Grasmoor Mission Community

Memo of GMC Leadership Group meeting
Saturday 28th September 2024 (0900-1100)

Present: Nick Baker (NB), Michael Bonner (MB), Christina Brentnall (CB), Gareth Browning (GB), Catherine Chambers (CCha), Jane Charman (JC), Clare Chittenden (CChi), Nick Cole (NC), Sue Cole (SC), Eleanor Ella (EE), Brian Furness (BF), David Hallewell (DH), Joan Ingrams (JI), Morna McDowell (MM), Samm Morris (SM), Kath Palmer (CP), Rosemary Riley (RR), Alistair Smeaton (AS)

Apologies: Roy Anetts, Jan Collins Webb, Gill Davidson, Chris Haslam, Deborah Hoddinott, Stuart Hoddinott, Kris Longshaw, Barbara Robinson, Ian Rumsey, Wendy Sanders, Sue Shaw, Lois Sparling, Andrea Ward, Pete Ward

1. Opening prayer:
Alistair Smeaton led us in reflection on 'Our home – their home – God's home' and prayer.

2. Welcome and apologies
Nick Baker and Samm Morris were welcomed to their first meeting. John Freeman was welcomed to speak to item 3.

Nick and Samm gave an introduction to their ministries. Nick has served in Dundee for the last 9 years and has now moved back to Cumbria with a sense of homecoming. Serving Christ in the community is an important dynamic for him – social justice, listening to people and meeting them where they are. Samm is a probationary deacon. She is currently spending time meeting people and learning about the context. Having trained with Anglicans she understands the Church of England ethos. She has already connected with Christina around work with schools. It was noted that Nick and Samm minister across a wide area and intersect with a number of Mission Communities.

3. St Aidan's Church Plant
The agenda was changed to allow John Freeman to speak to us first. He introduced St Aidan's Church previously known as the A66 Church Plant.

Why – the Church has a challenge engaging with children, young people and young adults. Current reach into the community in this diocese is exceptional. 3.5% attend church, double the national average, but only 7% is under 18 (not enough).

What – something new, St Aidan's Church, Cumbria. Planting a church, children's groups, mid week activities etc. Not a parish church but a regional church covering entire Derwent Deanery under a Bishop's Mission Order. Working across parish boundaries. Gathering and scattering is the dynamic.

How – now based in Bridekirk with their own space. Services started on 8th September and new families are attending. Feels encouraging. God is working in this. Steve, a full time children's and families minister, is working with John for 3 years. All services are currently at Bridekirk (3pm every Sunday) and that is likely to continue as the venue. Worship is all age. This is a different offer to the parish churches to reach those who aren't currently within the traditional church. Not in competition. Not funded by Ministry Offer but by the national church and other bodies.

We prayed for John in this ministry and John then left the meeting.

4. Memo of July meeting – approve for publication

The memo from the last meeting was agreed as an accurate record and approved to be made public on the GMC website.

5. Matters arising

Working with the Garden Planner

Poster and booklet were circulated at the last meeting, more were available and there are further resources on the God for All website. The Toolshed is now live on this website. Alistair spoke amusingly by way of explanation about the background – the Planner was created within the structure of God for All and approved at that level. A direction of travel for the way we do leadership in the future. Not doing this exercise as a mission community wide event but can be used by individual churches. Using it is entirely optional - only if you find it useful. CChi suggested using some case studies to learn more about it - perhaps as part of the November meeting, make it a more open meeting perhaps? Could make the mission community work better together. What is already going on, share the seeds and what is growing in all the gardens, does some stuff need cutting back etc. Perhaps a service of celebration. Overall agreed to leave it a bit longer to allow churches to do more individually. We will return to this in the New Year.

Launch of Comfort Café

An initiative to support people on their grief journey. Fortnightly on Thursdays 1030 – 1230 at Christ Church. First meeting Thursday 23rd October.

6. Around the churches – a whistlestop tour

People were urged to keep their comments focused and brief. Some did!

Bridekirk – good progress towards Eco Church Silver Award, Friendship Group and Baby Club going well, faculty for a new boiler underway and delighted to have received a full grant from Cumbria Community Foundation.

All Saints – a written report had been received from Stuart Hoddinott summarised below: Finance: all going as planned, although our general fund is currently suffering as more money is being directed by donors into the Toilet Fund. Likely reduction in 2025 Ministry Offer welcome.

