

The New Diocese and the Mission of the Church

A Statement by the Dioceses Commission

1 Introduction: The Church's Mission

The mission case for a diocese across the whole of West Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Dales is based upon the following key criteria:

- *The opportunity to re-imagine and re-envision the mission of the Church of England in a changed and changing context and enable it to speak with a single voice to and for the area.*
- *Effective scoping of episcopal leadership and engagement across the whole social, political and cultural landscape.*
- *The formation of an episcopal team focussed in a coherent area scheme.*
- *The enhancement of the local mission of parishes and networks through stronger strategic support and resourcing, enriching and sharing good practice.*
- *Provision of a centre for that resourcing in one diocesan office where missional creative energies can focus and flourish.*
- *The retention of three cathedrals within one diocese, each with distinctive missional strategies, being essential to honouring both past history and future holistic mission.*

- 1.1 The Dioceses Commission's review of the mission, structures and resourcing of the three dioceses of Bradford, Wakefield and Ripon & Leeds has provided for a once in a generation opportunity to renew and restructure the mission of the Church of England in a significant area of our country.
- 1.2 When the Dioceses Commission prepares a draft reorganisation scheme under section 6(3) of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007, it is required to include a statement of the effect of its proposals on the mission of the Church of England. This statement fulfils that obligation.
- 1.3 'Mission' is defined in s. 6 (2) of the Measure as 'the whole mission of the Church of England, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical'. It is in accordance with that broad understanding of 'mission' that the term is to be understood in this statement.

1.4 In the Anglican Communion, the mission of the Church has been described in terms of five ‘marks of mission’:

- To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.¹

On this understanding, the mission entrusted by Christ to his Church is directed not just towards individuals, but to individuals living in community and to the structures of society. It involves proclamation and pastoral care, but also social action and engagement, as part of civil society, with the businesses and civic structures that take decisions which affect people’s lives and the environments in which they live.

1.5 The Church’s mission is focussed in the leadership of the diocesan bishop and his episcopal team. It is he and they who, under God, set the vision of the diocese and pray and collaborate in ensuring its delivery.

1.6 That missional delivery takes place at differing levels of engagement. The ensuing sections look at various aspects of what is proposed and explain how a single diocese for West Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Dales should and can enhance the Church of England’s mission at those levels. They include parish and community support, the work of the three cathedrals and the wide ranging opportunities for engagement with those individuals and structures that hold the civic, civil and economic levers of power.

¹ *Mission in a Broken World: Report of ACC-8, Wales 1990* (London, 1990), p. 101.

2 A single Diocese for West Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Dales

The opportunity to re-imagine and re-envision the mission of the Church of England in a changed and changing context and enable it to speak with a single voice to and for the area.

- 2.1 We are clear that the division of West Yorkshire and the Dales between three main dioceses militates against the Church's mission to West Yorkshire and indeed the Leeds City Region as a whole. The importance of the regional identity of West Yorkshire and the Leeds City Region is increasing, while that of the individual cities and towns within it is arguably decreasing.
- 2.2 The increasing significance of Leeds for the whole county requires that diocesan boundaries should not separate Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield from Leeds, because the issues that the Church needs to address in each of those areas are interconnected. Currently the City of Leeds is divided between four dioceses and this is an issue for those, both in the Church and in secular institutions, who are concerned with the good of the City as a whole and not just with its individual parts.
- 2.3 There is a widespread view that the existence within a single, compact area of three diocesan administrations is a luxury that the Church of England can no longer afford. The fact that three diocesan bishops live within West Yorkshire similarly leads to a perception that the present arrangements involve duplication (indeed triplication) that is wasteful as well as unhelpful.
- 2.4 As regards North Yorkshire, we concluded from the evidence that its western half could not form a diocese of its own but should instead be part of the proposed new diocese. Bringing the Craven and Harrogate Districts into the new diocese will tend to increase the coherence of the Church's engagement with the structures of the Leeds City Region. For the whole of the Yorkshire Dales area of North Yorkshire to be comprised within a single diocese will also be beneficial.²
- 2.5 There is an active West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council. Its response to our report commented:

'From an ecumenical perspective, WYEC collectively welcomes the principle that its member dioceses should come together in a single diocese, largely coinciding with the area already served by WYEC. Such a move would not only reflect wider political and economic realities,

² For further reasoning on this see section 6.3 of our 2010 report and Annex A to our 2011 report. Both the Craven and Harrogate Districts of North Yorkshire are included in the Leeds City Region, as are the Selby District and the Borough of Barnsley, parishes from both of which would be included in the new diocese as now proposed.

