

TDS23(33) Report on the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal November 2023

This report is drawn from the work of the Programme Board for Change and Renewal which met on 9th November.

1. Headlines

The Board has looked at overall progress in the first year of implementation, and in particular has interrogated progress against the twelve areas of “fruitfulness and sustainability” which formed the basis of deanery planning.

This work gives two broad headlines behind which there is significant detail:

- **Progress is being made.** We are enormously grateful for the commitment and energy of local leaders who have embraced the desire for the flourishing of the church in Cornwall and who continue to faithfully serve and minister. Progress in some areas is stronger than in others, both by location and in areas of work. We have identified priorities for the work of the Change and Renewal team based on key risks and opportunities.
- **Of the twelve outcomes described under fruitfulness and sustainability some have strong plans likely to lead to success, but other areas will need more resources or better plans than are currently in place.** When we look at the twelve areas of work or outcomes (listed below at Section 4) we rate seven as “amber” meaning that plans are in place and being resourced with some confidence of achieving the desired outcomes. Five areas are rated “red” indicating low confidence that plans as they stand will lead to strong outcomes in line with our ambition.

2. Key risks and priorities at diocesan level for the next quarter

The team have identified three key risks which require their focus over at least the next quarter:

- **People.** We continue to carry too many clergy vacancies and need to prioritise making good appointments as soon as possible. Alongside this we know that key lay roles, usually volunteers, are vital for the flourishing of the church and can easily be overlooked or taken for granted. Cherishing, resourcing, and honouring lay leaders alongside the need to recruit to vacant clergy posts is a priority for the Change and Renewal team and the wider Church House teams.
- **Finance.** While putting bold proposals for the use of assets to Synod, and whilst rejoicing in an MMF collection rate that is likely to top 90% this year for the first time in many years, there are still a small number of parishes that are not paying the MMF agreed in their deanery plans. This will be addressed urgently.
- **Timing.** We know from the experience of TM that implementing bold plans often takes longer than we expect, and deanery plans are no exception. In too many places we are seeing that progress is slow, and that capacity locally and at Church House is often very stretched. This requires a disciplined approach to prioritising what happens where and when.

3. Priorities

The Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal identifies three main themes, these shape the priorities of the C&R team. The themes are; significant change in patterns of parish ministry, reversing the steep decline in the number of children and young people in the life of the church, and mission in communities experiencing deprivation.

To support changes to patterns of ministry we are making an absolute priority of recruiting clergy to parish roles. We are recruiting to three Deans of Area posts to release parish clergy who would otherwise combine their work with that of the rural dean role. We are working with local deanery teams to further refine deanery plans to make sure that the life of the local church can be sustained and flourish.

Work to research and model appropriate plans for work with children and young people has begun and will continue into 2024. We know that simply continuing what we are doing is unlikely to lead to significant change, but we also recognise that our local context means that simply importing a metropolitan or urban model for working with young people is also likely to fail, hence the investment now in working with young people and local leaders to make good plans based on our own realities. This work will also strengthen our planned bid for financial support from the Church Commissioners.

The distribution of Lowest Income Communities Funding is going well, local commitment to serving communities experiencing deprivation is strong even when the work is hard. We need to make sure that we can report the use of LICF to the Church Commissioners as well as grow more engagement in the work across the diocese.

The Change and Renewal team, and the deanery teams, have plans to resource these priorities, the Board will continue to monitor progress.

4. The twelve measures of fruitfulness and sustainability

When deanery and parish leaders were asked to make their plans we used twelve outcomes or areas of work that described what a fruitful and sustainable church would look like. These twelve areas form the basis of the plans and we continue to use them to shape our work. The Change and Renewal team have assessed the deanery plans and the additional commitments at diocesan level against the twelve outcomes. Most, seven of the twelve, are judged “amber” - not clearly achieving the positive outcomes described yet, but with credible plans and clear progress being made. The “amber” areas are:

- Work with children, young people and schools
- Discipleship
- Community Life (wholesome church communities)
- Creation Care
- Serving those most in need

- Responding to a diversity of callings
- Growing a sustainable diocesan economy (money)

The five “red” areas are where we think that current plans or progress indicate that we are not likely to achieve the outcomes we are seeking, or at least not overall across the diocese (there may be local examples where the picture is more positive)

- Global church
- Growing faith among those already part of the church
- Life giving leadership, this reflects our struggle to recruit clergy
- Buildings, recognising the challenge of buildings at local level
- New faith, bringing new disciples to Christ