Proposal

The process has highlighted that Minister Community 2a is a very diverse collection of parishes and congregations, with some important similarities. Of greatest significance are differences in Parish size with a small number of larger parishes and a large number of very small rural parishes. There are also significant differences in theology, in particular regarding attitudes to Living in Love and Faith and there is also a Society Parish. Areas of consistency include every parish having a congregation demographic that is older, and every parish having an ancient building that they are trying to care for.

The Diocese proposes that there should be four stipendiary posts who are rooted in their local community for Mission and Ministry but who work together to support other ordained and lay people to meet the needs of all the parishes. In line with Diocesan objectives,

* The Oversight Minister will have overall responsibility for ensuring mission and ministry priorities across the community including how clergy led offices are apportioned fairly.
* A Growing Faith Minister who will be focused on supporting the development of ministry in Schools and with families and young people across the Minster Community.
* A Focal Minister supporting the development of new worshipping communities and new expressions of worship across the many new housing estates.
* A Focal Minister supporting parishes to develop skills and expertise with the care of ancient buildings, including faculty applications, grant funding applications and engagement with their local community to develop community” ownership” for the building.

It is recognised that there are people with many skills within the PCCs and congregations who can work together to support one another. It is proposed that PCC officers will meet regularly and cross functionally to support each other in their areas of expertise. For example, PCC secretaries will meet on a regular basis, PCC treasurers will meet to agree and manage budgets, Church Wardens will meet regularly to support one another with matters relating to buildings and governance, and possibly grant applications and faculties. Safeguarding officers will meet to ensure best practice and provide support.

A significant challenge for the geography of Minster Community 2A, is that it crosses Deaneries, with the parishes of Castle Donington and Hemington cum Lockington being currently in Akeley East and the remainder of the parishes being in Northwest Leicestershire. This raises a challenge for how priorities with a limited pool of volunteers can be managed at local level. To avoid unnecessary additional burdens on volunteers it is suggested that as an interim measure, activity developing the Minster Communities should take priority over current Deanery activities. Longer term the Deanery configuration will require review, ideally to bring it into line with the Minster Communities..

At the moment there are sufficient funds within the current levels of giving within the Minster Community to cover the costs of 4 stipendiary posts however there are significant differences in the way in which parishes contribute to parish share. Given that the 4 Stipendiary roles will be supporting the whole of the community it is proposed that over the next five years every parish should work towards contributing towards the parish share the same amount per head of worshipping community across the Minster community. By today figures this eqautes to around £6 per person per week. and could leave a small surplus which could be used to offset inflation, It is proposed that PCC treasurers would meet to agree budgets each year to ensure that 4 paid posts can be funded, and that this might require prioritising funding of these posts over other expenses

The proposal recognises the importance of mission and recommends that mission priorities should be focused on:

* schools and related opportunities with families & young people
* developing links and engagement with new housing developments
* through building links with the community through baptisms, weddings and funerals,
* supporting one another with mission outreach events and generating new expressions of worship that are locally relevant
* there may be some missional opportunities arising out of the possible creation of Festival Churches, but it should be noted that Festival Churches are still subject to the same governance and administrative structures as other churches, so do not noticeably reduce the burden on clergy.

It is recognised that there are significant differences in theology regarding Living in Love and Faith across the Minster Community, but rather than allowing this to be something that divides us, it is proposed that parishes work together irrespective of these differences and cooperate to build on strengths and similarities. In order to enable this, it is important that the Oversight Minister understands that all voices should be equally heard and respected, and that unity does not require uniformity.

It is proposed that clergy with PtO will be invited to support stipendiary clergy and ministry in general across the Minster Community and that Lay Ministers will also work together to support stipendiary clergy in how best to support parishes so that there is an equitable spread of worshipping opportunities. This will inevitably mean the development of gatherings that are not related to Holy Communion, and it may well be that congregations need to be flexible, inclusive and collaborative as these new expressions are formed.