*with their associated mission potential, but would enable new ecumenical possibilities to be explored across the region... The proposed area bears a closer relation than at present to the Catholic Diocese of Leeds, and to two Methodist districts which are increasingly working closely together... A single diocese for the WYEC area would enhance ecumenical opportunities at every level of church life. Furthermore, the very process of bringing the dioceses together raises the possibility of establishing closer ecumenical working relations in a range of areas, especially those related to mission.'*³

- 2.5 We believe that the present configuration of the dioceses tends to impede the Church's mission rather than fostering it. In its consultations the Commission met a significant number of people who essentially took this view. That being so, the argument for change is, we believe, stronger than any argument for retaining the status quo.
- 2.7 The proposal of a single diocese for West Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Dales is intended to further the mission of the Church of England not only at parochial level but also at diocesan level, both by creating a structure that is more streamlined and more robust, and by enabling the Church of England to speak with a single voice, and in co-operation with ecumenical partners, to and for West Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Dales. It will also be able to respond effectively to the new communities that have developed over the last 50 years.

³ www.wyec.co.uk/assets/files/WYEC%20Response%20to%20Dioceses%20Commission.pdf, accessed 20 September 2011.

3 The Bishop as leader in mission

Effective scoping of episcopal leadership and engagement across the whole social, political and cultural landscape.

- 3.1 The Church of England understands the role of a bishop as chief pastor, principal minister and the leader in mission in a diocese.
- 3.2 A bishop as a successor of the apostles⁴ is ‘someone sent on a mission’, and in the Common Worship rite the Introduction to the service says:
- ‘Bishops are ordained to be shepherds of Christ’s flock and guardians of the faith of the apostles, proclaiming the gospel of God’s kingdom and leading his people in mission.’*
- A diocese can therefore also be said to be an area of mission led by the bishop.
- 3.3 The bishop’s role is not just to support the parishes in mission, but also to envision and enable the people of God in their wider in mission at work, in the neighbourhood and in their wider non geographical social network and social media relationships.
- 3.4 Because the Church of England is the established church and it understands itself as having a mission to the nation and not just to individuals, it seeks to relate to geographical secular communities at various levels – in particular, to civic parishes, counties and unitary authority areas, but also to regions as well as to England as a whole. Much of its missional activity in civic and civil society comes through the engagement of its bishops and other senior clergy. Though some of this engagement is clearly in the public square much of this service and influence goes on unseen, but is nonetheless significant and effective.
- 3.5 There are occasions when the Church needs to address the wider community at a level other than the parish – not least, when an area is affected by disasters and emergencies. The modern media look for a comment from an individual, not a statement from a committee – ideally, from a person who is well known, and if not, then at least from one whose office is familiar. In this context, the role of bishops as representatives of the Church to the community at levels beyond that of the parish has gained in importance. Even if the bishop is not well known as an individual, the office is still familiar in a way that other ecclesiastical offices are not.

⁴ Both the 1662 Ordinal and the Common Worship Ordination Services make the connection between the apostles and bishops.

- 3.6 In an unpublished paper entitled ‘What is the Diocese?’ given in 1996, Professor David Ford commented:

‘A diocese serves and builds up both parishes and the region (just as a parish serves and builds up both its congregation and its locality). This is a pivotal issue in much current finance-led debate about the diocese: is the diocese only a service organisation for parishes? If there is no vision of ministry to the region in ways that cannot be adequately fulfilled by parishes, then there will be a serious breakdown of the polity of the Church of England.’

The regional mission of the diocese led personally by the diocesan bishop should be recognised, valued and well resourced if we are to continue be Gospel salt and light in the political, educational and economic structures and institution across our land.

