



archdeacons'

visitation news

Spring 2020 - issue 16

Thank you for digging deep

You would think that an object such as a bunch of keys could be found quite easily because of the sound, and the irregularity of their shape. But on many an occasion when digging deep and wriggling around beyond the receipts, purse, pen, CW diary, mobile and whatever other worldly goods lurk, the keys can be difficult to locate. So, we turn said bag upside down. Tip contents out. Rummage through and at some point, we hear the jangling of the keys and then these keys take us into a new place.

Since March, lockdown has metaphorically taken away our keys and locked us out. Refused us permission to be where we wanted to be. Not that the locks were changed, but the pandemic ensured our keys were redundant for a while.

But amazing Churchwardens, along with colleagues and congregations in parishes, dug deeper and found amazing ways to continue to be a living presence as the body of Christ in unprecedented circumstances.

Thank you doesn't feel quite sufficient, but a huge thank you to you all for your perseverance, your stamina, your patience, your determination and your willingness to dig really deep into your spiritual reserves to sustain the ministry of the Church.

There is a deadline from publishers as I write this article, and deadlines put pressure on, but they also give some finality and conclusion. Quite different from the way in which we have had to work with so many unknowns.

Our experience of continuing ministry in our re-formed world is not so neat and boundaried.

There have always been fuzzy edges, but now we have less certainty, and frayed edges. It definitely feels like we shall need to go on digging deeper than ever before.

More than ever, we shall need to look for new keys and new locks that open up into a vast new kingdom world to continue to share the Gospel of Christ. We shall find ourselves opening up into new ways of worship that reflect old and new ways of sharing, serving and ultimately growing in friendship and becoming more like Christ.

This article has been revised since the spring and perhaps that too is an example of the shape of our ministry for the future. We have always needed to be alert and ready to adapt, but the pandemic propelled us quicker than we could ever imagine. We need to be ready for further revisions of church, but also revision in the way in which we live our lives and witness to the power of Christ the King.

Thank you all for negotiating ministry through a spring of immense challenge and change. We face winter challenges too, and often keys, locks and doors can get quite sticky, and need a little extra strength to prise open. The analogy is clear, but we hold onto the truth of our power resting only in Christ our King who gives us the strength to do all things.

Through every door, old or new, we shall find something of Christ waiting to be discovered and celebrated. A different phase has begun for us in Manchester Diocese and may God bless you and your part in becoming Church for A Different World.

Venerable Karen Lund
Archdeacon of Manchester



The Venerable Jean Burgess
Archdeacon of Bolton and Salford



The Venerable Karen Lund
Archdeacon of Manchester



The Venerable David Sharples
Archdeacon of Rochdale



Churchwardens' Training

Tue 7th July – CANCELLED

Sat 3rd October – CANCELLED

PCC Secretaries' Training

Tue 29th September – CANCELLED

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Church Growth: Finding a Manchester Blend



Building with the bricks we have

Builders and bricklayers sometimes talk about the Manchester Blend (pale tan bricks, with a quality handmade appearance, since you ask). For me,

the Manchester Blend is a helpful way to think about growth in our Diocese.

Mention church growth, and people in local churches can feel nervous. It can trigger fears of unrealistic expectations being imposed on them, or whizzy new marketing fads being imported from another part of the world. I'm keen to dispel those fears.

I was appointed as Head of Church Growth for the Diocese a year ago. For me, growth means us, together, finding a Manchester Blend. In other words, it is about this particular group of people, in this particular place, and how we can grow these particular churches. It is about building with the bricks we have, not the bricks we don't have.

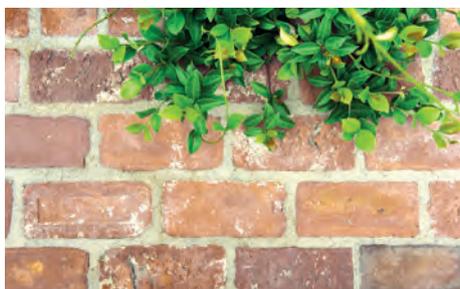
Fresh and Refresh

Our Growth Strategy centres on two words: *Fresh* and *Refresh*. *Fresh* means starting up new

types of church in different parts of the Diocese, particularly to appeal those with no current church involvement. At the same time, *Refresh* means helping our more traditional churches grow, in a way that feels authentic to them.

Fresh

Part of our *Fresh* strategy is to set up some new 'resourcing' churches, aimed particularly at young adults. We are currently bidding for central church funds to help us do this. Another key player in *Refresh* is Manchester Diocese's own Antioch Network of small church planting. The goal of Antioch is to plant new worshipping communities, outside the walls of our existing churches: in community centres, homes... even restaurants! In each case, the aim is not to grow a large congregation, but to keep on planting more and more small congregations.



