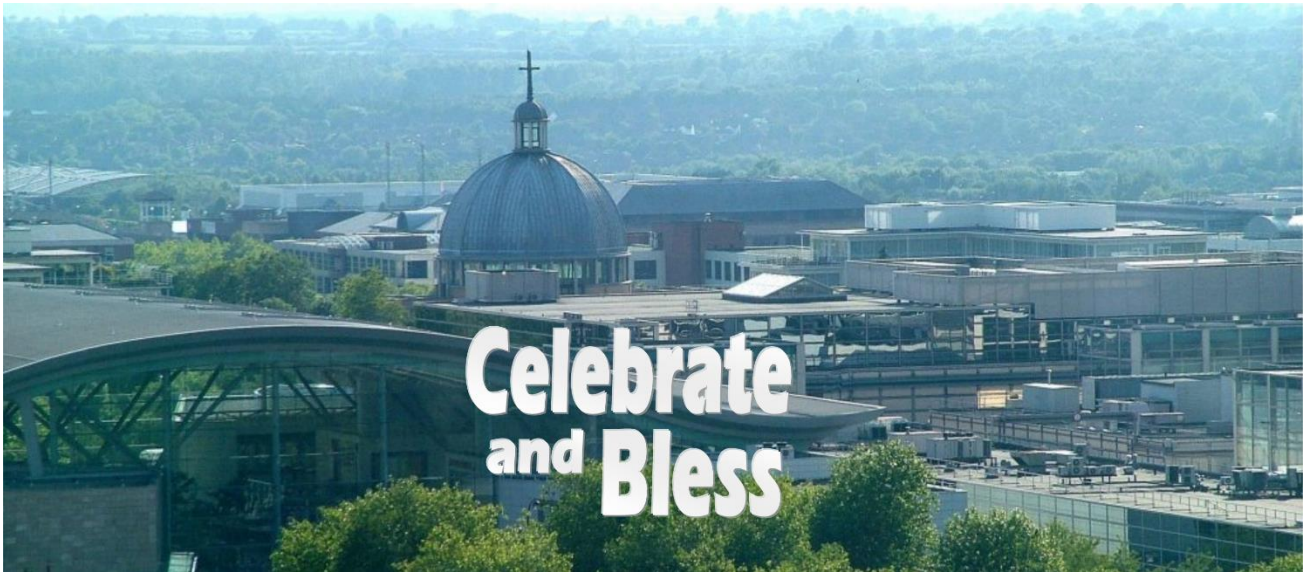


Celebrate and Bless Milton Keynes

A Strategy for Church in our Fastest Growing City



I. Introduction

“Celebrate and Bless MK” (CBMK) is a strand of the Common Vision being developed by Oxford Diocese. It reflects Bishop Steven’s desire to focus a greater degree of attention on the “city” of Milton Keynes at a key point in time as it transforms from large new town to high-impact regional centre. We have a strategic opportunity to act in a way that celebrates all that has been achieved while blessing the first-fruits of new growth.

This paper sets out some of the unique opportunities and challenges that exist in the city at this time – while offering a vision for mission that addresses the challenge of MK50. It is particularly important that the Church of England engages with our partners in other denominations as we develop strategies and new ideas – particularly where we have covenanted to travel together.

The main focus of this paper is on church growth – and we see this in terms of depth, impact and numbers. It is important that we respond to the rapid and continuous growth of the city, and this will mean the nurture of new Christian Disciples who will serve the common good and seek an ever-deeper relationship with Christ. We want a more Christ-like church which is able to meet the challenges that the city will face over the next fifty years – particularly amongst those who are disadvantaged or left behind.

In order to drive this growth, we will seek to invest in prayer, leadership and learning. We want to increase the number of worshipping communities as a way of reaching more people and serving the needs of the city.

Our specific need is for seed-money to fund leaders who will grow worshipping communities. Milton Keynes Deanery had previously been asked to reduce the number of ministers deployed here while the population continued to grow. We therefore developed more sustainable patterns of ministry and invested (where possible) in new worshipping communities. We believe that there is now a need for fresh investment if we are to meet the immense challenge that the future presents.

We will be asking the Diocese of Oxford and the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) to seed-fund posts that increase our local leadership capacity. This investment will help us to grow existing churches and plant new worshipping communities. We intend that this investment will be split between full-time, part-time, ordained and lay ministry.

Milton Keynes at 50

There is a tendency to think that Milton Keynes is just another large area of new housing, but there are particular opportunities and challenges caused by the unique context of the city. The key factor is that the city is reaching a major tipping point in scale, complexity and maturity. It is transforming from a new town with “no soul” into a significant regional centre. The city is becoming something very different and we need to play a role in shaping that new community.

Milton Keynes was designed as a patchwork of villages and towns built within a grid of high-speed roads. Although this pattern is now being blurred, the city often functions more like a complex rural district rather than a traditional urban environment. There are around forty named grid squares which are effectively villages with a population of 2,000 to 3,000 people. Some have over 5,000 and feel more like towns!

This is an exciting time for Milton Keynes. The city is doubling in size, and ambitions are high. There will be a new university within five years, and the economy is growing. Employment levels are high, and people are proud of the unique opportunities that this booming city provides. The population is generally young and diverse with a similar demographic make-up to Birmingham. There are a growing number of retired people, driven partly by families gathering in this area. Milton Keynes increasingly thinks of itself as an international city with links around the world. It is an innovative and energetic place where new ideas can be tried and often succeed. It is a place of corporate headquarters, academic excellence, a can-do attitude and immense creativity. It will be at the heart of the new Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford arc, and an important focus for new housing development.

Rapid economic growth is shadowed by deepening poverty. The Community Foundation has stated that we live in a “Two Speed City”. As businesses boom and Milton Keynes becomes the home of wealthy companies, many people are moving deeper into disadvantage. One in four children live in poverty, homelessness is on the rise, and house prices are out of reach for local people. A ring of estates around the city centre are in decline as the suburbs become even wealthier. We need to respond with compassion, but also have the courage to challenge injustice.

During the early years of Milton Keynes, the Diocese of Oxford invested money in church buildings, increased numbers of parish clergy and engaged in ecumenical partnerships – often based on a team ministry. This proved to be a successful strategy in many ways, but also created a dependency culture. It encouraged a model of ministry based on pastoral provision rather than missional creativity.

Over the past ten years there have been a number of changes, including:

- A move from structural ecumenism to unity through mission
- Stronger links with non-traditional churches
- The establishment of a sustainable pattern of deployment and finance
- The appointment of church leaders with skills in collaborative leadership and mission
- The launch of three new Christian communities and the re-launch of two churches which had become non-viable
- City-wide mission has taken off with new initiatives including the Food Bank, the Winter Night Shelter, commercial Christian advertising, refugee resettlement, Make Lunch, Citizens MK and more...

Deanery Synod has become a significant gathering and the word “exciting” is often used to describe the way things are going. There is a sense that something important is happening with increased focus on spirituality and biblical reflection. It is not insignificant that there is now a daily gathering of church leaders at Cornerstone Church who pray and engage with the Word together. There has been a move toward more relational working and partnerships are very strong. There is a real opportunity to do something new, but we need to seize it.