- 3.7 For these reasons, the English dioceses have, for the most part, been configured to the secular communities they have been intended to serve.
- 3.8 Our widespread consultations and research have led the Commission to the clear conviction that in the western half of Yorkshire community and civic life has moved on. The Church’s boundaries no longer reflect the ways in which communities exist and economic and civic polity is structured. This is now a hindrance to the Church’s mission to and engagement with the structures of society. One Diocesan Bishop at the head of an episcopal team and recognised as such across the whole area of West Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Dales would provide for far more effective and strategic missional engagement. The draft scheme contains changes to diocesan and archdeaconry boundaries with that objective in mind.

4. Episcopal Areas as coherent units of mission

The formation of an episcopal team focussed in a coherent area scheme.

4.1 It will be clear that rationalization and streamlining, and therefore a degree of centralization, with a single diocesan bishop and a single diocesan staff form an important strand of the Commission's proposals. Alongside this it is important to stress that decentralization is an equally important aspect of what we are proposing. There is therefore also a need for coherent missional areas within the whole led by area bishops who take their lead from the diocesan. Diocesan leadership needs to be in dynamic tension in this respect.

4.2 West Yorkshire has a decentralized political structure, and the inclusion of the western half of North Yorkshire in the new diocese, makes a decentralized structure for the new diocese essential. We have identified and propose five distinct areas into which the proposed new diocese is naturally sub-divided.⁵ These are:

- The City of Leeds
- The City of Bradford
- The City of Wakefield (with adjoining parishes in the Selby District and the Borough of Barnsley which relate to it)
- Calderdale and Kirklees
- The western half of North Yorkshire (the Yorkshire Dales)

We propose that each of these areas should form an archdeaconry and that each should become an episcopal area led by an area bishop.

4.3 This decentralization, to smaller episcopally-led units than the current dioceses, should result in mission and episcopal leadership that are more locally focused and closer to parishes, clergy and people than is possible within the existing structures. It will also enable the Church to be more focused in its engagement with the local unitary authorities – in which bishops have a key role to play.

4.4 The proposed Huddersfield Episcopal Area would correspond with the area covered by the Calderdale and Kirklees unitary authorities. The evidence that the Commission received indicated that the area has a natural coherence. Kirklees relates to Leeds and Calderdale, but is quite distinct from Wakefield, with which it has relatively little connection. Calderdale relates to Kirklees as much as to Bradford, and including it in a Huddersfield Episcopal Area rather than making it a subordinate part of the Bradford Episcopal Area ensures that it will not be overshadowed by its much larger neighbour. At present, only one member of the Wakefield diocesan senior staff, the Archdeacon of Halifax,

⁵ Our reasons for dividing up the diocese into these five areas in this way, which have been generally supported by the responses we have received, are set out in Chapter 7 of our 2010 report.

lives in this western half of the diocese. Both of the bishops, the archdeacon and the dean live in or near Wakefield. We propose that this area, like the others, should form a single archdeaconry and episcopal area, with both the area bishop and the archdeacon living in it.

- 4.5 The Cities of Leeds and Bradford though linked geographically, economically, administratively and politically, are distinct and distinctive cities, each with its own issues, challenges and opportunities. They are, respectively, the third and fourteenth largest English cities. For each the Church needs a distinctive, locally-grown and -led mission strategy, led by a bishop who can focus on its particular issues.
- 4.6 The Yorkshire Dales is a largely – and often deeply – rural area with its own rural concerns. The Commission believes that mission to and in that area will be enhanced by the creation of a rural episcopal area with a bishop who is not only resident in it but also able to focus on rural issues.
- 4.7 The City of Wakefield, with the neighbouring parishes in the Selby District of North Yorkshire and in the Borough of Barnsley that relate to it, is noticeably distinct from Kirklees and, though related to Leeds, does not form part of it. This area too, we believe, will benefit from the focused attention of an area bishop.
- 4.8 The decentralization to areas presents a new opportunity for enabling more local engagement in decisions about the deployment of clergy, the allocation of resources and the apportionment of parish shares, all within set overall diocesan parameters. These and other decisions could be taken at more local level than hitherto, thus enhancing local ownership. Importantly, the area bishop could be given delegated responsibility for ministry issues (ordinands, ordinations and appointments). The Commission believes that how this is worked out in detail would be best left to local decision.
- 4.9 In addition to their locally delegated responsibilities area bishops may also be expected to assume a specific mission and ministry mission portfolio across the diocese where their own giftings and experience warrant it. This would enrich the dynamic missional leadership between the whole diocese and its areas.
- 4.10 Though some laypeople (churchwardens, Readers, diocesan synod members) have relatively frequent contact with their diocesan office, many laypeople do not. They identify ‘the diocese’ with the bishop and their experience of him will colour their perception of the diocese. We believe that a system whereby the area bishops live among the people to whom they minister, are each focused on the mission of the Church in their episcopal area, and are generally present and highly visible within it, is likely to encourage identification with and loyalty to the diocese, and should therefore have a positive connecting impact on people’s readiness to support the diocese’s vision for mission and ministry and its financial resourcing.

