

Live Pray Serve Church Growth Strategy

Since 2014 the Diocese of Portsmouth has been working with an intentional mission strategy that prioritises evangelism, community engagement and church growth, and reflects the national church's goals identified by Renewal and Reform. In 2015 this was launched in the diocese as our Live Pray Serve diocesan strategic purpose for renewal. This strategy involves not simply a number of initiatives and projects, but rather is a single vision centred on intentional congregational growth and social engagement that is manifested in different but inter-related projects that will make church presence more vibrant and visible in every community.

There are two central strands to this strategy for a mixed-economy diocese:

1. **The promotion of new forms of ministry:** both within parochial structures, and also alongside them, new forms of church need to be created to meet the needs of modern people. This strand has included the introduction of stipendiary pioneer ministry and pioneer ordination training, church planting in central Portsmouth, and planning new forms of church to meet the needs of areas of new housing.
2. **The refreshing and revitalizing of parochial ministry:** a Mission Action Planning process was already underway in the diocese in 2014, but this has been given renewed impetus through a Leading Your Church into Growth (LYCiG) strategy that has involved lay people and clergy from nearly one half of the parishes in the diocese attending a church growth conference. Through this strategy the diocese is seeking to support and challenge those parishes that are already engaging in community outreach and mission to become even more vibrant and engaging. For those parishes that are struggling financially and in mission, a new Viability Focus process has begun that will assist by providing challenge and support, and in some churches in vacancy some interim ministry has been provided to enabled them to embrace change or in one case to consider closure.

This work is developing in a context in which the diocese is actively encouraging a variety of lay ministries such as lay pastoral assistants and lay worship leaders, as well as equipping lay people to be active in the leadership of their local church.

Our diocesan goal over the next decade is to end the pattern of congregational decline that has been seen in some parishes in the diocese, and to grow both in depth and numerically in the coming years by reaching out to those who currently have little contact with the life of the church. It is our goal to see overall numerical congregational growth within the next decade.

1. New forms of ministry:

Portsmouth diocese has long been a home for new church initiatives. Most well -known is the Messy Church project that was started at St Wilfrid's Cowplain, which has now spread to the rest of the UK, and is probably the most popular form of Fresh Expression at parochial level.

In summer 2016 the Diocese of Portsmouth was awarded £929k by the Church Commissioners for pioneer projects across the diocese. This funding supplements that which is already being provided by the diocese for pioneer projects in Gosport, Whiteley, Cosham, Milton and PO9. These stipendiary pioneers are a mixture of lay and ordained leaders seeking to bring a church presence to places where the church is currently lacking visibility. A Dean of Pioneer Ministry has been appointed to support this work, and the diocese supports the Regional Training Partnership Pioneer Hub at CMS, which should provide training support for pioneers.

Our first pioneer ordinand was appointed in 2015 to a post at St Luke's Southsea in the city centre of Portsmouth. This we hope will be the first of many ordinands who will be enabled to train through mixed mode mission shaped pathways, and discussions are already underway regarding the funding and placement of any candidates who would be more suited to this training than traditional theological college courses.

We have also been interested in equipping those with an interest in mission and Fresh Expressions to think about what might be suitable in their context with a view to creating a group of lay people who were enabled to start projects locally. The Mission Shaped introduction course has been run twice within the diocese to support such individuals, and the Church Commissioners' funding will allow the diocese to employ a half time lay pioneer officer whose work will be the promotion of courses and networking related to lay pioneering.

New large scale housing developments in the diocese, mainly in Whiteley and north of Waterlooville, have also been a focus for our mission planning, and a strategy is being implemented that will proactively engage with the developers and allow the building church communities at the initial phases.

In September 2016 a new church was launched in Portsmouth city centre, called Harbour Church. This is a plant from St Peter's Brighton, which is part of the Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) network. This church, based in a former city centre department store will seek to build an outreach that is particularly appropriate for students, and it is explicitly part of its mission to become a resource church for the city and diocese. Talks are already underway with larger churches within the diocese regarding the possibility of further church plants in other areas, and the diocese wishes to see other larger churches sending out planting groups in the next five years.

2. Refreshing Parochial Life

Whilst Fresh Expressions, pioneering and church planting represent new and imaginative ways to respond to a post-Christendom culture, parochial life remains at the centre of the life of our diocese, and we remain committed to thriving parochial churches. A number of initiatives and strategies are currently being employed to refresh that presence and offer clergy and lay people the support and challenge required to bring about change.

In 2015 a nine parishes from Portsmouth Diocese took part in a Leading Your Church into Growth conference held with Winchester Diocese to increase parochial awareness of mission and to build up the lay leadership capacity of those parishes. This has recently been followed by a large diocesan LYCiG

conference attended by over 115 lay and ordained delegates from benefices across the diocese. These initiatives have been well received in the diocese and are beginning to provide a common lens and language to talk about mission and church growth that is shared by incumbents and PCCs. Plans are already underway for another LYCiG conference that will take place in October 2017 for another group of around twenty to thirty parishes.

In 2017-8 this LYCiG conference input will be followed up through local parish based courses, LYCiG Local, and also through large gatherings of clergy and laity to discuss issues of invitation, welcome and nurture with well-known national mission experts. The purpose of these gatherings will be to provide a place in which delegates can gather together to share what has happened since the initial conference, and also consider what response needs to be put in place regarding the issues that LYCiG has brought to light.

The diocese has worked with a number of clergy to bring interim and change ministry to some parishes where church life was facing serious challenges in regard to fiancé and stewardship, buildings and mission. The diocese is keen to continue and develop the possibility of some specialist accompaniment through vacancy for parishes that require a revised and renewed mission focus.

For those parishes that have significant challenges in regard to stewardship and mission a Viability Focus Meeting (VFM) process has been implemented that seeks to address financial and stewardship issues in tandem with those of wider mission planning to create a SMART plan for the future life of those church communities. This process will continue into 2017.

These initiatives have sought to bring more than technical fixes to the issues of mission and church growth. Instead MAP and LYCiG have started to bring about some cultural shifts so that mission, evangelism and church growth are regarded as central issues in the life of the diocese.

Lay Pioneer Development Officer:

A great deal has been achieved over the past three years, not only in regard to new initiatives, but also in terms of changing church culture. The diocese is seeking a new Lay Pioneer Development Officer (LPDO), lay or ordained, who will continue the pioneering work that is already in progress, and will be able to identify new areas for development. The diocese is seeking to appoint an LPDO to promote lay pioneering within the diocese through training and advice, coaching and facilitation, and mentoring and mission accompaniment. We are therefore seeking a candidate with excellent teaching, coaching and facilitation skills, who will work closely with other colleagues specializing in areas of mission, including stewardship and children's and youth work.

The role of the LPDO will be as a focus for mission activity in the parishes and church communities of the diocese, by raising the profile of the need for intentional pioneering in parishes through regular preaching and teaching engagements.

For those developing Fresh Expressions, the LPDO will continue to be a source of support, challenge and innovation. In order to be such a resource it will be important that they are an active member of

national and regional networks, and are able to apply new insights to the contexts found in Portsmouth diocese.

Most importantly of all, the LPDO will be part of a larger team that encompasses ministry, discipleship and mission, and we are looking for a team player who can work with those of other disciplines and networks to create innovative solutions for the missional needs of the diocese.