

Hinckford Deanery: A Description and Vision

Autumn 2006

The Area

Hinckford Deanery consists of 37 ecclesiastical parishes joined together as 7 Benefices or Teams. The 2001 national census recorded the population as 34,151 of which about 20% (6,688) were aged below 16 and 19% (6,656) were retired ([Appendix I](#)).

The majority of the area is best described as rural but there are three significant population centres: Halstead where approximately 30 % (11,000) of the total population live, Earls Colne with 14% (5,000) and Sible and Castle Hedingham 14% (5,000). Whilst some shops are found in the villages it is these three key centres within the deanery and Haverhill, Sudbury and Bury St Edmunds outside the boundary that provide many of the shops and services. Major services such as Accident and emergency Units, large council offices etc, are located in the Towns of Braintree, Colchester, Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge.

Doctor's surgeries are located in Halstead, Earls Colne, Sudbury, Braintree and the larger villages. There is a cottage hospital, offering nursing care in Halstead with a number of Nursing/Care/Residential Homes in the deanery located mainly in Halstead with some others in the larger villages. A greater selection is found in the larger towns of Braintree, Sudbury, Haverhill, Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge not within the deanery.

Hinckford Deanery does not have a single centre of focus. Some of the villages relate to Sudbury, Haverhill, Bury St Edmunds or Cambridge whilst others relate more strongly to Braintree, Colchester or Halstead.

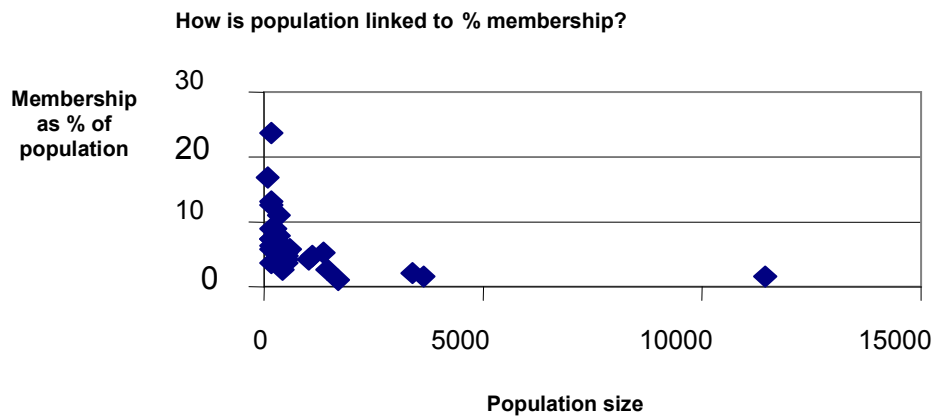
Bus routes cover the main routes from the population's centres but are much less frequent or non existent, in the smaller villages. Access, by public transport, from the southern parts of the deanery to the northern sections is via Colchester and Sudbury. Train services are available at Braintree, Witham, Sudbury, Wakes Colne and Colchester, all outside the deanery boundary.

Pre 16 education is provided by

School Type	Number
State Secondary	2
Private Secondary	1
Church Aided Primary	5
Church Controlled Primary	6
Community Primary	4
Private Primary	2

The majority of children below the age of 11 attend schools that have a Christian foundation and work collaboratively with the local Christian Community. Some pupils travel to educational establishments outside the deanery boundary. Post 16 education is provided by 1 of the local schools and by institutions in Braintree, Colchester, Newport, Ipswich, and Chelmsford.

The Churches represent the breadth of Anglican tradition and there is a strong and increasing sense of belonging. Within recent years two Ecclesiastical teams have been initiated (The North Hinckford team of 14 parishes and the Halstead Area team of 6 parishes). Other churches are linked together in benefices of 2 to 5 parishes. The Total membership of the deanery churches is just over 1000 and represents approximately 3% of the population of the area. There is a tendency for the percentage membership of the parish church, as compared to the total population of the area, to decrease as the population size increases. This ranges from 24 % in one smaller village to 1% in the largest town ([Appendix 2](#)). It is in these larger centres of



population that other denominations are found.

