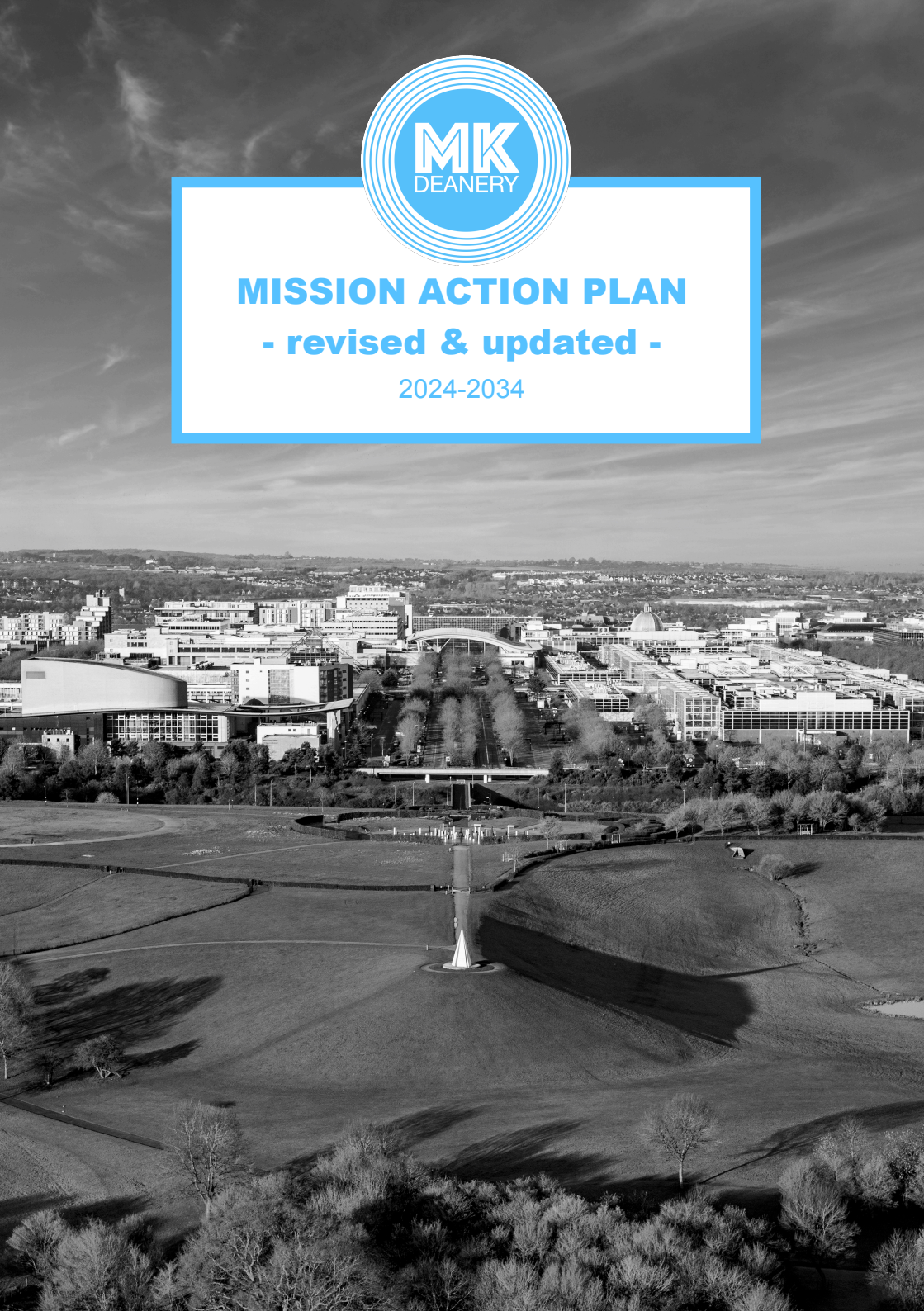
MK DEANERY

MISSION ACTION PLAN

- revised & updated -

2024-2034





Welcome

to the MK Deanery Mission Action Plan - or DMAP for short.

Each word of its name is important. It speaks of a communally held commitment to active involvement in strategic *mission*. It allows us to remain neither passive, insular or haphazard: there is too much at stake for that.

