



CLUSTER THREE

Farnsfield
West Trent
Riverside
Northwestern Group



RURAL RENEWAL

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BACKGROUND

Led by the desire to share the living hope that is found in following Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3) we are on a mission to grow new disciples with compassion confidence and courage. We believe that this vision is as relevant in the rural villages of our diocese as it is in our other contexts. We are also aware that there are some particular challenges in our rural parishes and we have spent time developing a plan that we hope will enable the church to grow and flourish into the future. While we understand the challenges in rural ministry, we are excited and motivated by the many opportunities that we see. However, the church needs to reach out to people outside of its usual congregations, grow younger and be future focused. As a diocese we are committed to supporting and developing ministry in our rural communities. We have spent time reviewing our learning and have identified several things that work well, including a focus on schools, strategic planning of resources, and the development of contemporary styles of worship, alongside the more traditional forms and styles.

We are drawing on examples of good practice in the rural where we have seen growth – Connect Church in school (Farnsfield, Aslockton); The Potting Shed Church (work with schools, children, families and youth); River Idle benefice (multi-parish benefice, with a focus on children's and families work)

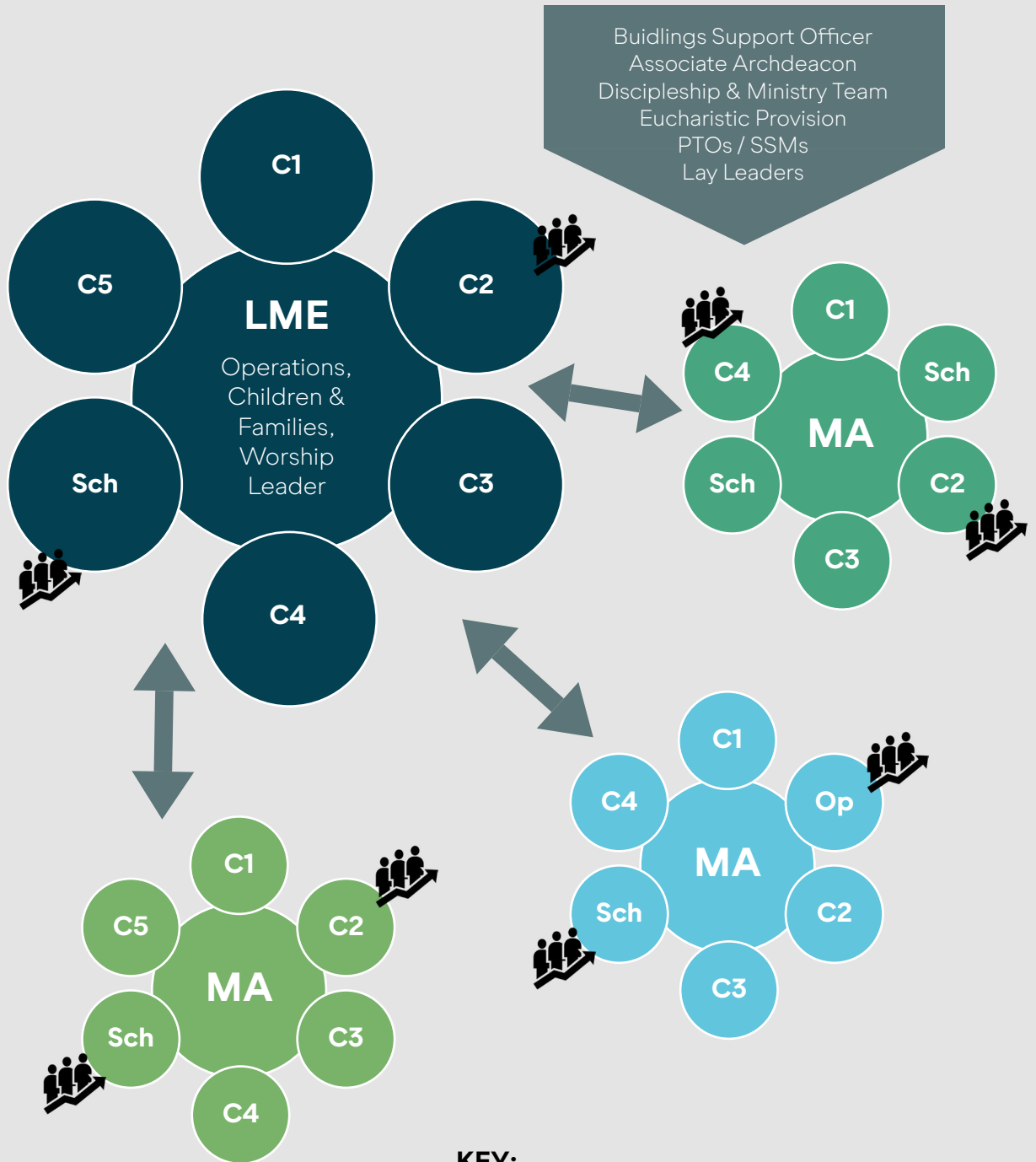
We are proposing a new model that draws together several (likely 3 or 4) benefices into a new cluster. Each cluster will have a priest who will act as lead mission enabler (LME) who will lead the strategy and vision for the cluster, and priests who will be mission associates (MA) focusing on leading one of the benefices. In addition, we have proposed a combination of other roles that can support the cluster (this may include an operations manager, children and family's leader, contemporary worship pastor). These roles will be funded by our successful bid from the national church through the diocesan investment programme.

