**Working Together in Runcorn**

The Anglican church in Runcorn is at an exciting time in its journey. Runcorn currently has one of the lowest church attendance figures in England. But at the moment there is a significant number of current or imminent vacancies among parochial posts in the town. This provides a unique opportunity to imagine a different approach to ministry.

The approach we are following combines the pastoral strength of local ministry with the missional potential of cross-parish activity. In outline, parish clergy will continue to be licensed in the usual way to their parishes, and remain responsible for their own churches and congregations. But there will also be an expectation that they will use a proportion of their time (between half a day to a day per week on average) to help support all eight parishes in Runcorn in delivering a particular area of ministry. This expectation will be written into clergy job descriptions, and will require all clergy to be willing to work positively across the different traditions represented by the churches in Runcorn.

When applying for a role as an incumbent or priest-in-charge in the town, applicants will be invited to indicate the area of ministry in which they would be willing to offer this wider support to the Runcorn parishes. As new priests have been arriving over the last few months, we have already been building up these offers of ministry. Areas in which people have already expressed an interest include:

1. Children and primary schools
2. Young people and secondary schools
3. New ways of being church
4. Asylum seekers and refugees
5. Online presence

Other possibilities yet to be covered include:

1. Caring for older people
2. Engaging with local government bodies and other agencies
3. Working in deprived/marginalised communities

But we are open to other possibilities as well. You may have other skills to bring, and we would welcome anything that enhances the mission and ministry of the churches across Runcorn. While some parishes may more naturally ‘fit’ with some skills, this is about facilitating ministry across the whole of Runcorn, so we are not linking particular parishes with particular skills. We are not averse to having several people with similar skills across Runcorn either, as long as people can work creatively together.

Being able to support the wider ministry to Runcorn is a requirement of the post. To help facilitate this, it is likely that a Bishop’s Mission Order will be created in the near future to which all clergy and licensed ministers will be licensed. This will provide a more formal structure to encourage the mission of the churches across the whole of Runcorn, and also give the diocese some mechanism for supporting the project.

The churches across Runcorn are looking forward to this next chapter in their life together with hope and enthusiasm, and we are confident that this collaborative approach will bear fruit as churches work together for the good of God’s mission across the town.

For more details about this, please contact John Hellewell, Mission Adviser, on john.hellewell@chester.anglican.org or phone 01928 718834 ext. 235, or Mike Gilbertson, Archdeacon, on michael.gilbertson@chester.anglican.org or phone 01928 718834 ext. 253.