There are three big themes that we need to address as the Diocese of Oxford:

a) Context: Significant Transition

In the Diocese, we are thinking ahead to 2025, but the National Infrastructure Commission, and MK Futures report are focussed on 2050. By that time there is an expectation that Milton Keynes will sit at the heart of Britain's "Silicon Valley" stretching from Oxford to Cambridge with a new technology focussed university at its centre. There will be a new rail link and an expressway by 2030. The rate of house-building is expected to increase significantly and **the population will double to half a million people.**

Milton Keynes was designed as a hub of communications, sitting roughly half-way between London and Birmingham. It is a commuter city with fast routes to the capital, and the rate of economic growth is already high.

The key thing to note is that this is not a question of steady growth, but a quantum shift. Milton Keynes has been growing steadily during the past fifty years. It is now expanding beyond the original boundaries and becoming something very different. It is reaching a tipping point in terms of complexity, culture and connectedness.

As the Diocese of Oxford, we need a bold new vision for the city which is geographically and organisationally on the edge, but rapidly becoming more significant than it was ever intended to be. It is already bigger in terms of population than some dioceses, but our presence on the ground is relatively thin - as we shall see in the next section.

b) Challenge: Opportunities and Resources

Attendance figures for Milton Keynes suggest that the church here is "underperforming". The Deanery is second only to Slough in terms of its low attendance per head of the population (0.9%), and the large team parishes are generally less "successful" on this measure than churches in the pre-existing towns.

The key problem is that the original church planting plan was never completed. It was highly dependent on new church buildings and heavily subsidised clergy. As the finances of the denominations changed, the progress of the "master plan" faltered and faded. By the year 2000 vast areas of the city had little or no church presence and many congregations remained tiny with relatively high levels of clergy provision.

On the other hand, Milton Keynes is also very "efficient", since it only costs £2.80 a year per head of population to run the Churches with their present deployment. This is largely because the Deanery responded well to the challenge given by the Diocese ten years ago. We raised shares and cut the numbers of ministers. We learned how to work more collaboratively and put an increased focus on mission. The current generation of ministers are working hard to maintain existing congregations and respond to the growing mission agenda.

The issue of sustainability has been addressed, but there are insufficient resources for church growth and planting. Population growth has continued steadily over the past twenty years but overall church growth has not kept up. The challenge of recent and new housing areas will not be met without financial investment in terms of pioneer ministry and church planting.

c) Purpose: The World as it Should be

According to the Community Foundation's Vital Signs report from 2018:

- 18.3% of children under 16 are living in families who receive out of work benefit or tax credits and where income is less than 60% of the median.
- The rate of infant mortality in Milton Keynes is 35% higher than the national average (5.3 out of 1,000 compared to 3.9 nationally)
- Hospital admissions for substance abuse among 15-24 year olds has increased 45% since 2013.

- Among young people 17 and under, hospital admissions for mental health-related reasons have increased 57% since 2013.
- 25% increase in reports of race-based hate crime incidents and 83% increase in reports of religiously motivated hate crimes.

There is a danger that Milton Keynes is merely seen as fruitful territory for church planting, but we need to remember that the purpose of the Church is to serve the Kingdom of God. We need to be heralds of the “World as it should be” in the midst of the “World as it is”. Milton Keynes is taking the lead in exploring new ways to do this through community organising, ecumenical mission projects and a range of strategic partnerships, but we have only begun to scratch the surface of need.

2. Vision

Bishop Steven has encouraged us to be “**a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God’s World**”. He calls us to be more contemplative, more compassionate and more courageous. Our work in Milton Keynes must reflect this challenge.

We also share a vision with our ecumenical partners for Milton Keynes as “**a City Alive to God**”. This vision encourages us to:

- lift our horizons from Church to Kingdom, from the present to dream of a future in which God is at the heart of all things
- open our eyes to the capacity of God to bring life in all its fullness
- commit ourselves to the wholeness of the place where God has set us and the people we are called to serve
- work together with God and one another to make the dream a reality

In Milton Keynes, there are a number of key issues which will impact the way we respond:

a) The Need for change

Milton Keynes is at the beginning of a second major period of change and development. During its first fifty years, it has grown from its roots in north Buckinghamshire to become a significant city. During the next fifty years it will grow to become a significant regional hub. The Church in Milton Keynes is under-resourced and is still catching up on the gaps left after the first round of church planting.

The Diocese of Oxford has an opportunity to shape the development of the city during this coming period. The opportunity will not come again, and we need to invest appropriately. Key to the work of the church will be the nurture of Christian values in the political, economic and cultural life of the city. Justice, hope and love must not be supplanted by consumerism, injustice and individualism.

b) Church Growth

Growth is at the heart of our vision. Milton Keynes will double in size over the next thirty years and the Church must grow so that it can serve the city.

It is important that we aim for growth in **depth, impact** and **numbers**. Our vision is to see a more Christ-like church, so we want to see more people maturing as disciples, acting for the common good and drawing others into relationship with Jesus. It is not enough simply to have more people attending events.

We long to see more people engaged in Christian discipleship through our churches and other worshipping communities. This will mean the growth of existing congregations and the planting of new worshipping communities. We will need both.

c) Collaboration and Team Work

There has been a tendency to look to heroic leaders as the answer to our problems. In Milton Keynes this often produced a cycle of charismatic founder figures followed by a succession of “disappointments”. Many congregations have intentionally waited out unpopular clergy in the hope of a future “saviour”. Likewise, clergy have approached their congregations as problems to be solved, rather than communities of saints.

Over the past fifteen years, Milton Keynes Deanery has invested heavily along with ecumenical partners in collaborative leadership with projects linked to Local Shared Ministry, lay leadership and team leadership for clergy. This has had a positive impact and we have seen a corresponding growth of lay participation in a number of churches. We have also been able to recruit clergy with team leadership skills which is resulting in a change of culture. We need to continue to encourage collaboration, rather than look for the short-term benefits that can sometimes be achieved by “strong” leaders.

Collaboration, team work and lay leadership will be crucial if we are to reach more people for Christ in Milton Keynes. If we are limited to the capacity of ordained leaders, our churches will not grow much more than they already have.

d) Ecumenical Partnership

Milton Keynes was founded at a time of high expectation for structural ecumenism. Although we are no longer pursuing a strategy of structural unity, we continue to honour that legacy in working with our historic partners. We are focussing on unity through mission in an expanding collaboration with new partners including Roman Catholics, Pentecostals and independents. We are not in competition with other Christians but are seeking the Kingdom of God together. This reflects a broader change in local ecumenism which views ecumenism in missional terms centring on the goal of the reconciliation of all things in Christ.

In practical terms, this means that most mission projects involve partnerships with other churches. There are also worshipping communities and ministry teams which are linked to multiple Christian denominations. In many cases, the dissolution of these partnerships would be pointless, unnecessarily complex and counterproductive.

