



Pompey Churches

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Plans unveiled for fresh approach to parish life on the Isle of Wight

ministry for mission

AN ISLAND REVOLUTION

IT'S time for change in our Isle of Wight churches, as we plan a pioneering approach to ministry and mission.

Parishes across the island are looking to work together in new ways to share the gospel within their communities.

A new 'Isle of Wight Plan' has been drawn up as part of our diocese's Ministry for Mission initiative. It aims to create a clear mission strategy which will transform church life.

Among the plans are the merging of the two deaneries to create one single deanery for the island and more effective working of parishes in clusters – each of which can offer the full range of worship styles and mission opportunities.

The plan envisages that each church will choose a specific group that it can reach out to – for instance, children and families, tourists, second-home owners, or older people. Each church will also have a specific group it helps within its community – those using Foodbanks, the homeless, prisoners, or those with mental health issues.

Each church will be urged to review how well they communicate the gospel, welcome

newcomers, relate to schools, hospitals and prisons – and set up opportunities for pioneering ministry among those who have no church background. They'll be encouraged to view the payment of parish share as a way of giving towards the Church's mission.

The Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight, the Ven Peter Sutton, said: "We face the challenge of huge change going on in the world around us, and trying to find a way in which the Church of God can transform society via the gospel message.

"We do not begin this process with a clear idea of what 'the Church' will look like in 10 years time. But it does have to be different, and this process is about finding God's hope for his Church in this place.

"Each church on the island has individual characteristics, strengths and areas to focus on. Each church should play to its strengths, but be aware of its place within the wider community of churches working together."

The plan envisages that the model of one clergy person being

responsible for one or more churches and working in isolation is not a viable option for the future.

Partly, that's because ministry is the responsibility of all baptised Christians. But the practical reality is that there is a national shortage of clergy, and that island parishes paid only 64 per cent of parish share owing from 2014 and before. Both lay and ordained ministries will need to be developed and changed.

Among the definite plans are a Lent Course exploring these themes, a 10-week course after Easter to develop lay pastoral assistants to help congregations to flourish and grow, the development of the 'Exploring Christianity' course as a way of promoting discipleship, and a

monthly 'ministry Eucharist' for those working in ministry across the island to meet for spiritual refreshment. Training will be offered for those reading lessons, intercessors, churchwardens, treasurers, and those offering pastoral care and involved in children's work.

All stipendiary clergy posts will be linked to an island-wide responsibility, and pastoral re-organisation will be the norm in parishes where parish share is not paid in full.

Each cluster of churches will be a place where teams of ministers can offer different styles of worship, a range of ministry and at least one Fresh

Expression, reaching those who have no church connection.

Curates from the diocese will visit island churches to talk about their vocations on Vocations Sunday – April 19 – encouraging worshippers to consider what God is calling them to do.

Island churches will be invited to send representatives to our ordination service in July and the Readers' admission service.

The Isle of Wight has 60 Anglican churches and parishes will be invited to review the purpose of each of their church buildings. Some may become 'pilgrimage churches', offering a spiritual experience to casual visitors; others may offer a focus on healing ministry, work more closely with church schools, or provide opportunities to reach those with second homes on the island.

The two deanery synods are working jointly this year before a formal process unites the deaneries permanently. The new joint synod is considering these plans during 2015, and this plan will also be examined by our Bishop's Council. For more details, see: www.portsmouth.anglican.org/iowplan.

