

Guidelines for Considering and Establishing Parish/Ministry Unit Clusters Diocese of Christchurch

Purpose and Definition

The purpose of Parish Clusters is to enable the contribution to the mission of the church by particular ministry units to be enhanced through strategic partnerships between two or more such units.

Clustering involves two or more ministry units entering into a commitment with one another to share in the mission of the church by sharing certain resources, personnel, opportunities and/or plant.

Clustering should be considered in situations where traditional patterns of ministry seem no longer appropriate. Such situations may arise, for example, because of population changes, the need for focussed mission or the need to develop specialist ministries.

The specific nature of such commitments will vary from cluster to cluster. However, in every case a cluster will be the result of:

- a prayerful response to the call of God by the congregations involved,
- careful strategic thinking over time by each ministry unit involved about its strengths and opportunities for mission,
- a deliberate involvement of the Bishop and relevant archdeacon or archdeacons to consider the wider implications for the church's mission,
- a process of engaging each congregation potentially affected in exploring mission and what it might mean to develop a Cluster relationship,
- a process of intentionally building a relationship at all levels between the ministry units involved,
- a formal covenant between the ministry units concerned and the Bishop that includes the mission rationale for establishing the Cluster, the details of what is to be shared and how it is to be managed, and a commitment to review.

Mission Rationale

The "Mission Rationale" for a Cluster will need to show how the particular ministry units working together in a Cluster will better serve the mission of the church. It needs to demonstrate that this path is more likely to serve the mission of the church than other possibilities (e.g. Local Shared Ministry, remaining independent, Co-operative Venture, closing down, merging).

Identifying Strengths

Before any ministry unit enters a Cluster it will need to demonstrate what it has to offer the Cluster in

terms of ministries, plant, opportunities, finance, other assets.

Identifying Stakeholders

Before any ministry unit enters a Cluster it will need to demonstrate that it has identified and at least considered if not consulted each of the key 'stakeholders' in such a decision.

In this case, 'stakeholders' at least includes:

- all congregations in the ministry unit,
- any lay or ordained leaders,
- all ministry units who are neighbours or who may have some common mission focus,
- the relevant Archdeacon(s) and Archdeaconry Council(s),
- the diocesan leadership,
- any group or body that the ministry unit already has a commitment to, and
- those whom the ministry unit serves or feels called to serve in mission.

Consultation Process

It is recommended that the consultation process will at least include:

- the Archdeacon(s)
- outlining and inviting feedback on the proposal at a general meeting of parishioners for any ministry unit that is affected,
- seeking the active input of the Diocesan Ministry Educator,
- informing at an early stage the relevant archdeaconry council(s),
- Anglican Care Family and Community Division,
- seeking the views of all neighbouring ministry units and of any other ministry units where their mission may 'overlap' with the proposal.

Approvals and Agreements

Before any Cluster is confirmed, approval to both the concept and the detail is needed from each affected vestry, a meeting of parishioners in each affected parish, the Bishop and the Standing Committee. Archdeaconry Council views will need to be canvassed and reported to Standing Committee as part of the process.

Standing Committee will report on the approval of Clusters in its report to Synod.

Where it is desired or necessary to adjust the formal boundaries of any parish a proposal must be brought to Synod in line with the statute.

11 May 2004
(to be revised following interim use)