



RESOURCING MISSION

Diocesan Strategies for Investing in New Mission Opportunities

In recent years, a number of dioceses have been investing in new mission opportunities, despite the pressures to allocate resources to existing ministry.

Such new investment requires critical evaluation if it – and the wider *Mission-Shaped Church* agenda – are to be sustained. To this end, National Church Institutions' staff organised a research seminar, drawing together a number of diocesan secretaries, to discuss issues such as:

- What are the key factors that can help a diocese create the capacity to invest in new mission opportunities?
- What sort of outcomes might a diocese anticipate through such investment?
- What processes are needed to determine the distribution of the monies between possible beneficiaries?

The seminar involved a case study of how one diocese has been investing funds in new mission opportunities and reflections from other dioceses' experience.

Case Study: Mission Development in Southwell & Nottingham Diocese

Various developments within the diocese in recent years have helped to create a context open to new mission developments:

- the parish mission fund (allocated to dioceses by the Archbishops' Council using Commissioners' funds);
- the publication of *Mission-Shaped Church* which had highlighted the need to become more mission-orientated;
- declining numbers of clergy, which, because the diocese had also had its own vacancies, had led to budget surpluses;
- the move away from a committee-based approach, empowering staff (led by a new chief

executive) to drive forward change;

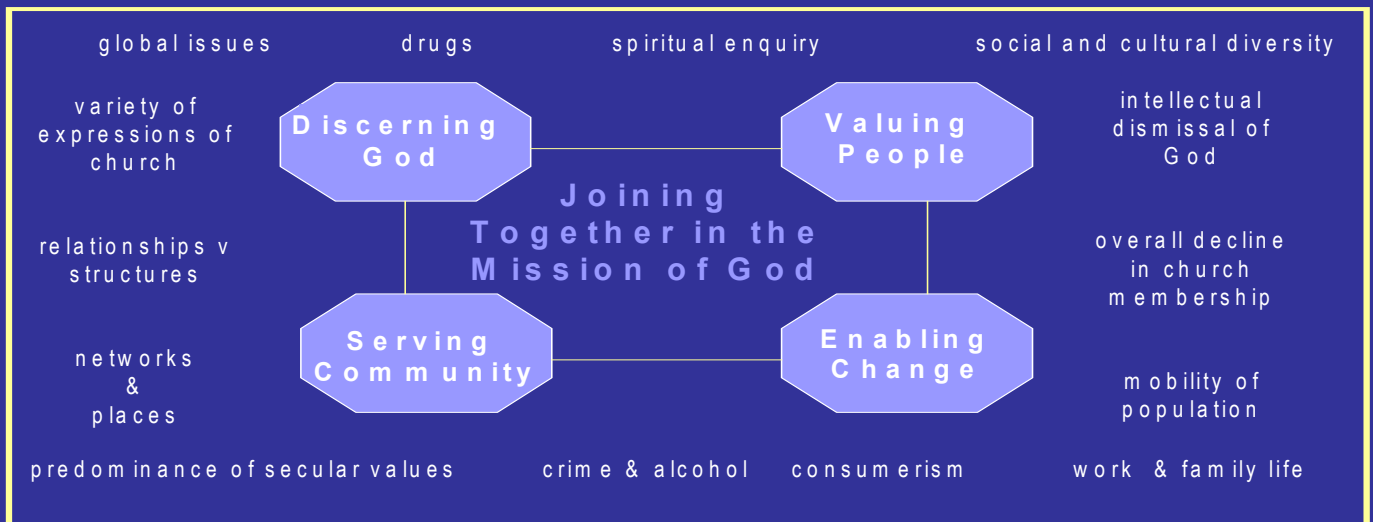
- changes in diocesan leadership, which brought new commitment to the strategic investment of resources;
- shift of decision-making responsibility to local level, co-ordinated by deaneries.

Added to this, there was a sense that the diocese was at a 'Kairos moment' – that God was prompting it to respond to questions like 'what has the Church to offer in the early 21st century?', 'how are we to promote the message of Christ afresh?' and 'how do we become a more mission-shaped church?'.