The Common Vision Strategy states that Christ-like churches are “Compassionate: alive to the needs of the world and wanting to make a difference in love. If seeking to plant or partner with another parish or deanery they will seek to come alongside the people already there, and to learn from their heritage and experience.” We need to be particularly mindful of this in Milton Keynes, given the complex web of relationships, and the things that have been said over the years – both in favour and in opposition to ecumenical partnerships. It is not helpful to talk about dissolving the LEPs or planting Anglican-only churches into ecumenical parishes without permission.

On the other hand, there are changes that will need to happen if the LEP system is to respond to the challenge of church growth. There are questions about leadership and governance that we will need to raise with our ecumenical partners. Some of these will be addressed as we “upgrade” the partnerships to Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs), but we will also need to address the question of rotating leadership which we feel has had a negative effect.

e) Capability and Capacity

When the Americans went to the moon, they spent a fortune developing huge rockets which could carry a few astronauts to the lunar surface. Only twelve people have ever set foot on the moon – and they only stayed for a few hours. For a multi-billion-dollar price tag, the Americans developed the capability to go to the moon, but not the capacity to stay. Commercial companies are now looking at low cost ways of going back – and are determined to generate higher-capacity solutions so that a moon base can be built...

In a similar way, we need to think in terms of capability and capacity in Milton Keynes. We could do what we did the first time, which was to spend a huge amount of money on sending a handful of people to plant churches. The cost was massive and it produced an unsustainable church. We had capability but not capacity. This time, we need to think in terms of capacity, not just capability.

The challenge of growth in the city is staggering. Even if we sent ten full-time ordained pioneers to Milton Keynes, we would only scratch the surface. The challenge is growing quicker than our resources. We need lighter, more sustainable options that enable us to reach further than we ever have before. This means more lay led projects, more flexible thinking, more support structures and a long-term leadership strategy.

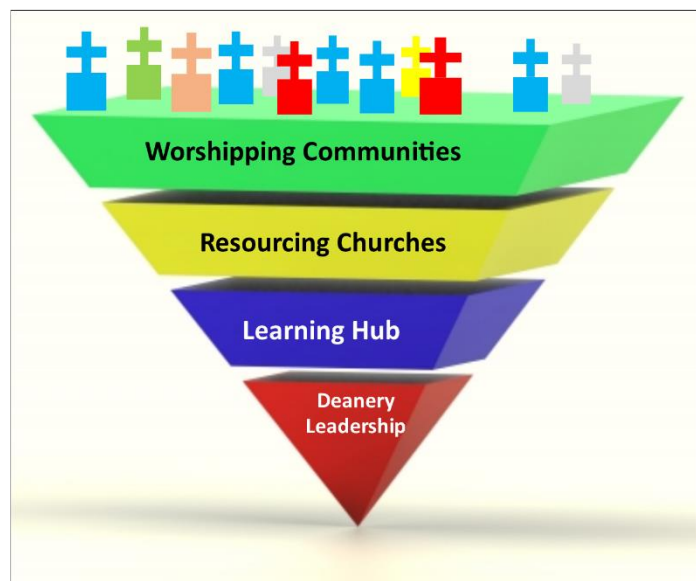
We need a “moon shot” in Milton Keynes – but not a short-lived high-cost project. We need culture change and a new approach to church.

f) A New Ecosystem

We need to establish a new ecosystem in Milton Keynes which is geared for growth rather than service provision. In the long run, making this change would be more valuable than any number of events, projects or posts. For the Anglican Deanery, this ecosystem will require a number of strategic “investments”:

- a) **Deanery Leadership:** We already have a full-time Area Dean. This has increased our capacity for vision-building, strategic planning and missional leadership, but we will need a new structure which can drive the Celebrate and Bless MK agenda. This might include a programme manager, office space, or a steering group. We will need to maintain our vision over an extended period of time, which can be challenging when personnel change, or new opportunities emerge. There will be a need to remodel the Deanery Leadership Team so that it can support our new agenda.
- b) **Planting and Pioneering:** We will need people who can help plant or pioneer new worshipping communities. This will require a coherent MK strategy which works for the geography and cultures of the emerging city.
- c) **Growth and Development:** We will need a strategy for encouraging growth in our existing worshipping communities. Some of this will be about up-skilling or recruiting leaders. There may also be a need to provide specific investments which help congregations to make paradigm shifts.
- d) **Learning and Training:** Our strategy will require the training and support of pioneers and planters, the nurture of new team leaders and the up-skilling of our clergy. This will require a range of programmes for training and ongoing support. This will include action learning, community organising, hard skills and mentoring. Our aim is to establish a new “Learning hub” which will meet these needs and provide resources for Christian discipleship in MK and beyond.

Our vision for a new ecosystem is best expressed through an inverted pyramid in which the local worshipping communities are at the top – supported by a number of systems, groups, individuals and congregations:



We are not the only Christian denomination working in Milton Keynes, so it is important to note that we will be working alongside our partners. In some cases, this will be in parallel, while in others, we will have different priorities. We believe that both unity and diversity are key to ecumenical mission. We fully expect to share the management of projects and resources with our partners in other denominations. This will include any new learning hub or prayer project.

3. Mission

We understand Mission as the work of God in the World. It is **God's mission** and we are invited to join in. It becomes our mission as we take up the challenge to serve Christ. The context of our work is the story of salvation as the framework within which history happens. As such we are moving from the World as it is towards the World as it should be.

Our focus must be on the **Kingdom of God** not on the Church. We are called to proclaim the Kingdom in word and deed. This means that we must seek the **Common Good** of all people in Milton Keynes and beyond, while calling them to join us as fellow **disciples** of Jesus.

It is really important that we are aware of the **context** in which we work. We need to respond to the physical and social reality of our city. We need to take the culture of our communities seriously and find appropriate ways to relate to those around us.

As servants of the Kingdom, we are committed to the holistic understanding of mission expressed in the **Five Marks of Mission**, as developed by the Anglican Communion and shared by our partners in the Mission Partnership.

We are called to:

- **proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God**
- **teach, baptise and nurture new believers**
- **respond to human need by loving service**
- **seek to transform unjust structures of society**
- **strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain the life of the earth.**

We want to encourage a broad approach to mission in Milton Keynes, and we hope to see all five marks of mission pursued by the new worshipping communities that form in our city. There is a temptation to pick forms

of mission that we are comfortable with, but the challenge is to broaden our understanding of what it means to be God's people and how we will respond.

Growth becomes an important focus of our strategy as we seek to become a more Christlike Church in Milton Keynes. We see this growth in three ways:

- **Depth:** It's crucial for churches to grow in depth. This will show itself in increased understanding of the many facets of faith, reconciled relationships, spirituality and the beauty of worship. This is part of what it means to be God's people. We need to strive for ever greater quality in our thoughts, words and actions...
- **Impact:** It's important for churches to grow in the impact they have on the wider-world. Serving the common good is part of the purpose that churches have. They are called to acts of mercy, kindness and compassion – reaching out to those in need and proclaiming the Kingdom in action not just in words...
- **Numbers:** Growth in numbers is an important aspect of Church life. We need to increase the number of people who are working together to change the world. Jesus calls us to make disciples and we need to take this seriously...

