

Diocese of Sodor and Man

Together making Christ visible

Growing Faith for Generations



Strategic Developing Funding application

2016

Growing Faith for Generations

Project Summary

The Diocese of Sodor and Man has a concise mission statement: 'Together making Christ visible'. This focuses attention on the whole purpose of the Diocese's life and work and the ultimate aim of all discipleship. In 2009 the Diocesan Synod agreed to replace the 3 rural deaneries and create 4 'mission partnerships' whose purpose is to bring parishes and partner churches together in prioritising God's mission.

The Diocese has established solid foundations for mission and ministry with children and young people and for nurturing young people's faith and engagement in Christian community. The unique and productive partnerships are with the Isle of Man Government's Education Department, the island's schools and churches, and Scripture Union Ministries Trust (SUMT). SUMT, over the last 30 years, has developed quality programmes of innovative religious educational resources delivered to all primary and secondary schools on the island. SUMT provides Christian youth work and leadership training commended by Scripture Union in the UK. The Diocese has strong ecumenical links and has driven forward island-wide Christian collaboration through the ecumenical instrument, Churches Alive in Mann. Practical work has been delivered by community initiatives in rural villages and through the Douglas Churches Town Centre Partnership which includes an effective Street Angels service.

We are now set to build on these foundations with an expanded, energetic and evolving church among the coming generations. This will make faith accessible and relevant to children and young people and nurture them as Christian disciples and leaders equipped to connect with and serve the wider community.

We know this is not going to be easy. Like many dioceses we have ageing congregations and too many demanding church buildings which sap energy and resources from ministers and their mission. We are aware many young people see the institutional church as disconnected from the everyday lives of communities and do not recognise it as relevant and contributing to modern world issues.

To tackle these challenges our project will operate through several complementary initiatives. Using evidence of past success, we will concentrate on investing where we can make the greatest impact.

The "Growing Faith for Generations" project will:

- Expand SUMT's input to many aspects of the curriculum for all ages of school children; and, by building close relationships between schools and volunteers and mentors from their local churches, provide children with a supported pathway to explore faith and develop Christian maturity.
- Deploy a Town Centre Missioner, Street Angels and SUMT interns, operating beyond church buildings, to develop Christian high street presence, outreach and support to young people in the island's capital.
- Deploy a Pioneer Youth Leader to engage with young people in rural communities, to stimulate grass roots initiatives and facilities, and to support groups of young Christians to share faith and revive Christian fellowship.
- Provide expertise to help local churches adapt and offer fresh expressions of church which cater for identified needs, interests and aspirations of young people; and help enable young people themselves to initiate new forms of Christian fellowship and community engagement.
- Expand Christian youth work training to develop, nurture and mentor young Christians as leaders able to take forward developments appropriate for Millennials and Generation Z, and to encourage and grow further young disciples.
- Pilot new approaches in the Island's test bed to disseminate resources and models for other dioceses.

To deliver this we need a Pioneer Youth Team closely managed by and accountable to the leadership of the Diocese and its key partner organisations and integrated with the Diocese's strategic development. We seek £135,000 from SDF which will leverage other funds for the project: cash and staff resources from the Diocese and SUMT amounting to £255,000; £85,000 from Sodor Partners and public donations. Robust governance with regular independent assessment will ensure effective use of all funders' investment.

In seeking to make Christ visible together in these ways, we should touch the lives of most of the island's children and young people. If 5-10% are attracted to Christ, this could mean 500-1000 new young disciples. Sixty potential young leaders will be encouraged, supported, mentored and trained to develop new mission and ministry initiatives in school, church and community.