

People Fully Alive: Ely 2025

– a strategy for growth

*A study course based on the “five levers”
devised for the South Leightonstone Group of Churches
Lent 2017*

Lever 2: **DEVELOP** healthy churches and leaders

Acts 2:43-47

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved..

FOR MANY, THE picture painted in this passage and a parallel passage at the end of Acts 4, is an inspiration. The Church is growing, indeed it is flourishing. People are coming to faith, lives are being changed, and the evidence for this is the way in which people are giving generously. They have experienced God’s mercy and grace and it has touched their pockets. They meet regularly, they share things in common. These were all signs that God was at work, and the church continued to grow so rapidly that new leaders had to be found (Acts 6).

Later in Acts we see how the young church moved out of Jerusalem and new congregations were founded. Sometimes this was from necessity: the persecution in Jerusalem meant people had to move. At other times it was in response to a call from God. The book of Acts paints a picture of a dynamic, flourishing and responsive church.

The main focus of our strategy is the life of the local church (parishes, chaplaincies, religious communities, *Fresh Expressions*, etc.). Whether people are drawn together by geography or network, the quality of each manifestation of the Body of Christ will make a huge difference to the ministry and mission of the church in every place. The strategy assumes that people generally join churches that are worth joining. This is not a concession to consumerism, but a belief that we are custodians of something infinitely precious and attractive, which is best disclosed by churches that exhibit a hunger and thirst for God, expressed in deep prayer, passionate worship, rich fellowship and committed service.

By 2025 we want to help every willing local church to display these qualities in ways appropriate to their tradition and context.

LAY AND ORDAINED LEADERSHIP

We aim for growth in the number of people exploring vocations to the caring professions, teaching, and the like, as well as people offering themselves for lay and ordained ministry and the Religious Life. We want to promote good and godly leadership of every kind, and to nurture the God-given gifts of all. We want to develop greater collaboration and teamwork within and between parishes. We want to refresh leadership so that both clergy and laity feel energised, empowered and liberated to grow in their ministry. Therefore we need to invest in ministerial training and development as well as define manageable roles for clergy (and others).

STRUCTURED REVIEW

The strategy aims to make structured self-evaluation, review and planning standard practice across the diocese. This would normally involve creating Mission Action Plans, and drawing on the wide variety of readily available tools, such as the 'Healthy Churches Handbook: We foresee that

vacancies will be an important time for reviews, and the resulting Parish Profiles will play a part in helping to (re-)shape church life for the future.

FRESH EXPRESSIONS AND TRADITIONAL CHURCH

When he was Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams talked about creating a mixed economy of Church life. He recognised and advocated the need for traditional and new forms of church to flourish. As a diocese we have seen the impact that Fresh Expressions can have and we therefore want to see our own mixed economy developing. We want leaders to invest their time in growing traditional and developing new forms of church for all generations, particularly children and youth.

The strategy anticipates an equal number of fresh expressions and traditional forms of church by 2025. The key to this will be to develop a culture of godly risk and experimentation. To assist in that desire we hope that a number of parish teams will attend programmes such as the ‘Mission-Shaped Ministry Course’ or ‘Leading Your Church into Growth.’ The strategy also recognises that many Fresh Expressions will be lay-led or led by self-supporting ministers.

The diocese is open to proposals for new Bishop’s Mission Orders to assist in the development and review of new forms of church. Alongside *Fresh Expressions* we also see the need to encourage various kinds of ‘church plant,’ not just in Cambridge but across the diocese.

In what ways does our church / do our churches already address the issues raised?

What could / should we do better?

What would be hoping to achieve?

How much needs to be thought about and instigated as an individual; at a parish level; at a group level; at a deanery level; at a diocesan level...

Who has the expertise to guide these ideas?

What resources do we have, and how could we use them?

PERSONAL RESPONSE SHEET:

 *Are there comments you wish to make or suggestions you want to put forward in response to any of the issues raised in this session?*

- *Are there “Fresh Expressions” we would like to see in our area?*
- *What should we do to strengthen/improve the health of our existing churches?*
- *How can we encourage local lay leadership - and its reception?*
- *Do we need help from outside training?*
- *Where do our Cell Groups fit in with all this?*
- *What mechanisms are there already for “structured review,” and how could this be improved or developed?*
- *and...!*