We believe that growth is healthy if it includes a balance of depth, impact and numbers. There is a danger that we focus on getting more people to attend events, become just another charity, or fight over what it means to be Christian. Healthy growth is about the nurture of new disciples who become servants of the Kingdom.

4. Church Growth in Milton Keynes

The Church of England has been planting Churches in Milton Keynes for over fifty years. This has generated a lot of experience but there are also some serious concerns which need to be taken on board. We have been involved in at least eighteen church plants so far, plus numerous “restarts”. Most of these began with great enthusiasm and creative leadership. Many are still doing well, but the majority began to struggle in the second generation of leadership, while a small number have now ceased to meet.

There is a myth in circulation that ecumenism is the biggest blockage to church growth in Milton Keynes. This is not true nor particularly helpful. Twelve of the fourteen surviving church plants emerged from ecumenical partnerships, which suggests that ecumenical mission has been a key driver of church growth in the city. The teams have, however, become large, complex and ungainly. This is making it difficult to have coherent long-term strategy and respond flexibly to opportunities. We believe that further growth will not happen unless there is a significant change in the leadership and governance of the LEPs.

It would be extremely disrespectful to say that people in the past simply didn't do things properly and we know better now. Many of the churches planted (or relaunched) in Milton Keynes had first generation leaders who were passionate disciples of Christ, focussed on mission, built teams, engaged with their community and had high level skills. Those who were involved still tell stories of the great excitement and energy that these projects produced, and the depth of spirituality which was involved. Problems often happened when local leaders wanted to hold on to the excitement of the early days, which brought them into conflict with a second-generation leader with a different set of priorities.

Other problems have included the reduction of clergy which became necessary because we were “over extended”. The Diocese understandably asked the Deanery to reduce the number of ministers in Milton Keynes because the churches were not large enough to support an appropriate level of share. This meant that parishes needed to spend more time working on redeployment or new ways of sharing ministry. There have also been issues relating to governance in the LEP teams due to the outdated constitutions which are still in place. We are now well on the way to resolving governance issues through the adoption of CIOs with support from the denominations nationally.

In spite of these challenges, there has been growth in Milton Keynes. Even while the number of full-time ministers has been dropping, the parishes and the Deanery as a whole have been investing time and money in church growth. The challenge is how we move forward into the second phase of expansion.

There are many ways of looking at church growth, but it is helpful to base our thinking on past experience in this city – particularly since a number of existing churches seem to be “stuck” and may need help to move on.

It is okay to be a small church. In fact, we will need a greater number of smaller worshipping communities if we are to reach every corner of our city. Smaller churches are a great place to nurture disciples and they can provide a deeper sense of community. This is not a question of status or success. We do not think that larger churches are somehow “better”.

On the other hand, we also want every church to be healthy, and this means that our finances and our deployment of staff will have to be sustainable. We can’t afford to support a large number of small churches, if each of these congregations requires an unrealistic level of support in terms of full-time ministers or some form of subsidy.

Small can be beautiful, but we don’t want churches to be unhealthy or stagnant. Small worshipping communities should still be seeking to grow in depth, impact and numbers. We would hope that smaller churches will endeavour to impact their communities and grow disciples. Sometimes this will mean that smaller churches are the ones that drive numerical growth, because they choose to plant new worshipping communities – or make a conscious decision to split in order to remain small!

Small can be beautiful, but larger churches also have their place. Larger churches have a more significant resource base and a critical mass of people. They can have a greater impact on a larger area, and often play a role in supporting or resourcing other worshipping communities. We aspire to have more larger churches than we do at the moment, so our strategy will include the possibility of growth for existing congregations.

We feel that it is important to have a clear understanding of how churches grow, so that we can help in a more intentional and strategic way. The following observations are an attempt to understand the dynamics of church growth in MK, rather than an expectation that every congregation must follow the same trajectory.



A pattern can be observed in the growth and development of churches across Milton Keynes. There are four stages of church growth, which could be understood in terms of:

- **Leadership:** the approach taken by the main leader and the core team
- **Numbers:** the numbers of adults and young people involved
- **Mission:** the key purpose of the Church community

Stage One: Birthing (0-60)

The first stage of growth is the birth of the worshipping community. This stage is marked by a single pioneering leader who takes on the bulk of leadership and organisation. This pioneer has high levels of creativity and the ability to build relationships – particularly with the unchurched or de-churched.

The pioneer has enthusiasm and resilience, which is essential because there is often a need to use rented space for worship, community life and mission. It is often necessary for the pioneer to have all of the equipment that the church needs in their house, shed or car. They are often the last person to go home and need to pack the church up at the end of Sunday worship.

There are a growing number of volunteers who are keen to help, and these people take on tasks under the supervision of the pioneer. They are given delegated tasks, but the vision and day-to-day management rests with the pioneer.

With this model, a worshipping community can grow to a size of thirty to forty adults gathered for worship – possibly with around sixty involved in some way. The limiting factor is the leadership capacity of the pioneer so the upper limit will vary, but it will be there. People's sense of belonging is linked to their relationship with the main leader.

The mission of the worshipping community is usually linked to a specific need. In Milton Keynes this has often been the need for a church in a new area of housing, but there have also been communities who have formed around a vision for ecumenical community or a concern about socio-economic deprivation.

We need to launch more worshipping communities in Milton Keynes and we will therefore need many more pioneers. We have often deployed full-time clergy posts for this task, which is hugely expensive, but there have also been projects which were started by lay people. We need a strategy which can be scaled up from small beginnings as communities grow. Employing lay pioneers would help kick-start the process in a greater number of places. This approach will work best if it happens within the support and accountability structures of a larger team.

We have been very successful in launching small worshipping communities in our city. A few have grown further, but many have remained small. Small churches can be sustained and supported within a larger network or team with an appropriate level of resourcing. A church of this size should not expect full-time ministry, which has implications for deployment, finance and congregational expectations. A small worshipping community is also called to grow in depth, impact and numbers – although the numerical growth might happen through the support of further plants and pioneering projects.

Stage Two: Self-Sustaining (60-200)

We have a number of worshipping communities which got “stuck” at the upper limits of stage one. After the pioneer left, the original members moved on or were drawn into conflict with a new minister. Some of the most difficult situations in Milton Keynes have involved lay people who were passionate supporters of the original pioneer and then fought successive generations of clergy over maintaining the earlier patterns of worship or church life.

It is important to note that a larger and more established worshipping community has a different set of needs and therefore calls for a different model of leadership.

Growing a church to a self-sustaining level requires a main leader who is skilled in team leadership and collaborative decision-making. There needs to be at least two “lieutenants” who work with the main leader but have a high level of autonomy. These lieutenants could be volunteers or part-time staff but will function as leaders in their own right with responsibility for administration, children’s work, pastoral care or mission.

With the extra leadership capacity that this brings, the worshipping community is no-longer limited by the capacity of the main leader. The leader is still a key focus, but their role is about gathering people in, or helping them to focus on the mission of the church.

