

God for Cornwall

A report from the
Church Army
Research Unit for the
Diocese of Truro

Church House Truro used funding from the Church Commissioners to ask the Church Army Research Unit (CARU) to help inform two areas of our work: our work with children and young people, and the work of commissioned lay ministers (Local Worship Leaders and Local Pastoral Ministers).

The big question that we are asking is, “what is God doing...?”

What is God doing in schools, in fresh expressions, in social action, among young people, and in lay ministry—through the churches of our diocese?

Schools

“Open the Book” is the main way in which local churches engage with children and schools

Fresh expressions

Some children do go to church, mainly at family baptisms, on holiday, and at Fresh Expressions

Social action

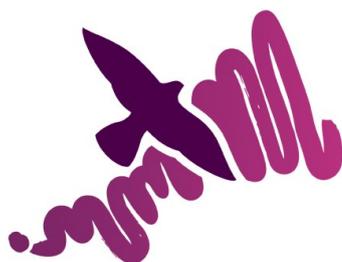
We know that our parishes are touched by poverty, but the poverty does not always follow national patterns and our engagement in social action is patchy

Young people

Young people are largely absent from our church life. The challenge is significant

Lay ministry

LPM and LWL ministries are success stories. The challenge is that we may need to grow new distinct lay ministries



DIOCESE OF TRURO

DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM
GROWING THE CHURCH

God has not abandoned Cornwall, God is at work among us, there are signs of hope.

After looking at information held by Church House, and other published data, researchers identified places across the diocese where they listened and explored. Choices about where to go were based on data and included a range of geography, deprivation, population density, and rurality.

Three questions underpinned the listening at parish level:

- **What is your situation?**
- **What is God doing?**
- **How could the diocese join in?**



Green Shoots, signs of hope

Three Green Shoots

- **RELATIONSHIPS:** there are many positive relationships and active co-operation with the local community and ecumenical partners.
- **CREATIVITY:** there is an openness to innovation, including buying or borrowing capacity to make things happen.
- **POVERTY:** there is a fragility and vulnerability. This holds open the possibility of God's transformation, particularly among the young and the poor.

How and where do we engage with children?

The answer is not in our churches, it is unambiguously through schools. The main vehicle for lay ministry with primary aged children is through “Open the Book”. The diocese stands out as having the highest penetration of “Open the Book” in England.

Why don't children and families come to church?

They do! We still lead a higher than average number of baptisms.

They do! But they are on holiday and won't stay.

They do! But not our church, children are more likely to be at a lay-led fresh expression of church, probably something more like “messy church”

Adding up poverty & wealth

The report found different sorts of poverty and wealth.

Most parishes in this diocese are “more deprived” than the average, but very few parishes are among the “most deprived” nationally. This is partly because the national data is better at measuring urban poverty, and we are a rural diocese.

CARU also found that we experience a “poverty of imagination and confidence when it comes to engaging with youth.” It also found a lack of capacity to do so.

The report notes that what looks like poverty can often, in Christ's hands, be a blessing.



Local Worship Leaders & Local Pastoral Ministers

Commissioned lay ministry is a strength of our diocesan life;

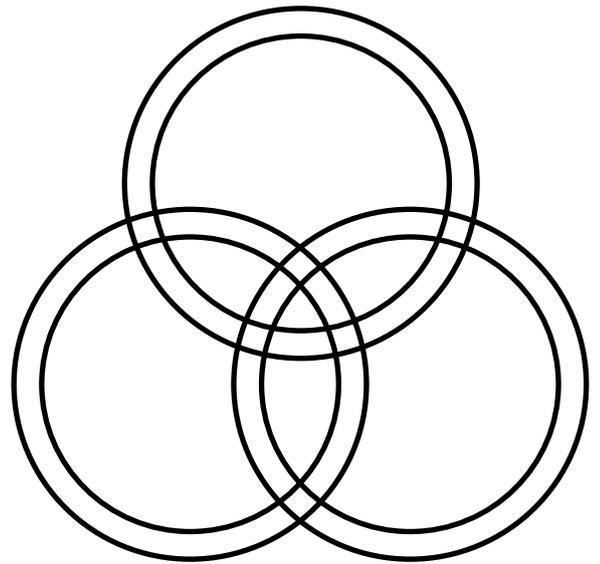
- The distribution broadly reflects population densities
- The ministry tends towards congregational life, it is what LPMs and LWLs have been asked to do!
- Most LWL and LPM ministry is not about growing the church or deepening discipleship, but some places are working to “re-imagine” these important ministries
- If commissioned lay ministries are going to respond to the challenge of children and young people they will need to look quite different in what we recruit, discern, train and lead for
- In some places, people are “just getting on with it”

Growing Faith

“Growing Faith” is about the overlap between church, school, and household, and in those overlaps it takes an interest in

- connecting communities
- spiritual encounters
- hopeful imagination

Growing Faith offers us new ways of understanding where some of the possibilities are for us in the future, initially working with two Growing Faith cohorts of AMD to learn what works and how best to support one another.



Five Questions in the “God for Cornwall” report

- How and where is the diocese most engaged with children?
- Why don’t children and families come to our church services?
- What place does social action have?
- Who are largely absent from the picture?
- What might this mean for lay ministry?

Matthew 6²⁵ ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?’²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?’²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?’²⁸ And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin,²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?’³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?”³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ ‘So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.’