

Holy Trinity Church, Ashby de la Zouch, Parochial Church Council

6 September 2025 4pm in the Church Building

Special PCC Meeting

MINUTES

Present (37)

Tim Phillips, Rachael Bull, Phill Taber, Ian Johnson, Jean M Harrison, Robert Onions, Janet Onions, Stephen Brook, Marie Palmer, Jo Prosser Garner, Ivan Hallam, Lynda Flower, Charlotte Day, Jean H Harrison, Lyn Thomas, Richard Onions, Glenis Garner, Ken Garner, Jennifer Swainston, Chris Bedford, Frank Bedford, Roy Westland, Stella Brook, Sue Johnson, Philip Craner, Beverley Clifford, Dawn Ball, David Ball, Mike Lancaster, Michael Phillips, Paula Holbrook, Ed Holbrook, Karen Pacey, Jim Curtis, Vernon Bayliss, Graham Heath and Helen Heath.

Apologies for Absence

Diana Saunders, Noreen Mewies, Rosemary Whyatt, Mike Whyatt, Janice Westland Penny Williams, Lindsay Parker, Ian Parker, Samantha Farren, Trevor Farren, Anne Hall, Sarah Phillips and Pauline Lomas

Welcome and prayers

Led by Tim

Introduction

- Tim opened the meeting with an introductory presentation to summarise the geography of the MC2A proposal.
- Phill summarised the MC2A proposal document as a collaborative partnership of local parishes and church schools, which was prepared in response to financial pressure and a desire to increase discipleship.
- Under the proposal, the local giving was just enough to cover four paid clergy posts.
- It is proposed that the four posts would be: an Oversight Minister, a Growing Faith Minister, a Minister for Mission and Engagement and a Minister for Buildings.
- Each church could then appoint a Focal Minister via its PCC with approval from the Oversight Ministry working group.
- The main proposal document refers to 'Minister', whereas the AI summary document refers to 'worker'. This reflects the freedom of each minister

community to appoint someone who is not an ordained minister in the CofE to any of the three roles (excluding the Oversight Minister)

Tea Break

Time for Questions and Comments

- What is a Focal Minister? A definition from the Diocese's website was shared.
- How does the Focal Minister's role fit in with the role of the Growing in Faith Minister? It is unclear whether this would be the same person, multiple people, or a team.
- It isn't clear from the AI summary that the Focal Minister is a separate role distinct from the four stipendiary clergy posts (though conceivably someone could have both the title of Focal Minister and, for example, Growing Faith Minister. A layperson can be a Focal Minister.
- Will HTA still have Tim if we opt in? Yes, but the definition of his role would change, and he would be spread more thinly as he would have other duties within the Minister Community. He would be expected to hold one of the four stipend posts, which would dilute his role at HTA.
- It is unclear whether the Focal Minister's post would be paid, and if so, how.
- Would a Focal Minister be per church or per parish?
- What is the biblical basis for having these four stipendiary posts? There is nothing in scripture that aligns with these.
- The proposal doesn't seem to address the issue of finance.
- What is to say that this proposal will help with finances?
- Will people want to give to a church and then not see a vicar regularly?
- Will people want to give knowing that the money could be directed to a church with only three attendees?
- Due to HTA's generous and sizable congregation, we can afford to pay for a stipendiary.
- Our church members serve widely beyond our borders and in our local community, but will we be able to do this if our resources are being shared elsewhere?
- We need to vote on the proposal, but it seems to go against the present legal framework, where each parish is responsible for raising and using its own resources.
- Should this be about money?
- Does the process address the financial issue?
- Does the proposal meet the objective of making disciples?
- There has been a huge amount of prayer over the process. It isn't just the Bishop deciding to save money and proposing that this is the only plan. Those working on the plan have taken a lot of time, energy and effort to find a mission-focused solution.
- When renamed, the four stipendiary posts sound like 'the CEO, the evangelist, the youth worker manager and the facilities manager'. These are not spiritual roles, but business roles.
- Would the Ordained Ministers have the chance to do the spiritual work when fulfilling these roles?
- Did a Minister really train and go through the ordination process to then look after buildings?

- Has anyone with any organisational skills been involved in the process? Yes, we believe so.
- Has this remodelling structure been applied elsewhere? This is being pioneered in Liverpool under a different name. In the Wigan area, where this has also been trialled, attendance and giving are down 30% and legacies have been withdrawn.
- We are also aware of the Laund experiment, though in the Laund area, the [only] paid post of Oversight minister is now vacant.
- Does the proposal address the 5 challenges named in the AI summary (quoted below)?
 - Wide variation in parish size, traditions, and theology.
 - Geographical spread with limited public transport.
 - Ageing congregations and stretched volunteers.
 - Clergy and lay leaders facing increasing demands.
 - Need to preserve parish identity while embracing shared mission.
- Has anyone heard anything positive about the Minster Community process?
 - Conversations with local connections and connections across Leicestershire have not been positive.
 - There are opportunities for increased lay participation in this model.
 - Are the opportunities not already here now? If people aren't stepping forward, creating space/desire, then how will this change with the Minster Community?
- Would we notice any difference in the services when we come to HTA?
 - Some churches in the proposed grouping are 'high church'. Would this impact the services at our churches in this grouping?
 - What about theological differences? Could we end up with a Minister who has a different theology?
- HTA contributes to CAP, Ashby Youth for Christ and provides support [governance] to the Foodbank. With PCCs having to 'come together' would this still be an option for us, or will we have to direct our resources elsewhere in the Minster Community?
- We are here for the Gospel as revealed in the word of God.
 - We recognise that working with a bigger group changes how decisions are made and where the focus will be.
 - Phase 3 will involve the production of 'working memorandums' between the Ministers and the Community setting out what they are/are not happy with preaching. No Minister would be forced to preach in a church contrary to their beliefs, i.e. in relation to the Prayers of Love and Faith.
- At launch, churches can form a Joint Church Council ('JCC') which sits above the PCCs in the Minster Community.
 - The establishment of a JCC would need to be agreed by all the Parochial Church Councils in the Minster Community.
 - There is no obligation to join a JCC, but if so, then the PCC would decide how much they want to financially contribute to it.
 - No PCC would be disbanded or lose their authority.
- There is currently no reassurance that, as posts need refilling, they would be replaced with postholders whose views are aligned with HTA's.
- The Bishop has already said that if a church does not join a minister community, when the minister leaves their post (for example, Tim Phillips leaves HTA), there will not be a replacement appointment, and we will have a permanent vacancy.

