

## **LOCAL COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY (LCM) in the SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH (SEC)**

A report of the Visitors' Weekend 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> September 2008

This was an intense but encouraging & rewarding weekend based in Aberdeen, which represented the first LCM Visitors' Weekend. There were 11 participants:

- 4 from the Norwegian Lutheran Church – clergy & laity from a single 'group' of 4 parishes
- 4 from the Church in Wales – all clergy
- 2 from different Church of England dioceses – 1 ordained (Bristol), 1 lay (Bath & Wells)
- 1 from the ARC

### **The Weekend's Activities**

- Scene-setting – introducing LCM, the material currently available, expectations of the weekend, who the visitors were representing
- All-day workshop – exhibiting the breadth of the LCM vision & ethos, introducing the LCM resource material – with examples of how it has been used – and there was considerable input from all levels within the SEC from those involved with LCM, with lots of discussion & questions
- Overnight visit to a 'charge' where LCM was in process – in my case to a fairly isolated rural church on the edge of the Cairngorms near Aviemore
- Feedback & debriefing for the visitors with the LCM team and supervising Bishop – including input from both sides about strengths, weaknesses, relevance & repeatability of LCM

### **Resourcing**

Some of the background & introductory material on LCM is available on the SEC website at:

[http://www.scotland.anglican.org/index.php/local\\_collaborative\\_ministry/about\\_local\\_collaborative\\_ministry/](http://www.scotland.anglican.org/index.php/local_collaborative_ministry/about_local_collaborative_ministry/)

Stories of 21 individual congregations engaging in LCM, and told in their own words, are found in the

publication "**Local Collaborative Ministry: the story so far**" published by the SEC earlier this year and also available from the ARC.

Workbooks have been produced covering a spectrum of areas that congregations or 'charges' are encouraged to use in the process of investigating or developing LCM for themselves. There are two categories:

**Theological Tools: "Laying the Foundations"** – to study the theological underpinnings of LCM;

**"Listening to the Context"** – to study & reflect on the locality & context of an individual church;

**"Making the Connections"** – to assist the linkage of local context & theological reflection; **"Gifts**

**Discernment"** – to help congregation & members recognise & develop their innate gifts & skills.

**Skills:** (most of which are self-explanatory) **"Listening Skills Workbook"**; **"Intercessions Workbook"**;

**"Visiting Skills Workbook"**; **"Reading the Bible in Church"**; **"Working Well within Groups"**;

**"Vital Vestries"** – to understand & develop the role & work of the Vestry (PCC); **"Diverse Discourse"**

– to learn about sermon & teaching strategies in small churches; **"Welcoming Small Congregations"**

(which the ARC already promotes & uses).

### **The LCM 'Process'**

It rapidly became clear that the LCM 'strand' within the SEC is both flexible and an ongoing process.

Individual 'charges' decide to begin LCM in a gradual way, and proceed along the 'path' in their own unique fashion. There is an outlined series of 'steps' that such congregations are encouraged to follow:

- Enquiry. Here the individual 'charge' and the relevant diocesan & denominational representatives investigate suitability etc. There is strong emphasis on 'telling the story' of the individual church.
- Exploration. Here the congregational members (and clergy, where present) begin using LCM foundational material. An annual review of progress is made and an LCM 'mentor' assigned.
- Covenant. Here the congregation becomes recognised as an official LCM 'charge', with appropriate constitutional amendment. A formal agreement is drawn up between the 'charge' and the diocese/Bishop.

There is no compulsion for any congregation to push through to the final stage here, and each 'charge' actually develops differently according to various factors, e.g. the gifting of its members, the needs of the surrounding community/context, the presence or absence of clergy (whether stipendiary or otherwise), the nature of the mission & ministries to which they believe they are called. So we heard from representatives from 'charges' at every stage of this process – both laity & clergy, from mentors and from those with LCM oversight (i.e. diocesan bishops).

Some key aspects of this process were identified & discussed in the form of questions:

1. What is our mission? A thorough assessment – primarily by the congregations themselves – of their purpose within the neighbourhood & context where God had placed them; i.e. mission was intended to come before ministry.
2. Who & where are the ‘ministers’? Which stressed a commitment to *“the ministry of all the baptised”* and to the role of the ‘minister’ (of whatever type) in *“empowering the gifts of all the baptised”*. Ministry was equally valid & valuable whether within or outside the “church”; i.e. there was a strong affirmation of the ministry of church members in everyday life.
3. Who needs to be trained? Which identified a commitment to equipping all members to be *“articulate, confident apostles & theologians”*, and where all should have the opportunity to discover & develop their gifts within their own congregation & community. In fact, the LCM process is intended to be one of ongoing growth in discipleship collectively & individually.
4. Who walks with us? A recognition that external support & encouragement was essential for developing the ministry of each individual LCM ‘charge’. The local minister/priest, the designated LCM mentor, the diocesan Bishop and the provincial LCM team were all part of this process.

### Perceptions & Issues

A number of key points arose during discussion and reflection. In many cases these were raised by members of the SEC themselves who were involved in the LCM process.

- LCM is not a process or ‘strand’ that is universally welcomed or supported by through the SEC.
- The attitude & involvement of full-time/stipendiary clergy is mixed. For some of them within the SEC, LCM is perceived as threatening & challenging. Although LCM was not designed, and is not intended, simply to help small churches with no full-time minister it is actually these types of churches that are most common within the LCM programme. Most, but not all, of the developing LCM ‘charges’ are those without a full-time stipendiary priest. If such is present and engaged in LCM, it is often where that individual has been ‘called’ to ministry from within that local congregation.
- The role of the vestries (PCCs) in LCM ‘charges’ is vital. Although LCM emphasises & seeks to develop the ministry of *all* the baptised, the members of the vestry are often at the heart. Generally, it seems that ‘ownership’ of LCM will only come for the whole congregation if the vestry is committed.
- Within individual congregations and in some SEC dioceses, LCM has enabled a broad range of different ministries. In particular – when encouraged by the diocesan & even provincial authorities – there has been a release of creativity beyond traditional confines ... especially of the liturgy. [One exciting example was of the ‘charge’ where engaging in LCM had led them to introduce a regular Children’s Eucharist. This has gradually been adapted further & further away from the SEC 1982 Liturgy, and now increasing numbers of adults attend – so that they can participate in something that they can now understand!]
- Significant changes have recently been instituted – with the installation of a new bishop – in the very rural diocese of Moray, Ross & Caithness. The ministry of the bishop has become essentially itinerant. This is seen as a commitment to LCM-type ministry & structures at the diocesan level.

The SEC has reached a ‘tipping point’ regarding LCM. At the end of this year, the current provincial LCM advisor retires. She feels that different skills are needed in leading things forward. In particular, that the encouragement & mentoring of LCM ‘charges’ has become more important than the designing & ‘testing’ of resource & training materials. The province has crucial decisions to make about future financial commitment to LCM. They are keen to confirm that what they are doing is of value beyond both the SEC and Scotland, e.g. how an organisation like the ARC might be interested and might use LCM resources.

**Simon Martin (12<sup>th</sup> September 2008)**  
**Training & Resources Officer, Arthur Rank Centre**  
[simon@rase.org.uk](mailto:simon@rase.org.uk)  
024-7685-3068

(A reading/resource list for local collaborative or shared ministry is available from the ARC – contact above  
Also, details of a very wide range of these & other local ministry resources (some freely downloadable) can be found on the ARC website by searching the Key Rural References database:

[http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/publications\\_and\\_resources/key\\_rural\\_references\\_database/index.html](http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/publications_and_resources/key_rural_references_database/index.html))