especially Baptism as it is 'meaningful'.
- Society has changed so much. Sundays busy, electronic communications, church being disconnected from mission and vice versa.
- Society has changed so we must change.
- Make more of the baptism and funeral ministry.
- Ask the community when they would come and change the [service] time.
- If they won't come to us – we need to go to them.
- Think outside of the box needed.

## Appendix A cont'd: Mission Ideas put forward at the Roadshows

- Deepening the Faith of Members
- Training in all aspects of ministry for laity to extend our mission
- Work with vulnerable and lonely people
- Apprentices: giving paid people career opportunities for their development, so not just volunteers
- Work with the lonely - identify the needs (all age groups)
- A dedicated family worker working on new housing developments
- Schools - clergy contacting and meeting children in a compulsory way.
- Coffee, craft and worship for families
- Reimagine worship and mission with pioneer ministers
- Internal - skill up lay people to lead, preach and witness (Development of lay people)
- Meeting people at the point of their greatest need
- Communicating our identity and history as a church
- Developing a youth initiative in every deanery
- A project that investigates the needs that local communities have
- Going out into the community rather than focusing in the church
- Creating a group of ecumenically based lay leaders
- Developing lay training available locally
- Working towards fewer boundaries, more flexibility and working together
- Following the example of developing a 'parson' person in each community
- Setting up social action projects that meet real needs in the local community
- Developing and resourcing our work with our schools
- Making use of our heritage offer and developing our mission to visitors, tourists and pilgrims
- Working with children and their parents through creating special events
- Reviewing the use of our church buildings to make them more effective in their local communities
- Making church attractive to young people and their families
- Develop the administration capacity of our parishes and free up our 'spiritual leaders'
- Create new worship services in the evenings to attract a wider group of people

We have sought to respond in true gritty style. At first we may have been a little suspicious of seemingly central dictates that came with threats to basic funding. We could have been tempted to be defensive and wind up the drawbridge but instead we embarked on a wide and exciting consultation. This included an open Synod presentation, talking to organised groups such as the Readers' Executive, Lay Voices, a gathering of Clergy, a variety of Task Groups and Deanery Synods; and four Roadshows held across the diocese.

### So how has our thinking developed?

In 2003 the Diocese adopted a short mission statement that named the values it would seek to inhabit and the spread of its activity:

**The Diocese of Newcastle**  
Generous, Engaged and Open  
a sustaining local Christian presence

This simple desire to ensure that there is a vibrant, authentic and sustaining Christian presence in every community that is generous, engaged and open in the way we follow Christ and invite others to join our pilgrimage has, in some sense, become part of our DNA.

It has proved a useful tool in parish life and a cohesive framework for activity at every level. We have met no suggestion that it does not still have a real currency in the life of the diocese today.

It is probably fair to say that the dominant understanding of mission has been seen in the sustaining of the parish system. Our clergy have been seen as key mission enablers, parishes have been resourced to develop Mission Action Plans (MAPs), local ministry development has been encouraged and our deaneries have become active partners in supporting mission at the local level.

In our consultations we found a strong desire **not turn our back on the parish system**, rather to have confidence in its ability to ensure an effective presence across the diocese and to commit ourselves to its continual reinvigoration.

## 1. Doing Church Better: helping our parishes to flourish

‘Doing Church Better’ was a theme of our Diocesan Roadshows which received substantial support, though people acknowledged that such an approach was not without its real challenges:

- What constitutes a vibrant Christian presence?
- How can we resource, support and encourage such communities?
- What should we do where local Christian communities are struggling or ineffective in reaching the people of their neighbourhoods?
- How can we develop the ministry of the whole people of God, releasing their potential?
- Are there areas in which we could structure ourselves better? What support from the ‘centre’ would be most effective; and above all
- How do we best use the findings from recent church growth research (e.g. *from Anecdote to Evidence*; and *from Evidence to Action*)?
- How are we deepening faithful discipleship?

### Some further steps

There is much to do but we suggest the following might be given some priority.

The following five areas constitute a whole programme of worthwhile work to **help our parishes to flourish**. It is possible that some parts may attract support from additional ‘Capacity Funding’ or ‘Restructuring Funding’ offered by the National Church.