Other Denominations

Representation of the other denominations of the Christian faith are located mainly in Halstead. Some denominations have congregations in the parishes of Earls Colne and Castle Hedingham, Sible Hedingham, Steeple Bumpstead. There are active 'Churches Together' groups in the towns. Members of these churches often travel significant distance to attend worship and other activities.

Other Faith Groups

The Jehovah's Witness' have a 'Kingdom Hall' in Halstead; other faith groups appear not to be present in significant numbers. But there is little evidence on which to base this statement.

Recommendations

No.	Recommendation
1.	Whilst retaining the links with local community we should work to strengthen the ties of unity between: The parishes in the Hinckford deanery The other Christian dominations in the area.
2.	Parishes should be encouraged to do all in their power to work and worship effectively together and to reduce the administrative burdens both for clergy and their own people.
3.	We suggest that each benefice look towards becoming a united parish and we look for a lead from the Diocese in this matter.

Buildings

Our buildings are a key resource and one in which a massive amount to capital is invested. It is essential that they are used effectively in the mission of the church ([Report E](#)) and that they can be viewed as positive resources rather than 'mill stones around our necks'.

Historically our buildings have been the centre of village activity used as meeting halls, shelters and a focus for community life. In the recent decades there has been a movement away from this principle. The movement of activity away from the church has encouraged the focal point of the villages to move as well. This has challenged the ability of the church to fulfil its mission.

The Faculty and DAC consultation process, whilst providing surety that our buildings remain safe and that development of them is thought through, is perceived as a slow and constraining process. The deanery has frequently felt held back by the speed of execution of this process and on occasion by the constraints of conservation against mission focus.

Recommendations

No.	Recommendation
4.	That the uses of our church buildings be courageously and imaginatively approached.
5.	That the deanery encourages the buildings of the deanery to be developed once again as multi-use buildings addressing the needs of the community in which they are placed.
6.	That the Diocese looks at a streamlining of the Faculty and DAC consultation process to ensure that the church is able to move forward with it's call to mission.
7.	That the Diocese looks carefully at the framework of reference the DAC uses to ensure the mission of the church is supported by their work.
8.	There needs to be more clarity about the processes involved in making a building redundant.

Congregations

During the last 5 years the average attendance (based on diocesan figures) of the deanery has grown 6.8% (from 659 to 704), an average increase of 11 persons per year. The attendance in 23 churches has grown in size (62%), two have remained the same size (5%) and 12 have decreased in size (32%). ([Appendix 3](#))

Churches in the deanery tend to have small congregations:

Number of Churches	Size of Congregation
14	10 or less
14	11-20
4	21-30
1	31-40
3	41-50
1	Just over 100

This significantly affects the style of church life. The average age of church membership is much higher than the age profile of the area suggests, but there is little empirical data to base this on.

In the period 2001 to 2004 the average number of children involved in worship on a Sunday fluctuated starting at 88 and ending at 108, a growth of 22%. Those 108 young people represent 1.6 % of the 0 to 16 age group. There is evidence to suggest that a high percentage of those 108 fall within the age range of 0 to 11. Whilst some parishes maintained a steady number of young people throughout the period others fluctuated greatly. Some parishes had no regular Sunday contact with under 16's in that period. ([Appendix 4](#))

Recommendations

No.	Recommendation
9.	To prioritise evangelism in the younger age groups (0 to 50 years).
10.	To develop Christian worship and discipleship activities that both attracts, retains and supports families.
11.	To develop worship and discipleship activities that appeal to younger single adults and adults without children.
12.	To develop a broader raft of ways of supporting those of mature years within the local congregations.

Other Involvement with Young People

The main point of contact with families and children is through schools ([Appendix 10](#)) with 4 significant opportunities presenting themselves; Lay members and clergy are involved in contact with

- Classroom based activities
- Assemblies
- Visits to the church

▪School clubs

The schools, parents, children and some church members, are not always aware of this contact and do not always recognise that they are being ministered to by the church or by people acting as ministers for the church through their involvement ([see Appendix 5](#)). It is worthy of note that schools currently recognise the visit of the clergy more easily than of the lay members of the congregations.

