

USING OUR GIFTS TO GROW THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

THE BELTISLOE DEANERY PLAN 2010 - 2015

SUMMARY

This is Beltisloe's Plan for its new Deanery. It represents the collective thinking of the old Groupings (Edenham, Corby, Bythams, Witham, Colsterworth and North Beltisloe) plus our new partners (Ringstone and Bourne). It covers the period up until 2015 and recommends that:

- as planned, Bourne and the Ringstone Group become full members of the Beltisloe Deanery at the end of 2010.
- mission in the new Deanery is led by 7 priests (one of whom, it is assumed, will also have responsibility for Edenham House),
- the current parish groupings remain in place until 2013 when we shall review their viability and decide whether different PCC groupings would be more appropriate,
- our Deanery share payments are set to cover the cost of this missionary leadership and make an equitable contribution to Diocesan costs,
- we work together more closely to nurture and develop ministry in our parishes. Specifically the Deanery Chapter will take an active role in:
 - running a Deanery Forum for new and ongoing lay ministry training,
 - encouraging our lay ministers to work across Group boundaries,
 - developing Lay Reader training across the Deanery, and,
 - developing a Deanery approach to youth work.

There is always a danger of us becoming over anxious and over shadowed by finance. Our experience is that our Christian charity is often tested in this way. Our Deanery has agreed that mission comes first. We pray we understand the place of the Gospel and the reality of God's love in this task. We must constantly remind ourselves of the teaching of Paul: 'if the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course.' (Galatians Chapter 5).

Our plan has three main themes

- Discipleship – personal training to help us use prayer and our God given gifts effectively.
- Ministry - continuing ministerial education
- Out-reach to our communities

This plan has 6 sections:

- The gifts we receive - the theological context for our Plan.
- Our communities and their Churches – a snapshot of today's Beltisloe.
- Using our gifts to grow mission.
- Our mission action plan.
- Funding mission – the way forward.
- Concluding thoughts.

THE GIFTS WE RECEIVE – the theological context for our Plan

- **ALL IS A GIFT**

The first principle of our life as Christians and of our life in the Church is that it is ‘from first to last the work of Christ.’ We are the work of ‘Grace’ the constant outpouring of God’s life, which upholds and sustains all things. It is not our world, or church, it is God’s. We must from the very outset set aside any possessiveness. We must be on our guard when talking about a parish or a vicar as being ‘mine’ or ‘ours’ – such a view of the world and the church is the way to death and not to life.

- **THE GIFT OF BAPTISM**

It is by Baptism that the Grace of God enfolds individuals in the power that raised Jesus from death, and brings each of us to new birth within God’s household, grafting us as living members incorporate into His body which is the Church - of which Christ is the head. Each Christian ‘goes into the church’ at Baptism. All of us are clothed with Christ. This is the foundation for the witness and service of the church in each community. Every baptised person is a Christian minister empowered and gifted uniquely for His service.

- **THE GIFT OF ORDINATION**

The Church of England has maintained the threefold order of Apostolic ministry of Bishop, Priest and Deacon. Among the baptised some are called and ordained (set apart) to ensure that the life of the local church is rooted in the belief and practice of the ‘faith one delivered to the saints,’ and to knit the local church to the Catholic church – universal in time and space. It is the role of the ordained to work in partnership with their brothers and sisters, and to serve them by Word and Sacrament and thereby to empower and inspire them, in Christ, for their ministry in home, community and workplace.

The priests’ primary function is the ‘cure of souls’. The gifting by the Holy Spirit in ordination enables them to exercise this cure by the celebration of the Sacraments and by the study and exposition of God’s Word; prayer is central to their life. The grace of God is at work through them to provide an authentic sign of Christ’s presence among his people. The outcome of ordained ministry is the growth of ‘every member’ ministry (1 Corinthians 12)

- **THE GIFT OF A GOODLY HERITAGE**

Our church buildings and the beauty of the surrounding landscape, the wealth of our communities, are also a sign of God’s goodness to us. The Church buildings are the witness of our forebears to the Gospel, and are hearts of prayer and worship in the midst of communities. They are to be valued as spiritual gifts not as monuments to a past culture. The building can provide for a route to engagement with the Gospel for the wider community. Our churches have a vital role to play in the building of healthy and sustainable communities. They should be an encouragement to devotion and not an obstacle to development. Where an emphasis on the maintenance of the building inhibits growth of loving service to Christ something must be amiss.

