

## **Current and Future Mission Resources**

Over recent years churches within the Diocese and the Diocese itself have tried a number of the church growth and church leadership and initiative programmes. The material presented here is intended to provide background to what the Diocese might do in mission related activities. **A Guide to Mission resources already used within the Diocese**

### **1) Leading your Church into Growth (LYCIG)**

A three day residential conference on this topic was mounted in 2008 in the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway. A similar event is being planned for the Diocese in January 2010. Now in its fifteenth year, this highly popular course is specifically designed for clergy and lay leaders who are looking for help and encouragement in leading their Churches into growth. The course takes the form of an open seminar with interactive talks, practical exercises, workshops and time and space for personal reflection. Times of informal conversation provide opportunity for team members to answer questions and to explore the profile of individual churches represented in the course.

LYCIG is committed to a 'mixed economy' strategy developing refreshed expressions of traditional church alongside Fresh Expressions. It takes as its starting point that the local church is the primary agent of mission.

### **2) Growing Leaders**

Growing leaders is a programme developed by CPAS which has been used by Trinity Westhill and is likely to run in 2009 in a number of churches in the Diocese.

'We need a church where people are helped to take up leadership roles, and equipped to carry them out with confidence and skill. We need a church where those in leadership in their Monday-to-Saturday lives don't feel they have to leave all that behind when they enter the church building on a Sunday. We need a church where we grow leaders of every age - children, young people and adults' \* Research shows that growing, healthy churches have effective leadership at every level – from small group leaders to the minister. Yet many churches struggle to identify and resource leaders. People are busy. Time is limited. Yet growing healthy leaders is vital. Growing Leaders is a practical resource from CPAS. It is more than just another course. Over a year, its unique mix of teaching, mentoring and practical application focuses on:

- ◆ Leadership rooted in Christ
- ◆ Deepening commitment to long-term service
- ◆ Essential skills for the task.

### **3) Fresh Expressions**

Fresh Expressions is a major initiative begun in the Anglican Communion in England but which has since been found helpful in other churches. Captain Gerry Bowyer has significant experience of the approach.

What are Fresh Expressions all about? They are an approach to our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

A phrase like 'fresh expressions of church' can be vague and unclear. If you are doing something new mainly for churchgoers or are running a parents and tots group but have no plans for it to become church in its own right (perhaps forming a cell church among the parents and carers), both could be really valuable, but they would not be fresh expressions according to this definition.

At the heart of Fresh Expressions is a different way of thinking about church. Many existing churches operate with a 'you come to us' mindset. The aim here is not to provide a stepping stone into existing church, but to form new churches in their own right. 'Would you like to join us?' is an invitation to come to 'our' church, set out as we like, at a time that fits us, in a style that we have pre-arranged. The flow is from outside-in: from the world into the congregation.

#### **4) Back to Church Sunday**

Back to Church Sunday 2008 welcomed back 37,000 people some of them in our Diocese and at churches like St Devenick's, Bielside which at the time was in an interim period.

Back to Church Sunday is celebrating another rise in the numbers drawn back to church by the event this year as organisers gather in London for a special event at Lambeth Palace. Figures based on returns from Dioceses suggest that more than 37,000 people took up the invitation to try church again on Sunday, 28th September 2008 – with more than 31,000 of them 'coming back' to an Anglican church.

Thirty-eight Church of England Dioceses from Cornwall to Newcastle took part this year, in addition to Churches Together in Scotland, the Church in Wales, Baptist, Methodist, United reformed and Elim Pentecostal churches. In all, around 3,000 churches took part – inspired by research that recently revealed three million people (six per cent of the adult population) would come back to church if they received a personal invitation\*.

Research by the Diocese of Litchfield after last year's Back to Church Sunday showed that, six months after the event, between 12 and 15 per cent of 'Returners' had become regular members.

#### **5) The January 2009 Mission Conference How our Churches can Grow – A Day of Learning, Sharing and Encouragement**

The Convener of the Diocesan Mission Committee, Canon John Walker described the meeting in the following terms:

"No one was more encouraged by last month's Mission Committee day on 'How our Churches can grow' than myself. The small group that planned the day were bowled over by the attendance of almost fifty. It seems that this is an idea whose time has come. That is reflected in the way it is being taken up in all the Dioceses of our church and many other denominations.

Two key priorities in the teaching and equipping ministry of our Bishop are Leadership and Mission. These are reflected in the agenda of the Diocesan Mission Committee for the year ahead. We are preparing a substantial presentation to Diocesan Synod in March, another Study Day in May, encouraging participation in the Provincial Conference on Mission at Aviemore in October, and mounting a residential conference in the Diocese next January on 'Leading Your Church into Growth'. The soon to be launched new Diocesan Website will have links to resources to help our churches grow and develop in this area.

