

# the northern ark : a contextual response to 'releasing the energy'

report for discussion with the Strategic Archdeacon



Parishes serving the areas of

- Avonmouth
- Lawrence Weston
- Henbury
- Southmead
- Upper Horfield
- Lockleaze



[northern.ark@gmail.com](mailto:northern.ark@gmail.com)

## **Introduction:**

'Releasing the energy' asks parishes to consider how they might respond to our diocesan growth strategy.

This discussion document is intended to stimulate discussion and response to the challenges and opportunities we face in the context of the neighbouring and coterminous parishes gathered together under the collective title 'northern ark'.

1. The outline plan discussed at our preliminary meeting.
2. A short profile of the current situation in each place.
3. A continuum towards the development of Local Ministry Teams in each place.
4. Towards a theological rationale for the Northern Ark.
5. A conclusion listing sought outcomes from this discussion.

# 1. Outline Plan presented at the preliminary meeting:

## Towards a Local Ministry Development Plan 2010 – 2014 for the Parishes of the Northern Ark – David Lloyd

(NB 'Ark' to avoid confusion with L.A. designation and current business using 'Northern Ark')

### 1.0 Vision

- 1.1 To discern and develop ways of implementing the aspirations of 'Releasing the Energy' that will fit the context of the Northern Ark.
- 1.2 To become a collective of confident, growing parishes committed to supporting the mission and ministry of every member and every parish within the Northern Ark. To become churches dependent upon the life and ministry of Christ in our discipleship as we serve Him and one another for the glory of God's kingdom.

### 2.0 Summary local ministry development plan

- 2.1 Invitation extended to parishes to enter a process of discovery towards becoming 'enabled parishes' in which every church member is involved, supported and encouraged in mission and ministry in ways appropriate to their context.
- 2.2 Ongoing development of supporting material for preaching and teaching of the theological principles of this plan based on the 'Go Local – Grow Local' Project.
- 2.3 Discernment, formation, training and support of a Local Ministry Team (LMT) in each parish to become the primary unit of leadership to sustain and grow the life of the church.
- 2.4 Build and maintain relationships with other parishes in the diocese of Bristol developing LMT's, in a spirit of exploration and discovery.

- 2.5 Recognise that in each geographical area residents will benefit from knowing who is or are the ministers with whom they may identify and to whom they should relate.
- 2.6 Work towards a tapering reduction figure for the Northern Ark of 2 stipendiary clergy (full-time or full-time equivalent) by 2014, supported by a stipendiary Interventionist.

### 3.0 Timing

- 3.1 May/June 2010 current staff invited to consider ministry needs and formulate/shape Plan
- 3.2 September/December 2010 prepare detailed plan for each parish
- 3.3 2011 – 2014 Development & commissioning of lay and ordained ministers of the LMT's of the Northern Ark.

Present: The Ven. T. McClure, Strategic Archdeacon, Canon Joe Hasler, Revds. Jenny Low, David Lloyd, James Wilson.

Following our discussion it was agreed we would prepare a short profile of our current status with regard to the development of Local Ministry Teams (LMT) to include a contribution from St. Stephen's, Southmead.

## 2. Parish profiles:

### St. Andrew's Avonmouth.

The church has had a difficult time over a number of years and as a result there are hurts and disagreements that are only just beginning to heal.

The congregation had diminished to about 23 but this is now growing slowly with the return of some who had drifted away and the addition of one or two younger families.

The members are used to not having a Priest and so already see it as their role not only to keep things going but also to reach out to the community. St. Andrew's is the only visible church remaining in Avonmouth village of any denomination.

They have done a lot of work thinking about their position in the community and what could be done with the building and site to serve the area but so far all developers who have been interested have dropped by the wayside.

They have already asked for and received some training to set up a Pastoral visiting team.

The PCC is ready to look at their gifting and consider how they might move ahead in leadership. Joe Hasler is coming to meet the PCC to move this forward.

### Henbury.

The church has struggled to make sense of the demands and challenges of the radical post war change in demographic from small Gloucestershire village to Bristol Outer Estate. Only in the past decade has any serious attempt been made to understand the implications of this change allied with a growing desire to transform inherited patterns into those more appropriate to the context.

At the APCM of 2007 St. Mary's articulated a conscious decision to move from a maintenance congregation to a missional community seeking new insights into the nature of mission, leadership and authority, what it means to be local and indigenous, eucharistic rather than bureaucratic.