- **A GENEROUS RESPONSE**

In the light of all God’s gifts to us let us remember ‘it is meet, right and our bounden duty to give thanks and praise at all times and in all places.’ Let us not be fearful in the presence of such goodness and beauty. Money in many ways is the easiest commodity to give.

What is needed is the gift ourselves, ‘our souls and bodies to be a reasonable and living sacrifice.’ Living in this way God’s future will unfold before us. The alternative is a mean diminishing of our common life that will bear no fruit that will last. Let us pray that ‘God’s will not ours may be done.’ Let us ask for the greatest gift - the gift of Love and let us always remember ‘we love because he loved us first’ (1 John 3).

OUR COMMUNITIES AND THEIR CHURCHES

(Conclusions from the 2009 Mission Audit)

Beltisloe Deanery comprises 34 rural parishes (ranging in size from 1,700 souls down to less than 30) plus the town parish of Bourne. The total population is currently around 25,000 (of which 60% live in Bourne) and has grown by about 20% over the past 10 years. Population growth is expected to resume once the overall UK economy recovers.

In many of our communities, especially the smaller ones, the Church is at the heart of village life. It provides a place for worship and a focus for community activities. Our overall experience, however, matches that of other rural UK dioceses (one third of our population care about the Christian Church and its future, one third are ambivalent, one third aren't interested). But importantly, our Churches are there for all of our communities at life's critical stages.

Across Beltisloe there are wide differences in the quality of the relationship between our communities and their Churches. It is strongest where a dynamic priest is supported by energetic laity; Both are important. It is weakest where little focus has been placed on making the Church and its service pattern relevant to the mission needs of today's communities. Within Beltisloe we have the vision to grow; sharing this vision is one of our challenges.

In many of our Churches the lay energy is provided by the "silver generation" (over 50's) who grew up in Churchgoing families with varying denominational backgrounds. For them the Anglican Church is "the shop that is open"; their local Church is more important than their original denomination. These enthusiasts have differing attitudes to traditional Anglican liturgy. Some see it is a condition of their involvement; some feel excluded by it. Skilful ministry can accommodate both these views.

The young families in our communities have very busy lives. For those with clear Christian sympathies regular Sunday worship is not always at the top of their priorities. These families will, however, support special services - in fact they expect them! Developing service formats which enthuse them is a key challenge for our ministers (ordained and lay). Leading them to love traditional liturgy and worship patterns is a further step.

The number of services held in our Churches is a good indicator of the vibrancy of the local Christian community. Feedback from the PCCs showed that:

- a routine and a rhythm to local service patterns really helps community engagement,
- Group Services have a key role to play in helping our communities develop mission and fellowship but should be in addition to regular local worship.

Each of our communities presents different growth challenges. There is a time & place for tradition and a time & place for innovation. They are both important; we all need to be sensitive to this.

Major building projects are often good ways of galvanising community support for our Churches. Within the Deanery we have considerable expertise in funding and managing such projects which is willingly shared. The mission challenge is to develop such occupation with bricks & mortar into a preoccupation with a living faith.

The important challenges from this mission audit are:

- how do we share our ideas and resources more effectively,
- how do we develop service patterns & formats which appeal to all styles of Christian tradition, with special emphasis on young families,
- how do we develop the interest in our buildings into an interest in our Church,
- how do we develop our social and pastoral role within our communities.

Our clergy and our laity must use their collective gifts to meet these challenges together.

USING OUR GIFTS TO GROW MISSION

Our belief is that mission comes first - our activities must be gospel led. We know that the foundations of our future growth are strong, empathetic leadership from our priests supported by an open-minded, energetic laity who have a clear eye on the future.

- STRONG, EMPATHETIC PRIESTS

Every Church looks to its priest for inspiration. We look for energetic leaders who understand local needs and will use their “gift of ordination” constructively to grow mission. Our priests need to be sensitive to the challenges highlighted above in our mission audit.

Beltisloe benefits most when our priests can be seen working together and supporting each other. Having our Chapter united together in support of the “Gifts and Giving” paper is a highly motivational example; the recent Deanery Lay Ministry Training courses are another.

