

West Swindon and the Lydiards Church Partnership

Review of the current issues and proposals for the Partnership's future

July 2013



Contents:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Methodology**
- 3. Report summary**
- 4. Mission and vision of the Partnership**
- 5. Key themes**
- 6. Partnership strengths and weaknesses**
- 7. Alternative scenarios for the future of the Partnership**
- 8. Decision making process for shaping the future of the Partnership**
- 9. Additional action points**

ISR Review Team and report authors:

Jon Doble

Sandra O'Shea

Simon Topping



Churches for work and social justice

1. Introduction

The process of a “review” is often a difficult concept in a situation where there has been a history of turbulence in the journey that has brought people to a point of where external involvement has seemed necessary. Such a journey can be difficult and at times uncomfortable or perhaps even painful, but finding new insight from the perspectives of outsiders can be an opportunity to discern a new way forward.

We hope that the brief engagement that we have had with the people and churches of the Partnership will provide that opportunity to stand back and reflect on the next stage and the process of how decisions will be made and implemented.

As Christian communities we remind ourselves *that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*¹, but we know too that managing change can test our faith and resolve to be rooted in such fruitful culture. Our purpose in offering this report has been to journey alongside the Partnership for a short while and to listen. We hope that such listening has been helpful and has valued the different strands of experience and the different viewpoints that exist within the situation, as it is through such listening that wisdom may be found.

We have not attempted to create a history of the Partnership story, nor have we attempted to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of the Partnership dynamics and nuances, for such an aspiration would be a bold one indeed given the timescales involved. What we have tried to do in our listening and reflections is to achieve a number of things:

- We have sought to create space to allow listening to take place and for reflective activity to inform how a process of decision making is approached.
- We have sought not to be definitive or prescriptive but to encourage reflective learning from the experiences that have shaped the different perspectives within the current Partnership community.
- We have sought to provide space to reflect on the culture of the Partnership, often described as “*the way we do things round here*”², in helping perspectives, stories and experiences recognise each other’s validity.
- We have sought to draw out what seem to us the core “narrative themes” as we have met them and offer them back to the Partnership as an insight into the context in which decisions need to be made about the future.
- We consider that it is essential that active choices are made in the near future about the role, shape and nature of the Partnership and we hope that this process of review will enable space to encourage such decision making.
- We will offer scenarios and options for change as a means of enabling decision making but the choices will have to be made by the members of the Partnership in dialogue with the Sponsoring Body and Participating Denominations.
- We believe that a framework that enables a culture of “*receptive ecumenism*” and a focus on missional intent will provide a fruitful and future focused strategic direction for the Partnership.

Jon Doble, ISR Director

¹ Galatians 5:22

² Deal and Kennedy 1982

2. Methodology of the report

The Review Team undertook an information gathering and consultation process with the Partnership in the following way:

- a) Initial conversation and background information sharing with Michael Johnson of the Sponsoring Body and Chris Scarisbrick, the Partnership Council Secretary
- b) Interviews with existing members of the Partnership Team: Claire Camm, Clive Deverell, Dick Gray, Tudor Roberts
- c) Interviews with Anne Carter, Trish Roberts and Bishop Lee Rayfield
- d) Consultation morning with lay representatives of each church within the Partnership
- e) Submission of comments by individuals from within the Partnership (13 separate submissions)

The consultation process will conclude with a final meeting with representatives of the churches in order to reflect on the findings of the review.

3. Report summary

Through the process of consultation the report has identified eight “key themes” in the life the Partnership (pp. 4-10). Nine strengths and eleven weaknesses of the Partnership were also identified (pp. 10-13).

In the light of these findings the report offers four scenarios for the future shape of the Partnership and recommends that the Sponsoring Body and the Participating Denominations provide direction to the Partnership Council on which scenario should be adopted, or suggest an alternative scenario (pp. 13-14).

The report concludes with nine additional action points (pp. 15-16). Not all of the action points will be relevant to all of the scenarios outlined.

4. Mission and Vision of the LEP

The West Swindon and the Lydiards Church Partnership was constituted as a single congregation Local Ecumenical Project in 1988.

