

DIOCESAN VISION 1. - THE VISION FROM ABOVE

In this first weekly instalment exploring different aspects of the Diocesan Vision and its implications for our future we have a summary of the Vision copied from a diocesan presentation.

The Vision Itself:	The Kingdom of God: Good News for All
The Diocesan Mission:	To proclaim <i>afresh</i> in this generation the good news of the Kingdom
Values:	Generous Faith - Courageous Hope – Life-Giving Love
Aims:	Transformed Lives: Growing Church, Building Community
Interventions:	Equipping people - Shaping structures – Sustaining resources for Mission
Aspirations:	5,000 NEW disciples (and 10,000 by 2030) 2,500 NEW transformation stories shared across the diocese 1,000 NEW local (lay) leaders 500 NEW community projects/ partnerships 500 NEW worshipping communities 50 NEW ordained vocations

Strive first for the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33 (NRSV)

How this **Diocesan Vision** fits in with our own Vision will emerge over time but they are not very different. The **Values** are certainly among those we need to hold and allow to work within our lives. The **Aims** are again not that far different from those things we have worked towards.

Transforming Lives

A Diocese committed to equipping a church of missionary disciples, centred on Christ Jesus and shaped by Him, transforming the lives of others, and living out their baptismal calling in the '5 Marks of Mission' [see below].

Growing Church

A Diocese committed to a mixed ecology of church that is more diverse, enabling people of every age and in every context to hear the good news of Jesus, where we grow and expand worshipping and witnessing communities (including Parish Church congregations, Schools, Chaplaincy, Plants and Fresh Expressions).

Building Community

A Diocese committed to being outward facing, rooted in and connected to its communities, working in partnership and networks for the common good, with particular care for poor, outcast, and vulnerable people. A church proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom in word and action making it tangible socially, economically, environmentally and in justice.

The **Interventions** are those things the Diocese sees itself needing to do:

- to support all of us in this time of change;

- enabling us to explore and discover the meaning of the Vision for the churches of our Benefice;
- encouraging us to grasp the opportunities their scheme will create for growth of us as God's people and of our churches/Benefice.

We are told we are to work out how the Diocesan Vision 'fits' within our own Mission and Ministry. However, while not being totally out of our control what we are actually able to do will be greatly affected by other initiatives and decisions about structures and future directions in the form of ministry. These will be explored in the coming weeks.

Please continue to pray for our churches, our ministry and our mission as we slowly respond to the easing of Covid restrictions and grasp this opportunity of renewal, that we have anticipated, but not perhaps to the extent the Diocese and national church is presenting to us.

THE FIVE MARKS OF MISSION

The Five Marks of Mission are an important statement on mission. They express the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission. The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ.

The first Mark of Mission, identified with personal evangelism at the Anglican Consultative Council in 1984 (ACC-6) is a summary of what all mission is about, because it is based on Jesus' own summary of his mission. This should be the key statement about everything we do in mission.

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

DIOCESAN VISION 2. - THE MINSTER MODEL

The Diocese is proposing we adopt a minster model of church, one that is different from the parochial model. In looking for material to explain this idea I came across the following from Diss in Norfolk. This is the Church where I grew as a Christian and heard my calling to be a priest, so is close to my heart. While the situations are not the same, Diss being a market town, it will give you a feel of how a Minster model, proposed by the Diocese for areas such as ours, can work.

How does the 'Minster Model' work in The Diss Team?

The collection of parishes which makes up the Diss Team Ministry operates what is known as a 'Minster model'. This kind of model works on the basis of having one central parish acting as the hub to the remaining five. Geographically, the market town of Diss, is seen as the nearest social and economic hub for its neighbouring communities – people shop there, use the local medical centre, High school, and catch the train to further destinations – so it makes good sense that the work of the parish church in Diss should act as a resource to the others villages in the area besides caring for itself. It has the largest number of people attending worship and an active group

of clergy and Readers who are able and willing to go out and support smaller congregations.

During the last fifty years many of the parishes of the Church of England have found it very difficult to finance a priest for itself, with the consequence that many are combined together to somehow make the system of ministry work. This has often proved impossible to operate with many a priest falling ill with stress or leaving the profession altogether. Subsequently, in the same period, alternative ways have been tried to answer these difficulties, and the minster model – a return to a more monastic system that pre-dated the parish system – has come to be tried and implemented again.

In the Diss Team there are two Stipendiary priests, ably supported by a Trainee Curate and an Assistant Priest with two Lay Readers and one Authorised Worship Assistant (AWA). They all minister in the central church (Diss) but also go out to the five other parishes to conduct services and offer spiritual/pastoral support. This they do in the mid-morning on a Sunday, and weekdays, but return to worship together on a Sunday evening so as to be refreshed and encouraged by each other. They also meet for Morning and Evening Prayer during the week to ground all they do in prayer. The belief is that each member of the Ministry Team is part of a 'monastic order' and so speaks and represents each other where ever they go and minister. This has a two-fold result that parishioners in all six parishes can be securely cared for, without such ministers becoming ill with a demanding workload.