We are looking for several mission associates to come and help us deliver this innovative vision. These posts will be time limited (initially for 3 years with a 3-year extension) with the hope that they can become permanent posts beyond this point.

We are piloting three clusters. This pack provides the information for Cluster 3.

RURAL CLUSTER PILOT MODEL

The model below demonstrates how this pilot will work.



KEY:

- LME = Lead Mission Enabler (ordained)
- MA = Mission Associate (ordained)
- C1 = Church 1
- Sch = School
- Op = Other Opportunity
-  = New Worshipping Community

PEOPLE

The proposed Lead Mission Enabler will be **Revd Chris Pearse** who is currently the vicar of The Farnsfield Benefice.

We have opportunities for 2 mission associates (Priest-in-Charge roles): one for West Trent benefice and the other for the Riverside benefice and offering wider support to the Cluster.

There are **20 churches** in this cluster serving a population of **14,355**.

There are **3 C of E primary schools** and **1 secondary academy** at Southwell (The Minster School).

OPPORTUNITIES

We have some good links with the schools and have seen growth among children and young families through the ministry of Connect, an after-school Church in Farnsfield. The team are now looking at piloting this model in The Minster School to reach out to secondary age young people. However, there is still much to be done. Many of our churches have few or no children attending on a Sunday and few young adults, but we have good relationships that can be built on to enable greater connections.

We consider that in this cluster, an initial opportunity can be found with the school at Bleasby, and at North Muskham.

CENTRES OF STRENGTH

These will be places where a new worshipping community is planted, focusing on reaching younger and to new people - those who are not currently part of a worshipping community (the de-churched or un-churched), with the gospel of good news that faith in Jesus Christ brings. [As recent research suggests](#) new things tend to reach new people.

These centres will share the following characteristics:

- Create a space where people can encounter God
- Focus on those who may be unfamiliar with the church (outreach)
- Desire to build a place of inspirational worship (likely to be contemporary worship style)
- A clear plan around discipleship pathways, beginning with a generous welcome, outreach events, explorer courses and pathways that enable a clear route from initial contact to full participation.
- A culture that understands what it is to be a disciple of Christ in the rural context in the 21st Century.

A place that can act as a hub for teaching, training and social gatherings for the whole benefice.

We envisage that in this cluster, a potential centre of strength could be developed at St Mary's Church Bleasby and North Muskham.

