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Southwark Archdiocese has been developing a Synodal model for encouraging missionary parishes. Attached is a file to explain Some Definite Service which is the diocesan approach to fostering missionary discipleship. It works by inviting the lay faithful to discern and share their gifts for the great works of catechesis and evangelisation. They create with their priests, and involving as many people as possible, definite, creative, bespoke plans. Lay leads in every parish create a network which collaborates in deaneries and the whole diocese. The approach creates co-responsibility and provides on-going relationships of prophetic listening and accompaniment. It is outward looking and seeks to reach everyone.

Here is a link to our work: <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk>

SOME DEFINITE SERVICE AND SYNODALITY

Over the last three years, in a spirit of Synodality, a team in the Archdiocese of Southwark (the diocesan Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis) has been developing an approach to support parishes in the three areas of Evangelisation, Catechesis and adult Formation through local people, plans, and prayer. This approach, called *Some Definite Service*, was proposed as a structured response to the Archbishop's desire, and the Lord Jesus' own call, for Southwark to become a missionary and evangelising archdiocese. It follows the methodology of Synodality through prophetic listening, lay inclusion and co-responsibility in Christ's mission. *Some Definite Service* enables support to be better directed to the grassroots life of parishes (subsidiarity), and is now embedding in the life of the diocese.

Key to participation in the life of the Church and her missionary work is an understanding that all have a part to play and a clear articulation of a positive and expectant vision. People are willing to give of themselves in the service of something large in scope and hopeful in reality. We take as our inspiration the wonderful quote of St John Henry Newman (7 March 1848):

"God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons."

Some Definite Service is not just another initiative 'from the diocese' but rather an appreciative and encouraging approach to parish growth and renewal through connection, collaboration and conversion. It comprises:

- An encouragement for each of the 175 parishes to develop a bespoke and creative plan for evangelisation, catechesis and formation through a process rooted in prayer, spiritual listening, discernment and the strategic gifts of people in the parish;
- A volunteer missionary network (made up of clergy and laity) which, at its fullest scale, will feature 525 Parish Leads (PLs) accompanied by 60 Deanery Mentors (DMs) who, in turn, are accompanied by the diocesan advisory team. Currently the network is running at 50% capacity and growing each week.
- A determination to be grounded in prayer through intercession, scriptural discernment and prophetic listening in the accompaniment conversations that take place daily within the network.

CO-RESPONSIBILITY

Co-responsibility is built into the *Some Definite Service* approach and is shown clearly in the creation and implementation of Parish Plans and Parish Lead appointments.

- Priests share their responsibility with Parish Leads by choosing them and giving them responsibilities in their specific areas (evangelisation, catechesis, and formation).
- Priests are encouraged to work alongside the laity in the development of Parish Plans. Parish Leads and other laity champion the plans (which are always about the action of the Holy Spirit).
- Baptism is articulated as the central foundation of missionary responsibility; laity are clearly and directly involved in developing and fulfilling the vision of their parish in collaboration with their parish priest. They have defined roles of responsibility for activating their Parish Plan.

LAY CHARISMS/GIFTS

Some Definite Service is intended to help form mature Christians and equip mature missionary disciples through regular accompaniment, prayer and teaching. Each member of the network is selected according to four criteria: Faithful, Available, Contagious and Teachable (FACT). Beyond that, the discernment of different gifts is encouraged so that they can be put at the service of Jesus.

Some Definite Service provides opportunities for laity to further serve in their parishes (as Parish Leads), beyond their parish (as Deanery Mentors), and helps prevent 'siloed' parishes, providing natural paths to accessing experience and wisdom from other parishes within the Network (solidarity).

It is becoming increasingly clear that *Some Definite Service* reflects the synodal ecclesiology of the 'people of God on a journey' wherein the laity are given formation and encouraged to give a strong personal commitment so that they can contribute charisms, and where clergy are supported.

CONSULTATION/PROPHETIC LISTENING

Some Definite Service is, by its very nature, consultative and iterative. Each conversation between Mentor and Lead, between priest and people provides an opportunity to see how the lost can be reached, how parish activity can be developed, how the individual can answer the call to holiness.

As one of our Parish Leads has shared, regarding our regular local and whole network meetings: 'Listening, silence, sharing and prayer underpin the meetings I have attended so far, mirroring the 'conversation in the Spirit', the 'dynamic of discernment' of the Synod. It's a different way of meeting, leaving room for listening

to the Holy Spirit, through a more flexible and living structure, involving laity and clergy, to fit a synodal church in mission.'

ACCOMPANIMENT

The central pillar of *Some Definite Service* is accompaniment: Accompaniment of people by people and of parishes by the diocese through the locally developed plans. The ripple effect of intentional accompaniment seen within the early Church is a practice that we directly implement. *Some Definite Service* can accurately be described as having a living structure of relationships between volunteers, clergy, and the advisory team for the diocese.

The fundamental purposes of *Some Definite Service* are to:

- Encourage greater participation in the mission of the Church
- Foster a missionary sensibility
- Recognise God's presence and will for the Church today
- Embed the practice of co-responsible planning in terms of evangelisation, catechesis and formation.
- Connect the various parishes and apostolates in terms of wisdom, activity and insight
- Equip the members of the network with the skills and language required by a missionary disciple, not simply through talks and resources but also through regular accompaniment.

CALLED TO BEAR FRUIT

Some Definite Service is beginning to bear fruit. Many diocesan initiatives now start with a period of consultation followed by implementation. The lay faithful feel more connected to their bishop and their bishop to them and the wider church. Mass attendance increased by 13% in 2023 and baptisms/receptions were this year the highest in the country and highest for a decade. More lay faithful than ever before are taking an active role in the mission of the Church for the world.