**Spring Meeting 2024**20 March 2024, held on Zoom

Attendance

**Diocesan Directors:**

Fr Gary Brassington (Clifton), Fr Sam Ofia (Lancaster), Canon Paul Watson (Menevia), Canon Michael Loughlin (Middlesbrough), Helena McGouran (Middlesbrough, Mission Together), Fr Daniel Rooke (Northampton), Dcn Michael Tosh (Plymouth), Fr Innaiah Maddineni (Portsmouth), Fr Tony Grace (Shrewsbury), Mary Dearden (Shrewsbury, Mission Together), Dcn Tom Kavanagh (Southwark), Fr Carlos Quito (Westminster)

**Appealers:**Mill Hill Missionaries: Fr Philip Adede, Fr Paul Boagey, Fr Dermot Byrne, Fr Kevin Hughes, Fr Jan Klaver, Fr Jimmy Lindero, Fr Bernie Luna, Fr Emmanuel Mbeh, Fr Brian Oswald, Br Eddie Slawinski

**Team:**Fr Anthony Chantry (National Director), Opeyemi Adeyela (Appeals Coordinator, West), Theresa Codd (Regional Community Fundraiser, North), Claire Colleran (Mission Together), Stephen Davies (Red Box Director), Isobel Mason (Appeals Coordinator, East), Nicky Pisa (Fundraising and Communications Director), Michelle Slater (Communications Manager), Dave Wheat (Regional Community Fundraiser, South), Allyn Zulver (Finance Director)

Insights from around the dioceses

Currently all bar 4 dioceses (Arundel & Brighton, East Anglia, Hallam, Nottingham) now have an appointed Diocesan Director.

**Menevia**: may be merged with Cardiff. (Note: Sr Maureen Davies has been appointed the new DD for Cardiff by Archbishop Mark O’Toole).

**Portsmouth**: planning 3 Masses around the diocese. 10-year pastoral plan in full swing – into year 3.

**Shrewsbury**: Diocesan Mission Team meetings (with Mary and Theresa) and visiting schools. Mission Mass in June with Bishop Mark. WMS tried to share resources. QR codes on Red Boxes using a sticker, too. Annual ring around with Local Secretaries to support them.

**Clifton**: Bishop Declan retiring. Bosco McDonald to be ordained bishop in May. September: deanery structure went from 13 to 9 ‘pastoral areas’. Planning on a mission Mass in each area in 2024.

**Plymouth**: still awaiting a new bishop, impacting on the diocese. Restructuring – causes issues when trying to ensure money is attributed to the correct parish. Difficult when some churches want to be seen as separate to the new parish as a whole. Difficulties when trying to find new Local Secretaries (secretaries feel they can’t step down until they find someone else).

**Lancaster**: centenary celebrations for the diocese. Looking to bring schools into the celebration of the centenary with Masses together in different areas of the diocese, both for schools and for Local Secretaries.

Fr Emmanuel/**Hexham and Newcastle**: new bishop last year. Lots of coins from Red Boxes not always banked. Some parishes/LSes contact Fr Emmanuel/Fr Frank in Freshfield to help bank coins.

**Middlesbrough**: organising a Diocesan Mass in June/July; potential change of bishop as Bishop Terry has reached 75. Mission Together: one of the school Trust Boards have taken on MTog as its main charity to support, with increase in school visits/assemblies. +Terry gave a good push at the parish visitation for Missio (even got two more boxes taken!) in Canon Michael’s parish last weekend. Looking to do a good push in Hull in the coming year.

Fr Jan/**Salford**: new DD appointed last year – a local deacon and school chaplain. Fr Jan, Theresa and Claire meeting with him this weekend.

Fr Philip/**Westminster**: Mission Together Mass with local schools from WES, SOU and ARU dioceses. Looking to doing something similar next year.

**Northampton**: Education newsletters for schools include some Mission Together material. Hopefully organise a Mass later in the year once Fr Daniel has managed to meet with Dave and Fr Kevin to discuss plans.

Asked about plans for next year’s **‘Jubilee Year – Pilgrims of Hope’,** not many plans have yet been shared, although each diocese has a ‘Jubilee coordinator’.

