

PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED

This stuff is easier and I have set out what I think are the major issues.

But I feel inclined to add one more at the start - which is finance.

I feel that we need to think about finance very carefully. I have always belonged in the school of thought which believes that if we get ministry and worship and mission right the finance will look after itself. I have never ever nagged people about money. But the situation here is serious because it has caused and is causing decision-making to be skewed in ways which are unhelpful.

We are looking hard at diocesan expenditure because the burden of quota is very great. For example, John Ferguson-Smith of the Administration Board and I are talking to Bill Pagan about how we could bring about a significant reduction in the areas of cost which relate to the Registrar's functions. We are considering the possibility of taking more of the administration in house which would mean moving to establish diocesan administration at a different level.

I am unhappy about the over-use of augmentation. I would like to see it abolished over because I think it facilitates decline. So does the process of grouping, regrouping and regrouping charges. Because the effect is to ease the pressure and so to allow further avoiding of the issues and challenges.

My preference for dealing with finance would be to see it as a stewardship element of a holistic process of parish development which we would establish congregation by congregation and which I want to talk about in a few minutes. But I would be interested in knowing what you would think of the possibility of addressing the challenge of stewardship in the whole diocese at the same time - or Area Council by Area Council.

I'd like now to say a little about each of the three areas which I outlined in the paper I sent to you.

I think the one which is most difficult one is the first - the idea that we would establish an ongoing review of charges, groupings and of the deployment of stipendiary clergy. Such a review would have to struggle with the question, 'What is viability - financial, numerical, spiritual, as a unit of mission?' We need to consider that. . We need to be equipped to take decisions in the face of coming retirements and so on. We need stability of the kind we haven't had for growth to happen. Down that road also lies the need for some serious thinking about the role of and our use of full time stipendiaries - and the deployment of our non-stipendiaries.

There is an interesting question in there about how we manage and group congregations. We need to study what other places do. Do we sustain so far as possible independent congregational life and ministry - while having informal clusters for mission, teaching and outreach. Or do we develop groups and teams so that we get the advantages of scale and the stimulation of clergy working together.

Secondly, I think that we need to do some tidying up of our development of mission and ministry. We seem to have both in the province and in the diocese a number of groups which are involved in different aspects of the same thing - the support and development of congregations

It seems obvious to me that we need a 'one stop shop' - one engine for congregational development; one group of people approaching congregations and offering support; one process of audit and examination; one set of strategic planning; one set of training and resourcing of clergy and lay. As I said earlier, if we see this as a holistic picture of development, then it is possible to see stewardship as one element of it, linked with others. It may also include worship development, pastoral care, teaching and learning, mission and outreach, social projects, the environment and justice, co-operation with others.

If we have one Strategy for Developing Congregations - one Diocesan Mission Strategy developed and held by one body - then we will also know what the task of the Diocesan Mission Officer and those who work as facilitators and supporters of development in congregations is going to be.

I have been working with Martin - first to create a Job Description for him - secondly to try and work out with him a much more focused and disciplined approach to strategic development in congregations. How many meetings - with what outcome - reporting to whom. We are going to experiment with the possibility of putting the bishop into the same process of congregational development - to give it status and also to give it focus. People look back with great warmth to the early days of Mission 21. They feel that there was clarity and optimism. But it has lost its cutting edge.

Thirdly I think we need to look at the way in which we take decisions. I don't like endless successions of meetings any more than anyone else. But since I have arrived, I feel that I have not attended nearly enough of them. I have attended one meeting of Diocesan Synod, one meeting of Standing Committee, two meetings of Cathedral Chapter and there have been two meetings of the Admin Board. I have also attended meetings of the Mission & Ministry Board, the LCM Group and the Diocesan Ministry Team. That doesn't seem to me to be nearly enough to produce any great sense of engagement with issues or continuity in decision making. Are these groups big enough - do they draw in a rich variety of people into the decision making processes of the diocese - yes and no I think is

the answer to that. I think they are too small and that we are not making the most of our resources.

This morning we looked at fundamental questions - the kind of questions about mission and ministry which it takes a while to answer. These have been much more practical and managerial questions - issues for which we could set up working groups quite rapidly. We'll say more later in the afternoon about how this process might run.

For now, once again, I am interested in what you think. I want to know if I am reading it right - or if it is nearly right, where is it off target. We are together as bishop and clergy - this is the moment to say it.