This move also marked a decision to move away from the inherited 'Vicar as Discipled' model of ministry towards an exploration of the ministry of others and the development of a 'democratic' ecclesiology, in part reflected by the recent reversal of the 19<sup>th</sup> C Tractarian re ordering at St. Mary's.

Over the past two years the focus of mission and ministry has shifted from the centre to the local with the creation of two satellite 'Pods' of small groups in Brentry and in Station Road.

The process of the formation of a Local Ministry Team was started in 2009 with the intention of pursuing the 'Go Local – Grow Local' model pioneered at Lockleaze.

### St. Gregory's, Horfield.

St Gregory's Church is traditional in many ways it still has a robed choir and servers with an average attendance so for this year of 46 with also 7 children attending. There is one stipendiary Priest, one retired Priest (attached all his life to the church) one lay member that acts in a Deacon role once a month. The congregation is hard working but most of their energy is spent on fund raising (£10,000 = 25% of income) and maintaining what was the vision of the church 40 years ago. There are many potential *leaders* within the church but most have little self-confidence through perceived attacks from a needy group that is a remnant of the church under Fr Ken. Change is hard for this group as it is seen as a lessening of their status hence their perceived animosity to anyone or anything new. This group been weakened over the last 4 years but still have a disturbing effect on the church as a whole as it feels a duty of care for them.

The *Priest* has been seen as the source of authority, rather than an authority over several periods of incumbents, which has destabilised the church community into a distrustful and fearful mindset. The hope of a Northern Ark alliance would empower the church community to break free from the constraints of its more unhelpful traditions and return to being a true focus of the community as a whole. This would be achieved by observing good practice and experience appropriate interventions from a body greater range of skills yet equal in status.

### **St. Peter's Lawrence Weston.**

St. Peter's congregation is largely elderly and about 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the electoral roll have died since I came! The congregation fell to mid-20's but seems to have now stabilised with the addition of some new families through our contacts at after school club (WoW – which also happens at St. A's) and Tiddlywinks for Mums and babies. These activities rely largely on one or two in the congregation and the cohort of Trinity students. There is still a great deal of reliance on having a Priest to lead things and to do the visiting, admin. etc. etc.

The PCC is 'building' oriented and spends a lot of time and effort on its upkeep. Money is always seen as a problem and paying the parish share is a constant struggle – although people are extremely generous.

The PCC have recently shown interest in what is happening at St. Andrew's with Joe and made noises that they could do something similar.

### **Lockleaze.**

The congregation that meets at St. Mary Magdalene Lockleaze has a normal Sunday attendance of about 38 adults and 3 children. It has a Local Ministry team of 7 consisting of an OLM priest, an Administrator (Churchwarden), a Licensed Lay Reader, a Treasurer, a Worship leader who acts as a deacon, Children's worker and healing leader, and a Sacristan. Other read, lead prayers, work with children and offer hospitality etc..

The ministry team meet monthly and work from an office in the church. Continued mentoring in ministry matters and in using the computer is still required. The Vicar is less needed and is closer to being redundant. Some gaps in meeting preaching requirements and during holidays are apparent. Being part of a staff sharing scheme across the Northern Ark will provide the security of staying connected to the deanery and the wider church and will give a support system that will allow them to consult on events, issues and concerns not previously encountered with people who will know their circumstances. We continue to be part of a Deanery partnership.

### **St. Stephen's, Southmead.**

Normal Sunday attendance is between 35 and 45 adults, with one or two children in attendance. We are developing a Local Ministry Team, with two very active churchwardens, a treasurer, secretary, a rota of three deacons for Sunday worship,

a rota of intercessors and lesson readers, a Sunday School leader, with others involved in various ways in Sunday worship and week-day events. We have one member concluding the "Equipping God's People" course, and hoping to attend a Local Lay Ministry discernment day in the autumn. We also have a Study Group leader, with the group meeting on a regular basis to discuss aspects of the Christian faith. We have a part-time administrator based in the White Hall (our community project) who works for both the project and the church. We have continued to be involved in the Parish Partnership since its inception; this has begun to give us some understanding of belonging to a larger entity. We also have a good and active relationship with the other Southmead churches, with church leaders meeting together on a regular basis. Nevertheless it will be a large step for St Stephen's and Southmead (a large parish of some 12,000 people) to be without its own vicar, and especial care, planning and sensitivity will be needed to make such a step if this has to be. (Consideration also has to be given to the vicarage building, which is very vulnerable if left as an empty building and this has caused problems in the past during interregnums. Ideally it should not be left uninhabited).

