

## Newcastle Diocesan Synod

### ‘Growing New Worshipping Communities’

*“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” (1 Corinthians 3.5-7)*

#### 1. Introduction

1. Newcastle Diocese is entering a new season with a new Bishop and a renewed vision. As a diocese, we are all being called by God to become a church of missionary disciples, turning outwards in mission. We are all being called to inhabit and foster a mixed ecology of church where everyone has access to an enriching and compelling community of faith. And we are all called to be part of a church growing younger and more diverse, youthful in scope, mindful of the realities of our diverse contexts, and thinking of the audiences beyond the ones we see now.
2. Growth is a natural expectation and part of our life in God: growth which deepens our faith, growth in those the Lord is adding to our number and growth in our service of, and witness to, our communities across all our varied contexts. This growth includes establishing new worshipping communities as part of a mixed ecology of church.
3. Our new season is characterised by outward facing values of seeking, sharing and sending. We are **seeking** through being open to God’s transforming love; **sharing** through being generous with God’s transforming gifts; and we are **sending** through being engaged in God’s transforming work in the world. Establishing new worshipping communities is part of our expectation and hope that we will need new churches, new congregations and new ways of engaging with more and more people as God grows his church in our diocese.

#### 2. Principles

1. We believe that God is growing the church in the Diocese of Newcastle (1 Corinthians 3.5-7) and that we must be open to growing significantly more as part of our responsibility to proclaim the gospel and work for the Kingdom of God as we reflect on the 5 Marks of Mission: tell, teach, tend, transform and treasure (see **Appendix 1**). This involves our expectancy that God is doing a new thing and our willingness to respond to what God is doing among us and to change, adapt, and develop as we discern where God’s Spirit is at work in our communities.
2. Establishing new worshipping Christian communities is part of the heritage of this Diocese with a significant number of churches planted in the past, during the rapid growth of Newcastle and other areas, especially in the years around the formation of the Diocese in 1882, and later in the 1950s and 1960s. It is also actively commended across the Church of England by the House of Bishops (see statement ‘Church Planting and the Mission of the Church’, June 2018).
3. Growth of the whole involves some parts growing and others shrinking, some things being started and others ending, some areas developing rapidly, others more slowly; we affirm that this is normal and healthy, though undoubtedly also uncomfortable at times. There is a cost to outreach and growth. We acknowledge that there may be times when some local church communities will need to consider the repurposing of a church building or even closure of a building; these decisions are primarily made locally but with wider diocesan support.

4. Establishing new worshipping communities is part of our discipleship as we seek to follow Jesus into our communities and wider world, and is a natural part of the life of a diocese which is outward focussed and **seeking, sharing** and **sending**.
5. Establishing new worshipping communities does not exclusively belong to or sit within any one 'tradition', context, size or geography, and we are committed to learning from different parts of the church which have experience in this area.
6. Establishing new worshipping communities can be understood in various ways and follows various models (see **Appendix 2**): we believe every church should be able to grow a new worshipping community in some way. In Newcastle Diocese we group these various models into three main areas:
  - i. **A Church Revitalization:** Where a group or team from one church moves to an existing church or parish to revitalise mission, ministry and church life.
  - ii. **A New Worshipping Community:** Where a group or team is formed with the purpose of starting worship from scratch in a brand-new place.
  - iii. **A Congregation Plant:** Where an existing church or parish starts, or plants, a new congregation within the parish; this could be starting a new service to reach young families or starting worship in the local school to reach a new demographic.
7. There are particular areas we believe have potential for growing new worshipping communities:
  - i. **'Growing Faith':** developing the connections between home, school and church offers distinct possibilities for many parishes to develop something school-based;
  - ii. **'Growing Good':** where engagement in particular local social issues or social community outreach offers opportunities to develop emerging networks and relationships as gathered worshipping communities;
  - iii. **Chaplaincies and Pioneering:** where these are regularly gathering networks of people together through missional outreach, for example in work or education contexts, which could be pursued further;
  - iv. **Digital:** the growth in digital social communication offers the development of worshipping communities which may not be primarily gathered physically in person but embrace digital communications technology; with due consideration of their ecclesiological formation.
8. Establishing new worshipping communities can take place anywhere in the diocese and is not confined to any one area or demographic; however, we do prioritise growing younger and more diverse and look to see this reflected when creating new worshipping communities.
9. Our process of establishing new worshipping communities will develop models that are replicable across a range of contexts and resources that can be shared.
10. The Bishop of Berwick will be accountable to the Bishop of Newcastle for raising expectations and encouraging the discernment of new worshipping communities across all our parishes as we are all sent into the harvest field (*Luke 10.2*), and will report regularly to Bishop's Staff, Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod as appropriate.