Our local churches are central to the mission of the church in society. The task of Bishop and Diocese is to energise and equip them for this role. In addition there is an emerging interdependence between charges as we seek to support one another in transition to a more missional way of being the church. There are all sorts of shoots of growth already pushing through. Hearing about them was one of the most encouraging aspects of the day.

It was good to round off last month's Study Day with the opportunity for individuals to receive prayer from our Bishop and one of the speakers for a fresh touch from God. Our greatest dependence needs to be on the Holy Spirit without whom we lose our direction and energy. As always He will build His church as we play our part."

Two of those who attended the conference Martin Auld from St Mary's, Inverurie and Ruth

Arthur from St Devenick's, Bieldside described the principle points made by the speakers in the following terms:

### **Malcolm Round – St Mungo's, Balerno**

Healthy church will grow spiritually and numerically – but you must carry out regular and detailed health checks'.

1988 – 75 people attend morning service and church was 'in the red'. This church now has a congregation of 400-500 at main Sunday service with another ±50 at a more formal service at 9:00am while an evening service attracts about 100. They addressed and resolved historical tensions, immediately organised a crèche – a must if you want to attract young families, looked at available council statistics on the age profile of the community to know its exact make-up. As rector, Malcolm concentrated on Bible-based teaching, mission and leadership – the congregation did the rest. Mission should be God based and there are no easy answers. Church size is immaterial for healthy growth. There are small and large churches and healthy and unhealthy churches. Growth comes out of healthy churches. Big churches have big problems and small churches have small ones. Not necessarily easier if the church is big; it's what's at the congregation's heart which is important. Congregations are the mission for the future – local congregations check your history out, there might be something that's preventing growth or that's stifled it in the past. Mission is very woolly. You must focus on it and prioritise. Define what area of mission you want to go for, what to target, look at the realities rather than fantasies. Have a mission strategy, such as being good news to the community, offer Alpha, pre-marriage courses. The process of change and growth can be costly in terms of finance, energy and relationships. Growth comes by the spirit & mercy of God.

Define what is mission in your context. Reaching the 'unchurched' and 'dechurched' - people must be taught how to talk their Christian faith in the ordinary places of their daily lives. They must be the Gospel and must communicate it.

Think about your Church services: If you feel embarrassed bringing someone to your church then your church needs to change. Look at style of worship. Have courage to try new styles but not 'all things to all people'. Small groups (house groups etc are vital for growth), Prayer life of a church must feature strong intercessory prayer, Vestry – heart of leadership and must be committed to all areas of church work, Vision must be clear and manageable

### **Gerry Bowyer – St Ninian's, Aberdeen**

Gerry is involved in a community project in Tillydrone/Seaton area – SAMS – part of The Samuel Trust – 'children hear God'. Children are picked up after school by bus and taken for an after school club of games and bible stories. Vitally they are then visited in their own homes, giving a short opportunity to talk with parents etc. This project involves three denominations/three theologies that have brought walls down and adapted to mission amongst the 'unchurched' in a deprived area.

Positive points: Developing relationships with children, Churches working together, 'Ownership' from children – some call this group their 'church', Based on the stories of Jesus – bible-based!

Street Pastors – Aberdeen is an ecumenical project within Aberdeen working to make late night Aberdeen a safer place and meeting people where they are. Listen.....Care.....Help. It is Non-judgemental giving love to everyone. The Gospel is at the heart of what Street Pastors do but not at the forefront of what they say. Fundamental is the Urban Trinity – in partnership and together with local statutory and voluntary organisations

### **Susan McDonald – Christ Church Edinburgh**

A growing church is continually asking questions 'where are we?' 'Who are we?' 'What do we

do'? 'How do we do it'? – Use resources God has given us – money, buildings and people. Mission about pointing away from self to God. Growing church into what God has called it to be within the context of where it is. Look at our gifts before settling on the tasks. Build up confidence of congregation by developing social activities: lunches, fun things etc. Identify and use the resources that God has given us: personal, spiritual and material. Attracting people: defined activities often off-putting, try open door approach. In their case outreach, of a practical nature, to the homeless was not successful. Instead they encourage/assist them to contact the appropriate agencies. Pre-school praise a hit. Suggestions: cityspace, quiet gardens, something on Saturdays, approach to young families, café culture (lurking & loitering), evangelism.

General: remember congregations are made up of people so communication is crucial within congregations, between them and with the Diocese. Remember also that congregations are a community of interest but from a range of other communities of interest and place. Understanding this will help a congregation to understand its gifts and from them reach out.

The following are the comments of three people who attended the day.

"I probably picked up more ideas from Malcolm Round's presentation than the others though they were all interesting. In my experience of conferences of this type, if you leave with one good idea which you can then put into practice, then the exercise has been worthwhile.