Involvement with families through primary schools, up to age 11, has a high level of occurrence; 5 schools recognise that they are visited on a weekly basis, 4 on a bi-weekly basis, 2 monthly and 4 monthly. It has proved much harder to work with the state run secondary schools. Neither school responded to a questionnaire nor is there an awareness of regular involvement by clergy or lay volunteers in assemblies or lessons.

Christian clubs exist in a number of schools across the deanery ([Appendix 6](#)). Some occur during the lunch break and others after school. Some are led by other Christian organisations.

A young peoples group is currently active in the Halstead Area Team of Churches for those 11 plus. Holiday clubs occur in the Halstead Area Team of Churches and the North Hinckford Team at Lamarsh and Twinstead. An annual Youth Emmaus Course takes place within the Halstead Area Team of Churches.

Recommendations

No.	Recommendation
13.	To build on the already existing relationships with families and children through the school communities.
14.	To heighten the awareness and role of lay representatives in the school communities.
15.	To raise the awareness of youth work within the deanery.
16.	To raise the profile, at secondary school level, of the existing Christian influence in primary schools.
17.	To develop good quality work with all secondary schools in the deanery.
18.	To strive towards the appointment of a 'Youth Worker' to support the growing work of the churches in the deanery.

Leadership within the Deanery

At present (September 2006) the local churches are led by a strong team of lay and ordained personnel

Leadership Category	Number
PCC	37
Church Wardens	74
Pastoral Assistant	1
Readers	11

Active Retired Clergy	3
Stipendiary Clergy	10.5
Title Post	1

[\(Appendix 9\)](#)

Currently two of our readers are in training for ordination and at least two are exploring a deepening call to leadership within the Church of England. The team of clergy represent the broad tranche of theology within the Church of England and work well together recognising diversity and valuing the sincerity of approach.

The encouragement and development of the ministry of all believers is recognised as being central to the continued health and development of the Anglican Church in this Area. The people of God are 'The Church'; it is they that proclaim and enact God's message and God's love in our towns and villages. It is the laity of our churches that make the Christian life in this area all that it is. And it is central to discipleship that we continue to inspire and equip each member of the church to discover the gifts and skills they have and to recognise God's calling to use them in their lives and in the life of the church.

The deanery is very fortunate in having a strong team of Accredited and non accredited Lay Ministers who are essential parts of the leadership within the deanery. The appropriate use of their skills and an ongoing commitment in support and training are key to continuing and developing vitality in our churches. The deanery is offering an increasingly broad spectrum of opportunities for training and accreditation, led by individual parishes and benefices and open to individuals across the deanery.

The stipendiary posts are of a variety of types including 1 title post; of these, 4 of are freehold posts and the remainder are held by license. If license time and retirement age are considered only 3 posts (including the tile post' [\(appendix 7\)](#) will fall vacant in the period leading to 2011. This means any significant re-arrangement of responsibilities will not easily be achieved until at least that date. It is not possible to include other less predictable factors.

There is a recognised need within the deanery to release the gifts and abilities of a greater number of individuals, lay and ordained. A number of in-house courses are being run within the deanery to further equip individuals for the task that God has called them to.

In a deanery of so many small congregations the leadership of worship is a challenge. Most services are currently led by Readers or clergy, but some are led by 'Worship Teams' consisting of Church Wardens and other lay members of the congregations. There is a balance between Eucharistic and Non-Eucharistic services. If they are to meet the breadth of the congregations and train others to take on the role of worship leader, it is vital that the clergy lead worship across a wide spectrum of forms; we are therefore challenged to provide appropriate Eucharistic leadership. Until a time that enough appropriate staff are available there will be a need for further development of 'Communion by Extension' to maintain our pattern of worship in some of our deanery churches. [\(Report F: Ordained ministry\)](#)

Recommendations

No.	Recommendation
19.	To further develop the opportunities for training and the release of talents and gifts of people within the deanery.
20.	To identify skills held by individuals, lay and ordained, in this area and use these to develop and release the potential of others.
21.	To put in place an increased number of mechanisms to allow the ministry of Word and Sacrament within the deanery to grow.
22.	To lobby the Diocese to put in place a mechanism for the training and ordination of Ordained Local Ministers, or similar.
23.	To continue to utilize, until a longer term solution is found, the principle of Communion by Extension.
24.	To look imaginatively at how the resources God has supplied can be used to fulfil the call to ministry within this area.
25.	To challenge, where appropriate, the constraints that exist on the development of every-person ministry.
26.	To encourage a Call to Ministry within the area and provide appropriate training and accreditation.
27.	To make use of the Diocesan Course in Christian Studies and press for local Centres to be offered.
28.	To approach adjustments in stipendiary clergy levels in a balanced and openly discussed fashion, with full involvement of parish, deanery and diocese.
29.	To increase the ethos of working together to build the kingdom of God across traditional boundaries.