- Under the Minster Community, we would not have our own 'Oversight Minister' at HTA i.e. Tim, as the oversight responsibilities would cover the whole Minster Community [around 20 churches].
 - HTA will be without a Minister at some point, whether that be if Tim leaves or if we join the Minster Community.
- We are now experiencing growth in discipleship within the parish, and we are already taking significant steps towards addressing the three key questions and most of the five strategic priorities.
- What is the future direction of our mission? It seems that this is in the hands of the Minster Community's Oversight Minister.
 - There would be an 'Oversight Group' made up of representatives from all over the Minster Community representing the different theologies in the Minster Community (not all of which will align with our theology) - how easy would it be to make a decision in this situation?
 - PCCs would remain independent bodies, and they would still have the authority to vote on proposals from the diocese.
- We need to be careful about feeling that we have a moral obligation to go along with the Minster Community process because of the time and effort that has gone into it.
- We haven't been asked to give an answer about whether we want to be in or out of the Minster Community. At this point, we have been asked instead to comment on the MC2A proposal document.
- Looking back, this started with the Shaped by God Process, which then became the Shaped by God Process Together before it went to the Diocesan Synod. The headlines were agreed with a 2/3 majority. There was a lot of discernment and prayer in this process that we should not treat lightly.
- If we were to opt out of the Minster Community, would we be out on a limb?
- Many Ministers appointed recently have been appointed on the basis that they will support the Minster Community process.
- Perhaps the PCC needs to postpone saying yes/no to the proposal document until more information/clarity are available..
- It is important to remember that we are still part of the Leicestershire Diocese and we will still speak and collaborate with our neighbouring churches and parishes. There shouldn't be any change to that.
- Do we have an idea of what the new recruitment process would be for new Ministers? Currently, we try to match the Minister to the congregation. What are the checks and balances for the process in the Minster Community? Who is going to make the recruitment decisions in the Minster Community, or is it done through the diocese? There is still no clear answer, though the questions have been asked throughout the consultation process.
- People have put a lot of time and prayer into this process, and we need to honour this. We need to be careful not to allow ourselves to get too far into the process and then to turn around and say no.
- Whilst we might want to affirm the goals, should we be clearer sooner that the model put forward does not, as we see it, serve these goals?
- Is there a safeguard for the clergy currently in post regarding how moving into a new role within the Minster Community might come about? It is proposed that the selection process for the new posts will be the same process used for appointing

Area Deans i.e. you can express an interest in a role, and then it will be a Bishop's appointment.

- It has been confirmed that there will be no changes to the clergy's current role descriptions that will be imposed on them. Obviously, this could change in the future.
- Will we still be linked to the Church of England, or will we decide to go to other churches, or a house church?
- The PCC are meeting on Tuesday to formulate a response to the proposal - how will this be communicated to the wider church family? The PCC will consider this at the meeting on Tuesday.
 - The Minutes for this meeting will be reviewed at the next PCC meeting (on Tuesday).
- Do we need to pause the process for ourselves? There are too many questions that can't be clarified or prayed about at present. We have difficulty serving the churches in Flagstaff. How can clergy do this in a wider community?
- Thanks were given to those on the panel for today's meeting (Stephen Brook, Ian Johnson, Rachael Bull, Phill Taber, and our Chair, Tim Phillips), and they were commended for being open with the answers that they have been able to give.
- Members of the PCC have been attending the Minster Community meetings, and they have been told that clarity will be given, but 2.5 years later, there is still much that needs to be clarified.
- Thanks were given to Noreen Mewies and Jean M Harrison during this process. Also to Ian Johnson, Rachael Bull and Ivan Hallam, who have given a lot of time to this process. Further, the PCC have been discussing and praying over this for some time now.
- We have now been asked to respond to the proposal on behalf of HTA, which is why it is now appropriate to bring this before the wider church family.
- Have there been opportunities to address the diocesan finances before now to fund more clergy? Cuts have been made, land sold etc., and this has reduced the deficit, but this still stands at just under £1m for next year.
- There is a huge reliance on the laity in the proposal.
- It seems that the consensus is that we're not ready to respond due to a lack of clarity and information.

The meeting closed in a time of open prayer, and then the words of The Grace.