"If you do not have a crèche then you will not get families" and "A children's worker will grow the church" both struck a note with me in the morning session.

Also the need to define our mission as "to bring people to Christ" and limit our strategy to one or two things that we then determine to do well seemed sound advice.

Taking as read the centrality and importance of the Eucharist we need to consider the statement that "the Eucharist is not a growth service" and whether there is another way to do church which is right for St Mary's congregation and for our mission." *John Yardley*

"I followed closely Malcolm Round's explanation of the difficulties Ministers or Priests face when first ensconced in a church whether it is of a small or large congregation and reflected on some of the similarities that had occurred in our own Cathedral Church of St Andrew. There is a feeling of uncertainty in what the unknown will offer when considering the delicate building of relationships between a new Minister and the congregation. The thought of any kind of change to be a possible necessity for the church to grow is a difficult conception. Especially from perhaps a strictly traditional into a more "modern" church assembly, to attract younger potential members to remain, yet still hold on to an already faithful congregation, brings a challenge to members of long standing relationship with their Priest let alone with a new one.

I welcomed the suggestion that by providing crèche facilities for the children introducing them at an early age to the stories of Jesus Christ means that this knowledge of God remains with them and additionally by giving hope and encouragement to the parents they may then decide to become more involved with the Church. Where schools or a thriving community surrounds a Church building, or there are many rooms available in the building, the concept of many children encouraged to come is easier to contemplate. The warm welcome received by those who enter our Church is well known, yet there is something more needed to break down the barriers to ensure that people want to return and belong. I often think that "modern" is a wrong conjugation to describe any change into the forward renewal awakening of a Church ready to accept the pouring of the Holy Spirit in the mission of growth.

How can our Churches grow? The Aberdeen Street Pastors are breaking down barriers among the people out in the streets. I am so glad to be a Street Pastor. The people are beginning to know that we are there to show the love of God ready to let the Holy Spirit enter and guide us to care, to listen, to help in any way we can. Often simply by listening we can see the healing process begin." *F B Cal-Anglia*

Perhaps this should be my New Year's resolution: to say at least once a day "nothing is impossible with God" ... the words of the Angel Gabriel to Mary and also Jesus in reply to his disciples after the bit about a camel going through a needle's eye (Mt 19:26). I found myself encouraged, inspired and deeply challenged yesterday.

Encouraged and inspired by all three speakers Malcolm Round, Susan MacDonald and Gerry Bowyer. Challenged personally – what will I do? Congregationally – what will us in our congregation do? And at every level upwards and outwards... "Nothing is impossible with God". One big temptation is to turn away from reality – but all three speakers agreed that the first thing to be done is to face the truth – particularly that part we have been ignoring – the elephants in our room. Malcolm spoke of people leaving, Susan mentioned having to get the right people in leadership positions – which has to include getting some unsuited people out (and as far as possible into something that they are suited to), and Gerry talked about the need to suspend three sets of denominational differences in the SAMS project for unchurched primary age children.

All three had a notable clarity of intent, and a willingness to hold to it over a period – in Malcolm's case, over 20 years. So what were his key themes? The local congregation is at the heart of God's plan – people, not buildings. St Mungo's does not own a building large enough for Sunday worship – but hires a local school whose head does not like them! God's presence – seeking to encourage this through sung worship in particular – through small groups meeting during the week – you've got to like the church you go to before you are likely to ask others to try it.

Not just welcome, but also Gospel – the stories of Jesus then and now – also the core of the SAMS project.

Susan MacDonald is well known to many from her time in this Diocese. She has been at Christchurch Morningside for a relatively short time, but has evidently made an impact. I gained the impression that she has unblocked a number of logjams so that schemes started well before she arrived have been enabled to come to new fruitfulness.

Some one liners:

"Focus on a few things at a time";

"Vision was not reality";

"Look at gifting BEFORE appointment"

Gerry Bowyer presented two projects, both involving collaboration with other Christians in Aberdeen City. One was SAMS which seeks to reach 8-13 yr old children and introduce them to the stories about Jesus. They are generally from families which have been unchurched for 3 or 4 generations. It requires a lot of volunteers – who visit the children in their families weekly – and a relatively modest amount of money at c£11k/yr e.g. for buses. It seemed to me the sort of thing that should be done. It is, however a long term investment. The other one was "Street Pastors". This is a group which patrols Aberdeen city centre on Saturday nights from 10pm to 4 am helping people who are in various sorts of difficulty – from being too cold in a taxi queue, needing something easier to walk in than high heels (flip flops), recent relationship bust-ups and so on. The police are very supportive and see SP as a complement to what they do and which has the effect of reducing violence and crime. The volunteers include men and women, old and young from (I think) about 16 congregations. *Nigel Feilden*