Location (residence) of mission associate posts:

- Thurgaton (West Trent Benefice)
- North Muskham (Riverside Benefice)



OUR BENEFICE

The Benefice is made up of 7 churches in the villages of Hoveringham, Thurgarton, Halloughton, Bleasby, Morton with Fiskerton, Rolleston and Upton.

It is situated within the Newark and Southwell Deanery covering a rural area of south Nottinghamshire bordered by the river Trent.



OUR LOCALITY

These are attractive villages where people seek to live in a rural location in close proximity to larger population centres in Southwell, with the Cathedral, and Newark. Young families are attracted by the primary and secondary schools in the Deanery, and there is a significant older population. There is some farming, some construction and light industry, and many people commute to work in the urban areas or work from home.

OUR CHURCHES

The church buildings vary widely in style and age. Some are of significant historical interest. Four of the churches have a church or village hall in close proximity, all provide some form of refreshment facilities and 3 have W.C.s and more are planned. The creation of social space by the removal of some pews creates the opportunity of varied use. Wider community use is encouraged. The majority of churches are open daily. Several are close to popular walking and cycle routes. Morton has recently sold its church hall, the money being raised to be spent on improving the facilities within the church itself.

OUR MINISTRY

It is encouraging that the size of congregations, though generally modest, has remained constant despite the challenges of the pandemic and now interregnum. Major and rural festivals are well supported. During the Covid crisis Zoom services were introduced on every Sunday morning and Wednesday evening and are still part of the regular service rota. These services attract people who for personal reasons are unable to attend church, and those who have already left the area or have moved to residential care homes. This initiative could be extended beyond this Benefice. A Benefice web site has been created providing service information including a link to enable those who are unable to attend the Live Zoom service to attend at a convenient time. The West Trent choir continues to be active supporting services within the Benefice. In recent years the Benefice has run a Lent group which has had some support and appreciation.

OUR PEOPLE

There is active lay support and participation in all services and many are lay led. There are two serving lay readers, an occasional team of bell ringers and two organists. In each location volunteers clean the church, arrange flowers and care for the churchyard.

The PCCs in the Benefice work well together on Benefice Council which consists of the churchwardens and Readers. This Council has become progressively stronger as it meets the challenges presented by the interregnum. It employs a part time administrator.

OUR SCHOOLS

Primary school education is provided by a Church of England Primary School in Bleasby. It has good links with Bleasby church and relates to the wider Benefice in that 121 children from the 7 parishes and elsewhere are currently being educated there. Secondary education is provided by the Church of England Minster School in Southwell.

OPPORTUNITIES

There is recognition that we must move forward and play an active role in any new initiatives. Several of the churches reach out to new residents arriving in their villages, and they also provide an ongoing communication link through news sheets and village web sites. One of the villages has developed and continues to manage its own fibre network, this is of great importance to several local businesses.

The parishes are well served by public houses which provide good meeting and social space. Most of the villages have a village hall which also hosts social networks and events. A sports field and hall in Morton is regularly used by cricket and football teams as well as having croquet lawns. A well know race track, riding school and livery stables are found in Fiskerton, the home of the British Horological Institute and a National Trust property are located in Upton. The only village shop and Post Office is in Fiskerton.

It is recognised that much has to be done to encourage growth particularly with younger people. The congregations of the 7 churches are willing to accept their responsibilities and work together to maximise the opportunities resulting from any new initiatives.

OUR BENEFICE

The Riverside group is made up of the benefice of Averham with Kelham in plurality with the benefice of North and South Muskham with Bathley and Little Carlton. Included in the parish of Averham are the hamlets of Staythorpe and Averham Park. The villages are situated close to Newark on Trent and Southwell. They are in commutable distance from Lincoln, Nottingham and Mansfield.



