

CENDD News: *Closing 'Regional Groups'* – an update from the Steering Group

Background:

As all of us involved in CENDD are aware, Distinctive Deacons in the Church of England can sometimes find themselves geographically quite isolated from other DDs.

Several years ago, therefore, the CENDD Steering Group decided to set up 'Regional Groups', each with a coordinator, to provide support for DD's based on their locality. It was decided to base these groups on the already established CofE Episcopal regions. For example, the North East Episcopal region encompasses the dioceses of Durham, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield and York.

The intention was that the coordinators would invite DDs in their regions to meet together via occasional zoom calls for mutual support and encouragement, and also work closely with DDO's to encourage greater awareness of diaconal vocations and CENDD activities.

Problems:

However, after a while it became apparent that the groups were not working as well as had been hoped, for a number of reasons:

1. The coordinators themselves were busy people and often struggled to find time to arrange zooms
2. When they did so, attendance was often very low: some regions have relatively few DD's but even where there are a number of DD's, most are busy people too and many don't feel the need to meet up with others.
3. Over time, several of the Coordinators stepped back for personal reasons and several regions lacked a coordinator

The Groups slowly ground to a halt, the only one still holding regular meetings being the (amalgamated) South West and South Central groups, thanks to the loyal commitment of their coordinator.

Decision to stop Regional Groups:

The question about whether or not the Regional Groups should continue and, if so, in what form, has been discussed a number of times by the Steering group. At its most recent meeting in March, it was finally decided that CENDD would stop organizing them. This doesn't mean that DDs themselves cannot continue meeting online or in person with other DDs – we warmly encourage DD's to do so. Just that the Steering Group won't any longer take responsibility for organizing them.

However, we are aware that when the groups worked well, they also acted as a channel of communication with the Steering Group, feeding back current issues and concerns DDs were

experiencing. We don't want to lose this. Any DD, DD ordinand or Enquirer is therefore encouraged to keep in communication with the Steering Group via the CENDD social media channels and email. We need to hear what is working well for you as well as the issues and challenges you face, so that common themes can be identified and we know what needs to be addressed.

CENDD Representatives

Although Regional Gatherings have stopped, there is still a big need to raise greater awareness of ordained diaconal ministry in most Dioceses, and to support vocations work. Therefore the Steering Group would like to find one DD in each Diocese to be a 'DD Representative' for CENDD, a 'link' person who will agree to keep in regular communication with their DDO/DDM. They will pass on news about CENDD events, check that their Diocesan website includes information about DD ministry, be someone the DDO can refer enquirers to for more information about being a DD, and gently ensure that ordained DD ministry is kept on the vocational agenda in their Diocese.

If **YOU** are interested in taking on this role in your Diocese, the Steering Group would love to hear from you.

Contact us via WhatsApp or email deaconsinthemove@gmail.com

Gill Newman

Chair, on behalf of the CENDD Steering Group