We are also keen to encourage the idea that any parish church can plant a new congregation of their own, perhaps in a different style from the parent church (for example, on an estate in the parish).

Refresh

Refresh is about helping our more traditional churches keep an outward focus and put in place helpful stepping stones for newcomers and fringe members to find faith. Such stepping stones might include: enquirers' courses; making Sunday worship more welcoming; creative use of baptisms, weddings and funerals; making the most of school links, toddler groups and social action projects, and so on.

Refresh involves equipping our clergy, lay leaders and chaplains with skills to grow their churches and faith communities. It also means helping develop confidence in personal faith-sharing among leaders and church members, so everybody feels able to talk about their faith to friends and colleagues, in a natural and honest way.

We are currently planning some lively one-day events for later this year, full of *Refresh* ideas. And I promise they will be neither guilt-inducing nor faddish!

Our message when it comes to church growth is simple: growth can happen, and it can happen here. *Refresh* is about offering realistic next steps which any local church can take to make growth more likely.

Mike Starkey

Diocesan Mental Wellbeing Youth Worker, Amy Sixsmith writes...

As Diocesan Mental Wellbeing Youth Worker, my role is to provide support for our Diocesan schools, parishes and youth groups in supporting young people's mental health and wellbeing. Through this post we are able to resource, equip, train and support those working alongside young people to encourage positive mental health and wellbeing. My role developed out of the recognition that currently 1 in 8 young people experience a diagnosable mental health condition (NHS England, 2018) and understanding that there is a need without our schools, parishes, youth work and communities to provide early support around this, as well as signposting on to further supports.

One aspect of this role has been delivering Youth Mental Health First Aid training across the Diocese. As an Instructor in this course, I have been able to deliver this training to over 200 people and provide key skills in recognising the signs and symptoms of mental ill-health in young people and provide initial support and guidance. Up

to now, we have delivered this training for staff in both secondary and primary schools, clergy, youth workers, parents and carers.

Alongside this, we have been able to provide other aspects of training across the Diocese to raise awareness of mental health issues for young people and provide appropriate skills in effective support. We have been able to support schools in a number of key areas in developing their own strategies of pupil wellbeing. A few examples of this work include training pupil mental health champions, developing school policies, facilitating group intervention work, one-to-one drop-in's and whole staff training.

My role hopes to break down the stigma that often comes with talking about mental health openly and promote the importance of positive wellbeing for all individuals, as well as equipping young people with the tools to look after their own wellbeing. Throughout my role, I have been eager to build relationships with outside organisation



and professional services, in order that we can ensure a holistic approach in supporting young people's wellbeing.

This role continues to develop over time and we are excited about the future areas we will be able to explore in order to continue to provide this support to our schools, parishes and communities.

Amy Sixsmith

Director of Education, Deborah Smith writes...

I took up my role as Director of Education for Manchester Diocese at the end of October 2019, so still consider myself to be a newbie...

It has been a busy start as I become familiar with the workings of the diocese as well as the geography, not to mention the traffic. It is certainly very different from my previous experience of travelling around Carlisle Diocese. However, as a city girl, born and bred in Liverpool, one I feel comfortable with. I am loving the role that God has called me into.

Manchester Diocese serves 194 church schools with 58,000+ children and young people attending them. We are around the third largest diocese nationally. It is such a privilege to be involved in supporting schools in delivering their Christian vision. During these first few months I have been so impressed by the commitment to children and families that is evident through the work of our schools and ministry of our churches. I have already seen some great examples of how schools and churches are working together to bring the love of God to their local communities. My prayer is we continue to work together to enhance the lives of all who live in our diocese. I have no doubt that God has big plans for



those of us involved with schools and churches within Manchester Diocese.

I get really excited when I consider the fact that each of our Church of England schools is required to have a Christian vision, underpinned by Biblical teaching, that children, young people and families understand and experience in practice through the life of the school. Alongside this, 58,000 children and young people are

involved in a daily act of Christian worship within our schools.

I am being kept busy visiting as many schools as my diary allows. However, I would very much like to visit deanery meetings to talk about the diocesan mission to children, young people and their families through the work of schools and would welcome any invitations to meet with you. I am very keen to find out from you your views on how, as a Diocesan Board of Education, we can further support schools and churches in their work. Please do get in touch if you'd like to chat.

My desire is that all connected with our schools are aware that they have a loving God, in whose image they are made and that He came so *'they may have life in all its' fullness.*' (John 10:10). I am very much looking forward to working alongside you all as we seek to serve the children and families throughout this diocese.

Deborah Smith



Manchester Cathedral poet in residence, Andrew Rudd writes...

We are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12.1).

Immediately I get a vision of thousands of people who see something that other people don't see, and have a faith that changes their lives and the world in which they live. And as a Churchwarden, or one of those who look after the church – people and buildings – you are one of those *saints*, those *witnesses*.