A leadership team like this is capable of growing a church from sixty to around 200. The limiting factors are linked to overall complexity and the capacity of the team

The church growth agenda in Milton Keynes is often focussed on the need for new church plants, but there is also a need to help existing worshipping communities break through the stained-glass ceiling into maturity. This will require greater focus on deployment, training and support.

It is important to note that the skill set of the senior leader is crucially important. This leader needs to be highly skilled in strategic leadership, team work and the nurture of new leaders. Without these skills the consequence of building a team could be hugely negative for the congregation and the other leaders involved.

Deployment is therefore particularly important because it would be helpful for teams and clusters to move appropriately-skilled clergy into churches which need more focussed development. There has been some experience of this in the large team parishes, where clergy have been moved between congregations to help move things on. There have also been a couple of “re-plants” in which churches were given a new leader and an injection of life from another congregation.

We need a more intentional strategy for helping churches move forward. This will require us to think about training and support for clergy, creative use of team ministries and clusters, and resources to help churches employ assistant leaders like children’s workers, administrators or pastoral workers.

Stage Three: Reaching Out (200-500)

As Anglicans in Milton Keynes, we have only had two churches which have grown beyond 200. As the city grows, we will need more, because these larger congregations can have serious impact on the wider community due to their greater resource base. Churches of this size can take a lead in planting new congregations, strengthening existing communities or developing larger scale mission projects. They have a mission to a wider area, as well as to their local community.

Moving from stage two to stage three requires a different set of skills in the main leader. This person needs to be a leader of teams of teams. The skills required for this include an ability to train and support capable team leaders who are spending more time developing their own leaders and volunteers. A “high-accountability – low-control” approach is essential if further growth is to be achieved.

In Oxford Diocese, we are currently using the term “resourcing church” to talk about churches with a wider-impact. Key to achieving this will be about recruiting or up-skilling leaders. In some cases, it might be helpful to increase the staff of a larger church which has the potential to take their congregation to the next level.

Stage Four: Aiming High (500 plus)

There are two protestant churches in Milton Keynes which have more than 500 members – neither are Anglican. We have been told by their leaders that these churches each have a team who are highly skilled specialists rather than generalists. This results in a significant increase in capacity, quality and impact. It also requires higher level skills in the overall team leader.

These churches tend to see mission in terms of high-level objectives like ending poverty, evangelising the world or driving national strategy. They are focussed on change at a national, diocesan or even global level.

We should aspire to grow churches to this stage, and should therefore think about how we support leaders of Stage Three churches as they develop their leadership capacity. In the next five years, however, our focus should be on the lower levels of growth where we can achieve significant impact with targeted investments.

Over the next few years, our focus will be on three main priorities:

a) Building Effective Teams

We want to strengthen existing teams so that they are better equipped to meet the challenge of further growth. Collaboration and team work are essential for the growth and development of individual disciples and worshipping communities. We have already developed some experience of this in Milton Keynes, so we know how effective teams can be, but more will need to be done if our investments as a Diocese are to be effective.

We are praying for God to send more workers to help with the harvest, and we are hoping to have additional funds which will pay for this. We know, however, that these new workers will flourish best if they are part of functional teams with experienced and collaborative team leaders.

Team leadership is not about control but about helping other people to shine. It requires a certain amount of natural talent, which can be developed through reflective practice and further training. It's a form of "servant leadership" which draws the best out of God's people and helps other leaders to work together effectively.

The large LEP teams were formed in a very different era, when each church had its own minister. They were called "teams" but really functioned as "groups". The ministers were independent professionals who came together for mutual support and the occasional joint project. This began to change when the denominations stopped funding an individual minister for each congregation regardless of size. The change was often a difficult time for clergy and congregations, but encouraged more collaborative approaches.

There is a particular issue relating to the role of team leader. This is sometimes described as merely an "administrative necessity" or a "contact person". On the other hand, team leaders have often been the people who drove creative change, dealt with major conflict, or supported other ministers. The role has traditionally been a rotating appointment on a three-year cycle, so many team leaders are just getting the hang of it when its time to step down. They have limited authority and there is no mechanism for recruiting people with the high-level team leadership skills that the future will demand.

In the new era, we will need the LEP teams to be more strategic and capable of responding flexibly to missional opportunities. We think this will require more team work and a greater focus on collaborative ministry. If this can be done, the LEP teams could become powerhouses and enablers of mission.

We think there are specific changes which will need to be made if this hope is to be realised. The first is the adoption of the new Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) framework which will improve governance, and increase the legal capabilities of the teams. The second is the ending of team leader rotation.

We will be investing in the training of leaders and will open a conversation with our ecumenical partners about leadership within the LEP teams.

b) Pioneering New Worshipping Communities

We want to create new worshipping communities which meet the needs of unchurched and de-churched people. This requires a pioneering approach which is about reaching people where they are and helping them to discover what Christian community might look like for them. We already have some experience of this in Milton Keynes but we need to do more.

Some of this will happen through the appointment of ordained pioneers who are paid and housed. We know that this can work because we've done it before. Our new pioneers will be supported by existing parishes and may well be joined by a team from an existing church or parish. In some cases, the pioneers will start as curates, begin the project during their curacy and will then continue as an incumbent status minister.

Some of this will happen through the appointment of lay pioneers who will be paid to work part-time. This will create the opportunity for a more light-touch experimental approach to fresh expressions. We are keen for new worshipping communities to begin very organically and develop in a way that works for those involved. In some cases, it is possible that these new worshipping communities will need increased resources as they grow – but we are equally happy if they remain small – as long as there is growth in terms of impact and depth.

From experience, we believe that it can take ten years for a new worshipping community to reach a sustainable point. We will therefore aim to have six or ten years of tapered funding in place for each project that we support – with a mid-project review point. At the end of the project, a decision will be made as to how the new worshipping community will be resourced in future. Ideally by then it will be self-sustaining.

c) Supporting “Breakthrough” Churches

We want to help some of our worshipping communities to grow beyond the limits of their existing model. There are a number of churches which could grow further if they receive the right support and develop a more team-based approach.

This will require support and training for senior leaders and teams. We may need to seed-fund additional posts like administrators, children's workers or community workers so that staff teams can be established. There will need to be a commitment from the existing leadership team and ongoing support from the Deanery.

This is a significant issue in Milton Keynes given the number of churches that have been “stuck” at the boundary between stage one and two. As the city continues to grow, we will need to increase the number of our larger churches so that they can have a wider impact - potentially support a growing number of smaller worshipping communities.

This strategy is not a criticism of smaller worshipping communities, but a recognition that a diverse church ecosystem will require a range of different communities of various sizes and styles.

5. Strategies and Investments

We are not responsible for growing the Church and we can't make people become Christians. It is only God who can do this through the work of the Holy Spirit. Our job is to create space for growth to happen as we nurture disciples at every stage of their journey. Our strategies will therefore relate to things that we can influence, like prayer, deployment, oversight, training and other forms of support.

Specific strategies for encouraging Church Growth in Milton Keynes need to address the challenges and contexts set out in this document. It is not helpful to apply strategies that seem to work elsewhere while

ignoring fifty years of local experience. We will therefore need to take particular note of the way previous growth has taken place in the city, and the impact of our very specific geography.

