

## **Holsworthy Deanery Mission Community – Growing the Rural Church.**

The Holsworthy Deanery Mission Community covers 21 active churches within the rural benefices of Holsworthy, Ashwater, Bradworthy and Black Torrington. At the present time, the Mission Community is resourced by four full time paid clergy, supported by four licensed readers.

Following a review of finance and resources, the Diocese of Exeter has concluded that the number of paid clergy within our Mission Community will need to be reduced to three full time clergy in 2019. This coincides with the planned retirement of two of the current incumbent clergy (Revd Kathy Roberts and Revd Jane Lucas) in 2019. Clergy numbers will then be further reduced to 2.5 in 2024.

Alongside the pressures on clergy numbers, many of the individual parishes within the Mission Community are struggling with falling numbers, ageing congregations, and difficulties in filling vacancies for churchwardens and treasurers.

The current situation is no longer sustainable, and as a result, the Holsworthy Mission Community has been identified by the Diocese as a pilot area for the 'Growing the Rural Church' initiative, under the leadership of our Archdeacon, Ven. Dr Mark Butchers, and the Growing the Rural Church Project Manager, Marian Carson.

Over the next twelve months, the project will consider options for managing the effects of the above changes, but this is more than just a 'damage limitation' exercise. The Diocese are keen to stress that this should be seen as an opportunity to find better ways of doing things within our Mission Community, and will reflect on:

- The roles and deployment of clergy and laity;
- Our patterns of worship, prayer and discipleship;
- Our pastoral care and ministry to older and younger people;
- Our governance structures, administration and finance;
- Sustainable approaches to the management of our buildings.

To carry out this work, a 'Design Group' is to be established. The members of this group will include the Archdeacon, members of the Growing the Rural Church team, the four current priests from the Mission Community, and **three lay representatives** (including Readers) from **each of the four benefices**. The first meeting of the Design Group is planned to take place on 17 May 2018.

### **Would you be interested in being one of the lay representatives for our benefice?**

If so, please could you let me know by 21 March 2018, either in person, by telephone (on 01409 231556), or by e-mail to [mark.neave@live.co.uk](mailto:mark.neave@live.co.uk). If we receive more than three nominations, a vote will be arranged to choose the preferred candidates.

If you have any queries about either the process, or what the role of the representatives entails, please do get in touch with me. If necessary, we will arrange a brief 'question and answer' session after one of our forthcoming Sunday services. Please do get involved in this process – these changes are coming, and will affect us all.

Thank you in anticipation,

Mark Neave (Reader).