The team in Lincoln suggests that, in the short-term, there will be fewer stipendiary priests coming forth to lead mission across the Diocese. Our planning will need to take this into account, for example we should expect:

- greater need for the sharing of ministry resources (both ordained & lay),
- greater pressure on us to demonstrate the viability of our Groupings and our Deanery Plan,
- longer vacancies between clergy appointments, and,
- more responsibility being taken by lay volunteers for missionary and administrative tasks.

The hierarchical, Episcopal nature of the Anglican Church makes it easy to abdicate responsibility for our future to those further up the tree. Our recent mission audit highlights this an important risk. The response of our Deanery Chapter has been most encouraging. Specifically, they have agreed to:

- run a Deanery Forum for new and ongoing lay ministry training,
- encourage our lay ministers to work across Group boundaries,
- discuss developing Lay Reader training across the Deanery, and,
- discuss developing a Deanery-wide approach to youth work.

Whilst it is clear that our clergy must provide leadership, it is equally important for the laity to provide the day-to-day energy that fuels growth. They must work together to do the basics well in terms of services, mission and fellowship.

- VIBRANT LAY COMMUNITIES

The Christian Church has always relied heavily on its laity for a “generous response”. It will continue to do so. Our laity has a key role in the growth of mission. We cannot, and should not, expect our priests alone to drive growth; it is a shared responsibility. Each of our parishes has lay volunteers who are committed to an ongoing Christian presence in their communities. For us to grow their energy levels will need to be high. We know that many of the families in our communities want to see our Churches organising activities in places where children are safe and where Christian values are practiced.

Trained lay ministers and readers will have an increasingly important role to play in our growing communities so quality of their training must support our ambitions. Our augmented team will bring fresh approaches to mission and, hopefully, broaden the appeal of Christ’s message as well as providing welcome service cover and support for our clergy.

We have much valuable lay experience in terms of mission, fellowship and administration. But we need to share our wisdom better. Stewardship is an area where, in recent times, we have made good progress. In 2005, only 5 of our original 29 PCCs had effective “Gift Aid” programmes; this has risen to over 20. The positive impact is on PCC finances is clear and Deanery Share contributions have risen by over 50%. Encouragingly, community involvement in these parishes has improved and has given us a foundation to develop much stronger social links between our lay communities.

OUR MISSION ACTION PLAN

Below we identify specific actions which, we believe will contribute. It is our fundamental belief that missionary leadership in our rural communities has to be provided by a small number of full-time ordained ministers – paid clergy who are in tune with the needs of our many and distinctive parishes and their parishoners. These “empathetic priests” provide a key stimulus for our laity. Without this leadership there is a high risk that the energy for growth will dissipate; with it we can do our bit to grow mission in our corner of the Diocese.

We have three specific areas where we aim to develop: discipleship, training and outreach. What does this mean?

- **Discipleship**
 - Bible Discussion Groups - at least one per group in the period of the plan.
 - Personnel Evangelism Course - one per year in the Deanery.

- **Training**
 - Ministers' – one per year for each minister.
 - New Lay Ministers - one Foundation Course per year.
 - Officers' - a course for each Treasurer, Church Warden and Secretary.

- **Out-reach Projects**
 - Deanery - one project per year e.g. Alpha Course.
 - Deanery services:
 - Lent evensongs annually.
 - Two other services of Worship per year.
 - One outreach project per Group per year.
 - Youth Work – one event per school term.

Our Clergy Chapter, supported by the Deanery Pastoral Committee, has the prime responsibility for ensuring that these agreed actions progress. The agendas of their meetings are structured appropriately.

FUNDING MISSION – THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Our financial objective is to ensure that the Deanery Share we pay each year covers the cost of our stipendiary ministry plus an equitable contribution to the missionary development of the Diocese.

It is built on what we know works – providing each of our communities with valued missionary leadership. The key to the motivation of PCCs is their wish to fund their own priest. So our Plan asks them to do this as a minimum.

With regard to funding our own priests, we have made good progress in recent years. Table 1 below summarises the key numbers.