Our main aim is to increase leadership capacity so that new growth can happen. In order to achieve this, we hope to provide targeted investments in terms of seed money which will help fund new posts.

The four key areas of investment will be:

- a) **Prayer**
- b) **Learning Hub**
- c) **Leadership Capacity**
- d) **Programme Support**

There will be other opportunities for churches, parishes and partnerships to apply for funding. This will include the new **Development Fund** being set up by the Diocese, and equivalent schemes provided by our ecumenical partners.

The Deanery of Milton Keynes is already talking to our main ecumenical partners in the city about how our different strategies can be integrated more closely. There are some obvious overlaps where we can work together or we could do similar things in different places. Joined-up thinking will increase our effectiveness and we must support each other in the common task of Christian mission. We hope to approach this as friends walking together, rather than rivals in competition.

a) Prayer

We believe that prayer must be a central focus of our work in Milton Keynes if we are to fulfil our mission here. Prayer is the means through which Christ transforms us, brings us into community and empowers us to serve God in the World. We need to pray for God's grace to be at work in salvation and transformation – work that only God can do through the Holy Spirit.

We recognise that there are already a multitude of events, meetings and gatherings in Milton Keynes which focus on prayer. We also rejoice that people have been praying for the city and the church here for over fifty years. We want to celebrate the prayer that has and is taking place, but we also want to bless the city in a new way and discover how we might bring prayer into the heart of our activity.

We believe that the most important thing that we can do is to build a **united vision** for prayer in the city. We believe that this needs to be shared with our churches, our people and our partners from other Christian traditions.

We want to encourage diversity, creativity and a sense of common purpose.

To achieve this, we will need to focus on encouragement, ongoing learning, resources, signposting, modelling and culture change. We do not believe that anyone can do this by themselves, so our aim must be to bring people together in unity so that they can spread out into every corner of the city – feeling equipped and ready to go.

We therefore propose that we will set up a **“prayer network”** in the city. This will need to be developed with our ecumenical partners, although we are willing to take the lead in coordinating this. There will need to be some form of **“reference group”** which will include key leaders from our partner churches. We will also appoint a part-time **“prayer coordinator”** who will be responsible for supporting events, maintaining communication, and resourcing initiatives. We will seek funding for this from a range of partners, and the post will be managed by the Deanery Leadership Team.

b) Learning Hub

In order to achieve the growth that we want to see in Milton Keynes, we will need to address two major issues:

- **Leadership:** We need leaders who are able to meet the particular challenge of mission in Milton Keynes. We need leaders who are pioneering, innovative and collaborative. We need people who can lead teams, nurture disciples and build up new leaders.
- **Spiritual Development:** We need to develop a generation of church members in Milton Keynes who are disciples not “church-goers”. We need to encourage people in their faith journey and build them up so they can be life-long learners, with a sense of vocation and a deep prayer life.

We would hope that discipleship will take place in our worshipping communities, but we recognise that there will need to be an intentional “leadership pipeline”, and there would also be an advantage in having a local “learning hub” in Milton Keynes.

The idea behind a leadership “pipeline” is that we plan for the future, rather than simply hope things turn out okay. It is important therefore that our strategy is shaped by present and future needs, rather than by past expectations or habits.

There are two key issues that we need to think about:

- **Leaders:** We need to have a clear policy of recruiting new leaders who have skills in mission, teamwork, discipleship and collaboration. It will be important to have a consistent approach, so that we have the skills we need for the future.
- **Leadership:** We also need to nurture lay leadership in our congregations. We will need to encourage a sense of vocation and help people to work effectively in teams. Much of this will happen within worshipping communities, but will be supported by the Learning Hub.

Existing churches could provide part of the leadership pipeline, through the nurture of church members and the training of leaders. We are also keen to use curacies as a stepping stone to local leadership. We have already begun to explore “pioneering/planting curacies” in which a curate begins a new worshipping community during their curacy.

We believe that we also need a local focus for leadership development and ongoing learning, if we are to support the ambitious programme of growth set out in this paper. We therefore plan to work with the Mission Partnership to establish a learning environment which will equip the church of the future to fulfil its mission.

This new “learning hub” will focus on:

- **Leadership:** Good leadership at all levels is essential to the mission of the church and to moving towards the vision, MK: a City Alive to God. Learning support for leadership is therefore a key area to address.
- **Faith Learning:** The mission of the church can only thrive to the extent that it generates disciples who have a lively faith in which they have confidence and which they are confident to share.
- **Common Good:** Our shared vision of Milton Keynes as “a City Alive to God” points beyond the church to the kingdom and to a God whose primary concern is for the world is to invite a commitment to the wholeness of the city. This is particularly important at a time when the city is changing rapidly, and issues in a call to social engagement. For this to be done wisely requires learning support.
- **Planting and Pioneering:** In order to grow the church in Milton Keynes, we will need lay and ordained leaders who are equipped and supported as they grow or pioneer new worshipping communities.

We hope that the new “learning hub” will have a number of key features:

- **Partnership:** The project will stress collaboration. This stems from the ecumenical gift of the particular history of the church in MK and an understanding of the reconciliation of diversity as a core component of the mission of God. Accordingly, the project will seek the widest possible ecumenical and collaborative partnerships.
- **Narrative Approach:** Coherence to the learning offer will be established through attention to the core Christian narrative, utilising this as a catechetical framework through which the bulk of learning is accessed. This will enable self-involvement, common language, ease of movement between modules and will be readily accessible and rapidly assimilated. The approach will also form the basis for faith learning in Leadership and Social Engagement.
- **Mentoring and Facilitating:** There will be a high degree of emphasis on bespoke learning through mentoring and on learning through facilitation in a variety of group settings, thus accessing the “learning in the room”.
- **Personal Discipleship Plans (PDP):** In order to stimulate discipleship, it is envisaged that the main preliminary for participation in learning through the project would come through involvement in Personal Discipleship Plans. This has the potential to increase participation substantially.

We believe that we need a strong local learning hub which will support the growth and development of the church in Milton Keynes. We will support the Mission Partnership as the lead agency in developing this project, and make use of this resource in the delivery of our strategy.

c) Leadership Capacity

In this paper, we have been arguing that further church growth in Milton Keynes will require an increase in both the capabilities and capacity of leaders. Some of this will be achieved by supported learning and better team work, but we also need an injection of new personnel. We need more labourers for the harvest who can help us reach more people in more places.

Past experience has taught us that external financial investment can help grow churches, but can also produce unsustainable patterns of ministry. The unintended consequences of creating new posts can be the financial burden of future generations. We want to avoid that by investing strategically, focussing on opportunities for growth, and managing expectations about long-term funding.

In practice, this means that we will be looking for “resourcing hubs”. These will be churches or parishes who are capable of supporting new leaders and deploying them effectively. We will create a process for parishes and churches to apply for funding and we will have clear criteria which we will use to assess their applications.

