

Archdeacon for Regeneration and Mission

Introduction

In 2021, Synod adopted what became known as the Diocesan Mission Action Plan (DMAP), which was produced by a Synod Working Group and validated in a lengthy process of consultation and feedback. The vision and hope that lay behind the DMAP was having a tool that would encourage ministry units to develop strategically and empower them to address and overcome 'growth inhibitors,' to encourage greater accountability among our clerical and lay leaders, and to generally spur the whole Diocese toward a more intentional missional footing.

The DMAP also laid out a new role of 'Missional Leader,' which was established by Standing Committee at the end of 2021 and given the title 'Archdeacon for Regeneration and Mission.' I was appointed to this role at the beginning of 2022 to begin implementing the priorities and principles of the DMAP. Over time, and in consultation with a Reference Group and Bishop Peter, I developed other initiatives that were consistent with the vision of the DMAP. Throughout my time as Archdeacon for Regeneration and Mission I have tried to be an enthusiastic advocate for our Diocese's vision for regeneration.

Major Activities

During 2024 several clergy groups met for mutual support, coaching and prayer. These were called **Missional Clusters** and were led by Carolyn Robertson, Indrea Alexander, Dawn Baldwin and myself. Cluster meetings gave clergy opportunities to reflect on missional progress in their parishes, commit to particular actions and be accountable for progress. By the end of 2024 the groups I was leading finished meeting, but most of the others have continued.

The Blue Book Guidelines require each parish to undertake a **Mission Impact Review (MIR)** every five years. This means that ten MIRs need to take place around the Diocese each year. The review aims to hold up a mirror for the parish with a 'fresh set of eyes' that can help discern what the Spirit is saying to a parish or ministry unity, to stimulate growth, and to encourage missional engagement and impact. Review Teams have been drawn from a pool of 13 lay men and women and 9 clergy men and women

who have been trained for this work. The pool is being refreshed, with some reviewers stepping down at the end of 2024 and six new volunteers have and are being trained for the MIRs scheduled for 2025. Parishes continue to give positive feedback on their review experiences that provide a combination of affirmation, stimulation and challenge. Nicky Lee continues to provide invaluable work scheduling and organising MIRs

The **Diocesan Prayer Community** was launched in May 2024. There are currently 265 members who have pledged to pray daily for the regeneration of our Diocese. The majority of the parishes in the Diocese have parishioners who are part of the Prayer Community. Our larger parishes have 20 or 30 people involved and some of our smaller parishes have high numbers given their size. Members of the Prayer Community report that the daily pattern of prayer is a very helpful daily rhythm and discipline that includes a scripture reading, praying the Lord's Prayer, the Prayer for Regeneration and praying for other needs in the Diocese.

During the year I encouraged several parishes to undertake a **website 'refresh.'** This was facilitated greatly by Jenny Adams of Winning Communications. Parish websites are the first places people visit when looking for a church, prayer, spiritual help etc. Church websites need to be attractive, clear and orientated toward newcomers rather than regular church attenders. Following significant research, Jenny developed a template that has been used successfully by several parishes.

The **Living Faith Conference** took place at the Christchurch Boys' High School Auditorium on Saturday 26 October. The conference was extremely successful, with about 400 people present from 44 parishes. Feedback suggested that this was a very effective way of strengthening Anglican identity, encouraging confidence in the gospel, casting a vision for growth and renewal, and stimulating a fresh narrative of our Diocese being committed to making disciples and living 'Jesus-shaped lives.'

2024 was the third annual conference organized in the Diocese. The first two in 2022 and 2023 were the very successful 'Leading you Church into Growth' conferences that were aimed at both clergy and lay leaders. 115 people came to the 2022 conference and 180 (including 20 participating on-line) in 2023. The Living Faith Conference was aimed at all parishioners, both younger and older. It would be sensible to continue this pattern of

annual conferences given the obvious benefit to our parishes, the positive feedback received, and the momentum gained for spiritual growth and flourishing in our parishes.

The guest presenters in 2024 were Bishop Eleanor Sanderson, Dallas Harema and Grant Norsworthy. Bishop Eleanor and Grant Norsworthy delivered excellent talks and Dallas Harema was interviewed. Attendees expressed appreciation for all three speakers in the evaluative comments in questionnaires.