Evangelism

The Church of England is a Missionary Church and called to work not just within its own building and amongst its own members but within the community in which it exists. The practical working out of this is clearly expressed in the life of the church membership. As daily life is lived, the core beliefs and practices of the Christian faith are taken by them into the wider community. This is a roll that the deanery churches commend and support.

The organisation of the Church reaches out to the community in many ways. It is exemplified in visiting by parishioners, the running of church based clubs, work within schools, hospitals and other groups. Often the individual members of the congregation involved in this work are not recognised as 'ministers' of the church.

Many, but not all, of the parishes in the deanery are involved in process led evangelism courses, providing clear and relevant explanations of the Christian faith enabling individuals to make their own assessment of the relevance of the Christian

faith to their situation. Increasingly these have been approached as joint parish/benefice ventures.

Halstead Area Team has plans for a Team-wide mission in 2008

Recommendations

(NB Many recommendations linked with evangelism are located in other sections of this plan)

No.	Recommendation
30.	Every parish or group of parishes should take up a mission challenge, develop and sustain it with appropriate support and encouragement.
31.	Put in place structures to enable individuals representing the local churches to be better recognised as those involved in ministry.

Our Place within the Society and the World

Whilst the focus of each local church is on God and the local community, we have a part to play in national and global issues. Our churches are an integral part of our local communities. It is important that this is reflected in what we believe and what we do; part of our calling to both transform these communities and support them.

It would be both unrealistic, and a failure in our calling, to consider only those events which happen within parish and deanery boundaries. This is reflected in the church's itinerant priestly leadership, the national structures that form part of our government and the mission work that we gain from and contribute to. It is echoed in the global issues that impinge on the communities that we form. Jesus' coming that we might have '...life and that in abundance...' (John 10:10) points to that. Each parish has a responsibility, within the discipleship process, to address issues relating to society and the environment. On a local basis it often lacks the resources necessary to inform and educate across the spectrum of issues. The deanery, archdeaconry, and diocese, has a greater pull on resources to achieve this process.

Recommendations

No.	Recommendation
32.	That, when making decisions, the churches continue to consider the impact these will have on local communities.
33.	That the deanery encourages the local congregations to engage with the local community bringing to life the relevance of the church.
34.	That Issues relating to Global and Social issues should be considered in the development of the 'Annual Deanery Plan' of events.
35.	To consider the Diocesan Initiative towards 'Fair Trade' and strive to use 'Fair Traded' goods, where appropriate, at deanery events.

Finance

The Deanery has worked hard to improve the payment of parish share; in 2005 we were asked for £318,142. The assessment for parishes varied from £44,868 for Halstead to £1530 for Ovington. Collectively, 89.9% of this was paid; 29 parishes paid 100% of their allocation; one parish paid 0% and the total shortfall for the

Deanery was £38000 of which £12 000 was the planned shortfall expected by the diocese.

The Hinckford Share is less than the cost of its Ministers and given the basis of our Parish allocation (mainly according to posts) it can be said that the Parish Share is wholly for paying for the local Minister. There is no contribution as such to Church Hierarchy such as Bishops, Archdeacons and none to the Diocesan staff or costs. We are fairly heavily subsidised.

Recommendations

No.	Recommendation
36.	That the deanery set up a group to consider allocation of parish share within the deanery.
37.	That the deanery consolidates on the stewardship initiative instigated by the Bishop of Colchester's Discipleship Challenge 2006.
38.	That each parish continues to strive to pay the full allocation of Parish share in the years to come.
39.	That the leadership of the deanery raises awareness that the parish share pays for the Vicars/Ministers in our parishes.