

Anglican Peacemaking Institute: Reconciling Mission 2021 – An Overview

What is the Anglican Peacemaking Institute and the API Reconciling Mission programme?

The Anglican Peacemaking Institute (API) consists of training and development programmes offered by Reconciliation Initiatives. The *API Reconciling Mission* programme resources participants with a vision for mission as a journey towards greater reconciliation in the world, marked by deep engagement with local communities, drawing on an asset-based community development approach. This programme is offered in the British Isles for Anglican Dioceses and Provinces in Europe.

Why is there a need for the API Reconciling Mission programme?

The church currently faces a significant *missional* challenge. There is a need to respond to social hardship and inequalities, increased since the economic crisis of 2008, and compounded by the viral pandemic of 2020. Added to this are the ongoing environmental issues facing the world, and a heightened awareness of racial injustice. The *API Reconciling Mission* programme has been developed to address this challenge. It also offers a vision for the emerging future of the church, in the light of the Covid-19 disruption, while connecting with the enduring five Anglican marks of mission.

Who is the API Reconciling Mission programme designed for?

The *API Reconciling Mission* programme is designed for Anglican Dioceses and Provinces in Britain and Ireland which want to explore a creative approach to the current missional challenge. Participants will usually be experienced clergy who want to explore fresh approaches to missional engagement with local communities, in company with others. Suitable lay leaders are also welcome if they can make the initial week-long training commitment.

A sponsoring Bishop will need to identify a group of four whom s/he sees as worth investing in for the future, and who might work well together. The participants should represent as much of the diversity of their Diocese or Province as possible, and ethnic diversity is especially welcome.

Ideally the nominated leaders should have completed some foundational training in handling conflict through Bridge Builders or have developed group process and facilitation skills via another route. Alternatively, the aim should be for them to undertake such training, alongside participating in the *API Reconciling Mission* programme, to enhance their skills for working with tension and conflict.

What is involved in each API programme?

At the start of each API programme is a week-long residential course of learning which incorporates:

- A dynamic adult learning course, integrating theological reflection;
- Anglican worship, morning and evening; and
- Biblical study led by eminent Anglican speakers.

Course venues are carefully chosen to facilitate community-building outside formal training sessions. In June 2021, the venue will be Launde Abbey in Leicestershire, assuming a residential can go ahead. Crucially, each API course is followed up with on-going coaching for participants over 18 months, meeting online every couple of months in small groups, using a facilitated action learning process. This enables participants to keep working at implementing their learning, and provides both support and challenge along the journey, as well companionship and diverse dialogue partners. In between action learning groups there will be occasional webinars, to provide inspiration and maintain contact.



What size will the 2021 group be?

The 2021 group will comprise 16 participants from 4 Dioceses/Provinces, to form the second cohort. The first cohort of 16 participants, from 4 Dioceses in 3 different Provinces, began the programme in July 2020, with an online conference. Both cohorts will participate in the June 2021 residential course.

Who is leading the API Reconciling Mission residential course from 12-18 June 2021?

A highly experienced facilitation team is leading the residential training course, including:

- **Alastair McKay**: director of Reconciliation Initiatives, with 25 years' experience of leading adult learning in practical peacemaking, including nearly 20 years heading up Bridge Builders;
- **Liz Holdsworth**: an independent facilitator, with 17 years' experience working with local parishes and on diocesan initiatives, previously in Peterborough Diocese, now in York Diocese;
- **Barbara Macnish**: an independent coach, mediator and facilitator with a background in cross-cultural church planting, and with a dozen years' experience of consulting with churches;
- **Al Barrett**: rector of Hodge Hill Church in Birmingham Diocese, with 10 years' experience in applying an asset-based approach to community development in parish ministry; and
- **Paul Wright**: is a community animator and street connector, who has many years' experience in community-building in Hodge Hill, Birmingham, including working closely with Al Barrett.

What are the objectives and learning outcomes?

The objectives of the *API Reconciling Mission* programme are:

1. To introduce a broader vision for the church's mission within a wider understanding of God's reconciling work in the world.
2. To offer practical tools to enable the church to engage deeply with local communities and to play a creative role in promoting reconciliation within society.
3. To resource participants for taking action within their local context, grounded in listening to the community, and to share learning across their Diocese or Province.
4. To contribute to a creative missional movement within the Anglican Provinces in Europe.

The planned learning outcomes are that, by the end of the initial residential training course, participants will have:

- Heard the story of Coventry Cathedral, and discovered ways in which the Cathedral has contributed to reconciliation in the city of Coventry and more widely.
- Reflected theologically and located the church's mission within the arc of God's reconciling work in the world, and connected this with the Five Marks of Mission.
- Worked with a theoretical framework for engaging with social divisions and injustices, and mapped existing initiatives and projects within their area onto this framework.
- Explored an asset-based development model, looking at a community's strengths and needs.
- Understood the approaches of associated networks and organisations.
- Considered how to move towards greater reconciliation in their own local communities.
- Developed a provisional plan to begin implementing a collaborative community-building approach in their own context.

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How is implementation supported?

After the weeklong *API Reconciling Mission* course, there is an 18-month process of follow-up coaching to support implementation. Participants will hold a regular online gathering, at two-monthly intervals, with a team from another Diocese or Province. The groups meet on a rotational basis so that there is dialogue with all the other teams in their cohort. These gatherings are action learning groups facilitated by an API facilitator. During this period, each group will develop a plan for how to share their learning with others in their Diocese or Province.

What is special about the API programmes?

Distinctive features include:

- A focus on serving local neighbourhoods and addressing issues of injustice, as central to the church's missional engagement with the world;
- An investment in leaders who have the potential to grow and to share learning with others;
- Intentional mixing of people of diverse genders and theological traditions who form a learning community together;
- Designed for small groups of four participants from a Diocese or Province, attending together for more effective support, follow-through and implementation; and
- A setting to develop good practice, share stories of success and failure, identify next steps, and move the church into a deeper engagement with the local communities they serve.

What is the invited financial contribution?

For the *API Reconciling Mission* programme beginning in June 2021, Bishops are asked to contribute £850 per participant, and to cover their travel expenses. This contribution covers full participation in the 18-month programme, including the follow-up coaching after the initial training course. The balance of the cost is covered by Reconciliation Initiatives. We can also assist with identifying sources of bursary funding, if needed.

What happens if the viral pandemic prevents the residential training week going ahead in June 2021?

If the residential training course planned for 12-18 June 2021 cannot go ahead as planned, a contingency plan will come into operation like the one implemented in 2020. This will involve delivering an online training conference during the same week of June, changing the structure of the action learning groups to incorporate a webinar element, and postponing the residential course until July 2022, for which dates have been reserved with Launde Abbey. Based on the strong positive feedback from the online conference delivered in July 2020, we know that we could make this work, if needed. Reconciliation Initiatives would cover the additional financial costs incurred, and there would be no increase in the diocesan or provincial contributions.

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