

THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER

The Rt Revd Dr David Walker



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am writing to you all as our current and future mission community leaders to thank you for your dedication and hard work in stepping forward into this important role. We have achieved a lot in Manchester Diocese over the last three years, not least in embedding new ways of working together and supporting one another. Much of this is due to the work that has been going on at mission community level and to the commitment of our current mission community leaders, for which I am so very grateful.

At Bishop's Leadership Team, we have been reviewing the issues raised at the mission community leaders' workshop with Andy Brookes earlier this year, and made a number of changes in the light of that feedback as we prepare for the appointment of the next cohort of mission community leaders.

Most importantly, we have streamlined the role description to ensure that the core expectations are clear, realistic and manageable, affirming the prayerful and relational ministry of mission community leaders. The revised role description is attached to this letter. As you will see, the emphasis is on mission communities focusing on one or two helpful actions each year, rather than setting overwhelming goals.

As the revised role description makes clear, mission community leaders play an important part in communicating the diocese's vision and priorities. We are therefore inviting all mission community leaders to a meeting at St John's House Bury, on 13th March 2025, from 10:00 to 2:30, to discuss and help develop the diocese's emerging strategy. We want this to be the start of a continuing conversation with you as we develop our proposals.

We have looked at the support provided to you, and our Area Deans have made a commitment to meeting with you every three months to discuss new proposals and approaches. This is an opportunity to discuss any wellbeing concerns. Our Archdeacons and Area Deans have also agreed to keep you informed about future developments in your mission community, where they are able.

The issue of mission community leaders being paid an additional responsibility payment for the role has been raised. Bishop's Leadership Team has considered this request but determined that this would not be appropriate given that additional emoluments are usually paid on the basis of what clergy are licensed to do. Many other clergy take on roles outside their core parochial duties, for example engagement with Diocesan or General Synod or diocesan committees and working groups. Mission community leaders can however claim for any expenses associated with the role from the Diocesan Board of Finance.

We recognise there is much to be learned from the progress made so far – our successes along with the things that haven't worked in our mission communities. During 2025 we will be developing case studies with you which can be used to share these experiences. We will also be providing the opportunity, in addition to our gathering on 13th March, for mission community leaders to meet together during 2025 facilitated by Andy Brookes again, so you can support each other with developing our mission communities.

As we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus afresh in our generation, and work to renew our parishes, chaplaincies and schools in mission and ministry, I want to thank you again, for all that you are doing in your churches and your wider communities. As we move into the next phase of the diocese's development, co-creation and communication need to be the watchwords of our approach. The changes we are making in response to your feedback demonstrate our commitment to this.

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized cross symbol followed by the name "David Walker".

Bishop David Walker

Thursday, 12th December 2024

Role and responsibilities Mission community leaders

The mission community leader is a leader in mission. They are an incumbent status priest or an experienced lay leader within the mission community who combines the role with their existing responsibilities. They have been appointed to guide the mission community, providing support to the mission community leadership team and the wider mission community. They will ensure that the mission community focuses on the diocese's key themes of **growing younger, church planting and revitalisation, developing missional leaders, and parish renewal**, and help identify work that can be taken forward in one or more of these areas.

The mission community leader will be appointed because of their skills and ability to fulfil the role, regardless of their stage of ministry. Typically, they will be familiar with the area covered by the mission community and the mission already taking place there, as well as being able to see future missional opportunities, inspire others and ensure the mission community is grounded in prayer.

Mission community leader - core ministry

- **Facilitate discussions** amongst the leadership team, and more widely, to agree the vision for the mission community and agree an achievable set of priorities for parishes to work on together.
- **Support new ways of working**, to bring new people to God and help strengthen and deepen the faith of existing congregations.
- Help establish a culture of **mutual accountability and support** across the mission community with a focus on celebration and thanks.

Mission community leader – key development areas

- Confident in building relationships
- Able to build consensus and respond in a positive way to conflict
- Willing to try new approaches and to take reasonable risks
- Committed to supporting a variety of expressions and traditions of church
- Able to provide visible leadership in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion
- Able to lead with humility.

As a mission community leader, you are expected to meet with your Area Dean every three months, for support with new proposals and approaches and to share information. This is also the opportunity to discuss any wellbeing concerns.

Mission community leaders will also be enabled to meet together to share their experiences and provide mutual support.

Where appropriate, your Archdeacon and Area Dean will inform you of future developments in your mission community, such as clergy appointments, pastoral reorganisation and the future of fragile churches.

You are able to claim for expenses from the Diocesan Board of Finance for expenses incurred in your role as mission community leader.

For more information about mission communities please visit:
<https://www.manchester.anglican.org/about-us/vision/>

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