A Mission Template: Shaping the Future

The factors outlined above, informed by theological reflection, led to the development of *Shaping the Future*, a mission template designed to encourage, challenge and support mission. It contains mission values, challenges and questions, against which parishes and deaneries are encouraged to review their life and activity. For example, the template challenges every post to have a mission rationale and every parish a mission plan. It also prompts every part of the diocese to question what could be done differently (or not at all), enabling local church leadership teams to develop flexible and properly resourced mission strategies to be shared across the diocese.

Four Mission Values



Whilst deliberately avoiding a top-down strategy, the diocese has highlighted children and young people as priority groups within its overall commitment to become more mission-orientated. It has been important not to limit

this focus to 'fresh expressions' of church – differing views on the meaning of mission are inevitable, but evangelism has been given a central position in the Church's work.

Stimulated by the development of the mission template, the diocese agreed to create a designated fund for resourcing new mission projects at local level.

The Mission Development Fund

The Mission Development Fund (MDF) is designed to support people rather than buildings and lay workers not clergy. A capital sum of £1 million has been put into the fund, the first stage of a long-term project. The monies were found from a combination of grant funding (eg. the parish mission funding and EIG monies), recent budget surpluses, and property development income. £750,000 has already been committed to projects.

Through the possible realisation of capital in surplus parsonages, as well as voluntary contributions, the diocese hopes to increase the fund to £2 million during 2007.

Applying for funding

Ideas for projects are generated locally – with the help of diocesan advisors if required – or at diocesan level. Through a simple application form, potential candidates outline their project, demonstrating how it connects with the values of the diocesan mission template and describing the partnerships involved. This must be accompanied by some financial analysis. Projects also require deanery support in order to be considered for funding.

Allocating resources

The Chief Executive and Canon Missioner adjudicate applications for less than £5000, but a special task group is responsible for deciding which larger projects to recommend to the

Bishop's Council. This group has been vigorous in its appraisal of projects, aiming to avoid the Bishop's Council second-guessing its judgements. That said, the Bishop's Council's involvement in the strategy process has been positive, despite some nervousness among members about the size of commitments to specific projects.

When approval has been granted for a long-term project, the individuals involved are expected to take part in a project management training session before any monies are released. The project is then subject to a monitoring process, which is tailored to it and based on a combination of indicators – from church growth, to the quality of service to the community. This process is agreed with diocesan officers and progress reported annually to the Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod.

Outcomes

Anticipated funding outcomes are:

- numerical growth
- realistic cultural engagement with the gospel
- diversity (in terms of patterns of ministry)
- encouragement of local congregations and networks
- enhanced value of lay ministry
- increased confidence towards the centre, both in terms of senior staff and diocesan mission strategy and resourcing.

It is too early to provide definite conclusions of whether these outcomes were being achieved. The monitoring process would pick this up in due course, which is important if further commitments are to be made to projects. In some cases it might be appropriate to limit financial support to three years only.

Strategically, the MDF has already been successful, providing a clear stimulus for investment in mission. It has demonstrated that even less well-resourced dioceses can release people and funds for mission (although inevitably,

Projects funded by the Mission Development Fund so far:

- *new posts – evangelists, youth workers and children’s workers*
- *a youth club, holiday club and café*
- *an e-chaplain for commerce in Nottingham city centre*
- *a Car Boot Church and Community Worker*
- *a Sports Ambassador for the whole diocese (in partnership with Christians in Sport)*

there continues to be some pressure to use the monies available to keep down parish share). By targeting resources on mission, the fund has prompted a review of all deployment and resourcing within the diocese – what is being learned is having a wide-ranging impact.

Emerging issues

- How to bring greater coherence between mainline and mission budgets.
- Where does parish ministry still ‘work’? What should be done where it does not?
- The importance of monitoring, training and support (especially HR).
- The importance of lay ministry - the mission fund had raised its profile.
- Levering in more funds to support mission (a dedicated funding officer helps in this).