Financial Results 2023, Allyn Zulver

Missio’s overall income in 2023 is just over £4million. This is down by about £1million on 2023, mainly due to there being a large legacy given in 2022 which skewed the usual income. Unrestricted income (mainly made up of Red Box and World Mission Sunday donations) was largely the same as in 2022.

More detailed information on Red Box income per diocese and parish to be shared after the meeting.

There has been a rise in Red Box income being paid directly into the Missio/Mill Hill Missionaries bank accounts, not least with the ongoing issues of bank branch closures, difficulty paying in cash, and people using less cash.

Planning Overview 2024, Nicky Pisa and Stephen Davies

In 2019 Missio reviewed and streamlined its **communications strategy**. In 2023 we reviewed the results and found that the streamlined process (focussing on the four editions of Mission Today, being sent directly to more people, and integrating all of Missio’s work alongside that of the Mill Hill Missionaries) had been successful. Production costs are down, and combined income has increased. Income has particularly increased for Red Box, and for World Mission Sunday. However, money for the training of future priests and sisters is down.

The combination of the cost-of-living crisis, along with people using less cash, can also be felt, with fewer people donating to Missio/Red Box. However, our most faithful supporters are now donating more often, although on average they are donating less (approximately £2 less per donation per year).

Two key activities this year as a result:

1. **Updating our online donation process** to make it easier to give, and to enable people to more easily give to the area of work they want to support. This new online platform will also integrate with our database and make it easier to pay in Red Box monies as well as send in Mass intentions. This should be implemented by September at the latest. A second stage will be a fully refreshed website which will be fully integrated with the database. This will mean less has to be done manually, enabling more time for colleagues to build relationships with supporters by phone, email, letters, and in person, all of which we know is key.
2. **Encouraging support for the training of future priests and sisters**: we have developed resources for the seminarian sponsorship scheme available online: [**missio.org.uk/sponsoring-together-resources-for-groups**](https://missio.org.uk/sponsoring-together-resources-for-groups/). These are specifically to encourage parishes and communities to take on the sponsorship together. They include posters, sign-up sheets, a short talk, and even widgets to include on a parish website. After Easter, a mailing is also going out to around 3,000 supporters of ‘Society of St Peter the Apostle’ with fresh information on the sponsorship programme and celebrating the fact that Fr Vincent, former Missio National Director of Malawi, has been made a Bishop. Bishop Vincent was sponsored through the programme by a supporter in England and Wales. Fr Tony Grace asked whether it is possible to find out numbers of students sponsored from within each diocese. We will share this information.

**World Mission Sunday**: this year’s theme chosen by Pope Francis is ‘Go and invite everyone to the banquet’ based on Matthew 22.9. It is a chance for parishes to really celebrate being a part of the universal Church, and the theme lends itself to encourage parishes to reach out beyond their usual congregation, too, and to celebrate the diversity of cultures and communities within their parish (an idea Mary Dearden expanded upon). We are intending to develop a slightly more generic pack of WMS materials this year, and enhance it with case studies closer to World Mission Sunday, enabling us to respond to world events which may take place between the pack being produced and World Mission Sunday itself. The [**Pope’s message for WMS**](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/missions/documents/20240125-giornata-missionaria.html) does emphasise that the only collection taken on WMS should be for the young and poor missionary dioceses. In England and Wales, the collection has been a ‘second collection’ since the 1990s. A question was raised about whether our bishops might be reminded about this.

**Red Box 2024:** As discussed in the Spring Meeting in 2023, we are undertaking some research into the Red Box with current Red Box holders, people who used to have one, and even those who have not. The focus is not on eliminating the Red Box, but on looking to the future and an increasingly cashless society, and finding ways for people to still feel part of the Red Box community and able to support missionaries and our global Church family both financially and prayerfully. Within a week of sending an email, hundreds of people have responded saying that they would be happy to take part in in-depth interviews about the Red Box. These will be carried out by a small, specialist research company so as to avoid any bias from us. Since a limited number of people will be interviewed, we will also send out surveys for more people to be able to share their thoughts and ideas. All the results will be shared with DDs and Appealers so that we can look at future possibilities and developments together.

This will also inform our future communications about the Red Box, the imagery and language we use, etc..

The updated online giving platform (see above) will also help us to offer a more bespoke and friendly donation process for the Red Box, including the use of QR codes for specific campaigns or areas of work (as brought up by Fr Brian Oswald).