## Appendix A: Mission Ideas put forward at the Roadshows

- Flexibility of worship: type, time and place
- Moving on with Messy Church
- Discipleship and Spirituality
- Bishop’s Vision
- Children and Families
- Leadership Development
- Increased Social Media
- Better use of buildings
- Youth 11-18
- Complete strategic reorganisation of the diocese into missional units
- Youth Development Strategy
- Education: developing spiritual awareness
- Training Lay People (not just for worship)
- Advertise ourselves!
- Broadband in Church (as a resource)
- Faith in our communities
- Education, Schools and Christian Communities
- Discipleship and nurturing of current congregations
- Diocesan survey of what people want from the church
- Annual conference sharing good practice between churches
- Centralisation of resource management to support parishes and release energy
- Engaging all ages
- Extending God Calling Network 8-15 Youth and 15-25 Youth Families
- Young people and schools engaging with parents
- Facebook Church
- Volunteers Project
- Lay Ministry Training—bereavement visits
- Work with 30-40 and support groups
- Sharing resources across deaneries
- Burger Evangelism
- Meeting people where they are—homes and shops
- Collaborative working between parishes
- Friendship Groups
- Getting out of Church—meeting peoples’ needs
- Youth & Family Worker/Mission
- Gravetalk
- Every member missionaries
- Church Community Link

We were also aware that not only do we desire 'To Do Church Better' and 'To Do Church Differently' but that we should not take our eye off the bigger picture of God's Kingdom among us. Its undertow pulls us always back to the work of our gracious God who continually comes among us and even uses us as collaborators and fellow workers.

**May we always give thanks for God's generosity, engagement and openness to us and to the people we are called to serve.**

## Diocesan Synod

This report has been produced for the Diocesan Synod by the TRIO Group on behalf of the Bishop's Council and the Strategic Development Group.

In receiving this report we trust Synod will give a clear mandate to support and affirm the areas of work outlined in this booklet covering:

- Doing Church Better: helping our parishes to flourish
- Grant funding for the support of our poorer communities
- Doing Church Differently: Companions of St Aidan

The Ven Geoff Miller  
The Revd Paul Scott  
Simon Roberson

**The Feast of St Hild**  
19th November 2015

## Five areas of work to help us flourish:

### 1. Discipleship at the heart of everything

A more concentrated and developed support for the **deepening of discipleship**

### 2. Engagement

A strengthening of participation in the life and decision making at every level across our diocesan structures and within the schools, communities and neighbourhoods we serve

### 3. Good Growth

Enhanced support for and implementation of the **Mission Action Planning** to enable:

- a better understanding of the **strength and impact** of our local churches in their communities
- the use of church growth research to **support parish development**
- the Deanery to **support mission at the local level**
- the discernment of areas that could flourish from **radical restructuring**

### 4. Ministry

Lay and Ordained working in partnership for a **ministry of the whole people of God** including a deployment policy that encourages growth in areas (and activities) of effective mission.

### 5. Strategy

- The production of more useful (and easily accessible) statistical information to **sharpen strategic thinking**
- to assess the **vibrancy of church life** using qualitative and quantitative data to identify **effective interventions to improve mission and sustainability**
- implementation of our financial strategy to **resource and support our diocesan mission.**

## 2. Grant funding for our Poorer Communities

'Resourcing the Future', one strand of the programme of Reform and Renewal introduces a major change to the way in which the National Church allocates central funding. From 2017 some dioceses will receive a grant to support mission in their 'poorer communities'.

This change introduces greater accountability and dioceses in receipt of a grant will participate in a 'peer review' of how they intend to use the grant. Dioceses will need to demonstrate how the grant will be used for mission and growth in those communities.

As a result of a below average per capita income across our diocese, Newcastle is one of the Dioceses that will receive a grant for mission in our poorer communities.

### A sustaining local Christian presence

The language of 'poorer communities' has been introduced by the National Church, not us, and we realise it is not without its difficulties. However, in our Diocese we have always been clear that the Gospel impels us to be present in places it would be impossible to justify by simple economic considerations.