Reflections

The fund has been effective because it is part of - and has helped promote - a wider strategic process in the diocese, facilitated by leadership, theology and financial capacity.

Communication has been vital in building general support and ensuring a wide range of applications are made. The diocese has scattered small seeds of publicity, rather than made one big splash, which would quickly be forgotten.

What difficulties need to be tackled?

To date, there has not been much protest when, as must happen, applications for funding are refused. A transparent selection process and the required deanery support for applications have been helpful in this respect. However, the process does risk that the more professional classes take a disproportionate amount of the funds. Officers

have sought to make judgements based on the quality of the project, rather than how it is put across on the application form. It is important for the diocese to help local churches generate and develop ideas, and access other forms of external funding (which would increase the likelihood of the project receiving support from the MDF).

There is a risk that by basing funding on local applications, support could be focussed on current (clergy-led) patterns of ministry, with more cutting-edge, non-parochial projects overlooked. As a result, the initial exclusive focus on local discernment has been changed to allow some projects to emerge centrally.

Views from other dioceses

- Dioceses need to be clear about what outcomes they expect from funding.
- The language of 'mission' and 'fresh expressions' needs clarity to ensure existing or inherited ministry is not made to sound negative (in contrast to new mission opportunities).
- The mission outcome of all the Church's investment needs assessment.
- The emphasis on mission development funding has helped prompt dioceses to restructure their mainline budgets. For example, how does existing investment in ministry, education and social responsibility fit with the diocese's overall objectives? How can existing work in the diocesan office be done more collaboratively to advance the common mission?

Creating the funding

- £0.5m per annum seemed the minimum necessary investment for a worthwhile mission development fund. Although (in the context of the Church's total expenditure) not a large investment, releasing funds for mission requires vision and commitment.
- Increased giving is the best way to realise new resources. A bolder approach is required in respect of teaching about giving, through the training of clergy.
- A mentality that argues that a diocese's main goal should be to keep down the parish share makes it difficult to raise funds.
- Local concern about where 'their' money goes and distrust of central structures mean communication is important to stimulate giving.

Sustainability

- Although the initial push was for significant investment upfront, the key future issue is ensuring project sustainability.
- There is often anxiety two thirds of the way into the funding period about future support, especially in areas where self-funding is difficult, eg. mission work among children.
- Dioceses have to think carefully about what length of funding commitment can best enable a project's sustainability.
- New diocesan funded posts need proper accountability and support.
- There is merit in starting projects with part-time (lay) posts and building up to the establishment of a full-time post as the project grows.
- Investment in new opportunities is church 'research and development' work and dioceses should accept that some experiments will fail. This requires better research in the Church about what it funds; greater honesty about what works and what does not; and stronger resolve to stop what is not working.

Central (ie. diocesan) v local strategies.

- Dioceses need to address the concern that local funding decisions favour those who make the best applications, rather than the most-deserving projects.
- Alternatively, dioceses could channel funding into creating good practice models. This means backing individuals (eg. giving money to those skilled in developing network churches) rather than projects, replicating their successes and learning points across the diocese.

This information was gained via a research seminar held on Wednesday 3 January 2007.

In attendance:

- Jane Easton, Leicester Diocesan Secretary
- Keith Robinson, London Diocesan Secretary
- Mike Eastwood, Liverpool Diocesan Secretary
- Peter Hill, Southwell and Nottingham Chief Executive
- Stephen Marriott, Guildford Diocesan Secretary
- Paul Bayes, National Evangelism Advisor, Archbishops' Council
- Catherine Evans, Policy Researcher, Church Commissioners
- John Preston, National Stewardship and Resources Officer, Archbishops' Council
- Philip James, Head of Policy Unit, Church Commissioners

A separate document records the result of discussion on diocesan strategies for investing in new mission opportunities.

For further information, contact:

Paul Bayes/Philip James
Church House
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3AZ

Tel. 020 7898 1502/1671
Email: paul.bayes@c-of-e.org.uk
philip.james@c-of-e.org.uk