

**DIOCESE OF CHESTER**  
**THE COMMITTEE FOR MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017**

*Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5)*

Here is a handful of responses from some Committee for Ministry (CfM) course participants in 2017: 'This was ... an experience I was glad to have undergone.' 'This course is exceptional. I have found the experience very emotional and I cannot begin to say how interesting it is.' 'I have enjoyed this module very much. Any expectations I had have been far exceeded.' 'The support from my fellow group members has been exceptional.' 'I have learnt lots, and been guided to some fantastic reading.' 'Of course, sometimes things go wrong and the feedback isn't quite so positive.'

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Nevertheless, whether critical or glowing, all responses suggest an eagerness for learning and mutual support that is heartening. Thanks are due to the many volunteers and staff that make such a learning community possible.

Following an enthusiastic response from Synod to the Archbishops' Council report *Setting God's People Free*, the diocese has become one of the pilots for its implementation. Charged with promoting change to 'enable the whole people of God to live out the Good News of Jesus Christ confidently in all of life Monday to Saturday, as well as on Sundays,' we anticipate a widening of that learning community.

Meanwhile the Committee's core work has continued. In the year under review three Pastoral Workers, ten Readers and nineteen ordained clergy were admitted to office. Of those currently in pre-licensing training, twenty-one are prospective Pastoral Workers, twenty-eight are Reader candidates, and fifty-two are ordinands. The diocese is now joint third nationwide in the total number of ordinands it sponsors. All recently-admitted licensed ministers are provided with continuing practice-based learning in the early years of their respective ministries. A significant number of people in these

programmes also use them to complete a higher education qualification. We continue to enjoy a very good partnership arrangement with the University of Chester which validates our courses.

Other areas of work include a re-launched Ministry Development Review scheme for clergy; higher-profile promotion of vocations in ministry; revised and refocused schemes for Pastoral Worker and Reader training (with a new pastoral and missional focus) and the appointment of a new Warden of Readers; new support and training for Spiritual Directors/Accompanists; the provision of tailored training for Initial Ministerial Education 2 and more general needs; leadership training; mentoring and coaching opportunities; resourcing appropriate ministerial learning opportunities provided by outside bodies, the Arts and Faith Network, and facilitating our unique Foundations for Ministry course. Our own longstanding residential '24 Hours with a Theologian' continues to be a very popular way for ministers to engage with current theological research.

We maintain our collaborative work with the Dioceses of Liverpool, Manchester and Blackburn via the part-time ordination course offered by the All Saints Centre for Mission and Ministry. We also

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have relationships with St Mellitus NW for contextual ordination training. Most of our ordinands are training with one of these two courses, though a number remain supported at residential colleges.

CfM edits and oversees the production of The Diocesan Cycle of Prayer, which has again seen an increase in its circulation – it now stands at 1600 in print per issue, plus the online version.

**Michael Gilbertson, Archdeacon of Chester,  
 Chairman of the Committee for Ministry**