The participating denominations are: the Baptist Church (West of England Baptist Association), the Church of England (Bristol Diocese, Swindon Deanery), the Methodist Church (Upper Thames Circuit, Great Western Federation, Bristol District), The United Reformed Church (South Western Synod).

The participating churches are: All Saints Lydiard Millicent, St Mary’s Lydiard Tregoze, Holy Trinity Shaw, Toothill Church, Westlea Church.

The Partnership constitution has been amended in 2009 and 2011.

The overarching vision of the Partnership is “to be the People of God and extend the Kingdom of God throughout West Swindon and the Lydiards”. Within the Partnership literature the image is frequently used of five burning coals (representing the five participating churches) which burn brighter when they are brought together.

The mission of the Partnership is summarised in the constitution with the wording of the “five marks of mission”:

- to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
- to teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- to respond to human need by loving service
- to seek to transform unjust structures of society
- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

5. Key Themes

The following key themes emerged from the report team’s meetings, interviews and correspondence. These themes are not listed in an order of priority but, taken together, help to highlight the complex range of factors which shape the current life of the Partnership, either positively or negatively.

5.1 Accountability

Are Partnership clergy primarily accountable to the Partnership Council and the Partnership Team, are they primarily accountable to their denominational leaders and structures or are they primarily accountable to the local churches within the Partnership for which they have specific pastoral responsibilities? It was considered important by many to clarify these lines of accountability in order to ensure effective decision making within the Partnership. The view was expressed that for decision-making which related directly to the life of the Partnership (including local church decision making) all clergy should consider themselves primarily accountable to the Partnership Council and to the Partnership Team.

Some considered that the conflict over competing lines of accountability was felt most strongly by Anglican clergy within the Partnership. It was suggested that the Anglican Church operates with a more “top down” model of clergy oversight and management so that Anglican clergy look for direction from leadership that is situated outside the Partnership, creating a greater possibility for a clash between Partnership and external lines of accountability. In contrast the Baptist Church, the United Reformed Church and, to a lesser extent, the Methodist Church operate a “bottom up” model of clergy oversight and management and so are less likely to feel accountable to leadership and management that is external to the Partnership.

It was also noted that, when a church experiences a gap in ministerial oversight due to delays in making a new appointment, it is often not clear to that church who has a mandate for decision making within the church.

The Partnership constitution does not presently provide detailed guidance on lines of accountability for members of the Partnership Team. The description of the Partnership Council's role on the Partnership website states that the Partnership Council should "act in partnership with the Ministers in spiritual oversight of our Partnership churches and their leadership teams and church committees to help achieve our mission." In the view of the Review Team greater clarity is required within the constitution on lines of accountability.

5.2 Partnership Team

Linked to the theme of accountability, concerns were expressed about the functioning of the Partnership Team. It was felt by some that the present collegial model of equals working together is failing and that, in order for the Team to operate effectively, it was necessary to appoint one member of the Partnership Team as a Team Leader. It was also felt that a Team Leader provides a focal figure for the Partnership and helps to clarify lines of accountability. Any new Team Leader would need structural and constitutional back up in order to make such leadership effective.

Occasional reference was made to the potential appointment of a "Team Rector" who would act as a leader for the Anglican clergy within the Partnership Team (at present no Team Rector has been appointed). In the past the roles of Team Leader and Team Rector have been combined when that person has been an Anglican. This leadership has been broadly recognised and accepted across the clergy and membership of the Partnership. When the Team Leader is not an Anglican, and therefore not also designated as the Team Rector, this can lead to a lessening of the Anglican clergy's sense of accountability to the Partnership Team Leader.

The Review Team questions whether it is helpful to use the designation of Team Rector within the context of the Partnership.

5.3 Denominational demands and expectations

Frustration was expressed at the way in which the churches in the Partnership have to deal with the differing governance models and bureaucratic demands of four separate denominations. Examples that were given were:

- i. the Methodist Church asking for figures on children and young people using different age brackets to that of the other denominations
- ii. The Methodist financial year ending in August rather than March
- iii. Maintaining an Anglican electoral role across the whole of the Partnership

Denominational bureaucratic compliance was felt to be additionally complicated by the fact that some of the Anglican bureaucratic requirements are legal obligations. At times this has required a separate Parochial Church Council to convene during a Partnership Council so that members of the council who are on the Anglican Electoral Roll can make decisions required by law. Some felt that this practice is alienating to non PCC members of the Partnership Council.