Areas of our Diocese continue to understand and experience poverty, exacerbated by the restructuring of Government funding. We take no local pride in hosting the largest foodbank in the country, nor in being reminded that our region has the highest unemployment rate in the country. Pensioner poverty, lone parenthood and child poverty continue to blight so many of neighbourhoods.

Some 16% (24) of our parishes are located within the 10% of most deprived areas of England (according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) statistics 2010). We also need to recognise those areas within our diocese, both rural and urban, which experience 'pockets' of concentrated deprivation.

The grant we will receive for mission in our poorer communities will be significantly less than the former allocation from central funds. Our challenge is to use this grant **wisely, creatively** and **effectively** so as to strengthen our mission in our poorer communities.

### Companions of St Aidan

The Companions of St Aidan would be an order of **community mission enablers** who:

- share a simple rule of life inspired by Aidan's desire to bring the Gospel to the people of our diocese through a deep love for them
- share some simple training, support networking and have opportunities to share learning and fellowship
- would work alongside local Christians discerning the grain of God's work to identify key mission opportunities in strategically identified areas or sectors
- would share a passion for 'good growth' (or perhaps better 'fruitfulness') of our mission that has a tangible impact and is measurable
- would work to an agreed time scale on 'mission projects', with identified outcomes and evaluation
- are lay and ordained and include paid workers and volunteers

### The undertow of the Kingdom

We face challenging times but not without hope and excitement. We await the formal arrival of Christine, the twelfth Bishop of Newcastle and we look forward with anticipation to her leadership among us, not least in finding our way in these uncertain times.

In our Roadshows we prayed that God would '**disturb us to dare more boldly**' and that, '**losing sight of the land we may find the stars.**' It is a prayer we will hold on to fast.



A second possible bid could be for a more generic piece of mission work across the Diocese that complements and takes us beyond (and outside) the already active mission focus of parishes. The ideas described earlier are not without creativity but none hold the big picture or distinctly resonate with our desire to strengthen our presence and impact in local communities especially where the church is not at its strongest or worse has lost the capacity to proclaim the good news with any effectiveness. How can we do church differently in an authentic **North Eastern way?**

### The germ of an idea

Dare we try something completely innovative yet rooted in our Christian heritage? We could create a new Christian order say, for now, the **Companions of St Aidan**.

Such a new 'workforce' would allow us to choose some key areas perhaps using some of the ideas mentioned above and provide purposeful resource to putting them into practice. If undertaken well it could also increase our capacity both through the Companions but also those they work with.

Time limited initiatives would move towards sustainability and allow a learning community to develop. Above all calling upon our own Christian heritage as a basis for this work could root it in a deep and rich spirituality. Like in days gone by it could map an itinerant ministry of the proclamation of the Good news onto a stable network of parish ministry. Surely this could enhance and further our desire to ensure that there is in our diocese a sustaining local Christian presence.

**Is it a way forward for us to develop for our 2016 bid for Strategic Development Funding?**

### The work we have to do:

1. to agree our **own working definition** of a 'poorer community' that takes account of our rural and urban context
2. to assess the **vibrancy of church life** in 'poorer areas', using qualitative and quantitative data to identify effective interventions **to improve mission and sustainability**
3. To **celebrate** through learning and theological reflection the **mission, discipleship and spirituality** in our 'poorer communities'.