**Profiles prepared by** - Revd. John Hall, Canon Joe Hasler, Revds. Jenny Low, David Lloyd, James Wilson.

### 3. The northern ark

– a continuum towards the development of Local Ministry Teams (LMT) in each place – Joe Hasler

A model where each congregation displays concrete examples of the next step towards change.  
i.e. The different congregations appear to represent different stages on a continuum of change  
from the model of **‘Vicar as Discipler’**  
toward a **‘Local Ministry Team’** (LMT)  
which aims to become responsible for the cure of souls .

We were pleased that Southmead has joined these discussions. Conversations were not detailed enough to include them in this continuum.

#### The continuum

<Vicar as Discipler -----Local Ministry Team>

< St. Peter Lawrence Weston ----- St. Gregory the Great -----St Andrew Avonmouth-----St Mary Henbury-----St Mary Magdalene Lockleaze.>

Stage 1

Stage 2

Stage 3

Stage 4

Stage 5

#### The parishes on the journey.

<b>Stage on Continuum</b>	<b>Description of the intervention at this stage</b>	<b>Where currently exhibited</b>	<b>Some actual examples of current interventions</b>
<b>Stage 1</b>	Exciting interest in self determination	St. Peter Lawrence Weston	Exciting interest. Mission that does not ignore old timers but approaches the new and growing periphery
<b>Stage 2</b>	Bringing the challenge of LMT alongside 'vicar as discipler' model.	St. Gregory the Great Horfield	Dealing with distant memories. Breaking down old patterns. Helping the new players take some power. <i>Two local ministers identified by PCC</i> <i>Encouraging others</i>
<b>Stage 3</b>	Exploring possible action to change toward LMT.	St Andrew Avonmouth	Check out who has been identified with ministry. Foster an explicit consciousness of what they do. Work on self-policing of their rules and conflict management.
<b>Stage 4</b>	Beginning to develop and apply a change strategy	St Mary Henbury	Beginning to develop a local ministry team. Gaining authority from the parish. Need of learning and accompanied experience. Keeping an eye to the community and satellite developments (Pods).
<b>Stage 5</b>	Working out how to sustain and perpetuate the achieved changes towards a LMT	St Mary Magdalene Lockleaze	Local ministry team formed. Some mentoring and support required. Looking for next generation. Connecting with wider church.

## **The interventions suggested by this continuum include**

- Helping people envision a future.
- Encouraging
- Developing new contacts
- Helping authority understandings of teams in a parish
- Training and learning
- Community awareness
- Coaching and mentoring
- Administrative sensitivity

The need is for some interventions to take place alongside people within a parish and some to be provided by outside intervention.

We think initially we need two stipendiary posts operating from insider roles and one from an outsider role.

We would envisage this would change to two outsider and one insider priest as the work develops.

Eventually it maybe that only two not three stipendiary posts will be needed.

Current staffing is 5.6 stipendiary posts.

## APPENDIX 1

The following is a summary of the pattern given by Roland Allen<sup>1</sup> and means that for each local church:

- It should have handed over to it the Bible, the Creed, the Ministry, and the Sacraments.
- The community is responsible for recognising the spiritual gifts and needs of its members and for calling forth those ministries.
- The Christian community will share its message and its life with neighbouring communities not yet evangelised.
- The Holy Spirit, working on the human endowments of the community leaders, is sufficient for its life. Do not train them too much. Do not import them from outside.
- The Christian community should control and manage its own financial affairs independent of subsidy.
- The Bishop and his staff are crucial in this process.
- Any Christian community that can't do these things is not a church; it's a mission field.

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<sup>1</sup> R.Allen. (1912) *Mission Methods: St. Pauls or Our?* (Robert Scott) London.

## 4. Towards a theological rationale:

### The northern ark – the process of ‘releasing the energy’ in working class culture - David Lloyd

The outer edge of the northern part of the City of Bristol consists mostly, though not entirely, of local authority and ex-local authority owned housing estates with a predominantly white, working class culture.

#### **Geographically the area shapes an arc from Lockleaze in the east to Avonmouth in the west, taking in Upper Horfield, Southmead, Brentry, Henbury, and Lawrence Weston.**

Our current diocesan strategy envisions the development of Christian communities living lives of deepening faith and commitment to one another, to the communities in which they are set, and in their calling as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is a challenging and exciting vision for the church at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Already plans are being made to encourage the discernment and development of the vocation and ministry of each Christian, with selection and training opportunities being provided at various levels.