The conference was organized by a small team consisting of the Archdeacon for Regeneration and Mission, Ven. Indrea Alexander, Ven. Ben Randall, Rev'd Peg Riley, Rev'd Sammy Mould, Andrew Clark and Fay Deam. Veronica Cross and Rev'd Nicky Lee also contributed significantly in the weeks leading up to the conference.

Bishop Peter summarised the conference in the following way:

“The challenge and encouragement from the Living Faith conference, in my summary, is that the present and future regeneration of the Diocese (and of the church in the Western world) is through focus on living Jesus-shaped lives in a Jesus-shaped church working for a Jesus-shaped world to the glory of God. With this understanding of what it means for each of us to be a disciple, Jesus invites us each to be involved with others encouraging fellow disciples to make disciples. Critical in this process is a focus on engaging with each other where we are at in the messiness of life. Programmes and courses have their place, but the first call to the church at this time is to “let love be genuine,” that is, to develop a culture of love in which we hear what God is saying to us, day by day, and act on God’s voice. For those at the conference who read this message, what is God saying to you as you continue to digest the messages of the conference?”

Conference goers were invited to purchase a copy of John Mark Comer’s book ‘Practicing the Way.’ With 70 copies purchased and distributed, this book has proved to be an excellent follow-up resource. Many individuals and couples around the Diocese are benefitting from Comer’s call to apprentice ourselves to Jesus—being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus and doing what Jesus did.

In September 2024 the Diocese engaged with Crossway Baptist Church in Melbourne to provide training for clergy and some lay leaders in '**Building a Discipling Culture.**' The course began with 14 clergy and 4 lay leaders. Bishop Peter has also been involved. The course aims to help create church cultures where parishioners are growing as disciples so making new disciples becomes the norm and expectation. The year-long training course has 15, one hour Zoom sessions with an experienced coach and 2, two-day intensives. It finishes in late August. Between teaching sessions, members of the cohort are expected to implement their learnings in parish life. As anyone who has been involved in culture change in any social group will know, this is hard work! However, building a discipling culture is based on Jesus' own model of ministry. It is also expressed in the Anglican Communion's 'Season of Intentional Discipleship' that began in 2017.

Activities for 2025

Following my retirement from my role as Archdeacon for Regeneration and Mission in 2024 I took up Bishop Peter's invitation to continue in a 10% role as Coordinator of Mission Impact Reviews for 2025. At the writing of this report, we have completed two MIRs and trained four new reviewers. The other eight MIRs will take place between July and October.

I am also involved in coaching a parish team as they negotiate significant change in their parish. I have also met and consulted with a bishop and other church leaders about aspects of the DMAP. Finally, I have followed up with vestries and clergy several months after their MIRs to provide both accountability and further resourcing.

Other parts of the Archdeacon for Regeneration and Mission role are being carried forward by other clergy in the Diocese. Sam Knight is Coordinating the 'Building a Discipling Culture' course, Carolyn Robertson is involved with Missional Coaching for clergy, and Indrea Alexander is involved with Rural Ministry Development.

Final Comment

The DMAP has been a tremendously stimulating document for the Diocese. It has helped us become more deliberate and strategic about how we develop our parishes by focusing on a small number of missional priorities.

However, this activity is predicated on the people of our Diocese growing as disciples and living 'Jesus shaped lives.' It also depends heavily on us all having a growing commitment to prayer. All the plans and strategies we employ will come to nothing unless we seek God in prayer and faithfully pray that 'God's kingdom may come.'

Thanks

Throughout my time as Archdeacon for Regeneration and Mission I was supported by a very able Reference Group. The group consisted of Carolyn Robertson, Bruce Deam, Lucy Flatt and Meg Harvey. I would like to publicly thank this team for their missional vision, insight, questions and support. They contributed significantly to the successful implementation of the DMAP in the Diocese.

My gratitude is also extended to Nicky Lee for her 'behind the scenes' work supporting Mission Impact Reviews, Veronica Cross for her efficient and effective support, and my wife Pip for supporting me in this role. I would also like to thank Edwin Boyce and Gavin Holley and their respective teams in the Anglican Centre for their cooperation and commitment to the DMAP and my work. And finally, I would like to thank Bishop Peter for the opportunity of this ministry and for his support, encouragement and trust.