- 4.11 The diocesan bishop will be an ultimate focus of unity for the diocese as a whole, leading it in its mission to the region and relating it to the national church and representing it internationally.
- 4.12 The decentralized nature of this particular region and the distinctiveness of the five episcopal areas that the diocese will comprise, each with its own very particular mission context, make it essential that the delegation to the area bishops should be maximal.⁶ To facilitate this, and to ensure that the diocesan bishop remains rooted in a full episcopal ministry involving sustained engagement with the local, we believe it to be essential that he should retain direct responsibility for one of the episcopal areas. In the light of the responses that we have received to our 2010 report, we are clear that this should be the Leeds Episcopal Area. This is likely to mean that the Archdeacon of Leeds will need to focus solely on Leeds rather than exercising wider diocesan responsibilities (as the other archdeacons may) and that the other area bishops (and in particular the Bishops of Wakefield and Bradford) will need to perform some episcopal duties within the Leeds Episcopal Area. We also recognise that the Bishop of Leeds may need additional resources, particularly in the early formative years of the new diocese, given his leadership responsibilities for bringing the new diocese into being.
- 4.13 The greater accessibility of significant leaders such as archdeacons and bishops, who hold both the overarching vision for the diocese as well as responsibility for its interpretation in area contexts, will ensure that this vision is kept fresh and adaptable to changing times and seasons.
- 4.14 The division of the area into archdeaconries will be legally fixed (though it could be changed at a future date under the Pastoral Measure without reference to the Dioceses Commission or the General Synod). By contrast, it is important to bear in mind that the arrangements for episcopal oversight, including the allocation of episcopal areas and the precise duties delegated to the area bishops, can be changed from time to time by the diocesan bishop issuing fresh instruments of delegation with the approval of the diocesan synod. The episcopal areas can therefore be reviewed and adapted in the light of experience without needing to seek the approval of the General Synod. Thus, the creation of a single diocese will provide a built-in flexibility which will enable the diocese to respond to further developments without further recourse to the Dioceses Commission or the General Synod.

⁶ We nevertheless recognise that safeguarding for children and vulnerable adults must be delivered, monitored and controlled centrally, under the aegis of the diocesan bishop. In Annex F, Schedule 2 of the main report (p.41), this important responsibility is listed as one that would not be delegated to an area bishop.

5. Supporting Parish Mission

*The enhancement of the local mission of parishes and networks through stronger strategic support and resourcing, enriching and sharing good practice.
Providing that resourcing within one diocesan administration where missional creative energies can focus and flourish.*