Resourcing Hubs

We are using the term “Resourcing Hub” to refer to a church or parish which is supporting the growth of a new worshipping community – a traditional congregation or some form of fresh expression. This definition is important to us, because there are a number of large team parishes which have already had a significant impact. Most of the previous growth in MK was powered by partnerships and they provide a structure which makes it possible for smaller congregations to exist.

To be a “Resourcing Hub” requires a generosity of spirit, because it is about giving things away, sending people out and losing control. It requires maturity, because the new will not always appreciate the old – and will need to establish its own identity and independence.

It is our expectation that “Resourcing Hubs” will plant within their own parish area, but there will be occasions when hubs will work together to plant or pioneer a new worshipping community. This new worshipping community will normally become part of the existing parish unless there are good reasons for alternative governance structures.

In order to function as a Resourcing Hub four key criteria will need to be met:

- a) **Mission:** is the church or parish already engaged in mission which produces growth in depth, impact and numbers?
- b) **Collaboration:** Is there a track record of working in partnership with other groups?
- c) **Coherence:** Is there shared vision, clear leadership and functional governance?
- d) **Critical Mass:** Are there sufficient numbers of people who would be willing and able to support the growth of a new worshipping community?

We recognise that there is a cost connected which relates to being a resourcing hub. When a group of leaders (lay and ordained) leave a church to help with a new project there is both an opportunity and a cost. There is an opportunity which is created for the nurture of new leaders because the departure creates space, but it also takes time for the church to recover - financially, numerically and organisationally. There will be a period of mourning as well as celebration. We need to be careful not to set too high a pace for planting, that the costs have long-term and negative implications for the churches and parishes involved.

Criteria for Investment

The aim of this strategy is to grow the church in Milton Keynes. We will therefore provide seed funding that enables churches and parishes to grow so that they are ready to plant new worshipping communities. We will also provide resources so that new worshipping communities will be formed.

We will be looking for projects which meet certain criteria:

- 1) **Mission:** We are looking for projects which aim to grow church in terms of depth, impact and numbers. We are keen that new worshipping communities will be working towards the Five Marks of Mission.
- 2) **Leadership:** We are looking for projects which will have good leadership in terms of vision, strategy and discipleship.
- 3) **Need:** We are looking for projects which respond to a clear and identifiable need. We are less keen on projects which are driven by “good ideas”.
- 4) **Vocation:** We are looking for people who have a strong sense that this is what God is calling them to do – and are willing to respond.
- 5) **Team:** We are looking for projects which build teams and grow new leaders.
- 6) **Learning:** We are looking for projects which include an expectation of ongoing learning – both by leaders and by the community.

Potential Investments

There are five targeted investments that we hope to make possible:

i) Lay Pioneers

We could fund a number of lay pioneers who will each plant or pioneer a new worshipping community. These pioneers will be funded for a fixed period of six or ten years (this figure has yet to be agreed) possibly with tapered funding so that the local parish is encouraged to resource the project in the long term. If the parish is able to find more funding for the project, it would obviously be possible for the pioneer to be employed full-time.

There are a number of people in Milton Keynes who have already pioneered new worshipping communities in this way – but with mixed success. The advantage of paying our lay pioneers is that they would be accountable and committed. Some people are already exercising this kind of ministry, but would be able to better justify the time involved if they were paid.

Key to this will be ongoing support in terms of training, mentoring and action learning. There are skills in community organising, pioneering and discipleship which could be taught, but our lay pioneers will also need ongoing supervision and support. It is our expectation that these lay pioneers will become members of existing parish teams, and will be line-managed by the overall team leader.

We hope to see a worshipping community of around thirty or more established within six to ten years. At the end of this period the parish team will need to make decisions about the long-term staff resources allocated to the project. Our expectation is that the new worshipping community will be generating sufficient resources at this point to justify a certain level of staffing, but this could obviously be increased if there is potential for further growth.

ii) Ordained Pioneers

We could fund a number of full-time ministers who will plant or pioneer new worshipping communities. These pioneers will be funded for a fixed period of six or ten years (this figure has yet to be agreed) with tapered funding so that there is a built-in process towards long term sustainability.

The ordained leader would be supported by a “resourcing hub” which will provide additional resources in terms of expenses, project costs and a team of lay people. We would expect the pioneer to work within a wider team which will provide a level of support and accountability. Housing within the work area might need to be provided.

This is an expensive investment, so we will challenge our full-time pioneers to aim high and seek to grow more significantly within a ten-year period. We expect to see either a larger community (stage 2) or multiple congregations/gatherings. This may require additional funding to seed-fund support staff.

iii) Lay Leaders

We could fund a number of lay people who would act as leaders, ministers or support staff. This will be particularly helpful for churches which are seeking to build a more collaborative culture and grow beyond their present limitations. These additional team members could be administrators, children’s workers, pastoral workers, community organisers, worship leaders, or intergenerational ministers, etc... They would become part of the local leadership or staff team, and contribute beyond their primary role.

We want to focus on churches and parishes where breakthrough growth is possible and will look for proposals which are intended to deliver growth in depth, impact and numbers. We are particularly keen to fund posts which will help change the organisational culture of the church or parish.

Funding for these posts will be enough to pay someone half-time for five years. This would be seed funding which will help kick start a post – but long-term funding would need to come from the parish. As with lay pioneers, it would be possible for a parish to provide additional funding and make these full-time posts.

iv) Associate Ministers

We could fund full-time associate ministers who would support the work of “resourcing hubs”. This would help a church or parish to release more staff time and resources in support of future growth. Larger churches could appoint a “worship leader” or a “site leader”.

This post would help the existing church to maintain growth while “giving away” resources, members and leaders for new projects.

This would be a relatively expensive investment, so there would need to be evidence that the post would provide sufficient value in supporting growth both in the “resourcing hub” and any new worshipping communities which emerge.

d) Project Support

In order to support the project as a whole, we will be looking for funding to employ:

- 1) **Programme Manager:** We need someone who can manage the programme and help identify new/additional sources of funding for our projects.
- 2) **Prayer Co-ordinator:** We need someone who will coordinate and support the prayer initiative. It would be ideal if this post could be funded ecumenically.

We would also like to have funding for office space, so we can create a physical place where the project can be coordinated and driven. This could also be a focus of prayer.

Desired Outcomes

We want to be both ambitious and realistic in our thinking, so we are aiming to increase the number of worshipping communities in Milton Keynes, and the number of paid staff members who nurture disciples and build Christian community. The numbers set out in this document reflect a level that we feel is reasonable in terms of long-term sustainability and realistic in terms of potential investment.

This project is focussed on new work that we aim to initiate between 2020 and 2025. We recognise that it may take until 2030 for us to see the outcomes that we hope for. Previous experience suggests that it often takes ten years for a new Worshipping Community to be established and sustainable.

In brief, we expect to see the following outcomes by 2030 at the latest:

- a) **New Worshipping Communities (Stage One):** A significant number of new worshipping communities with at least thirty regular members. These communities will be led by lay pioneers or teams. In some cases, we will be thinking about how to grow further by increasing the provision of ministry.
- b) **New Worshipping Communities (Stage Two):** At least three new worshipping communities led by full-time ordained ministers with a membership of more than sixty. These communities will have already grown beyond the “birthing” stage. They will either be single congregations, or missional communities with multiple sites or gatherings.