The view was expressed that denominational bodies would need to operate more flexibly with regard to the Partnership and accept that some data could not be submitted in the way they would prefer. It was also recognised by some that complex and occasionally competing denominational bureaucratic structures were an inevitable but necessary overhead of ecumenical endeavour.

There was also concern that the Partnership created an “island mentality”. Because of the difficulty in relating to all four separate denominations the result was that the Partnership churches did not relate properly to any of them and so lost the opportunity to participate in regional and national denominational projects.

5.4 Financial viability

A range of comments were made regarding the financial position of the Partnership:

5.4.1 *Economies of scale*

It was recognised that operating as a Partnership of five churches did allow for some economies of scale. In particular, the Partnership’s administrative hub was appreciated by many. It was noted that some of the smaller churches may not have the administrative resources to operate alone without the support of the Partnership administrative hub.

5.4.2 *Building maintenance*

Some expressed concern that the Partnership could not afford to maintain its present number church buildings, especially with low membership levels in some churches. It was suggested that the Partnership sell off one or more of its church sites and gather a larger congregation in the remaining site(s).

5.4.3 *Hidden costs*

There was also concern that the Partnership did not recognise the high financial cost of maintaining the older buildings within the Partnership (particularly All Saints). The question was raised as to whether the calculations for the financial contribution to the Partnership from individual churches recognised the higher costs of maintaining an older building.

5.4.4 *Staff shortfall*

Concern was also expressed over whether the financial position of the Partnership was leading to reductions in staffing which were too severe for the future viability of the Partnership.

5.4.5 *Reserves*

Concern was also expressed about the reduction in the level of financial reserves held by the Partnership.

5.4.6 *Multiple bank accounts*

Each church has its own bank account in addition to a Partnership bank account. Could some of the complexity in running the Partnership be reduced if there was just one bank account for all the churches?

5.4.7 *“Common purse”*

Alongside calls for the consolidation of all banks accounts into one there were also concerns expressed about the tensions caused by having a ‘common purse’. It was felt that local church leadership teams do not understand the Partnership’s financial commitments to the four denominations because of their lack of knowledge about the financial details of the common purse.

5.5 Worship and preaching diversity

There was a noticeable divergence in opinions regarding the perceived advantages or disadvantages of promoting diversity in worship and preaching across the Partnership. At present this diversity is principally achieved through the practice of preachers and leaders of worship taking services across all five churches in the Partnership, plus a fifth Sunday Partnership service. In addition, each local church maintains worship and liturgical practices that reflect historic associations with a particular denomination.

The feedback from the Review Team’s research indicated that the majority view in four of the churches in the Partnership (Holy Trinity, St Mary’s, Toothill and Westlea) was that this diversity was a positive benefit to the life of the Partnership. There were some who also expressed this view at All Saints, but there were others at All Saints who felt that the pattern of moving preachers and leaders of worship around the Partnership prevented a local church from developing its own identity and worship style. There was concern that the local congregation would not know what to expect from week to week. There were also some at All Saints who felt that its worship style should consciously reflect the church’s Anglican roots and that this was not possible with a rotation of preachers and worship leaders from a range of denominational traditions.

It was also noted that, on occasions, differing denominational church practice could lead to confusion and misunderstanding. The following examples were cited:

- i) the Methodist, Anglican and URC practice of permitting only formally trained and recognised preachers and worship leaders to take services, which conflicts with the Baptist practice which allows for greater flexibility in terms of who preaches and leads worship.
- ii) The Methodist practice of preachers choosing their own hymns and songs conflicts with the Anglican practice of the local organist or music leader choosing the music.
- iii) Differing practices across the Partnership in relation to the admission of children to the service of Holy Communion.