The things in the air are the things we can all sense. Even if some of them feel complex and contradictory, these things are our current reality: a clear definition of which is vital before we can begin to conceive of a new state.

It is all too obvious that churches are not as full as we wish they were, that leaders are over-stretched, volunteer energy is depleted, young people are largely absent from our worshipping communities, money is scarce and mission in a fragmented world of hyper-individualism and rapidly evolving AI seems daunting.

If we wanted to confirm our sense with hard numbers we could easily point to the low percentage of MK residents who engage with local church communities, and the below-average level of clergy per capita in our city as evidence of our struggle & explanation for our exhaustion.

However, if the times seem dark, then the opportunity for light is at its greatest.

The difficulties highlighted in an honest assessment of our current state are not the full picture. It is also true that the people of God remain a people of hope, that our God is neither surprised nor defeated by our challenges, that a sense of optimistic vision exists within our congregations and that a strong desire for missional work in the exciting city of Milton Keynes resides as a deep sense of calling in many.

There remains hope for full church gatherings of many sizes and types, for church plants in new areas, for young people being prioritised in mission and for the church to be known for the service of those in need.
The role of this plan then, is to plot a course “from where we are, to where we want to be”.

Our theory of change is “Mission” - the outward focussed communication of God’s love - but mission that is enhanced by reflective and targeted strategy, free from suffocating structures which deplete missional energy and which is typified by selfless and humble service of those currently outside our walls.

What follows has emerged from conversations among groups small and large, laity and clergy. It reflects deep faith and high optimism for the future and outlines a pathway towards a future where every resident of MK has a realistic chance of consistently and meaningfully being impacted by the Good News of the Kingdom.

This DMAP is neither a full or final word. It is a living, breathing document which will evolve and mature as we reflect on our actions and give thanks for the outcomes we see along the way. We don’t presume we speak for everyone: this is simply an attempt to direct and motivate our humble efforts to serve the Master in our little Anglican patch of the harvest field… relationship with the wider church is integral to all that we hope to see. The Kingdom of God is much wider than just us!

As you read through this vision document, may you be inspired to jump in with both feet…and as you do so, may others join you on the adventure!

WHAT A DEANERY IS (And what it isn't)

Before declaring a plan for the D*eanery*, we must be clear what it is, and what it isn't.

A Deanery is a collection of Anglican churches and parishes in a geographic area. As such, it is obviously fairly intangible. It's not a "thing" and should not be a focus of too much attention, resource or energy in and of itself. It has neither the authority to compel any church to engage nor to spend it's own money in any particular way. It should, when at its invitational best, be a point of unity which serves and resources the mission of local churches.

> "We are neither a large parish nor a small diocese…"
>
> *Wycombe Deanery*

All that said, the deanery fulfils important functions. Through its various synods and committees, the Deanery forms an important part of the synodical government of the Church of England and therefore plays a vital role in making decisions for the good of the local church.

Any DMAP must hold in tension its dual roles of unifying parishes, while simultaneously celebrating their distinctive identities. While it is a point of unifying purpose and resource, the Deanery should never drain energy away from the local church or attempt to enforce a homogeny of expression. The Deanery exists primarily to be of benefit to local churches, enabling *their* flourishing, rather then the other way round. The Deanery is of course also made up *of* those same local churches. The relationship is cyclical and mutual: they each strengthen the other.

The plans which follow are therefore inherently limited. Fancy words on shiny paper will remain just that without the engagement of local disciples and the participation of multiple parishes. While the Standing Committee can make some choices about deployment, pioneering projects and management of parish share; the exciting missional mandate remains in your hands. Our hope is to enable you to do that to which you are called, in fertile ground, in order that fruitfulness is possible.

Attributes of a Good DMAP

A GOOD PLAN WILL...

- **Be equally accessible and engaging to a wide variety of ecclesiologies**

  Multiple expressions and forms of church are needed to ensure we can reach the city with the good news of the Kingdom

- **Be *generic* enough to enable individual expression in parishes yet also *specific* enough to generate corporate identity and momentum**

  The DMAP aims to provide a direction of travel, a filter for decisions and an overarching identity for Anglican mission in MK while not attracting energy to itself at the expense of local mission

- **Have specific objectives towards which the deanery consistently works**

  Rather than being a list of good intentions and best wishes, the DMAP outlines specific objectives (more will emerge over time). Working towards these things will help ensure that the future is different from today.

