

Reconciling Mission 2023 – An Overview

What is the Reconciling Mission programme?

The *Reconciling Mission* programme is a learning and development programme offered by Reconciliation Initiatives (RI). *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 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 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. 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 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 consider 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.

The course venue is Launde Abbey in Leicestershire which offers a fruitful learning environment and works well to facilitate community-building outside formal sessions.

Crucially, the residential week is followed up with on-going coaching for participants over 16 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 as companionship and diverse dialogue partners. There will be two day-conferences at Coventry Cathedral in March 2024 and 2025 with two cohorts gathering together, along with each participating group's sponsoring Bishop, or another senior staff representative.



What size will the 2023 group be?

The 2023 group is expected to comprise up to 24 participants from up to 6 Dioceses/Provinces, to form our fourth cohort. The third cohort of 25 participants from 6 Dioceses in England and Wales, began the programme in July 2022.

Who is leading the Reconciling Mission residential course from 2-7 July 2023?

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

- **Alastair McKay:** director of RI, with 25 years' experience of leading adult learning in leadership and practical peacemaking, including nearly 20 years heading up Bridge Builders;
- **Barbara Macnish:** an independent coach, mediator and facilitator with a background in cross-cultural church planting, and over 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.

There are also several planned visiting speakers: **Jenny Sinclair** (Together for the Common Good), **Catherine Morgan Hickey** (HeartEdge), **Rosemarie Mallett** (Bishop of Croydon), and **Frauke Eicker** (CMS/Partnership for Missional Church).

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 outreach and projects within their area onto this framework.
- Explored an asset-based development model, drawing on a community's gifts and strengths.
- 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 16-month process of follow-up coaching to support implementation. Participants form part of regular online gatherings, 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, using a group coaching process, which are led by one of our facilitators.

By the end of the process, each group will also 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 supportive learning community together;
- Designed for small groups of four participants from a Diocese or Province, attending together as a group for more effective support, follow-through and implementation; and
- A setting to develop good practice, identify next steps, share stories of success and failure, and move churches into a deeper engagement with the local communities they serve.

What does research highlight as benefits of the programme?

Independent research with the first cohort, from July 2020 to the end of 2021, highlighted the following benefits of the programme:

- Inclusion of participants within a diverse and pastorally supportive peer group offering perspectives from different contexts;
- Connection and reconnection with fundamental questions about mission, ministry and personal vocation;
- Prioritising the experience of listening, to peers, congregation members, people within local communities and the Holy Spirit, to discern how God is at work; and
- The evolution and development of existing and new outreach to local neighbourhoods, often in partnership with others outside the church.

The executive summary of the research conducted by Dr Joanna Sadgrove is available on request, and can be downloaded from [our website](#).

What is the invited financial contribution?

For the *Reconciling Mission* programme beginning in July 2023, Bishops are asked to contribute £995 per participant, and to cover their travel expenses. This contribution, which meets around two thirds of the delivery costs, gives full participation in the 16-month programme. This includes the follow-up coaching after the initial residential, and participation in the two day-conferences in March 2024 and March 2025. The balance of the costs is covered by RI, from our reserves.

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