5.6 Local church commitment to the Partnership

The feedback submitted to the Review Team highlighted a significant difference in the levels of commitment to the Partnership as it now functions and as it is now constituted. In a pattern similar to that identified in relation to attitudes to worship and preaching noted above, responses from four of the five Partnership churches (Holy Trinity, St Mary's, Toothill and Westlea) indicated very strong support for the Partnership in its present form (although there were suggestions, included within the report, for ways in which the working of the Partnership could be improved). Within All Saints it was possible to identify the following range of views with regard to the Partnership:

- i. A similar view to that expressed within the other four churches. The Partnership was regarded as making a very positive contribution to the life of the churches within it, with the ecumenical overhead in terms of administrative complexity being outweighed by the benefits of joint working and the richness of denominational diversity.
- ii. A preference for a "lighter touch" Partnership or possibly a Covenant or Council of Churches bound together in a looser way. The advantages of this model were seen to be a reduction in the financial and administrative burden, greater clarity over accountability and the opportunity for each church to develop its distinctive identity.
- iii. A preference for All Saints to leave the Partnership and to become an Anglican church. From this perspective, despite being a member of the Partnership, All Saints has retained its Anglican culture and identity and reverting to its original Anglican status would recognise this fact.

Some of the feedback received by the Review Team explored the consequences of All Saints withdrawing from the Partnership. The following consequences were identified:

- i. Whilst it was felt by some at All Saints that it would strengthen All Saint's financial position to withdraw from the Partnership, the majority view from within the other four churches of the Partnership was that the Partnership would still be financially viable without the contribution from All Saints.
- ii. There was recognition at All Saints that, if it were to withdraw from the Partnership, it would not be sustainable in the long run for All Saints to have a full time clergyperson operating exclusively at All Saints.
- iii. There was also recognition that the Partnership may lose access to human resources within All Saints who presently contribute significantly to the Partnership's children and young people's work, to training /confirmation work and to adult Christian education.
- iv. It was noted that, outside the Partnership, All Saints may miss the administrative support currently provided by the Partnership's administrative hub.

5.7 Clergy Stress

The theme of clergy stress was highlighted within the feedback but with a range of explanations for its causes:

5.7.1 *Understaffing*

In part, understaffing has been a product of long gaps between the departure of one minister and the arrival of the next, increasing the workload of the remaining staff. Concern was also expressed over whether the existing “full compliment” of clergy team members is actually adequate for the requirements of the Partnership.

5.7.2 *Accountability*

It was suggested that confusion over competing lines of accountability has led to increasing clergy stress (see section 5.2, pp. 5-6).

5.7.3 *Clergy areas of responsibility*

Stress may also be caused by confusion over the degree to which individual clergy should spend time working in churches of the Partnership for which they had not been given specific pastoral oversight. It was felt that greater clarity about the roles and functions of clergy in those churches for which they were not directly responsible would help to reduce the level of stress.

5.7.4 *Different governance models*

Clergy are required to understand and operate within a range of different denominational governance models as well as the governance model of the Partnership itself.

5.7.5 *Additional bureaucratic levels*

Decision making structures and committees operate both at the local church level and at the Partnership level. This generates a large number of extra meetings. Additionally the pace of decision making at the local church level is faster than at the Partnership level which can lead to additional frustration (see also section 5.4, pp. 6-7).

5.7.6 *Multi-church working*

Clergy who come from a pattern of operating in a single church context may struggle to adapt to working within the multi-church context of the Partnership.

5.7.7 *Personnel mix*

The Partnership Team will necessarily include members with differing theological perspectives, worship styles, temperaments, personalities etc. Such differences have the potential to increase clergy stress.

5.7.8 *Delegation*

There were some suggestions that clergy stress was increased due to reluctance on the part of clergy to delegate roles, responsibilities and decision making to lay people. It was felt that some issues relating to clergy time management and unrealistic expectations regarding the clergy workload could be addressed through increased delegation.

5.7.9 *“Inevitable” level of stress*

The view was also expressed that the Partnership is a necessarily complex body, given the participation of four different denominations and five churches, and that a certain level of stress was to be expected for clergy working within the Partnership.