- **Have longevity which enables commitment and reflective evaluation**

  Nobody engages with a plan they suspect will be ripped up and redrawn soon. This DMAP sets our course for the next decade.

THE STRATEGY

ENABLE & ENCOURAGE churches and disciples to bless the city with creative expressions of the 5 Marks of Mission.

1	2	3	4	5
Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom	Teach, baptise and nurture new believers	Respond to human need in loving service	Transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace & reconciliation	Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain & renew the life of the earth

6 Value Characteristics

As well as defining *what* we do, it is important to define *how* we will do it: what characteristics will typify our actions?

Wholeheartedly committed to relationship

Valuing people above projects, viewing neighbours as friends rather than targets, being concerned with souls not spreadsheets and committed to one another's flourishing

Courageously faith filled

We want to see fruit, be innovative & take risks

Generously collaborative*

Sharing resources and learning in relationship

Reliant on prayer

This is the bedrock of all work and hope

Selflessly future-oriented

Working tirelessly for the faith of future generations

Focussed but flexible

Targeted & strategic but open to opportunities and the Spirit

* This commitment to collaboration obviously encompasses the deanery & familiar ecumenical partners - but also includes a desire to broaden our work and deepen our relationships with wider denominations and networks.

THE SPECIFICS

So what does all this mean? What will actually happen as a result of this?

While the majority of the missional activity will reside in individual churches and parishes, there are some projects on which the combined energies of the entire deanery will have a more positive impact.

Over-leaf are some specific tasks and projects which the Deanery will focus on in the coming years (2026-2029 specifically). They are not exhaustive…some new opportunities will arise, nor are they eternal - some of the work might be finished within the life of this plan.

RESTRUCTURE

- Identify legacy structures which are not future-proof and reorganise to enable growth & flourishing
- Identify opportunities for church planting and developing new worshipping communities, especially amongst specific groups, under-served areas, areas of deprivation or young people.

FUND

- Develop and extend the Deanery Mission Fund, enabling lay-led mission activity in churches across MK
- Prioritise the allocation of Deanery finances to new projects and planting opportunities which would be otherwise unsustainable

YOUTH

- All clergy trained to shape church & focus mission with youth in mind
- Priority given to Mission Fund applications focussing on young people
- Synod to advocate and organise for a new Church of England secondary school in MK
- Explore possibility of YouShape hub opening in Milton Keynes in 2027

LEADERSHIP

- Recruit and retain fantastic clergy, curates and lay-leaders to MK
- Lay leadership & formation training offered across the Deanery
- Vocational pathways elevated in prominence Deanery wide
- Deanery leadership restructured to facilitate effective governance

Does our church need to have this same vision?

Not as a statement, no! Each local church is much better served by mapping and auditing the needs of its own community, understanding its own particular gifts and unique call to minister in its context. The deanery strategy makes no sense as a vision statement for a local church. That said, we hope it would become a driving force behind what you do and how you do it.

What will actually change?

Each of our deanery meetings will be focussed around the 5 marks of mission, in ways which demonstrate the values mentioned above. We will share ideas, celebrate successes (and failures) and pray for one another.

The Deanery committees will begin identifying blockers to mission which might be removed, and also assess where its limited monies can be spent for greatest impact. For instance, we would like to use any rebate of our parish share to seed new plants and projects. These committees will also be mapping areas of the city which are under-resourced, and seeking to recruit missionary leaders in line with this vision as and when the opportunities arise. Future deployment decisions will be influenced and informed by this work.

What can I do now?

Pray!
Pray for yourself and your involvement, for your church and its work, for your neighbourhood and its people, and for the growth of Kingdom in Milton Keynes.

Local Involvement
Engage fully in your local church. Do you have your own Mission Action Plan? Are there ways you could support the growth of activity characterised by the 5 Marks of Mission? Could you offer time, energy, expertise or money to these things?

Deanery Involvement
Could you join the deanery synod as a rep from your church? We need fantastic and dedicated disciples to oversee the work of this plan, pray for our deanery and ensure it is managed well.

CONNECT
www.mkdeanery.org



Find out more about the deanery, news and how your church can apply to the Mission Fund

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