

DIOCESE OF CHESTER MISSION REPORT

You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven. Matthew 5: 14-16 (MSG)

The *Mission Team* has a clear purpose of breaking new ground and inspiring, enthusing and serving churches in Mission, focusing on spiritual and numerical growth across generations. We have been re-imagining our strategy for Mission and exploring a fresh and vibrant vision to grow the Kingdom, helping churches energise ministries to ensure there is a growing and sustainable Christian witness in every local community. In partnership with clergy and laity across the Diocese, we promote healthy churches, ensuring we are appropriately resourced to evangelise and grow Disciples of Christ, as well as develop welcome, worship, stewardship and buildings strategies. We are excited about exploring changes in society with regard to culture and shifting attitudes and ensuring we are resourced to tackle the evolving shape of the Church to meet the challenges of Mission in coming decades. We promote existing and new models of church to grow congregations that flourish through serving each other and our communities.

We have four mission priorities around which we focus our work:

Mission Priority One: Rooted in Prayer



Prayer underpins everything we do in Mission and is the essential element of our Mission Strategy. We had the most amazing time as we participated as a whole Diocese in *Thy Kingdom Come* global wave of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost, with many of our Parishes organising numerous creative prayer events, Rural Deans leading daily prayers with their Deaneries at the Cathedral, daily prayers at Foxhill House and Woodlands and a pilgrimage on Pentecost Sunday from Foxhill to the Cathedral. This all culminated in a special National Beacon Event at the Cathedral, where we were full to capacity and worship was led by Stuart Townend, as we prayed for many more to come to know Christ. We hope this acts as a catalyst for an even deeper corporate prayer life in the Diocese for years to come.

Mission Priority Two: Inspiring Young Generations

The Diocesan Missioner and Young Generations Missioner have made significant progress in developing strategy and identifying the critical mission priorities amongst young generations, specifically supporting Parishes, Deaneries and Mission Hubs in their mission and ministry, creating a real momentum around the Diocese. As we see a positive attitude cultivated in parishes towards young people and their families, we expect to see a corresponding level of growth. And we've had great fun being present beyond the 'church walls' at such events as the Church at Creamfields, led by churches from the Great Budworth Deanery, Salt Sunday and at the Cheshire Show. We already have approximately 50 employed Parish Youth, Children and Family Ministers. The Diocese also currently has 6 chaplains in schools seeing approximately 6000 students every week. We are delighted at how our Young Generations Mission and Strategy Hub and Network is beginning to flourish as we pray, worship, develop strategy and plans, engage as a learning community and have fun together. Planning commenced for a Youth Weekend at Foxhill House and Woodlands, followed by a pilgrimage to the Chester Cathedral Beacon Event.



Mission Priority Three: Developing a Culture of Whole Life Discipleship and Confident Evangelism



We have developed cultural change programmes for churches considering growing whole life disciples and the role of both the 'gathered' and the 'sent' church as we live out the Gospel every day in the frontlines where God has placed us. Working in partnership with LICC and Jesus Shaped People, we offer great teaching resources suitable for all Parishes and contexts. As we participate in *Setting God's People Free*, this teaching forms a critical element. We have been planning to participate as a Diocese in the National Weekend of Invitation in 2018. We are busy developing Ambassadors for Mission within the Local Missioner Network to help grow

confidence amongst laity as we live out Jesus's command to make disciples. Through this network, we are also developing a network of pioneer evangelists to build confidence to share the Gospel with those not yet part of the Body of Christ. The 300+ churches were challenged to think about spiritual and numerical growth at LEAD Academy and 3 more churches started the Jesus Shaped People journey. The Diocese of Chester formed the biggest 720 strong group ever at the Big Church Day Out North at Capesthorpe Hall and we raised £5,500 for Children in Need as well as sharing Luke's Gospel and prayers with 300+ un-churched ladies at our second Cathedral Zumbathon.

Mission Priority Four: Urban Transformation Programme

We have spent much time praying and developing Strategic Plans within Birkenhead and Runcorn thinking about vision, objectives, plans and resourcing requirements for each project. This has borne much fruit and the Archbishop's *Believe in Birkenhead* four-day Deanery Mission, acted as a great catalyst to bless and enthuse our churches for Mission. We shared the Gospel in primary and secondary schools, the Hive youth club, Cammell Laird, St. Catherine's Health Centre, YMCA and church evangelistic events and fun days. The mission was a wonderful learning experience and one of the biggest mission events in Birkenhead in recent years with over 1500 young people and many more adults hearing about God's love. As a result of the Mission, we are seeing chaplaincies develop and we are now prayerfully discerning how God wants us to move forward



The Diocesan Mission Team has thrived, operating at different levels across a number of areas:

Contributing at a National Level

We have built relationships across the country contributing to the National Mission Agenda:

- National Growth and Evangelism Strategy Consultation
- Thy Kingdom Come Beacon Dioceses and Champions Events
- National Weekend of Invitation 2018 Conference and Core Team Consultations
- Commenced Consultation with the Northern Province Missional Youth Church Network and National Youth Advisor
- National and Northern Regional Missioners Conferences and Consultations
- Pioneer and Fresh Expressions Conferences and Networks
- Ministry of Sport Conference and Networks
- Cathedrals and Growth Network
- Serving as part of the Archbishop's Crossroads Mission in Durham (March 17)

Contributing at a Diocesan Level

- Development of a proposed Mission Strategy
- Development of Bid Proposal for Church Commissioners Strategic Development Fund
- Development of a 2018 Mission Programme of Diocesan Events and Activities
- Two year Lead Academy (Church Growth Cultural Change Journey) with 300+ Church Leaders
- Development of a 300+ Churches Clergy Network
- Created a Local Missioner Network for laity to participate in Mission networking and teaching
- Diocese of Chester announced as a Thy Kingdom Come National Beacon Event and exemplar
- Leaders of Young Generations Hub and Network growing and developing with quarterly worship, prayer, networking and teaching events for leaders across the Diocese
- Prepared for pilot and rollout of Journey of Generosity
- Developed relationship and knowledge with National Research and Statistics Team to ensure improvement in our Mission quantitative and qualitative measurement systems and research
- Review and re-write of the Diocesan Mission Webpages
- Foundations for Ministry/IME/CMD Mission training days
- Buildings for Mission training days delivered, including buildings maintenance, writing a successful grant application, engaging local communities and interpreting church heritage

Contributing at a Deanery Level

- Progress is being made in the Birkenhead Mission Area with plans being developed for the post Believe in *Birkenhead Year of Mission 2017* and on going Mission Programme
- Planning continues with Runcorn Mission Area identifying the strategy for growth going forward
- Our desire is to drive a culture of continuous dialogue for mission development so we contribute on a regular basis to CAMPC, MAMPC, Deanery Synods and Chapters, Parishes and Church Services

Contributing at a Parish Level

- Facilitating Parish Vision, Strategy and Mission Planning Days
- Ongoing consultancy and support regarding growing Ministry and Mission amongst young people
- Consultancy on Mission and All-In Worship with ongoing development of Worship Audit Toolkit
- Fundraising support to churches that are planning building projects exceeding a total of £4.5million
- 121 support to realize the potential of church buildings
- On going work with Parish Giving Officers and inspiring parishes in stewardship initiatives
- Support and advice for pastoral reorganisation

Our aim is to have a whole lot of fun and spread a whole lot of joy as we witness individuals and communities transformed through God's amazing love.

Rev. Lyn Weston
Diocesan Missioner