### **3. Identifying opportunities to establish new worshipping communities**

1. The Bishop of Berwick, supported by the Director of Mission and Ministry (DMM), will hold an overview of this work on behalf of the Bishop, and will ensure that all those involved in

establishing new worshipping communities are part of a learning community and work to agreed processes. These processes include:

- i. **Prayer:** ensuring that the establishment of all new worshipping communities is the fruit of prayerful and wise discernment of the work of the Holy Spirit;
  - ii. **Safeguarding:** ensuring all new worshipping communities operate according to diocesan safeguarding policies and guidance, including safer recruitment and online policies;
  - iii. **Accountability:** ensuring clear accountability and governance are in place for each new worshipping community;
  - iv. **Mixed Ecology:** ensuring new worshipping communities have a recognisably Anglican identity despite potential challenge to traditional patterns and understanding as the wider mixed ecology becomes apparent.
2. There are three ways envisaged for discerning opportunities to establish new worshipping communities (as described in section 2.6):
- i. **A local Parish Church** identifies a need to reach a new or distinct demographic (e.g. new housing estate, previously unreached group of people, etc) or develop existing missional work into a new worshipping community. Where these opportunities are identified Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) will keep their local Deanery Development Group informed, as well as the DMM who may be able to offer further support and, where possible, extra resource.
  - ii. **A Deanery Development Group (DDG)** identifies the potential for a new worshipping community or church revitalisation, as part of ongoing deanery planning work, particularly where this might be working across parish boundaries. DDGs will liaise with their Archdeacon and the DMM who will bring a DDG recommendation to the Bishop's Staff for their agreement. If agreed, the DMM will work with the DDG to offer further support and, where possible, extra resource.
1. **The Bishop** initiates a new worshipping community to respond to a particular need or request which may fall across two or more deaneries and DDGs, or emerge from a chaplaincy or network which is not rooted in an obvious parish or deanery context. This is unlikely to be frequent and will only be done following consultation and agreement with any interested parties.
3. Factors that lead to the decision to establish a new worshipping community may include:
- i. **clear identification** of a missing demographic (e.g. a particular age demographic, a specific geography like a housing estate, or a network);
  - ii. **discernment** of a new opportunity (e.g. business park, local school, area new housing);
  - iii. **openness and potential** for church revitalization in a struggling congregation or parish.

#### **4. Resources for establishing new worshipping communities**

1. The Bishop of Berwick and DMM will commit time and energy to encouraging and supporting this work across the diocese.
2. St Thomas Newcastle Church is designated as a resource for supporting the establishment of new worshipping communities and will support and lead on initiatives as guided by the Bishop of Berwick.
3. The DMM will draw in resources from the Mission and Ministry Team as appropriate.

4. There are specific paid roles which already have a focus on discerning new worshipping communities in particular parishes or deaneries, including: community development workers; pioneer ministers; mission enablers; and youth and children's workers. We also hope to develop further authorised lay ministry roles which also contribute to forming and sustaining new worshipping communities. The DMM will ensure all those in these roles are supported in this area of mission.