- c) **Breakthrough Churches:** At least two existing worshipping communities which had been around 50-70 in size, but have now grown into “stage 2” churches with a collaborative culture and a staff team. We would hope to see at least fifty additional members in these churches over a five to ten-year period.
- d) **Resourcing Hubs:** At least three of our churches or partnerships will have been planting and supporting new worshipping communities. We would hope that resourcing hubs do not see a net loss in membership as a result of planting and have recovered their initial numbers.

The figures quoted above are very conservative estimates, based on figures that it would be reasonable to expect, given the planned investment in new staff. The words “at least” are significant. Even given these low targets, we would expect a significant and sustainable increase in membership. We obviously hope that the final results will be even higher.

It is relatively easy to measure numerical growth, but less easy to assess growth in terms of impact and numbers. We are keen, however, that the evaluation of our strategy should take these factors into account. What evidence will we be able to show that the new worshipping communities are serving the common good? Can we see lives transformed and disciples growing in maturity? Are the existing churches and parishes becoming more outward-facing? Are new leaders emerging? Are people becoming more prayerful?

6. Funding Request / Budget (2020-25)

We are asking for funding from the Diocese and SDF to support a number of targeted investments which build both capability and capacity. This project relates to the five-year period from 2020 to 2025. We want to grow new worshipping communities during this time, but it is more crucial that we establish a culture of growth in depth, impact and numbers. We do not expect this to be the end of the story...

We do not want funding for ongoing roles, but we do need seed-funding if we are to create new posts. Our expectation is that these posts will become locally-funded within a ten-year period and we believe that this is reasonable target given our previous experience. We need to be ambitious and realistic about the number of new posts which the Deanery and parishes could sustain in the long-term.

We have been using the comparison with Reading as a starting point for these calculations. Reading is a similar size city to Milton Keynes (at the present moment). If MK had the same number of ministers per head of population, we would need to add around eight additional full-time staff. We feel that this is a reasonable figure to aim for – although we are going to make half of these part-time lay staff so that we increase capacity as well as capability.

We think it would be reasonable to apply for around £3M. Some of this would come from the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) with match-funding from the Diocese. There are decisions still to be made about the exact numbers involved.

The key questions are around the balance between lay and ordained ministry and the timescale for investments. For example, we could take on more projects if we deploy more part-time lay people, or if we limit funding to six years rather than ten. Some of us may feel that full-time ordained ministers are more likely to be successful, but we could afford fewer of them...

We are therefore putting forward four options. Each of these options would cost about the same amount of money, but they vary dramatically in the number of posts provided.

Option 1: More Ordained Ministers (3-6 years term for Pioneers)		
i) Lay Pioneers:	4 part-time lay pioneers who will establish new worshipping communities. They will be fully funded for the first three years but the funding will taper during the final three years.	4
ii) Ordained Pioneers:	5 full-time ordained ministers who will pioneer or plant new worshipping communities. These ministers will be housed. They will be fully funded for the first three years but the funding will taper during the final three years.	5
iii) Lay Leaders:	2 part-time lay leaders who will help build up existing churches or parishes. Full funding for five years.	2
iv) Associate Ministers:	2 full-time ordained ministers who will support an existing church or parish so that it can meet the growth challenge. Full funding for five years.	2

Option 2: More Lay Leaders (3-6 years term for Pioneers)		
i) Lay Pioneers:	10 part-time lay pioneers who will establish new worshipping communities. They will be fully funded for the first three years but the funding will taper during the final three years. (9 if there is no tapering...)	10
ii) Ordained Pioneers:	2 full-time ordained ministers who will pioneer or plant new worshipping communities. These ministers will be housed. They will be fully funded for the first three years but the funding will taper during the final three years.	2
iii) Lay Leaders:	6 part-time lay leaders who will help build up existing churches or parishes. Full funding for five years.	6
iv) Associate Ministers:	No full-time ordained ministers who will support an existing church or parish so that it can meet the growth challenge.	0

Option 3: More Ordained Ministers (5-10 years for Pioneers)		
i) Lay Pioneers:	3 part-time lay pioneers who will establish new worshipping communities. They will be fully funded for the first five years but the funding will taper during the final five years.	3
ii) Ordained Pioneers:	3 full-time ordained ministers who will pioneer or plant new worshipping communities. These ministers will be housed. They will be fully funded for the first five years and the funding will taper during the final five years.	3
iii) Lay Leaders:	2 part-time lay leaders who will help build up existing churches or parishes. Full funding for five years.	2
iv) Associate Minister:	1 full-time ordained minister who will support an existing church or parish so that it can meet the growth challenge. Full funding for five years.	1

Option 4: More Lay Leaders (5-10 years for Pioneers)		
i) Lay Pioneers:	6 part-time lay pioneers who will establish new worshipping communities. They will be fully funded for the first five years but the funding will taper during the final five years.	6
ii) Ordained Pioneers:	2 full-time ordained ministers who will pioneer or plant new worshipping communities. These ministers will be housed. They will be fully funded for the first five years and the funding will taper during the final five years.	2
iii) Lay Leaders:	4 part-time lay leaders who will help build up existing churches or parishes. Full funding for five years.	4
iv) Associate Ministers:	No full-time ordained ministers who will support an existing church or parish so that it can meet the growth challenge.	0

We recognise that there are strengths and weaknesses in each of these four options. They would require very different levels of support and generate very different results. We are therefore keen to consult widely and gather as much wisdom as we can before making a choice.

7. Next Steps?

The next stage of our local process will be to engage with a very wide group of people – including our ecumenical partners, parishes, and leaders. We want to know what people think about the direction of travel set out in this document and how they might want to engage with this agenda.

We are asking five questions at this stage:

- 1) What do you find positive in this proposal?
Which ideas would you encourage us to pursue?
- 2) What do you find challenging, uncomfortable or unclear?
What issues would like us to think about?
- 3) Is your parish/partnership likely to put in an application for additional investment?
If so, can you let us know what ideas you might have?
- 4) What learning needs do you have in your church/parish?
- 5) Which of the four “options” do you think we should adopt?
Why do you think it’s the best option?

We are on a tight time-scale, so we want your feedback by **Palm Sunday 14th April 2018**. Please send feedback to **CBMK@mkdeanery.org**

A proposal will go to Bishops Council which will hopefully become part of a bid for funds from both the Diocese and the National Church. It is possible that national money will be released through a Strategic Development Fund grant which will need to be match-funded by the Diocese.

In the Summer/Autumn of 2019, we will go back to parishes and encourage applications for specific projects. We will work with parishes to help identify the best opportunities for new development, and we will firm these proposals up by the end of the year.

It is hoped that some resources will be released in 2020, but the full amount may not be available until sometime later.

Thank you for taking the time to read this paper. We appreciate your time, and look forward to hearing your ideas. Please keep praying for Milton Keynes as we seek to build a more Christlike church here for the sake of God's World.

Tim Norwood (on behalf of the Steering Group)