

## **Bishop's Talk and Response to the Paper on Mega-Parish Benefices**

1. **Introduction:** Why be negative about pastoral reorganisation? The Church always needs to be revived, not stultified. The challenges are not regrettable, but there can be huge gains.
  
2. **Bishop's Responses to the Paper:-**
  - a. There is not one model for pastoral reorganisation: it can be revivifying. Mega-parish benefices can work and can produce life.
  - b. History freezes life. Rural life has never been static. Bishop worries about the walls and fences of north Hampshire. There needs to be healing of memories.
  - c. Sustainability? There really needs to be 'critical mass'. No one church nor one ministry can offer the whole ministry of the Church. Itchen Abbas in interregnum say, "We don't need a vicar". Young people say they want to be part of a youth setup with critical mass. The hardest lay post is that of Treasurer. Critical mass is needed so that Church can be experienced in its fullness.
  - d. Clergy are looking for collegiality.
  
3. **Comments and Bishop's replies**
  - a. Every place is different, therefore there must be different solutions. Bishop pointed out tensions between parish and benefice. The differences are the exciting 'bits'. Listening is most important.
  - b. Practicalities of organisation: PCCs + Benefice Council?
  - c. Role of priest – what is the character of which ministry, lay and ordained. Bishop said all the calling and ministry of the church resides in Baptismal identity.
  - d. Can't avoid expectations of people; need a conceptual model of what a priest is. Have to resist all being laid upon us: effects of collusion worse for priests. New models are needed. No room for egomaniacs running everything.
  - e. Bishop: New benefices need a birthing process, and a consultant to the process.
  - f. What theological training and support is needed for priests and people to help with reorganisation? Could process theology provide a model? Will the diocese take initiatives in this direction?
  - g. Worst point at which to do pastoral reorganisation is during vacancy.
  - h. Diocese could help practically by making a financial allowance for a paid administrator.
  - i. Mega-parish benefices have an affect on the deanery