

Shaping for Mission

Wem & Whitchurch Deanery, Autumn 2021

This newsletter is being shared with congregations across our churches, as an update for what is happening in our Deanery and a guide to how you can get involved at present.

What is Shaping for Mission (SfM)?

“Shaping for Mission is the process across Lichfield Diocese to strengthen our life of discipleship, vocation and evangelism while facing a significant reduction in financial income.

We are working together as people of hope to make our mission sustainable in helping fulfil our diocesan vision.”

(Diocese of Lichfield website)

What does that actually mean for us in this Deanery?

For starters, it means that our 21 churches have been asked to think about areas where we can work together. A team – headed up by our Rural Dean, Reverend Adam Clayton – has been looking at our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. We have then been working to produce a vision on how this might be achieved.

What is our agreed Deanery Vision?

“To help our churches to be filled with confident disciples of Jesus Christ and to be an effective Christian presence in the communities we serve.”

The intention behind this vision is to grow the Kingdom of God in our Deanery. We want everyone in our churches to be excited, encouraged, equipped and empowered across many forms of ministry.

If you want to learn more about the research that led us to that vision and to see the detail of what the vision might include, there are two videos available to watch on YouTube:

1. Our findings - tinyurl.com/shaping1
2. The vision - tinyurl.com/shaping-vision





Schools Ministry

Our Deanery has a LOT of church schools. One of our strengths is how we have engaged with them over the years. But there is still more that we can do. Could schools ministry be something for you? Here are two ways to get involved:

Lay Chaplaincy

We are looking for people who would like to volunteer to be lay chaplains in our Deanery Church of England Schools. After training, we would be asking lay chaplains to volunteer a couple of hours every two weeks and go into school to be a listening presence for staff and pupils.

If you are interested and would like more information please contact Reverend Deborah Walton:

revd.deborah.walton@icloud.com

07954 338902

Open the Book

Open the Book offers primary school children an opportunity to hear key Bible stories told by a team of Christians from local churches, who present the stories during assemblies or acts of collective worship. Each presentation takes around 10–15 minutes and can be incorporated into a wider school assembly, or can stand alone.

If you like the idea of dressing up and acting out a story, this might be for you. Training is provided and you'll be working with other willing volunteers.

We're hoping to set up three teams across the Deanery, each of which would be able to travel to our primary schools in the area, sharing God's word.

If you're interested in Open the Book, please contact Bridget Hodges, who has kindly agreed to be the co-ordinator for the first year:

bridgethodges@hotmail.co.uk

01948 840644



Rural Ministry

A large part of our Deanery covers rural communities, which have their unique challenges and opportunities.



A number of Deaneries in the Salop area have identified reaching out to rural and farming communities as an area of growth.

Adam, our Rural Dean, is in conversation with the Bishop of Shrewsbury and Borderlands Rural Chaplaincy about opportunities to offer pastoral support to rural communities and farming families in conjunction with Parish ministers.

If you are interested and would like more information please contact Revd Adam Clayton:

revajbclayton@gmail.com

01939 291390

What else is going on? What might be happening in the future?

- We already have a chaplaincy team, working at Whitchurch Community Hospital, which hopes to continue to grow.
- There will be opportunities to build on our work with families who approach us for baptisms, weddings and funerals, helping them to grow in faith and find their place in the church family.
- We want to help small churches to make wise decisions about their futures. This might involve helping parishes to merge or closing buildings if necessary.
- Members of our churches who are not ordained but help lead services (or might help lead services) will be offered training to help them do so to the best of their ability.
- We'll be helping churches to reach out to the 'lost generations' (those under 50, or even 60). This might include offering events and courses for enquirers.
- To do all this, we need to be confident about our own faith. This will mean our churches helping each of us to engage further with what it means to be disciples of Jesus.

How can I make a difference now?

If you genuinely want to see our churches growing and more people coming to faith in Jesus Christ, there is one positive and simple thing you can do without any training:



Inviting others

Christmas is our busiest time of year for good reason. In the middle of winter, people want a 'good news' story... and we offer them the greatest story ever told. But many people have lost touch with church or feel that it's a closed shop to them.

It is remarkably easy to change that perception by extending an invitation. This year, the Shaping for Mission team would like to challenge you to invite more people to church at Christmas. It's probably the time of year when we have the biggest variety of services, such as:

- Carol services
- Christingle services
- Midnight services

We encourage you to think of **five** people you could invite to a service in your local church this Christmas. If your church produces a flyer, make sure to give one to each of those five people, maybe with a circle around the service you think might interest them most – "I saw this and thought of you" is a powerful statement. Even better, invite them to go with you. Offer to walk with them to church, so they're not arriving by themselves and feeling self-conscious.

Go on, make a start now. Which five people are you going to invite to church this Christmas?