<u>Table 1.</u>				
Old Beltisloe Mission Costs and Share payments: 2004 - 2009				
<u>Year</u>	<u>Cost of Stipendiary Ministry</u> <small>See Note below</small>	<u>Deanery Share Paid</u>	<u>Surplus/(Deficit)</u>	<u>Surplus/(Deficit) as %age of Stipendiary Costs</u>
2004	£99k	£74k	(£25k)	(25%)
2005	£73k	£74k	£1k	2%
2006	£119k	£101k	(£18k)	(15%)
2007	£107k	£112k	£5k	4%
2008	£116k	£115k	(£1)	(1%)
2009	£101k	£114k	13k	13%

Note: Costs impacted by vacancies in all years.

This table shows that in 2004, Beltisloe Deanery had a 25% deficit. Our 2005 Plan – the first one of the New Era - started us along the road to self-sufficiency and we have maintained this position since 2007. In 2009 we generated a 13% surplus which contributes towards the costs of developing mission in the Diocese. When the numbers from our new partners (Ringstone and Bourne), are added the 2009 surplus for the wider Deanery was also 13%.

An important issue for us is that we still have significant differences in the financial “viability” of our PCC Groupings - some currently generate a surplus and some run a deficit. This Plan seeks to address this issue and then move us to a position where Beltisloe reliably generates an appropriate overall surplus for the Diocese. Our clear experience is that it is much easier to motivate parishes to contribute towards this appropriate surplus when they have a full-time stipendiary priest in post.

Table 2 below shows our Plan for Share over the next three years (2011 – 13). It is based on the following assumptions:

- that the cost of a stipendiary priest will rise by 3% p.a and thus be approx £45,000 in 2013,
- that each Group is free to decide how to divide its “Group share” between its PCCs,
- that the Rector of the Edenham Group will also be responsible for Edenham House, and,
- that the Corby Group and Bytham Group will be asked to fund a priest together from 2013.

Of the 35 PCCs in the expanded Beltisloe Deanery, 21 paid their requested share in full last year. Our experience is that active stewardship programmes are the most reliable route to PCCs being financially healthy. Our clergy also argue strongly that such programmes also give significant payback in terms of Christian fellowship and the development of mission.

However, there is much to be done to help all our PCCs meet their share requests in full. This Plan assumes that we shall continue to work closely with the Diocesan Resources Team (DRT) to improve the “pay rate” in Beltisloe. Table 2 also shows specifically where help is needed.

Table 2			
<u>Planned Changes in Share: 2011 - 13</u>			
<u>PCC Group</u>	<u>Comments re Share Payments and Stewardship Programmes</u>	<u>Planned No. of Stipendiary Priests</u>	<u>Proposed Annual Increase in Share</u> <i>(See Note)</i>
Edenham	Pay rate good. Share request on this Group is disproportionately high.	½	0%
Corby & Bytham	PCC pay rates vary considerably. Successful programme in parts of the Bythams in 2008. DRT help needed to achieve viability by 2013.	1	3%
Colsterworth	Pay rate has fallen away during interregnum. Programme in 2007, needs revitalising to meet agreed objective of viability by 2013.	1	10%
Withams	Pay rate poor. Stewardship programme in 2010. Big concern whether viability is feasible. Review in 2013	1	25%
North Beltisloe	Pay rate now good. Viability within grasp following successful programmes.	1	5%
Ringstone	Pay rate good but new programme needed.	1	3%
Bourne	Pay rate very good but share needs review post 2013.	1	3%
Deanery		6½	

Note: These increases will enable each PCC Group to cover the full forecast cost of stipendiary ministry in 2013, as a minimum.

There are considerable challenges in this Plan, most notably in (1) establishing the viability of the Witham Group, (2) moving the Colsterworth Group to breakeven, and (3) improving the pay-rate in the Corby & Bytham Groups. In recognition of this we shall conduct an interim review of progress in 2013. This review will:

- agree whether the current PCC Groupings are viable and, if not propose changes, and,
- set the Deanery share (and its allocation to Groups) for the subsequent three years.

If the Plan works then all our PCC Groups will be self-funding and we shall generate a surplus which can be used to develop mission further within the Diocese, and/or, if appropriate, our Deanery. This is the financial objective of this Plan.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Diocese's Mission Statement is to secure a growing, worshipping, celebrating, proclaiming, caring Christian presence in each of its communities.

We wholeheartedly support this aim. This Plan sets out to do this.

We know the road ahead is going to be tough but we journey prayerfully, directed by the Holy Spirit.