OUR CHURCHES

There are four churches, one at Kelham, Averham, South Muskham and North Muskham. There is a Vicarage at North Muskham. The Vicarage is a modern three bedroomed house, adjacent to the parish church at North Muskham.

OUR LOCALITY

There is a Primary School at North Muskham. There is also a Preschool, and an After-school club operating out of the Rural community centre in North Muskham. The Rural community centre is used for regular clubs and activities including, yoga, Zumba, short mat bowls, art club and Luncheon club. There is a social in the bar every Tuesday. There is a yearly Pantomime production put on by the village players. North Muskham church has a toilet and coffee bar. The pews were removed which allows for flexibility in the use of the space. Tables can be set out for Messy church, social events, coffee mornings etc.

In the village of Kelham there is Kelham Hall and Kelham House both of which are used for weddings and other functions. In Averham there is the Robin Hood Theatre which regularly delivers quality amateur productions and can be hired for meetings and events. Averham and Kelham can hire the Robin Hood theatre for events. The theatre is very close to Averham church. Averham are currently fundraising for installation of a toilet. South Muskham church has a toilet and kitchenette. In South Muskham there is a village hall which has been used for fundraising activities and Café church. The Horticultural society meet there and have three shows each year.

The villages comprise of a range of housing. Mixed housing includes families with young children, teenagers, working couples and retired people.

WORKING TOGETHER

Within the Riverside group of churches each of the P.C.C.s work closely together offering support and is mutually beneficial via a group of Churchwardens and Officers.

OUR MINISTRY

Each church offers socially based informal outreach, including coffee and tea mornings/afternoons. The two village magazines are church based. They are delivered free to every house across the seven villages, reaching over one thousand homes. People from the villages gravitate to the churches at Festival times. The product of us working together can be seen on the Riverside website and is linked to the 'Church near you'. Each week a newsletter is emailed out to subscribers. There are always several events planned to bring the community together, to raise funds for the church and for charities. These include MacMillan coffee mornings, food bank collections and raising money for Emmaus Trust supporting the young homeless in Newark. A collection is made each Christmas for T4U 'Give Love in a box'. All collections from the Harvest Festivals were given to Newark Food Bank and Women's aid.

The two Messy Churches, which take place monthly, are thriving with an average of twelve children attending Averham and ten at North Muskham. The parents of these children also join in with informal outreach. Children from Preschool in North Muskham come to church once or twice each term for stories and activities. The children from Muskham School come to church to celebrate events such as Harvest Festival. There is a desire for us to develop our connection to children within school and provide services which are more appealing to older children and young adults.

We have embraced safeguarding and we are using the safeguarding hub.

BILSTHORPE

OUR LOCATION

Bilsthorpe is a large ex mining village in North Nottinghamshire on the edge of Sherwood Forest, with St Margaret's Church and a Methodist Church serving the community. In the village there are new housing developments, a museum of mining and social history, and a primary school.



It is a friendly village with lots of amenities : - a broad range of shops, doctor's surgery, chemist, post office, library, play parks, Public houses, waste disposal tip, fishing lodges, duck pond, sports field, bowling green, Southwell trail (for walkers, cyclists, horse riders), other footpaths, car repair garages, petrol station, industrial estates, village hall (to be demolished, Parish Council/residents presently in consultation regarding rebuild). Village organisations include an over 50's club, St. John's Ambulance, Garden Club, Toddler group, Heritage museum, Scouts, Youth Centre, Knit and Natter group, Seated Exercise group, Friends of Southwell Trail, Parish Council and Bilsthorpe Together Group.

The population consists of ex miners and their families in the interwar and postwar large housing estate, close to the original pit. Older houses, converted farm buildings and newer houses and bungalows make up the rest of the village with a mix of all age groups.

OUR MINISTRY

We offer hospitality twice a month, following a service, it is a useful opportunity to chat and to welcome new people. There are no other facilities attached to Church but we have several community spaces in the village, namely: the Scout Hut, the Green Centre, Burton Court and the Library. We have a W.C. opposite church behind the new Rectory building.

