

Reconciling Mission 2022 – An Overview

What is the Reconciling Mission programme?

The *Reconciling Mission* programme is a learning and development programme offered by Reconciliation Initiatives. *Reconciling Mission* resources participants with a vision for mission as a journey towards greater reconciliation in the world, marked by deeper 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.

Why is there a need for the 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 Covid-19 viral pandemic. Added to this are the ongoing environmental issues facing the world, and a heightened awareness of racial inequalities. The *Reconciling Mission* programme has been developed to address this context. 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 Reconciling Mission programme designed for?

The *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 parish or cathedral clergy who want to explore fresh approaches to missional engagement with local communities, in company with others.

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.

What is involved in the Reconciling Mission programme?

At the start of each 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 gifted Anglican speakers.

Course venues are carefully chosen to facilitate community-building outside formal sessions. In 2022, the venue will be Launde Abbey in Leicestershire, assuming an in-person residential can go ahead.

Crucially, the residential week is followed up with on-going coaching for participants over 15 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. There will be two day conferences at Coventry Cathedral in March 2023 and 2024 with two cohorts gathering together, along with each participating group's sponsoring Bishop, or another senior staff representative.



What size will the 2022 group be?

The 2022 group is expected to comprise 16 participants from 4 Dioceses/Provinces, to form the third cohort. If demand is high, there will be a maximum of 24 participants from 6 Dioceses. The second cohort, originally of 16 participants from 4 Dioceses in England and Wales, began the programme in June 2021 with a residential week run on a socially-distanced basis, due to Covid restrictions.

Who is leading the Reconciling Mission residential course from 3-8 July 2022?

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

- **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 over 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.

In addition, there are a number of visiting speakers, including Jenny Sinclair (Together for the Common Good), Jonathan Evens (HeartEdge), hopefully Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy (Leicester Diocese), and Frauke Eicker (CMS/PMC).

What are the objectives and learning outcomes?

The objectives of the *Reconciling Mission* programme are:

1. To introduce a broad 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, with the potential for sharing 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, participants will have:

- 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, drawing on a community's strengths and needs.
- Understood the approaches of some 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.



How is implementation supported?

After the weeklong residential course, there is a 15-month process of follow-up coaching to support implementation. Participants will hold a regular online gathering, typically at two-monthly intervals, with a group from another Diocese or Province. The groups meet on a rotational basis so that there is dialogue with all the other groups in their cohort. These gatherings are action learning groups facilitated by one of our facilitators. During the process, each group will develop a plan for how to share some of their learning with others in their Diocese or Province.

What is special about the Reconciling Mission programme?

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 churches into a deeper engagement with the local communities they serve.

What is the invited financial contribution?

For the *Reconciling Mission* programme beginning in July 2022, Bishops are asked to contribute £950 per participant, and to cover their travel expenses. This contribution covers full participation in the 15-month programme, including the follow-up coaching after the initial residential week, and participation in the two day-conferences in March 2023 and March 2024. 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 week going ahead in July 2022?

If the residential week planned for 2-8 July 2022 cannot go ahead as scheduled, a contingency plan will come into operation like the one implemented in 2020. This will involve delivering an online conference during the same week of July, changing the structure of the action learning groups to incorporate a larger webinar element, and aiming to hold a short residential in 2023. Based on the strong positive feedback from the online conference delivered in 2020, we know that we could make this work, if needed. Reconciliation Initiatives would cover any additional financial costs incurred, and there would be no increase in the diocesan or provincial contributions.

Document date: 6 October 2021