We also want to find a better way of encouraging those who give directly, especially by Direct Debit, to feel part of the Red Box community. The personal relationship is key, even if their donations are automatic.

Mission Together, Claire Colleran

Two documents released in 2023 are having a big impact on Catholic primary schools and how Mission Together seeks to support them. The new [**RE Directory**](https://catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/religious-education/item/1000034-religious-education-curriculum-directory) impacts on schemes of work for RE across primary schools in England (not Wales), as well as impacting on the mission and ethos of a Catholic school. The [**Prayer and Liturgy Directory**](https://www.cbcew.org.uk/new-prayer-and-liturgy-directory-launched-by-ces-and-bishops-conference/) has an impact on the prayer-life of schools, an area where again we produce many resources to support schools. Both include an emphasis on helping children recognise their place in God’s global family, which is always something our resources aim to do, and there is a growing push to educate around Catholic social teaching. Our resources are being re-worked to reflect the two directories, and new resources produced to support teachers to deliver on them. As we have been doing, this also includes support for teachers who are lacking in confidence around teaching about the Catholic faith. All the resources do include a missionary focus, often featuring Mill Hill Missionaries and other missionaries working around the world.

Pope Francis has called for a ‘World Children’s Day’, similar to ‘World Youth Days’. The first World Children’s Day is taking place on 25-26 May. We have produced materials for it. Very little has been produced for it by anyone else, so please do share the materials: [**missiontogether.org.uk/calendar/world-childrens-day**](https://missiontogether.org.uk/calendar/world-childrens-day/)

Mission Together Masses are in the pipeline for Southwark, Westminster, Lancaster and Salford. If anyone else is interested in a Mass in their diocese, please contact Claire.

Middlesbrough and Shrewsbury both have very active Mission Together Diocesan Directors and the impact they have is evident. Thank you to Helena and Mary, as always.

Outreach and Volunteers, Theresa Codd and Dave Wheat

Lots of volunteers have said how positive they have found the **Appeals** taking place in their parishes, helping them to carry on the momentum the Appeals often spark. Thanks to the Appealers for their support of Local Secretaries, making them feel recognised and appreciated at the Appeals.

**Support for Local Secretaries** continues, including a **new Local Secretary Handbook** sent out to new Local Secretaries (both in the North and South) and available on the refreshed Local Secretary pages at [**missio.org.uk/LS**](https://missio.org.uk/ls/) The handbook includes an emphasis on the developing role of the Local Secretary, as well as the support available for them.

**Online training**, especially for new Local Secretaries, and online gatherings continue to provide the opportunity for volunteers to come together. This has worked well for Birmingham Archdiocese, where the DD, Fr Michael, is currently studying in Rome, but is able to continue to support the Local Secretaries in his diocese.

**Gatherings in person** are also incredibly valuable, and the Diocesan Masses and events also continue, helping to build a sense of community. Local Secretaries receive a personal invitation to any Masses or events taking place in their Diocese and they are encouraged to advertise these occasions with their Red Box holders and the wider parish community. The Masses and events vary depending on the diocese. For example, Portsmouth diocese is planning on three Mission Masses in different parts of the diocese to make it easier for people to attend them in this geographically spread-out diocese. In Clifton, it is hoped to hold a Mass in each of the newly formed 9 ‘pastoral areas’. In Hallam, despite not having a diocesan director, the Diocesan Mission Team is organising the annual diocesan Mass.

Details of Masses and events are kept up to date at: [**missio.org.uk/mission-masses-and-events**](https://missio.org.uk/mission-masses-and-events/)

This year, Theresa and Dave are hoping to use the Masses as opportunities to encourage volunteers to meet others doing the same role in their local part of the diocese, enabling them to support one another and hopefully work together.

The **contactless trials** begun last year continue into 2024, with the Local Secretaries who have been trialling them being encouraged to make use of them alongside their regular Red Box collections. A guide will be developed on how to use the device, and also how to make use of any contactless device a parish may have for its own use. We will also include information on how they can use their mobile phone as a contactless device, for those who want to do so. At the moment, we can only do this for people who have an iPhone.

Reminder **Missio National Council** meeting for all Diocesan Directors is being held from **10-12 June 2024** at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire. Please make every effort to attend. Further information to be sent in due course.