5.8 **“We cannot go on as we are”**

The final key theme which emerged from the feedback received by the Review Team was the repeated view that the Partnership has now reached a point where significant changes in the structure, practice and (potentially) composition of the Partnership need to be implemented in order to effectively address the issues listed above and in order that the Partnership might be able to achieve its vision and fulfil its mission.

In recognition of this call for change the Review Team has outlined four alternative scenarios for the future shape of the Partnership, plus a series of specific action points (see pp. 13-16).

6. **Present strengths and weaknesses of the Partnership**

Members of the Partnership were also asked to identify present strengths of the Partnership (what they valued about the Partnership) and present weaknesses (what they identified as challenges to the effectiveness of the Partnership). An analysis of these strengths and weaknesses will help in the consideration of what future structures and practices will best suit the Partnership. The following strengths are not listed in order of priority.

6.1 **Strengths**

6.1.1 *Diversity in worship and the range of preachers*

As the report has already noted, diversity in worship styles and preachers is seen by some (predominantly from Holy Trinity, St Mary’s, Toothill and Westlea) as a strength and by others (predominantly from All Saints) as a weakness. For those who saw it as a strength it was felt that such diversity was appropriate given the denominational diversity represented within the distinct congregations of the Partnership and it was also felt to honour the core ecumenical values of the Partnership.

6.1.2 *Greater awareness of the wider community*

The five churches of the Partnership are set in differing social, economic and cultural contexts. The shared activities of the Partnership has helped members of the different congregations to be more outward looking and more open to learn from the experience of others Christians living in other settings.

6.1.3 *Youth Work (Emerge) and Messy Church*

The work of Emerge and Messy Church was considered to be a strength by a majority of those who offered feedback to the Review Team. There was a minority view that the level of volunteering required to run Messy Church may not be sustainable in the long term.

Both Emerge and Messy Church were seen as the best examples of the Partnership dividend – projects that were only possible because of pooled resources across the five churches. They were also considered to provide models for future Partnership mission projects.

Some concern was expressed that the Partnership's "ownership" of the Emerge project was nominal and that greater investment by the Partnership was needed, through financial support, through volunteers and through engaged oversight, in order to secure its long term future.

6.1.4 *Administrative hub*

The work of the administrative hub was highly valued across all the churches of the Partnership. It was recognised that the hub provided a practical way for the Partnership to manage the additional bureaucratic overhead created by ecumenical working. The financial benefit of sharing office equipment and technology was also noted. The hub was also considered to be essential for the administration of the high number of weddings and baptisms within the Partnership. Economies of scale, in general, were regarded as a strength of the Partnership.

6.1.5 *Friendships across churches*

The Partnership has helped to build and strengthen wider social networks amongst church members in a way that would not have been possible as individual churches. The occasional social events organised by the Partnership (e.g. strawberry teas) have helped to strengthen these networks.

6.1.6 *5th Sunday services*

The fifth Sunday Partnership service was viewed by many as a positive opportunity for joint planning, for a sharing in the worship diversity of the Partnership and for a celebration of the life of the Partnership.

The view was also expressed by others, however, that the fifth Sunday Partnership service was an excuse for many to "take a Sunday off".

6.1.7 *Support for smaller churches*

In addition to the economies of scale already mentioned it was felt that the Partnership helped both to support smaller churches financially and also for those smaller churches to engage in activities that would not be possible without the wider resources of the Partnership.

6.1.8 *Asset and skill sharing*

Linked to the above point it was felt that the combined pool of skills, experience, training, expertise and gifts across the Partnership significantly enhanced the life of the Partnership in a way that would not be possible as separate churches. Examples of the benefits of this asset and skill sharing were the range of training courses and Christian education work undertaken within the Partnership. In particular, the Alpha courses, the Lent courses, Bible Track, marriage

preparation and confirmation classes were highlighted. The jointly run child protection and vulnerable adult training was also regarded as a strength of the Partnership.

6.1.9 *Spiritual support*

Each congregation offering regular prayer support for the other churches of the Partnership was also noted as a significant strength of the Partnership.

