

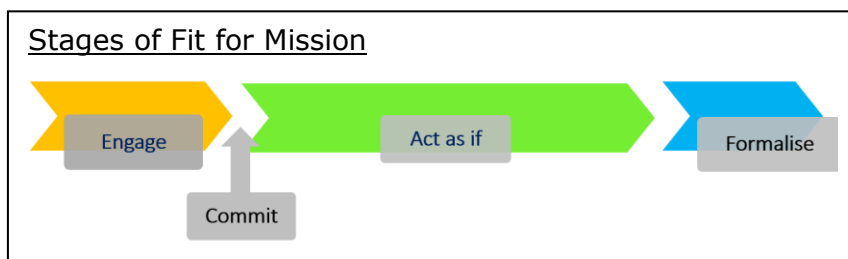
Getting Fit for Mission ready

Simple ideas that deaneries can do now



We are currently in a pilot phase where parishes from two deaneries (cohort 1) have committed to the two-year change programme of Fit for Mission. There will be the opportunity for parishes in every deanery in the diocese to join Fit for Mission over the next four years, in two more cohorts.

As each deanery begins to actively engage with their decision on whether to go ahead and commit, they will be supported by the Fit for Mission programme team in engaging deeply and prayerfully with all in their church communities.



Many people are asking what they can do **now** in preparation for Fit for Mission in their deanery. While the programme team doesn't have lots of capacity to work with deaneries before the engage stage, there are steps deaneries could take now that would help to prepare.

1) Do more together; build relationships

A significant part of the change of Fit for Mission is to work together rather than as isolated individuals or parishes. That sense of being the body of Christ is key. By choosing just one or two things to do together across parish boundaries ahead of Fit for Mission you will start to build new relationships and to embed that culture of togetherness, where individuals and communities offer their gifts, time, and talents to the wider team.

This might include: praying together (see below); volunteering for existing community projects outside your own parish; hearing stories about what is happening in the deanery; hearing testimonies of how people are living out their Christian faith in their day-to-day life. There is no programme for this, no one thing or cheesy icebreaker that everyone has to do together; you will know as a deanery what you already do and so what makes sense for you in building relationships. Maybe it's as simple as adding a social to existing groups and get to know each other more.

2) Pray

Fit for Mission is about the mission of God. It isn't a management game or an exercise in church reorganisation. It isn't a cost cutting exercise or a top-down programme. It is about the people of God thinking, praying and stepping out in faith to try to build a bigger church to make a bigger difference. Prayer has to be central. The single most effective thing that we can all be doing at this stage to prepare for Fit for Mission is to pray – individually, together, with people we know, with people we don't know, and remembering that the faithful God is with us always until the end of the age.

3) Create a local map of mission

There will be so much going on across the deanery already, more than any individual is aware of. Fit for Mission is largely about building on what and who is there already. Everyone being able to see the amazing things that are already going on will be a great encouragement. It will also enable you to see how and where you can most easily start working together, where there is duplication or where there might be energy for something new. Just by seeing the list or map, opportunities for new engagement and mission in our communities may become obvious. For guidance on how to map mission in your community contact fitformission@liverpool.anglican.org

4) Talk about your hopes and dreams

The ambition of Fit for Mission is that your church communities will thrive and grow. Conversations now about what your hopes and dreams are for a bigger church making a bigger difference will help as you start to engage with Fit for Mission. It is important to include in the conversation both your hopes and dreams as well as the things that hold you back now, even if you don't have the answers to how to overcome them. Experience has shown that having these conversations, thinking about what could be, talking about the what ifs, is formative. Having this conversation prayerfully and unburdened by the practicalities of who, how and when is an important learning stage before outcomes, plans or bright ideas emerge. Contact fitformission@liverpool.anglican.org for guidance on facilitating these conversations in your church or deanery.

5) Think about the 4 priorities

At the heart of Fit for Mission are 4 missional priorities:

- i. Introducing people to Jesus
- ii. Deepening discipleship
- iii. Developing Christian leaders
- iv. Working for justice

What can you do to move these on? Could a few of your churches go onto Leading Your Church into Growth (LYCiG)? Could you run a Directions course in the deanery to help people think and pray through God's call on their lives? Could you run Activate or another relevant discipleship course in your deanery to explore and unpack what it means to be a missional disciple? Could you encourage people to volunteer for one of the existing justice or community projects? Fit for Mission will be much more effective in your deanery if you have intentionally focussed on missional discipleship in the preceding months.

If you want further information on any of the above – or other ideas at this stage for how you might take steps together to deliver on the 4 priorities, contact fitformission@liverpool.anglican.org. We'd be delighted to help you think through what might work best for you.

6) Keep up-to-date with Fit for Mission

We are on a steep learning curve with the first cohort, and some things will go well, and other things we will do differently (hopefully better!) with cohorts 2 and 3. Fit for Mission updates will come through the Bulletin, and will also be on the Diocesan website and social channels. Sharing these updates will help to create awareness in church members about what Fit for Mission is, and start to prepare people to engage with the possibility of joining the programme. Fit for Mission is a big and ambitious project, and it is really easy to get the wrong end of the stick, especially with the detail. So we can help by referring people to the [website](#) or using materials provided by the Fit for Mission team, such as the 2 page overview, the Scoping document and the FAQs.

7) Make practical changes that will make life easier in the long term

There are lots of best practices that you would start now that will mean you are one step ahead for some of the practical aspects of Fit for Mission. These include:

- Joining the [Parish Giving Scheme](#) (PGS) and encouraging as many church members as possible to gift through it. It's really straightforward to do, could increase your giving, and makes some of the practical elements of Fit for Mission easier. Cath Gaskell is happy to help any churches to get set up and using PGS and can be contacted on cath.gaskell@liverpool.anglican.org.
- Keep [A Church Near You](#) (ACNY) up to date. Both helpful for communicating, as well as for gathering local data about churches and worship.
- Use the [Church Development Tool](#), a short anonymous survey, to get a clear picture of demographics, discipleship and evangelism in your church.

As you join in more formally with Fit for Mission there are plenty of resources and help that will come your way, so we wouldn't encourage you to be too ambitious at this stage. Wait for the help and support to arrive. But the above will make it a bit easier when you do look to make those important changes.