

Report from Bradford Episcopal Area Forum June 7th 2017

Bradford Episcopal Area Forum meets 2/3 times a year, and is open to anyone from the Bradford Episcopal Area, although Deanery Synod reps are strongly encouraged to attend. It is an opportunity for people to meet from across the whole Episcopal Area. Its agenda is devised by the Bradford Area Leadership team, which is made up of; Deanery Synod Lay Chairs, Area Deans, the Archdeacon and is chaired by Bishop Toby, with input from the communications team and others. As such it is an important forum for discussion of strategy and vision at an Episcopal level.

The Forum met on Wednesday June 7th 2017 to discuss Discipleship and Lay Training across the Bradford Area.

Approximately 96 people attended with 31 apologies.

Discipleship.

Members were asked to discuss areas of discipleship that had been significant in their own lives, where had they grown the most, why and what were the next steps.

There were a lot of good responses but main features included:

- Small group work
- Retreats and weekends away [including New Wine, Spring Harvest, etc]
- Being encouraged to speak about faith outside of church
- Mentors

Interestingly one of the main recurring themes was just about intentional fellowship. Something about having a very focussed, intentional time/group or community to meet with. Reoccurring words: people, relationship, mentoring, spiritual direction, space.

Lots of different courses mentioned;

- JSP
- LYCiG local [mentioned the most, reflecting Diocesan direction or just helpful course?]
- SHAPE
- Pilgrim
- LICC
- Alpha
- Ecumenical Christian studies Course
- Spiritual Direction

Follow up or possible areas of work to be explored;

- Having a resource page on Diocesan website with list of courses
- Mailings with dates for local and national conferences and retreats [New Wine, etc]
- Looking at how to nurture/establish intentional discipleship groups.
- Training around sharing ones faith with others

Authorisation.

Groups were asked to discuss the question of authorisation for Lay Ministry, its pros and cons, and challenges.

Generally the following roles were cited as areas needing some accountability/authorisation, particularly in terms of roles with some potential confidentiality issues:

- Healing Prayer ministry
- Pastoral ministry
- Worship Leaders
- Intercessors

Authorisation seen to be more about '*permission giving*' from the vicar and PCC rather than from a higher Diocesan level; a move away from 'bureaucracy'.

Pro's: Authorisation gave 'validity' to lay ministry and accountability.

Con's: More about levels of training being a barrier, and if certain people 'authorised' others not encouraged, another layer of hierarchy.

The groups were asked to discuss training; what it should look like and areas to be explored.

General consensus was towards 'light' training, not too heavy or long, held at local [deanery] level, accessible to all.

Two main themes emerged;

- Local – informal and resourcing, short with good 'take away'
- Authorised – Two levels:
 - 1] Readers, Pastoral Care, Home communion [not chalice bearing in church]
 - 2] Worship leader and Prayer ministry.

Barriers to training included:

- People's busyness
- Accessibility [particularly for younger/professional people with families]
- Cost
- Not being contextual [every deanery/area different, with different needs, and different people]

Possible areas of work:

The question of authorisation needs a wider discussion at both Area and Diocesan level. Perceived difference in clergy and lay opinions; clergy move away from 'bureaucracy', but lay desire for 'validity'.

To look at some of the 'local' training needs, short, accessible courses based on 'gaps' identified.

Post It exercise looking at Lay Ministry roles, Areas of Flourishing, Current Training and Perceived Gaps.

What Leadership roles are Lay people doing in your church?

82 different roles were cited; some more than once, with 368 mentioned overall by 96 people present.

Involvement in Worship [Sunday Mornings or other] had the largest incidence and frequency of citations in terms of lay involvement: **26% of 82 roles and 32% of roles mentioned over all**. Leading Worship [**20%**] and Intercessors [**19.5%**] were the most frequently cited.

Church Officers: [PCC, Wardens, Secretaries, Safeguarding, etc] had the next largest number of citations: **19.5%** of roles and **24% of roles mentioned overall** with Readers/Preachers [**23.5%**], and Church wardens [**21%**] being the most frequently cited.

Work with Children and Young People accounted for **10%** of roles mentioned [14% overall] with children's groups being the most frequently cited [**40%**]

Pastoral Work accounted for **10%** of roles cited and **10%** frequency, with the most being in **pastoral care [27%]** and **prayer teams [24%]**.

Discipleship [group leaders] were **7%** of 82 roles mentioned, and **7.5%** of roles mentioned overall with small group leaders being the most frequently cited [**40%**]

Community/Outreach Lay ministry involvement had a wide variety of roles [**22% of 82 cited**], but less overall frequency [**8%**], with lunch clubs being the most frequently cited [**21%**]

Church Fabric **6%** of roles mentioned, with cleaning having the highest proportion [**33%**]

These figures show a phenomenal number and variety of lay ministry across the churches, and encouraging that the most cited were around involvement in worship, and the great variety in numbers of lay people involved in ministry outside of 'Sunday morning's and involved in the wider community.

Possible areas of work:

If the figures are representative of the numbers of people generally involved in ministry, large numbers are involved in leading worship and intercessions, children's ministries and pastoral care and might inform direction of training.

Different/surprising areas of interest: staff teams and strategy groups mentioned a number of times and also, the wide variety of community roles; opportunities for training?