I have the privilege to be poet in residence at the Cathedral in Manchester, but I worship at a much smaller parish church in Cheshire. There is something wonderful about walking into either church. At Frodsham St Laurence, people have worshipped for more than a thousand years. The story of these people is spelled out in stone, glass and wood. And that story continues in those who maintain and keep it alive as a community. Maybe that's why the Churchwardens are so important? You are people who keep the *connections* intact – between people in the church, between the members and the

parish, between people and place. Those connections, those invisible lines, are where God's love flows from one person to another. Here's a poem I wrote about those kinds of connections:

Organ Lot

*The road turns, sweeps downhill
past this two-acre field, the Organ Lot,
whose rent was used to pay the organist.*

*I imagine a thread – it spools out
from this patch of ground, between trees,
past settlements of the living,*

*across the churchyard, in through the huge
oak door, to the organ stool. So that,
sustained by this soft ripple of barley,*

*these few cattle clustered with their calves,
these cartloads of corn, the chancel might
resound with Magnificat (Set B, after Handel)*

*though in a lean year, there'd be scarcely
enough to fund a Lenten dirge.*

*The Quinquennial report's arrived. More lead
ripped from the roof, rain pouring in.*

*Two youths have broken through the vestry
door, taking turns to star in the CCTV*

*as they take up the offering. The trustees
meet with another glass or two*

*of Tony Jolly's ale, steady themselves
for the latest bill. How to restore
the damaged pipes and levers?*

How to eke out this field

*for another harvest? I want so much
to believe this line will hold.*

*This unpretentious grass, the thankful
people as they come.*

How do we keep these connections alive and flourishing in today's very secular world? I get the sense that almost everybody would rather a church was *there* than *not there*. The building itself, the bells: the church is still part of the pattern and coherence of life. It's a place in which care and relationship occur – something to cherish.

How do people use your church? How can we help to make it a place where people have deep and transforming encounters with the God they don't even know? May God bless you in your particular and unique work.

Chief Operating Officer/ Diocesan Secretary, Helen Platts writes...

I joined Manchester Diocese as Chief Operating Officer/Diocesan Secretary in February 2019 – what an inspiring and challenging first year it's been! Having worked in London for many years, I'm finally coming back to my roots and it's great to be home.

Although it would have been easy to get stuck behind my desk in the first few months given the demands of the job, it was a priority for me to get out and about in the Diocese, getting to know as many of you as possible and visiting over 50 churches in my first year. I also appreciated the opportunity to meet many of you at your Deanery Synods, last winter. Given the restrictions of the last few months since the start of the coronavirus crisis, these visits are even more precious to me.

It's been inspiring to find out about the many wonderful things going on in and around our churches, and to see the love of God at work. Over the last year we've been sharing the good news from around the Diocese with you – through our Vision video, Crux, e-news and Twitter – to help us create a culture of confidence and hope, as we start to make the fundamental changes necessary to build a sustainable future for our church. The future we all want to see, with growing

congregations, full of confident Christians able to talk about Jesus and their faith, and churches leading the way on social action in every local community.

I joined the Diocese at a time also of significant challenge. As we all know, Church attendance continues to decline and this is having a direct impact on our finances and the number of clergy we can afford. As we know, many of these challenges have increased with as a result of the pandemic.

In my first year, we made good progress with developing our 10-year vision and strategy, so we have a very clear focus and set of priorities which we are absolutely committed to delivering. This is especially important given our financial challenges and the fact that we have limited resources.

My second year is all about making sure we provide practical help to help clergy and laity alike make changes – some of them

incremental, some of them fundamental – to help us all achieve our dreams and hopes for our church and reverse the decline. We're focusing this year on 'Setting God's People Free' and supporting and encouraging all people – lay and ordained – to feel more confident in expressing and sharing their faith with others. Another important opportunity is our work with children and young people and their families. I'm working closely with the Diocesan Director of Education, Deborah Smith, who also joined us in 2019, on how we best reach out to children and young families to ensure a vibrant future for our church communities. And in the second half of 2020, we will be following up on our discussions about changes to the deanery arrangements, with debate and dialogue about local ministry and changes to the way we organise ourselves in our parishes to ensure a sustainable future.

I've had tremendous support since I joined you – from my colleagues on the Bishop's Leadership Team, the senior lay people who give so freely of their time and energy, the team at Church House, and clergy and laity across the Diocese. I recognise that the progress we've made so far is with the building blocks for change. As I continue in the role, it will be important to assess our impact on the ground in terms of church growth and sustainability. While these tangible positive results may still seem some way off, through our energy, effort and prayer, I'm confident we will be able to create the sort of church God is calling us to be.

Helen Platts



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