Our Summer Festival weekend was very successful, displays and exhibits by village organisations saw a steady stream of visitors. Sunday Service was well attended with the Bishop of Sherwood, a large Scout presence and their families, alongside regular and occasional members of the congregation. Lunch was enjoyed afterwards in the marquee tent adjacent to Church. This worship and social event was much appreciated by everyone.

Our vision for outreach in the future is dependent upon additional resources to build upon the network already in place and to aid the active nucleus of people working hard, to grow our church presence in this community.

WORKING TOGETHER

We work closely with St Andrew's Church Eakring, Rev'd Margaret Groves, S.S.M. and Lay Reader, Heather Brown take weekly services at St. Margaret's and St. Andrew's. The two churches support each other's Festival services and a joint choir performs. At school, Rev'd Margaret S.S.M. takes assemblies, usually once a fortnight, and on special occasions and for festivals, classes also visit Church.

GOOD NEWS STORIES

We have had requests from new villagers for a Sunday School for their children and some newcomers are now regular or occasional worshippers. We have a particularly close working relationship with Scouts, and other village organisations: The School's Head teacher is very welcoming and prepared to work with us. There is potential for growth in the expanding village population.

EAKRING

OUR LOCATION

Eakring is a small, rural village with approx. 450 inhabitants, situated two miles from Bilsthorpe, our sister parish. Eakring is predominantly a farming village, but is also home to the National Grid Training Centre, as well as some smaller enterprises, including three equestrian businesses. There are no schools in Eakring, children having to travel to surrounding villages. Our LML, who lives in the village, has links with one of the schools.

Eakring residents are proud of the village's link with Revd William Mompesson, former vicar of Eyam during the plague of 1666. Mompesson was vicar here after Eyam and is buried in the church. Mompesson's Cross can be found on a local footpath, whilst within the church is an information board, new stained glass window and memorial mosaic.

Just outside the village is Dukes Wood where oil was drilled in WW2. 'Nodding Donkeys' can still be seen there. Footpaths surround the village, including the Robin Hood Way. Walkers and visitors can find refreshment at the village tea room, The Daffodil.

The village has a small estate of eco homes built for local people to rent. A small number of new homes have also been built as infill. There are no shops here.

OUR CHURCH

St. Andrew's Church is the oldest building in the village, its tower dating from 1236. The building has been restored and reordered over many years. The church is open 7 days a week for visitors. A service takes place every Sunday at 9am. The congregation is warm and welcoming, and coffee and cake is served after every service. Toilets are available in the village hall next door and there is small car park. The church has a team of bellringers and an organist. The churchyard is still open.

Residents in the village are of mixed age groups, as well as mixed groups economically. There is limited social housing. Most people know each other and it is a caring and supportive community. The church benefits from having an LML building relationships within the village community.

The congregation at St. Andrew's has steadily grown over the years and it is hoped that this will continue, as we look forward to a bright future spreading the Good News of Jesus to new generations.

WORKING TOGETHER

Historically the villages of Eakring and Bilsthorpe have been linked for hundreds of years. However, the churches are not part of a formalised benefice. The two churches work well together, with our LML and the Revd Margaret Groves sharing services. Members of the congregations go on outings and walks, and celebrate special events together. Our village choir has members from both congregations, who sing at special services.

GOOD NEWS STORIES

There are many good news stories in our parish and we are hopeful for the future. A member of our congregation is just about to start reader training. We open our church for concerts as well as art exhibitions and for Christmas fairs. We have held pet services, as well as special services for the Newark Caledonian Society. The church at Christmas Eve is always full for Christingle and Nativity. We have a sound system and the church is well maintained, with regular maintenance undertaken. In 2023 we had two weddings and two baptisms, and in 2024 three baptisms. Two new stained glass windows have been installed, dedicated by two local families. Our church is committed to charitable giving.



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