6.2 Weaknesses

There is considerable overlap between the perceived weaknesses of the Partnership and those concerns highlighted in the “Key Themes” section above. In this section only those concerns which are additional to those mentioned under “Key Themes” are included. The following weaknesses are not listed in order of priority.

6.2.1 *Potential future lack of a free church ministerial presence*

With the retirement of Dick Gray, concern was expressed that future staffing levels would not be sufficient and would not adequately reflect the size of the Free Church presence within the Partnership.

6.2.2 *Tokenism*

There was a view that some members of congregations were tokenistic in their engagement with the Partnership and that some churches services were token Partnership services while the main service of the church retained its denominational distinctiveness.

It was also felt that the ongoing life and mission of the local church meant that there was little energy for engagement on separate Partnership projects.

There was concern that an LEP spread over several buildings leads to separate loyalties.

6.2.3 *Difficulty in adapting to reduced ministerial oversight*

Some church members have found it a struggle to accept that there is no longer one minister to one church.

6.2.4 *Property concerns*

A concern was expressed about the degree to which the Partnership Council fulfilled its role in term of taking responsibility for property issues at the local church level.

6.2.5 *Relationships with other churches*

The geographical area covered by the Partnership includes a number of active churches who are not members of the Partnership. It was felt that relationships with these churches were overlooked because of the focus on the Partnership churches.

6.2.6 *Lack of County Ecumenical Officer*

There has been no local County Ecumenical Officer in recent years and it was felt that the support of such an officer may have helped the Partnership find its way through the difficult issues which are now being considered by this present review.

6.2.7 *Lack of a sharing agreement with All Saints and St Mary's*

It was suggested that a sharing agreement did not exist at All Saints and St. Mary's because of the reluctance of the other churches in the Partnership to take joint responsibility for the complex property issues relating to those churches. The disadvantage of this arrangement was considered to be the fact that other Partnership ministers could not register weddings at these churches. Additionally, it was felt that this allowed a more specifically Anglican culture to be retained within these churches.

6.2.8 *Changes in the national ecumenical context*

It was felt that the wider crisis in ecumenism was having an impact on the Partnership. The Partnership was developed at a phase of ecumenism when "organic unity" was a priority. The present ecumenical focus on "visible unity" needed to be reflected in the life of the Partnership.

6.2.9 *Undervaluing of lay leadership potential*

As mentioned in the section on clergy stress the view was expressed that insufficient value was placed on the potential for the development of lay leadership. A greater level of trust in the capacity of lay leaders to take on areas of responsibility within the life of the Partnership was necessary if the Partnership was going to respond positively to future reductions in staffing levels (and existing levels of clergy stress). There was a suggestion that a lay leadership training programme could be undertaken by the Partnership.

6.2.10 *Lack of sensitivity to differing social-economic contexts*

Although one strength of the Partnership was perceived to be the opportunity it provided for people to learn about the wider community it was also suggested that a lack of sensitivity to the different pressures and needs of those living within economically deprived areas of the Partnership could lead to disunity within the Partnership.

6.2.11 *Lack of planning for Partnership outreach*

The view was expressed that there is presently no coherent plan for Partnership mission outreach or for joint social events that would help to build links between the Partnership and the local community.

7. Alternative scenarios for the future of the Partnership

Recognising the strong sense within the Partnership that the time has come for changes to structure and practice in order to strengthen and secure the future viability of the Partnership, the Review Team recommends that one of the following scenarios is adopted:

7.1 Scenario one

The Partnership is dissolved. Each separate church is adopted by a denomination. The Review Team suggests that All Saints, Holy Trinity and St Mary's are adopted by the Anglican Church, that Toothill is adopted by the Methodist Church and that Westlea is adopted by the United Reformed Church. Under this scenario the Review Team suggest that the separate churches consider the formation of a looser Covenant or Council of Churches.

