

**The Bishop of Carlisle**  
The Right Reverend James Newcome  
Bishop's House, Ambleside Road,  
Keswick CA12 4DD

1st June 2015

*To All Clergy in the Diocese of Carlisle*

Dear Colleague

Now that the Synods of the Diocese and the Methodist District have each strongly endorsed the Strategy for Ministry and the establishment of Mission Communities with whichever ecumenical partners are appropriate in a local area, it is our hope that work can now get underway in seeing how these may be implemented across the county. This will mean forming deeper relationships and ways of engaging in mission with the churches in your local area.

As Canon Law stands at present, each Mission Community would need to become some form of Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) in order to permit effective shared ministry. The establishment of each of these would involve a substantial amount of legal work and bureaucracy which, if all the churches in the county were doing so, could become troublesome and in the end unworkable. Therefore may I commend to you the proposals to form a **Covenanted Partnership across Cumbria?**

In effect, this is a formal Permission agreed at national level that will enable the whole of the county of Cumbria to become **one single LEP**. It will leave the local re-organisations, as Mission Communities are formed, without the need to get bogged down in as much legal work: clearing the way for our energies to be focused more on "God for all".

The proposal is explained in the enclosed leaflet and further details are available by following the links. What I would like to stress is that this proposal is indicative of the wider Church's support for our initiative; and has been drawn up to allow our partnership in Christ to flourish and to grow. It enables as full a sharing of ministry as Canon Law allows within our Mission Communities, without any binding requirement to do so. I trust it will serve as a further sign of our commitment to work as one, that Christ's love may be known to the world.

Before the Diocese can go ahead with this Covenanted Partnership arrangement (to form a CPEA), each PCC needs to consider whether they agree or not to this proposal: **that the Diocese enters into a CPEA agreement (a Covenanted Partnership) with our partner churches**. Even if your proposed/potential Mission Community doesn't have other denominational partner churches to work with, we would greatly value your assent to this proposal anyway. If you cannot in all conscience, theologically or otherwise, agree with this proposal, then you are perfectly entitled to vote against it. The CPEA does not require 100% consent but the larger the percentage in favour the more credibility we have as 'the first Ecumenical County'. Since this does not change one single piece of Canon Law, I hope that you will feel able to offer your support.

If you have further questions about the proposal please do be in touch with our new Ecumenical Officer, David Cooper – [revdavidcooper@btinternet.com](mailto:revdavidcooper@btinternet.com).

I do hope and pray that it will command wide support and that we can rightly claim to be the first truly Ecumenical County.

With all best wishes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.