



## Press Release for July 1<sup>st</sup>

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### **New Theological College planned for the North West of England**

The Anglican bishops in the north west are looking to the future as they announce plans to form a brand-new independent theological college in the region.

As part of their commitment to providing outstanding formation for lay and ordained ministries, the Anglican bishops for the north west of England (incorporating the dioceses of Blackburn, Carlisle, Chester, Liverpool, Manchester, and Sodor & Man) commissioned a review of theological training across their dioceses last year. This was conducted by the Rt Revd Graham James, who consulted a wide range of people in the region and beyond.

The North West Bishops are deeply grateful for their partnership with St Mellitus College which brought full-time ordination training to the North West for the first time in over forty years, and for the valuable contributions of All Saints Centre for Mission and Ministry and Cumbria Christian Learning over many years. However, the Bishops, following Bishop Graham's report, have a vision for a new independent integrated college incorporating all this inherited richness and, like a daughter of generous parents, carrying with it family resemblance of mission-focussed generous orthodoxy with hopeful aspirations for the transformation of the north west.

The Chair of the North West Bishops, the Rt Revd Julian Henderson explained that "After prayerful consideration, wise counsel, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the bishops of the north west are overwhelmingly committed to pursuing this exciting vision and so we have committed to working towards forming the new college by September 2021." The Bishops have established a multi-disciplinary implementation team led by the Rt Revd Philip North, together with the Rt Revd Beverley Mason and the Rt Revd Emma Ineson. Bishop Philip said, "this is a once in a generation opportunity to develop a new outstanding theological college in the north west to serve the Church in the region and beyond."

The new independent college will offer part-time and full-time formational, vocational training for lay and ordained leaders of the Church and become the sole regional theological educational partner for the north west dioceses. Bishop Emma noted that the team recognise that change can be unsettling but she stressed that they "are committed to building on the strengths of three current providers, and the six dioceses they serve, so that the new college can be both an outstanding centre of excellence in theological education, and be better able to respond to the rapidly changing needs of the Church across the region."

As part of responding to the needs of the region, the new college will seek to provide pathways for groups that have previously found it difficult to access training. The Bishop of Manchester, the Rt Revd David Walker, explained "there are many people who are called by God, but who currently find it hard to access the training they need. My episcopal colleagues and I are determined that this new college will enable people from diverse backgrounds to pursue ministry in the Church of England."



The bishops are committed to working with current and prospective students to create with them a college which will form the next generation of leaders and ministers for the transformation of the North West and beyond. Bishop Emma explained “We are praying that the new college will engender faith, courage, hope and love in all who are formed there.”

The team have already had discussions with the University of Durham and national Church of England bodies, including Ministry Council and Ministry Team, all of whom have committed to providing staff advisors to the team. Bishop Beverley explained “we want to work collaboratively with all of our partners to ensure that this college is launched on time and on budget, and we have been greatly encouraged by the willingness of those we have engaged with to work with us as we seek to collaboratively construct this new theological college.”

That spirit of collaboration is evident in the theological diversity of the implementation team and the diversity of tradition in the wider team of regional bishops who are supporting this project. Bishop Julian explained that “in this project the North West Bishops are choosing to embody mutual flourishing by working together across the different traditions of the Church for the sake of mission and ministry in the region.”

The Bishops expect the college to have around 250 students once it is fully operational, which would make it one of the largest theological colleges in the country. Bishop Philip explained “by bringing together so much of our regional theological training in one place we believe that we will provide unparalleled opportunities for staff and students across the north west.”

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