7.2 Scenario two

All five churches remain within the Partnership, but with the Partnership Council, all the local church councils and all staff members agreeing to the following structural changes and ways of working:

- a) A Partnership Team Leader is appointed by the Sponsoring Body who acts as line manager to the other Partnership Team members (possibly an external Team Leader or a Team Leader who is a lay member of the Partnership), with changes to the Partnership constitution to this effect.
- b) The Partnership Team Leader and the other Partnership Team members are accountable to the Partnership Council for all areas of their work which relate directly to the life of the Partnership, with changes to the Partnership constitution to this effect.
- c) All churches of the Partnership promote a diversity of worship which respects and reflects the denominational and theological diversity of the Partnership, including an open policy on pulpit exchange and the use of preachers and worship leaders in good standing with their local churches, with changes to the Partnership constitution to this effect.
- d) The four denominational bodies operate with the administrative flexibility necessary to accommodate the unavoidable limitations on data collection and data submission which a four denomination partnership of churches implies.
- e) The Partnership Council acknowledges in its ways of working the changes in the wider ecumenical context. In the spirit of "receptive ecumenism" each church of the Partnership should primarily focus on what it can receive from the other churches' worship styles, theology, practice, governance, rather than what the other churches can receive from them.
- f) The Partnership Council draws up an action plan for mission which identifies specific mission projects to be undertaken by the Partnership as a whole (in addition to Emerge and Messy Church).

7.3 Scenario three

All Saints withdraw from the Partnership and becomes an Anglican congregation, probably in a new parish or benefice with one or more local Anglican churches. One member of the remaining Partnership Team oversees St Marys and Shaw (and acts as Partnership Team Leader), one (new) member of the Partnership Team (possibly half time) oversees Westlea and Toothill churches, and one member of the Partnership Team oversees Emerge and associated youth work (half time). Under this scenario the same ways of working (a-f) for the Partnership are adopted as in scenario 2.

7.4 Scenario four

All Saints withdraw from Partnership and become an Anglican congregation, probably in a new parish or benefice with one or more local Anglican churches, St. Mary's and Shaw leave Partnership and become Anglican congregations within a new Anglican parish or benefice. Emerge becomes a project of the new St. Mary's and Shaw Anglican parish or benefice. Toothill and Westlea churches form a new Local Ecumenical Project with a full time or half time Methodist or United Reformed Church or Baptist minister.

8. Decision making process for shaping the future of the Partnership

It is the view of the Review Team that the following steps should be taken in order to implement one of the scenarios outlined above:

- 8.1 The Partnership Council should be convened to decide which of the four scenarios described above is to be implemented (or it should form its own alternative scenario)
- 8.2 Given that the constitution does not permit the Partnership Council to make changes to, or agree the dissolution of, the Partnership without the approval of the Sponsoring Body and the Participating Denominations, the Review Team believes that the Sponsoring Body and the denominational leaders should also give direction to the Partnership Council on which is their preferred option for the future.
- 8.3 In the light of the vote of the Partnership Council, the Sponsoring Body and Participating Denominations should oversee the implementation of necessary changes.
- 8.4 In order that members of the Partnership have an opportunity to discuss their responses to the report prior to the decision of the Sponsoring Body and Participating Denominations ISR will convene a morning consultation on July 13th at Toothill Church.

9. Suggested Additional Action Points

(not all the action points will be relevant to all the scenarios outlined above)

- 9.1 The Partnership Council should clarify and agree its policy on the admission of children to Holy Communion, on who can preside at a service of Holy Communion and on infant baptism.
- 9.2 The Partnership Council should agree on a common definition of "children" and "young people" (i.e. age range) for data collection purposes and inform the four denominations of their decision.
- 9.3 The Partnership Council should explore the viability of establishing full sharing agreements for all of the Partnership buildings.

- 9.4 The Partnership Council should oversee an annual review of Emerge, undertaken by the Emerge Management Team and including site visits.
- 9.5 The Partnership Council should seek to develop a new Partnership wide model of pastoral care which recognises the reduction in ministerial staff.
- 9.6 The Partnership Council should plan a lay leadership training programme.
- 9.7 The Partnership Council should explore ways to strengthen its relationship with other local churches who are not members of the Partnership (e.g. Freshbrook, Gateway, St. Peter's RC).
- 9.8 The Partnership Council should explore ways to establish closer working between the five local church treasurers of the Partnership.