

THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER



January 2019

The Rt Revd Dr David Walker

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I write to in this season of Epiphany; when the Church gives thanks for how, by God's grace, the Christian Gospel is proclaimed to all peoples.

When I wrote to you in October 2018 I outlined that the Fit for Mission Strategic Programme Board felt that it was an opportune moment to undertake an evaluation of our approach to Fit for Mission before beginning any fresh activity and that we had instructed Do-Well UK Ltd to complete the evaluation by the end of 2018.

On 14 December 2018 Ken Perry, Mike Corfield and Charlotte Harrison of Do-Well UK Ltd attended the Fit for Mission Strategic Programme Board in order to report back on the work that they had done to date, which was the completion of the first stage of the evaluation. The evaluation contained detailed and robust findings with specific recommendations on how the diocese might move forward.

Their report was discussed at some length and it was very clear in that meeting that the evaluation has already unlocked rich and valuable learning for the diocese that will help support taking Fit for Mission forward.

This would not have been possible had it not been for the way that interviewees (including a wide range of clergy, lay people and officers from across the diocese) who met with the evaluation team were "open, reflective and genuine in their desire to support the evaluation of Fit for Mission". It demonstrates, for me, that there is a culture within the diocese to embrace opportunities to learn and become better.

These findings are being taken very seriously indeed and careful consideration is being given to them and to deciding what next steps are going to be most appropriate – there is a commitment to do this as quickly as possible, but, given the importance, there is a need to balance speed with getting things right.

The starting point is that Do-Well UK (Ltd) will be leading a Strategic Purposing Session for us, on the 12th of February 2019, so that the Fit for Mission purpose and scope can be 'nailed down' with clarity, certainty and clear lines of accountability set out. Once this has happened, we will have a unified view that everyone can share and rally behind. It will also mean that practical decisions regarding the allocation of resources, our approach and the support that is needed can be taken.

Unfortunately, it isn't possible for everybody to be invited to be part of this initial session. However, there will be senior clergy, officers and laity representatives in attendance and arrangements will be made to ensure that the outcomes of the session and further next steps will be shared quickly across the diocese.

I recognise that across the diocese there is a keenness to hear in detail what emerged from the evaluation and what is going to happen as a result of what has been learned to date. Please rest assured that this will happen in due course, and the next stages will also be fully communicated. The Fit for Mission programme remains very much a priority for me and our leadership team. We are committed to being a worshipping, growing and transforming Christian presence at the heart of every community. Fit for Mission is the vehicle to ensure that we flourish in the years ahead and to become a Church for a Different World.

The agreed deadline for completion and submission of Mission Action Plans (MAPs) by parishes across the diocese was 30 November 2018 and it was hugely encouraging that at that point 88% of parish MAPs were received.

I was delighted with this excellent achievement. I recognise that the process of developing and completing MAPs demands considerable effort, in terms of time and expertise, from everyone who is involved. With that in mind, genuine and sincere thanks are extended for all the hard work that has taken place in individual parishes over recent months to reach this point. Mission Action Planning is an ongoing process and submitting a parish MAP is not the conclusion of that process. Now that parishes have a (for many their first) MAP in place the next phase is the most difficult – to make the plan a reality! Many churches find it helpful to use the activity plan as the bulk of their PCC agenda and keep updating it as progress is made and the next steps are identified.

Whilst the content of parish MAPs will all be very different, in order that the diversity and distinctiveness of parishes is reflected it is important that there is some consistency in how mission action plans are presented. For this reason, the MAP toolkit contains the agreed templates that have been developed and that should be used. This is available using the following link: <https://www.manchester.anglican.org/documents/parish-map-template/>

Since Mike Chesterton moved on to a new role, a vacancy has existed for a second MAP officer. Following a successful recruitment exercise a new Mission Action Planning Officer will join the team on 1 March 2019 to add further capacity and support to this important activity going forward. Rev Canon Simon Bessant is currently based in the Diocese of Sheffield and brings with him a wealth of direct experience to enable us to continue to support mission action planning across the diocese. His appointment underlines the commitment within our diocese to mission action planning.

The work being undertaken in conjunction with Do-Well, in terms of the evaluation of Fit for Mission, will help us be really clear about what is needed to ensure that parishes and deaneries are fully supported with mission action planning. It is a great opportunity to learn from, and build on, what has been achieved so far.

Whilst no new work is being commissioned during the evaluation period, the deadlines for the completion of Deanery Mission Action Plans remain unchanged. For pilot deanery areas the deadline was 31 December 2018 and for non-pilot deanery areas the deadline is 31 March 2019. Support and advice for parishes and deaneries is available from Andy Salmon and he can be reached via email MAP@manchester.anglican.org and by telephone on 0161 828 1457 or 07436 532408.

We look forward to welcoming Helen Platts, who joins us in February 2019 from St Paul's Cathedral in London. Together with her professional skills, she also brings her years as a member and lay officer of a parish church in the North West. Her role of Chief Operating Officer will incorporate the responsibilities formerly undertaken under the title of Diocesan Secretary.

2018 was a very encouraging year for our mission work. We saw four successful Archdeaconry Days, two strategic development projects get underway, and a very warmly welcomed increase in those being called to (and beginning training for) ordained ministry.

With key staff in place, we can look to engaging with the opportunities and challenges ahead of us. It remains God's mission, not ours; and our task is to find our place within it. My confidence is that the Christ who has called us to be his Church for a Different World will lead us on, in the power of his Spirit and the glory of the Father.

With every blessing,
+David Manchester

