

# The Committee for Ministry

## Highlights of 2018

*Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.*

1 Peter 4.10

### Twenty Years of Foundations

The twentieth anniversary of the *Foundations for Ministry* course was celebrated in September. More than 1100 people have completed the course in that time. The brochure for the anniversary Eucharist began with the question 'What is God calling you to do?' That sense of seeking God's vocation in life for each baptised person is the core, both of *Foundations for Ministry* and the wider work of the Committee for Ministry (CfM). Simply put, we need each other's help as we strive to serve God effectively in daily life, at work, and in church. Vocational exploration is the heart of all we do, whether that be informal conversation and support or the processes of formal training and recognition.

### Setting God's People Free

This is a major national initiative to encourage active discipleship and witness in everyday life. It can be summarised as 'Helping each other live out our Christian faith in all of life'. The Diocese of Chester has been part of the first cohort of dioceses working with the national church. In turn, we are currently working with around twenty pilot parishes in the diocese to learn how best to communicate the message and encourage response from congregations. Following the pilot stage, which finishes this summer, we will be encouraging parishes across the diocese more generally to get on board. This is a cross-department initiative, with Mission, CSR, Education and Communications all involved. Within CfM's specific remit, *Setting God's People Free* has been incorporated into study programmes and featured in departmental training.

### Topics of Study

Topics for learning opportunities under CfM auspices included developing resilience in ministry, new approaches to Bible reading, rethinking apologetics, passionate presence, and reimagining remembrance. Once again, the two annual residential conferences, *Twenty-four hours with a Theologian*, were fully booked. The fourth *Women's Voices* day conference was also a sell-out. For the first time *Foundations for Ministry* was offered in three teaching centres to reduce travelling for students.

### University of Chester

The long-standing partnership with the University of Chester was subject to periodic review by the university in December and the report recommended it be renewed for a further five years. This validation means that those undertaking FfM can earn a Church Universities Certificate of Higher Education and this continues to be the route chosen by most students. Validated HE programmes are also provided for Pastoral Worker and Reader training. Training facilities at Church House and at Foxhill are extensively used in these programmes. Thanks are due to the staff and the many volunteers whose efforts make these programmes possible.

### Licensed Ministries

For licensed ministries CfM provides processes of vocational discernment, selection, initial training, early-years continuing training, and in-service development for everyone serving directly under Bishop Peter's authority, whether lay or ordained. In the year under review eighteen clergy, ten Readers and five Pastoral Workers were newly admitted to office. Of those currently in training, twenty-five are prospective Pastoral Workers, twenty-nine are Reader candidates, and forty-five are Ordinands.

**Training Grants**

As well as training opportunities offered internally, licensed ministers are supported in appropriate programmes offered by outside providers. The take-up of grants for this purpose has risen dramatically and once again all the funds provided to support clergy were expended.

**Diversity of Provision**

Other areas of work included support and training for a well-established network of Spiritual Directors/Accompanists; new appointments to the roles of Officer for Self-Supporting Ministers and to that of Dean of Women in Ministry; Ministry Development Review schemes for lay ministers and for clergy; a new cohort for *Making Headway* – the Art of Leadership; the Arts and Faith Network; the publication of the termly *Diocesan Cycle of Prayer*; and facilitating the sabbatical scheme for clergy.

**Regional Working**

Collaborative work continues 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 have relationships with St Mellitus North West for contextual ordination training.

**Michael Gilbertson, Archdeacon of Chester**

**Chair of CfM in 2018**