- 5.1 The major part of the Church's mission is carried out in its parishes and a significant part of the diocese's role is to support that parochial mission. It does so through the services provided by the diocesan office (including advice to clergy and churchwardens on the full range of issues that they face in the course of their work) by the education department, and also by specialist advisers on key aspects of the Church's life such as worship, evangelism, work with children and young people, social responsibility, and urban and rural issues. Evidence suggests that individual dioceses are finding it increasingly difficult to provide specialist services.
- 5.2 Among the aims of diocesan reorganization must therefore be to maximize the range, quality and resilience of the services offered at diocesan level, while at the same time ensuring that the services offered by the diocese are accessible to, and the diocesan structures accountable to, the clergy and people.
- 5.3 It is also expected that economies of scale would mean that creating one diocese in place of three will over time result in a net decrease in the cost of diocesan services. This presents an opportunity to redirect resources to new mission initiatives and/or to reduce the parish share requested from the parishes.
- 5.4 Pooling the resources of the three existing dioceses, will make it possible to ensure that the services provided by the diocese to its parishes are of the highest quality, are more resilient, and can be delivered more economically. Providing that resourcing within one diocesan administration will make for an environment where missional creative energies can focus and flourish.
- 5.5 The creation of episcopal areas co-terminous with archdeaconries provides the new diocese with an opportunity to strengthen and revitalize mission support for parishes. How area bishops are resourced in this will be for local decision.
- 5.6 Parish clergy will benefit from a much greater range of skills, expertise and resources in relation to their own training and development. There will also be greater opportunities for movement than is possible in a small diocese. More on-going professional development will enable clergy to refresh their skills and abilities and thus assist the delivery of mission.

- 5.7 The encouragement and transfer of good practice in mission and ministry from parish to parish within episcopal areas and across the diocese as a whole should be easier to achieve, both in rural and urban contexts.

6 Cathedrals

The retention of three cathedrals within one diocese, each with distinctive missional strategies, is essential to honouring both past history and future holistic mission.

- 6.1 The Commission looked very carefully at the inclusion of all three cathedrals in one new diocese. Responses to our 2010 report have underlined the importance of all three for the mission of the Church in West and North Yorkshire, for its engagement with civil society and with those who are not regular churchgoers.
- 6.2 It is clear that leading representatives of the three dioceses, ordained, lay, and especially the relevant civic authorities, are concerned that nothing should be done to detract from the status of any of the three cathedrals or limit their ministry.
- 6.3 We therefore believe that it is essential to retain all three cathedrals for the effective mission of the diocese as a whole and especially in relation to the communities they have served for generations. To remove any of them would disable that local mission and the traditions they serve and uphold.
- 6.4 While there is some commonality in their ministries, each cathedral has a distinctive missional contribution to offer to the whole:
- Ripon Cathedral as an historic centre of worship and mission and a place of pilgrimage and presentation of the Christian faith which also provides a mission focus and resource for its rural environment.
 - Bradford Cathedral in the areas of interfaith engagement, community cohesion and cross cultural mission.
 - Wakefield Cathedral in relation to its mission and iconic status for civic society across West Yorkshire.
- 6.5 In addition, we envisage that each of these three churches would serve as a focus for the ministry and mission of the Church in its own episcopal area and in relation to unitary authority structures.
- 6.6 Leeds Parish Church will inevitably be the focus for the Leeds Episcopal Area. The scheme leaves open the possibility of Leeds Parish Church developing into a pro-cathedral of the diocese at some point in the future, so that the Bishop of Leeds has a cathedra in his see city. Whether this is appropriate may depend on how the diocese and West Yorkshire develop in the coming decades. The scheme is so drafted neither to require this nor exclude the possibility.
- 6.7 There cannot legally be more than one pro-cathedral in a diocese and giving greater significance to Huddersfield Parish Church than to Halifax Minster and

Dewsbury Minster would detract from the significance of those two churches in Calderdale and North Kirklees respectively and, in the latter case, its historic significance as the mother church of a much wider area. This is another example of the way in which the episcopal areas of the new diocese will differ from each other and give opportunity for new ways of working episcopally.

