# Reimagining Mission:

## A Parish Guide for the Diocese of Canterbury

## Introduction

We’re inviting every parish to develop a Mission Action Plan (MAP) that reflects local context, gifts, and opportunities. This guide offers practical pathways for parishes to think creatively about mission—especially in multi-church benefices, rural settings, and communities with schools or seasonal rhythms.

## 1. 🤝 Partnering with Schools for Missional Impact

**Why it matters:** Schools are vibrant hubs of community life. Partnering with them can deepen relationships, offer pastoral support, and introduce faith in accessible ways.

### Ideas for action:

* **Chaplaincy-style presence:** Appoint lay or ordained volunteers to regularly visit schools, offering pastoral care and spiritual support to children, families and staff.
* **Shared events:** Host seasonal services (Harvest, Christmas, Easter, Remembrance) in school halls or churches, co-designed with pupils and staff.
* **Faith & values curriculum support:** Offer input on RE lessons, assemblies, or themed weeks (e.g. “Hope,” “Justice,” “Forgiveness”).
* **Prayer spaces:** Create interactive prayer stations in schools during Lent or Advent.
* **Youth-led worship:** Invite pupils to co-lead occasional Sunday services or Messy Church-style gatherings.
* **New worshipping communities:** Consider working with schools for new opportunities such as Messy or Café Church. FLOURISH partnerships between schools and churches can also create new communities.

## 2. 🏛️ Focusing Resources in Multi-Church Benefices

**Why it matters:** Many benefices have multiple churches, but limited resources. Strategic focus can strengthen mission and sustainability.

### Ideas for action:

* **Discern a ‘hub church’:** Identify one or two churches best placed for regular worship, community engagement, and growth.
* **Celebrate diversity:** Use other churches for occasional services, heritage events, or contemplative prayer.
* **Shared leadership:** Develop a team of lay leaders across the benefice to support worship, pastoral care, and outreach.
* **Digital ministry:** Use online platforms to connect congregations across buildings, especially for teaching and prayer.

## 3. 🎉 Becoming a Festival Church

**Why it matters:** Some churches may not sustain weekly worship but can thrive as “festival churches,” celebrating key moments in the Christian year.

### Ideas for action:

* **Seasonal rhythm:** Plan 6–8 services per year around major festivals (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Harvest).
* **Community invitations:** Link services to local traditions—village fairs, remembrance events, or historical anniversaries.
* **Creative liturgy:** Use music, storytelling, and visual arts to make festival services engaging and memorable.
* **Heritage & hospitality:** Open the church for visitors, exhibitions, or quiet prayer during holidays or weekends.

## 4.🧭 Considering Something Bigger: Pastoral Reorganisation

**Why it matters:** Sometimes, the most faithful step forward is a structural one. Pastoral reorganisation isn’t about losing identity—it’s about gaining clarity, resilience, and shared purpose.

### Ideas for action:

* **Ask the big questions:** Are current boundaries helping or hindering mission? Would a new configuration better serve the whole area?
* **Explore benefice mergers or team ministries:** These can release energy, reduce duplication, and foster shared leadership.
* **Consult openly:** Involve PCCs, congregations, and diocesan officers early. Transparency builds trust.
* **Focus on gifts, not gaps:** Reorganisation should amplify what each church brings—whether hospitality, heritage, youth work, or prayer.
* **Plan for sustainability:** Consider how buildings, finances, and clergy deployment can support long-term flourishing.

**Next step:** Speak with your Archdeacon or Area Dean to begin a conversation about possibilities. The Diocese offers support for discernment and planning.

## 5.🤝 Partnering Where There Are Gaps or Opportunities

**Why it matters:** Mission thrives in relationship. No parish is an island—and partnerships can unlock new energy, resources, and reach.

### Ideas for action:

* **With neighbouring parishes:** Share events, training, youth ministry, or pastoral care. Consider joint MAPs for shared vision.
* **At deanery level:** Tap into deanery synod discussions, mission grants, or collaborative projects. Deaneries can be incubators for innovation.
* **Ecumenical partnerships:** Work with Methodist, URC, Catholic, or independent churches on food banks, prayer walks, or seasonal services.
* **With charities and community groups:** Partner on wellbeing initiatives, environmental action, or support for families and the elderly.
* **Digital collaboration:** Co-host online services, podcasts, or prayer spaces with other churches.
* **Look at where your gaps are:** Sometimes it looks like there’s no-one to do what you’d want – that could be one of your “Three Things” itself! It might be that you partner with another parish to fill a gap or let the diocese know it’s an area where you need help.

**Next step:** Map your local landscape—who’s already doing good work, and where could you join in or fill a gap?

## 6. 🧭 Developing Your Mission Action Plan

**Steps to follow:**

1. **Listen deeply:** Engage your congregation and wider community in prayerful reflection and conversation.
2. **Discern priorities:** Identify 2–3 key areas where God may be calling your parish to grow or change.
3. **Set goals:** Make them SMART—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.
4. **Celebrate progress:** Share stories, review annually, and adapt as needed.

## 🌿 Final Thought

Mission isn’t just about what we do—it’s about how we do it, and who we do it with. Whether you're discerning a new structure or forging fresh partnerships, the Spirit is already ahead of you, preparing the ground.

This guide is your invitation to step out boldly, faithfully, and together.

You can find more ideas and support on the [Diocese of Canterbury’s Three Things webpage](https://www.canterburydiocese.org/mission/three-things/).

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