As ministers in the northern ark we are delighted at these developments but at the same time are left asking ourselves whether what is offered is contextually appropriate for the people of our parishes when the models of selection and training available at this time are predominantly professional/managerial in concept and delivery. Whilst these would appear to be appropriate to their context we are aware that by their very nature they are necessarily inappropriate and unavailable to the majority of those we serve and minister with.

Thus our rationale stems not from a criticism of what has been planned; rather from a critique that argues for a wider understanding

of the contextual demands of mission and of ministerial development in order that the vision of ‘releasing the energy’ might be fulfilled throughout all the parishes in our diocese, and beyond. Our aim therefore is to help congregations to become more effective in mission and more authentic in representing their communities.

It is our belief that the challenge we face lies in the development of a methodology – or should that be methodologies? – consistent with our Anglican understanding of both the diversity and catholicity of ministry yet at the same time coherent with our situation as a church developing new approaches to questions of ministry at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> C. We already know and understand processes that have served us in the past. The question is, are they sufficient?

In terms of our ‘northern ark’ context and culture we believe that the answer is ‘not yet’.

Our goal is the development of a Local Ministry Team (LMT) through the creation of Learning Communities in each parish, out of which experience has taught us ministries will emerge, diaconal, sacramental, pastoral, administrative, liturgical and so on. We cannot demand or predict which ministries the Holy Spirit will call out from

our communities, but we do believe that God is already equipping us with the resources we need to be the church he wants us to be where we are.

We further believe that it is not unreasonable to suggest that the manner or order in which God forms and shapes the Christian community is likely to be consistent with the manner or order in which God forms and shapes the local community out of which the church is called.

It would perhaps be controversial and at least odd to espouse the view that working class Christians are in some way 'less' in their calling or that those defined as professional or managerial classes are somehow 'more'. So too for our ordained ministers, we do not talk about 'blue collar' clergy, at least not explicitly.

We simply observe that, just as God has designed a diverse creation to reflect his glory, so he has designed a diverse people to serve that creation and therefore we presuppose that those whom he has called into ministry will genuinely differ, and that the wider church will be made up of a complexity of diverse people who together will live out the concerns of God's kingdom in their own way and in their own context.

Our experience in the parish of Lockleaze taught us that an apprenticeship model was the one that would provide an alternative pathway into ministry for people who learn differently from the standard academic method.

Without a commitment to develop further the use of this apprenticeship model, parishes such as ours may fail in their mission

not through lack of ability or desire but simply by default, for the route by which they might travel simply does not exist.

The training in Lockleaze also taught us that, in some places, learning was more effective when the congregation formed a Learning Community from within itself. In this context the aim is wider than the training of one person for ministry; it becomes the development of a whole team where people may feel more prepared to acknowledge a vocation they may have harboured for years, or be surprised by a vocation others have seen in them, which they have failed to notice.

Existing methods of selection and training may fail to take account of this opportunity.

Furthermore, experience has taught us that creating the context of a Learning Community fosters greater confidence and risk-taking helped by the support of friends. These are not so readily available through the more academic model that trains people out of their context and invests in individuals and only indirectly in communities.

Stanley Hauerwas has remarked that once, Christians understood they were pilgrims, now they are just tourists who happen to be on the same bus. All we are asking is that those on the circuitous routes we travel be given equal and appropriate encouragement as those travelling on the main roads.

(Anyone who uses public transport will know that the routes around estates tend to wander about a bit and take some getting used to, but they're fine once you get your bearings!)

David Lloyd May 2010

## 5. Conclusion: Sought outcomes

- We would like to see the conclusion of our discussions lead to the preparation and implementation of detailed plans for each of our churches across the Northern Ark using the process for the discernment and development of Local Ministry Teams of the 'Go Local – Grow Local' project pioneered at Lockleaze.
- This implies a commitment to follow through the proposals of this document at various levels to both the principles and the process of the development of **lay and ordained** local ministries as outlined in the 'Go Local – Grow Local' project. Without a clear commitment to this process the formation and development of the Northern Ark will not have a future.
- This development can only take place therefore with the support of our Bishop and his Senior Staff and a commitment to the further development of lay and ordained ministries as envisioned in these documents.
- We propose that this commitment be affirmed before the next stage of the process of development, i.e. the preparation of detailed plans for each church during the period September –December 2010.