7 Parishes on the periphery of the new diocese

- 7.1 At present, the Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds and Wakefield all include parishes that are neither in West Yorkshire nor in North Yorkshire, but have, for over 35 years, been in County Durham, Cumbria, Lancashire or South Yorkshire. There is no reason to believe that these county boundaries will change in the foreseeable future.
- 7.2 We have looked at each parish in detail. We do not believe that secular boundaries should be followed automatically and without reflection. In some cases we have concluded, in the light of responses from the parishes concerned, that the arguments for retaining them in the new diocese are cogent.
- 7.3 In other cases, we believe either that the parishes' own mission and that of the dioceses which cover the counties concerned would be enhanced if they were included in those dioceses, or that the question of whether that is so needs further exploration. A transfer of those parishes is therefore included in the draft scheme.
- 7.4 Some of these parishes are already involved in local ecumenical structures that cover the counties or districts in which they are situated: a transfer would make that simpler. In other cases, a transfer will facilitate increased ecumenical co-operation. The inclusion of these parishes in the receiving diocese will also facilitate enhanced co-operation with neighbouring parishes in those dioceses. Transferring these parishes to the diocese that covers the county in which they are situated will enable them to take their place in the Church's mission to the wider community to which their people belong.
- 7.5 In some cases, diocesan support will be delivered from a centre much closer to the parishes and/or much more accessible from them than would be the case in the new diocese. In all cases a transfer will enable the receiving diocese to speak for a greater part (and in some, the whole) of the relevant districts and counties when engaging with the structures of secular society.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 As stated in our 2010 report we remain convinced that the structure that we are proposing would enable the Church to engage in mission to this part of Yorkshire more effectively and efficiently. At the same time, it will result in missional episcopal leadership that is more locally focused and closer to the parishes, clergy and people than is possible within the existing structures. The scheme makes it possible to create episcopally-led units of worship and mission that are truly local, while at the same time establishing a diocese that is large enough to be sustainable, with resilient and economical administration, and which can relate coherently to civil structures at the county and regional levels.
- 8.2 Our recommendations, we believe, are both radical and realistic. They reflect the evidence we received and, in many cases, suggestions made to us during the Review.
- 8.3 It continues to be the vocation of the Church of England to provide a Christian presence in every community. We envisage a structure that would enable the Church of England to engage more coherently with the people and communities of West Yorkshire and the western half of North Yorkshire, and with the institutions of civil society there.
- 8.4 Our proposals would eliminate duplication and triplication and offer the prospect of greater efficiency and resilience in the support of parishes, schools, clergy and other licensed ministers.
- 8.5 The total number of bishops and archdeacons would be reduced from eleven to ten and support services would be consolidated in one diocesan administration.
- 8.6 We propose retention of the three existing cathedrals, each of which plays an important missional role that is valued by the wider communities and in particular by their local authorities.
- 8.7 The formation of five area bishoprics in Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds, Ripon and Wakefield, offer the prospect of more focused mission and engagement with the important and distinct communities in these areas. The creation of episcopal areas with area bishops and area councils is a crucial part of what we propose. Our recommendations involve not only rationalization but also an emphasis on, and empowerment of, the local dimension of the Church's life. The area bishops would be, as many have requested, closer in every sense to their clergy and people than it has been possible for the diocesan bishops to be. Thus there would be a strong element of devolution within a context of rationalization.

- 8.8 While the new diocese will incur significant set up and transition costs to the national church there will be long term consequent financial savings. While such savings are not the driving force for the scheme and should not be overestimated they are an expectation and reality.
- 8.9 At the same time, the creation of a single diocese would place the financial challenges faced by the existing dioceses within a wider framework. A larger structure should be more robust and sustainable into the middle of the century and beyond. Any further reorganization that might prove desirable in response to changes in Church and society could take place within the context of the new diocese and without the need for involvement by the Dioceses Commission or the General Synod.
- 8.10 Finally, it is important to stress that to recommend reconfiguring the Church in Yorkshire for mission in the twenty-first century is not to pass an adverse judgement on the suitability of structures established a century and more ago in response to the circumstances of the time. Nor is it in any way to devalue the life and work of the Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds and Wakefield in their respective histories of 93, 176 and 124 years. There is much to celebrate in their history of worship and witness, and much for which to thank God.
- 8.11 What we propose now is that, for the next phase of the Church's worship and witness in Yorkshire, those three dioceses should be brought together into a new structure for episcopally-led mission in the parishes, in the areas that comprise West Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Dales, and in that part of Yorkshire as a whole.

On behalf of the Commission

MICHAEL CLARKE
Chair

29 October 2012