What's Flourishing in terms of Lay Ministry in your church?

62 different activities were mentioned as flourishing in lay ministry, some more than once, with 99 citations overall.

Children's work and Messy Church were mentioned the most, with an overall frequency of **13%**; all work with young people accounted for **24%** of all activities mentioned as flourishing.

Community work and worship both accounted for **19%** of all activities mentioned as flourishing, with lunch clubs and drop in's mentioned 5 times, and the music within in worship also mentioned 5 times.

Discipleship accounted for **8%** of roles mentioned, with home groups mentioned the most.

Interesting outcomes/possible areas of work:

- These are encouraging figures for children's ministry and it would be good to look with Children's Ministry team how this can be supported and developed through to youth work.
- Exciting to see long list of flourished community ministries, and could be an area to build on in terms of training and supporting.
- A number of citations of flourishing 'areas' were around hospitality; coffee rotas, drop in's, lunch clubs, can this be encouraged and theologically underpinned through training to include/develop discipleship alongside?

What Training is already in Place?

25 areas of training were identified, with 72 citations overall.

In terms of actual training **Eucharistic Ministry** accounted for **10%** of all mentioned, and **Safeguarding** the same [**10%**]. This is to be expected as the main formal training offered at the moment in the Area/Diocese. Training for **children's and youth work** also accounted for **10%** of training already in place, but not clear where this is being accessed.

Training for **Intercessions [7%]** was the next most cited area of training, and seems to be delivered 'in house'.

Interestingly, Reader ministry was mentioned just 4 times, perhaps reflecting that people saw this separately/exclusively [**5.5%**].

Discipleship had the most variety [**10%** of the different areas of training mentioned], mostly with people recording discipleship courses delivered/undertaken [Alpha, etc, accounting for 10% of all discipleship training undertaken]. *However, all 'training' in the discipleship group was actually people taking part in some discipleship [Alpha, Pilgrim, retreat days, home groups], rather than actual training to deliver discipleship [no mention of training to lead small groups].* LYCiG local was very popular and cited the most.

However, the most responses for this question was 'nothing', being mentioned 12 times, 17% of the total!

Most people said that training was just 'on the job', from previous office holders, with oversight from vicar.

Where are the Gaps?

21 actual gaps cited with 43 mentions overall.

Most mentioned by far was lay involvement in worship **16.5%**, with small group leadership **11.5%**, and pastoral care **9%**. Children and youth work together accounted for **14%** of gaps mentioned overall.

Comments of 'everywhere' and 'general lay training' accounted for **21%** of all citations.

There were a number of comments about lack of commitment and difficulty in recruiting volunteers/succession planning; alongside this, young people were also seen as a 'gap' mentioned 4 times.

Interesting areas mentioned and possible areas for training opportunities:

- Strategy and Vision planning
- Building Unity and Fellowship
- Evangelism
- Mentorship
- Practical courses on equipping lay people to run/lead; parenting courses, debt management, welcoming refugees [outreach to community]
- Relating faith to areas of everyday life such as parenting, volunteering, managing money, leisure, the environment.

Conclusion.

These figures are a rough representation of the incidence and frequency of lay involvement across the Bradford Area, and areas of strength and weakness; they are in no way statistically significant and will not give the whole picture. They do, however, give a snapshot of what's going on and perhaps an insight into people's mind-set when thinking about lay ministry; the high frequency, in particular, of involvement in worship and church officers may be truly representative of lay ministry but may also reflect that people are more tuned in to seeing/recalling these as lay roles.

In spite of these limitations, there appears to be lots of areas for encouragement; particularly work with young people and lay involvement with worship.

However, although these areas [worship and children] were mentioned most in terms of lay involvement and areas of flourishing, alongside pastoral care and home group leadership, they also came up as the areas with the biggest gaps in terms of training. So, lots of people 'doing' these roles, but maybe not supported; as cited, learning on the job, but would maybe benefit from more training and input. I think this may be particularly true for lay involvement in worship.

The numbers of lay people cited as being involved in home groups was reasonably high, but this area of discipleship wasn't particularly cited as flourishing and was also mentioned as an area where there were gaps in training. If we are to encourage discipleship in our churches strengthening the role of small groups and supporting lay leadership could be a priority. This links in with the comments in the discussions around discipleship where key points were about relationship and community/fellowship as areas where people grow in their faith. It might be possible that at a local Bradford Area level we can begin to look at strengthening small groups and discipleship in some way, increasing people's sense of unity and togetherness, and building leadership in these areas.

Also, it was encouraging to see community involvement mentioned with such a wide variety of roles, less people involved, but seen as areas of flourishing, with hospitality ministries playing a significant role in the high numbers. Some input into theologically underpinning this and creating/encouraging opportunities for sharing faith in these ministries may be perhaps an area to explore; sharing ones faith with others was cited as an area where people's discipleship had grown, so perhaps an opportunity to encourage both areas of ministry and growth.

The gaps in worship leading and pastoral care training may be something looked at in a wider Diocesan context as potential 'authorised' ministries, however, it may be possible to do some one off training in areas such as 'how to pray with people', 'putting together worship' [song sets and liturgy], 'leading intercessions' for example, at a local level.

Sharon Bavington 20th June 2017