## **5. Outcomes**

1. We expect that new worshipping communities will generate the growth and impact of the church numerically, spiritually and missionally becoming a natural part of the rhythm and priorities of all our churches.
2. Every church is enabled to play a part in praying and working for new worshipping communities, and each person is enabled to see themselves as a missionary disciple.
3. By the 150th anniversary of the founding of Newcastle Diocese in 2032, the Diocesan Synod expects 150 new worshipping communities to be established, including church revitalization projects.
4. A mixed ecology of church in Newcastle Diocese will be widely recognisable and celebrated.

## **6. Strategy review**

1. The Bishop of Berwick and Director of Mission and Ministry will ensure this strategy and the outcomes described are kept under regular review.
2. The Bishop's Staff will review progress monthly.
3. The Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod will receive regular reports on progress, at least annually, and ensure we keep in view the personal responsibility and accountability of each person in enabling this growth as a missionary disciple.

+ Mark Berwick  
August 2023

## **APPENDIX 1: The Five Marks of Mission**

(As defined and agreed by the [Anglican Communion](#))

The first Mark of Mission, identified with personal evangelism at the Anglican Consultative Council in 1984 (ACC-6) is a summary of what all mission is about, because it is based on Jesus' own summary of his mission. This should be the key statement about everything we do in mission.

### **The Five Marks of Mission:**

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom (Tell)
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers (Teach)
3. To respond to human need by loving service (Tend)
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation (Transform)
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth (Treasure)

## APPENDIX 2: Church Planting Models

(Excerpt from Bishops' Church Planting Paper 05/09/2017)

Church plants, fresh expressions of church and missional communities represent different terms and methodologies used to describe the creation of new congregations. Here are some of the ways (or models) that are commonly being used in England:

1. **New Developments:** a new church community established within a new residential development that has a distinct sense of community or is not easily served by an existing church.
2. **Closed Churches:** a leader and congregation are invited to "plant" into a church building that is either closed, faces closure or needs so much help to survive that a different approach is needed and agreed.
3. **Parish Graft:** a leader and a congregation "graft" into an existing congregation with a view to infusing the church with new DNA and fresh energy. This is a partnership between old and new, but with the understanding of change being welcomed. Also called a "revitalisation".
4. **New Congregation:** developing a new service for a new people group within the existing parish church. This will include international congregations, perhaps using their own languages.
5. **Network Church:** a leader and a congregation start a new church in a new space that draws in people through their network of relationships. This is not a geographic (parish) church but exists autonomously within or across another parish or number of parishes.
6. **School Plant:** a new worshipping community based within and ministering to a school community in its broadest sense and not just using a school building as a venue for worship.
7. **Estate Church:** a church based on an un(der)reached estate that has a distinct sense of community and a distinct ministry to that estate.
8. **Workplace Church:** a worshipping community based in a workplace ("second space") connecting with those who work there.
9. **Cafe Church:** Creating new congregations in "third spaces" especially in cafes and coffee shops. In some places running the coffee shop may also pay for the mission work. Third spaces are understood as being a space distinct from "first spaces" (homes) and "second spaces" (workplaces) e.g. cafes, restaurants, etc.
10. **Missional Communities:** these are understood as communities constituted by a specific missional purpose in relation to a network or a place. They are not parish churches or places of conventional worship.
11. **Messy Church:** this is a way of being church for families, not just children. It is adaptable to its context but its values are about being Christ-centred, for all ages, based on creativity, hospitality and celebration.
12. **Age related churches:** These focus on creating church for a particular age group such as children, youth, young adults or senior citizens.
13. **Special interest groups:** These tend to be new congregations which initially aim to connect incarnationally with a particular group such as those who might play a particular sport or have a certain hobby.
14. **New monastic communities:** These communities include a stronger focus on intentional community through a gathered and dispersed life, patterns of prayer, contemplation, hospitality and practical engagement in mission beyond itself (often to the poor).