Tower and Spire: worst weather affected areas having now been repointed but this is a temporary fix likely to last no more than 10 to 15 years. Long term solution could cost c£300K
Toilets: Now in a focused tendering process but difficult to find people willing/able to do the work which is in three stages – Disabled and Unisex, Disabled, Ladies and Gents, Disabled, Ladies, Gents and the shell of a Commercial Kitchen to be used as a Servery. The intention is to provide a full suite of facilities able to service a concert / event audience in a standard interval. Drains have been laid across the graveyard, next step is to bring the drain inside the building. Funding is achievable but we will need to extend our faculty term.
Organ: Long past its prime, doing odd things, OK for ordinary services where our congregation know the score but we are now issuing health warnings to outside users. The toilets take priority but we are looking out for any good / bargain shorter term solutions.
Lady Chapel: A permanent sound system to be installed for ready for us to transfer back into the warmer area around the end of October.
Roof Walkway: Our planned contractor having retired, we are now seeking an alternative.
AS as a church (ie the bunch of people) is doing well with new faces arriving, although some have moved away. Everyone in good heart with progress and supportive of all our aims to give AS a renewed focus into the local community. Delighted by the level of active support from the congregation, with everybody who is able taking on a role in supporting the fellowship.

Lorton Street - delighted to welcome Nick and Samm, have conducted a review of church and outreach and now taking forward an action plan, forming better bridges with users of the premises. There is a long way to go but progress feels positive.

Great Broughton – restarted Cafe Church but struggling to get people from the village, working closely with the village school, outside wall being repointed to deal with damp.

Christ Church – Gareth gave a short but lyrical update. We are about to host the Life Exhibition week beginning 14/10. Around 500 primary school children will come to view this interactive display about Jesus and discovering him.

Dean – since January 2019 no identifiable priest for the community, decided to go back to a service every week with a quiet time for 1st and 3rd Sundays. Clare writing letter to all on electoral roll with an update and asking why they are not coming. Using parish magazine to communicate to the whole village – we are a community church. Plan for 2025 includes a second service of HC each month.

Brigham – has had a lot of work done but contractors are losing interest so architect is looking for new ones. Stained windows looking good and have been re-pointed. Mixing and matching services with the Methodists which is working well. Lack of a kitchen is proving to be a problem. There is growing involvement with the local school.

Brigham Methodists – ditto re the sharing. Lost 2 stewards from the chapel and Paul Harold is currently on sick leave. Brigham Bunnies (pre-school) needs some help as a key person has stood down. Eco Chur5ch going well with outside space (bench and pots) and exploring repair cafe options.

Lorton – very positive harvest service with four visitors but no school involvement or farmers Still waiting for our QI report.

Loweswater – started vestry roof, first stage of a lot of work. Buttermere - issues with the building will have to wait. Big service in November - anniversary of death of Canadian airman that crashed into Red Pike. Installing a memorial.

URC – thriving toddler group but also short of volunteers. Kings Church lending someone currently, till October. Do we need to share resources more across the Mission Community? Buildings are a concern. Two choirs practise at the top of the Cockermouth building. Lift cannot be fixed (church, manufacturer and insurance company) and so the church members meet downstairs but the choirs have to still go upstairs. West wall needs a major assessment of need. Now working with a local chap to progress this. Also can't make head nor tail of the architects report. They are trying their best.

7. Understanding our 2025 Ministry Offer

A paper had been circulated to Church of England Treasurers, DCCs and PCCs explaining the basis of our proposed 2025 Ministry Offer and suggested baseline offer from each church. This reflects our reduced level of staffing for the time being. The Methodists and URC have for soime years been making a small contribution towards 'Central Cost' ie the cost of resources such as comms and office facilities that we all use. This money comes in towards the end of the year following annual council meetings and has not yet been received. The URC is facing financial challenges and may not be able to contribute next year.

8. Celebrating Advent and Christmas in our churches

The Church of England has prepared and published resources for Advent and Christmas 2025 under the title 'Follow the Star: Calm and Bright. There was discussion in small groups about our hopes and plans for this year. Everyone was urged to send their finalised services to jane asap for the CTiCa Chrismas card which we will need to have by Sunday 17 November in time for Lights Switch On.

9. Future events

Gathering Day, theme Artificial Intelligence, a long morning on Saturday 17th May. PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS DATE HAS NOW BEEN CHANGED – WATCH THIS SPACE.
GMC/ CTiCA Service of Praise to mark the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Sunday 26th January 4 pm at Lorton Street Methodist Church. Please put in your diaries

10. AOB

Fell Church Patronal Festival tomorrow Sunday 29th September 11 am for St Michael and All Angels.

11. Date of next meeting

Saturday 16th November at Bridekirk

11. Closing prayer

The meeting closed with the sharing of God's grace.