



Response by KEMC Leadership Team regarding the pattern of ministry and governance

Last year, the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee asked the KEMC Leadership Team to consider the vision, pattern of ministry and governance that would sustain mission and ministry across the eight churches in looking to the future. Following this request, the Leadership Team wrote to all members of the congregations outlining the facts of the current situation and the challenges that the Mission Community faces in its witness across the villages and communities of the Kent Estuary. As a result of this, there was an invitation to an Open Meeting held at Arnside Methodist Church on 10th October 2025.

At that meeting, chaired by the Archdeacon and attended by around 70 people from across the churches, more information about the current position and its context was shared, aided by the perspectives of Diocesan officers from Church House. An invitation was then issued for volunteers to form a 'Working Group' to explore a potential direction of travel, reporting back to another Open Meeting by the end of January 2026.

It was very encouraging that 10 volunteers emerged to form the Group, working to terms of reference provided by the Leadership Team. It was judged prudent that the stipendiary clergy were not part of the Group but were copied into its work, with the opportunity to comment if they wished.

The Group met seven times between mid-November and mid-January. A small network of people met in parallel with the meetings of the Group to uphold their work in prayer.

The Group reported their proposals at an Open Meeting (framed within an act of worship) held on 28th January, attended by around 50 people. Their report was then circulated through the congregations.

The church councils were asked to consider the proposals at their meetings in February and March, with churches asked to encourage and promote a particular culture and attitude to prayer during this time, aided by a special prayer composed to encourage this prayerful endeavour. At the beginning of March, a 'Week of Prayer' was organised across the Mission Community with prayer stations set up in each church, together with a series of shared prayer times and an encouragement for personal prayer and devotion (supported with several 'prayer points').

The outcome of the church council discussions was reported to the Leadership Team meeting on Wednesday 25th March. The responses were as follows:

Council	Decision	Notes
St John's	Unanimous agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) noted that under the provisions of rule M37 of the church representation rules (2020) the prerogative of this PCC to make its own decisions in relation to any transfer of property rights, liabilities and function. (b) any and all changes must be communicated to 'the existing 'Parish community'
St Peter's	Unanimous agreement	<p>If the direction is progressed, there should be further discussion about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the nature of the proposed agreement between the new PCC and the Methodist churches because of Methodist endorsement of same sex marriage

		(b) the way in which the funds of individual churches may be managed / protected
St Thomas'	There would seem to have been no vote. The final sentence of their response is: <i>"While we do not wish to hold back from what could be an exciting and vibrant change in church life, we do feel it must be done sensitively and with great care."</i>	Extensive comments and concerns set out in a full report of the discussion and shared with the Leadership Team
St Michael's and All Angels	Unanimous agreement	Consideration should be given to ensuring governance arrangements are simple and straight forward.
St James'	12 in favour 2 against	It was noted that a stocktake of each church's health might be an appropriate early step
LMC	Unanimous agreement	
SVC	8 in favour 2 abstentions	
AMC	3 in favour 1 against 15 abstentions	

The Leadership Team considered that this outcome clearly indicated that the PCCs and Methodist Church Councils support the direction of travel set out in the report of the Working Group – albeit not without concerns and reservations.

The endorsement of the proposed direction of travel represents the start of a journey. There are significant concerns that will need to be addressed and a great deal of detail that will need to be worked out locally and in collaboration with diocesan staff and the support of Church House.

In parallel there will need to be formal consultations (including with the stipendiary clergy and their representatives) and legal processes, involving the Diocese and Church Commissioners (relating to the Mission and Pastoral Measure). The proposals will also require an agreement between that new parish and the Cumbria Methodist Circuit. This necessarily will involve the Diocese and the North West England District and will form a subsequent phase to the progress of the direction of travel. As some of the council responses noted, a more formal agreement for ministerial collaboration between the two Churches raises particular issues that will need to be considered.

The Leadership Team is keen to maintain the momentum that has been generated over recent months, along with full and open communication with the congregations. It would be helpful therefore if there can be early clarification of the nature of the various processes that will now need to happen, the way in which KEMC and the local churches will be involved, and the potential timeline.

The indication that the Diocese (relating to the fifth proposal in the Working Group's report) is willing to support the appointment of an additional associate priest for 18 months, pastorally to support the change process is warmly welcomed. Again, clarity about the likely timescale of this will be important.

KEMC Leadership Team
30th March 2026