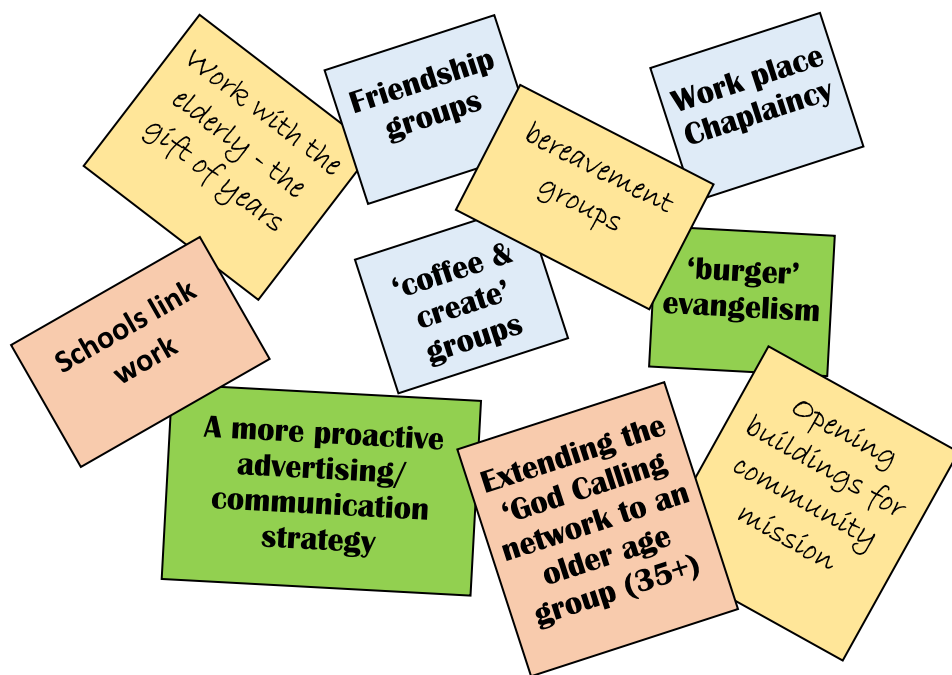
### 3. Doing Church Differently

In the Diocesan Roadshows we juxtaposed the desire to do parish better with the suggestion that we should put more energy and resource into doing church differently.

It would however, be wrong to imply that we have not already been creative in our desire for mission. The diocese has in recent years seen the development of an urban Bishop's Mission Order and a similar rural initiative, two Pioneer Ministers have been appointed and three Fresh Expressions have been born, a new church has been planted in a large housing estate and a major multi-school academy has been opened. All of this only adds to the 40 plus Messy churches across the diocese and the plethora of social action projects some of which have been about their business for over twenty years.

However, while we acknowledged a deep desire not to undermine the parish system we also detected significant energy in the diocese for new approaches to ministry that can work across parish boundaries and involve different forms of ministry and governance.

The Roadshows identified no less than 55 ideas (*see Appendix A*) for new mission initiatives and we could add to these more ideas generated at the Lay Voices meetings, the work of the Readers' Executive, the Clergy gathering and other groups who submitted their ideas. The ideas put forward were wide in their scope and appeal. For some it involved the wholesale restructuring of the diocese into missional areas, others thought that providing more central or administrative support for parishes and deaneries would release energy and time for mission, yet others thought major developments in the use of social media could be exploited better, not surprisingly many thought that initiatives among young people should be priority. There were a whole host of smaller locally based initiatives identified which included developing such things as:



Common to all these ideas was the need to find new ways of working, to better equip and liberate lay people to share fully (and in many cases take a lead) in mission and to encourage clergy to become even better collaborators. Perhaps most heartening was the powerful desire to be an outward facing Christian community.

### Opportunities from the Strategic Development Fund

The National Church has indicated that it will make available significant funds in each triennium, starting in 2017, to support Strategic Diocesan Mission initiatives. To receive Strategic Development Funding dioceses will need to submit a plan of action that will evidence tangible development across their diocese.

As dioceses become familiar with this new way of working it is anticipated that the new funding arrangements will enable all dioceses to begin to plan for a rolling programme of bids to support strategic mission initiatives.

Within the current triennium, which ends in December 2016, the National Church set aside some funding to support Strategic Development and we have an opportunity to present an outline bid for consideration in April 2016. Not to bid would ensure that we miss out not merely on new resource but on building the capacity to extend our outreach in the Gospel.

Two possible themes might inform a bid. Firstly it is clear that work with children, young people as well as better links with schools has good support. Our Children and Young People's support team (CandY) is now established and involved in extensive consultation. More resource would enhance this vital work. Yet perhaps the timing is not quite right. The CandY Team hope to put together their strategy in time for Pentecost 2016 and would be harried if it needed to be produced much earlier. **Would this make a good second, later, bid in 2017?**