

## Fit For Mission Overview

### Background

- Church attendance is declining, fewer people are available as workers, there are too many buildings and declining income. Something needs to change.
- C of E commissioners have given funding for 6 years to develop new mission and ministry.

### Underlying priorities

- New Christians, deeper disciples, more leaders, working for justice.

### Aim

- To encourage mission and planting of new Worshipping communities.
- Share finance, admin and building management between churches to free up people for mission.
- Encourage greater working together and sharing of resources.

### How

- Amalgamate at least 8 parishes in a Deanery in to one or two large parishes.
- At least 70-80% of parishes in a deanery need to join to make this viable.
- We are in Ormskirk Deanery with 20 parishes, so we would probably amalgamate with 9 others.
- Current parishes would become “Worshipping Communities”.
- The new large parish would have a PCC and be led by a rector (an incumbent).
- The current PCCs would be disbanded, there would be no local churchwardens or treasurers.
- There will still need to be a local admin team including a finance officer and buildings officer etc.
- All the finances of the current parishes would be merged in to the one large parish.
- The large parish would agree a budget with the Worshipping Community.
- Each Worshipping community will have oversight from a “priest-in-charge”, but they may spread their ministries across the large Parish and delegate individual church leadership to a local leader.
- The large parish would appoint 7-10 churchwardens from the Worshipping Communities, but not every community would be represented.
- The new large PCC would be elected and include a Rector, 2 Churchwardens, 6 lay members, 2 clergy and 2 others co-opted as needed.
- The new PCC will meet 9 time a year, with 3 meetings being full parish meetings for everyone.

### Process

- Our PCC has to decide whether to start the 2-year process to amalgamation by September 2023
- Once started it’s almost impossible to stop moving to full amalgamation in 2 year’s time.

### Pros

- Good to focus on mission, planning new Worshipping communities and working together.
- For small struggling parishes there is greater support and sharing of resources.
- Brings greater efficiency and support from sharing of administration.
- Allows local decisions about closing of failing churches.

### Cons

- Loss of our autonomy – we could no longer decide alone on things like employing a youth worker or improving the building.
- Uncertain whether there would be enough sufficiently capable and willing volunteers prepared to join the new PCC and the various linked groups that will also be needed.
- The old PCC will probably become the new local team, so may not release people for mission.
- Risk of a drop in giving and legacies as money no longer going directly to local church.
- For churches with a single priest like Christ Church, a risk the priest will be allocated to an area of ministry across the new large Parish and lose focus on their own church.
- For a larger growing church like ours, which is already fit for mission, we risk diluting resources.

### Risks of not joining

- It is unlikely Christ Church would be given funding for a new curate.
- We may be seen as not supportive of other churches and our vicar may feel isolated. However we could still explore clustering with other churches who haven’t joined Fit for Mission.
- Perhaps we will miss out on becoming more fit for mission.

*Jonathan Lock Mar 2023*