The minster model is therefore a monastic model as developed by the likes of St. Benedict in the fifth century, whose rule was based on a team of ministers worshipping together and offering it to others, as well as learning together and for others, and providing a safe space for people to live and grow in the Christian faith. The great festivals of the Christian year – excluding Christmas and Easter – are only celebrated in the centre, rather than in each parish, to avoid duplications in small numbers. And all administrative meetings such as Wardens' meetings are held in the centre, in what is sometimes referred to as 'the Chapter Room'.

The operation of this model is greatly helped by the presence of a Team Office with a paid Administrator, who is also a member of the Ministry Team but who does not take services. This role is designed to check that everything is covered and no one is overlooked.

Hopefully you will now have something of an idea of the model of 'church' being proposed to replace the parish system. While the model is similar, situations are different. It is likely that one or two, or potentially even three parishes may in time become part of our 'Benefice'. However, it is unlikely that your one stipendiary priest will be joined by another. The emphasis in this Diocese is more on the priest changing their role to become an enabler, and for lay people, readers, and locally ordained priests, to be encouraged to form part of the leadership team. While promoting the idea of a central hub church, with some going out to help at the 'satellite' churches, Derby Diocese is also strongly promoting the idea of an appointed lay person being the identified local 'Christian presence' in each parish/community. These are to be known as Lay Focal Ministers. More about the role in coming weeks.

What is obvious from our current situation, the Diocesan Vision and what is happening elsewhere across the Church of England, is that we are all being called to take more

responsibility in the mission and ministry of our churches and that working closer together is the way forward.

Consequently, worship and learning groups are offered in the centre (Diss) and in each parish, but also with the request that some things are done just in the centre to which the outer groups of people are required to attend.

A different model certainly, but we all get in our cars to go shopping, for social and other leisure activities, even to walk the dog, so using our cars at times to unite as God's people is something we should perhaps more readily engage with.

DIOCESAN VISION 3

Deployment of Clergy/Ministers and the new Minster model

Last week I offered you some thoughts on the model of church being promoted in the Diocesan Vision. While retaining Parishes within the structure, the Minster model is a development of what has been happening over the last few decades.

As we are well aware, as a result of financial pressures and a shortage of people offering themselves for the priesthood many churches/parishes have had to unite in groupings – either as Teams or as Benefices. Often it would be a Vicar or Rector with a number of parishes to deal with – ranging from 3 as in our case, to 12 or more small rural parishes 'joined' together. Sometimes you would have a Team Rector working together with 1, 2 or even 3 Team Vicars ministering to many parishes. It tends to be in urban areas that the old model of one priest to one church survives, but even that is an increasing rarity.

While there are similarities to Benefices and Teams the Minster model being proposed is different. As I explained last week it is likely that if Repton becomes a Minster then one, two, or potentially even three more parishes may in time be united to us. However, it is unlikely that your one stipendiary priest will be joined by another. We may be fortunate if a retired priest or reader moves into the area but those things can only be prayed about and not planned for!

The emphasis in this Diocese is more on the priest changing their role to become an enabler. This has been described to the clergy as being a bit like a football manager. We are told that we will be less 'hands on' – in other words – not out on the pitch playing but on the sideline and behind the scenes working hard to ensure the 'team' performs as well as it can, continuing to offer the vital mission and ministry that is both our calling and the heartbeat of our Christian communities. How this will work out we do not know but the Diocese has already appointed people into positions to oversee the re-training of the clergy during the next 3 to 5 years.

You will appreciate there is concern among the clergy about many aspects of this. How does this new role fit with the role we were ordained into – in my case, some 30 years ago! Was I called to be a manager? How will I cope being less hands on? How will I cope with increased invisibility but increased responsibility? And the less personal concerns such as: "If I'm not doing the work who will?"; How will this affect everyday ministry in the different parishes?; Will these changes lead to the closure of smaller churches?; How will adopting the model affect the 'Minster' church, in other words St Wystan's?

At a time when we are considering how I might take more services in Newton Solney so we are being told that I and or my successor will have more parishes to 'care' for. Whether we

continue with the parish model and simply take on a couple of more parishes into the Benefice or adopt the Minster model I will be spread even thinner across the different churches. However, this is where the Minster model is radically different. The national church is finally recognising that small local churches where there is no resident priest/Vicar have suffered as a result of not having a person identified as the 'church person' living there. Within the new model they are promoting the idea of a Lay Focal Minister for each parish/church. This person will be someone who is called to the role, who, living in that parish, feels that God wants them to be known as the person to turn to, to act as a focus, to be the identified Christian hub. They would be so for an agreed number of years, before stepping aside and allowing someone else to take on the role. It is seen as a role that a lay person can fill and while a mature faith would be required it is not seen as a role that requires being licensed as a reader or ordained as a priest – although those things could happen of course. Those Lay Focal Ministers would work closely together with the stipendiary priest and whatever Readers, retired priests or priests in other roles form the 'staff' team. I finish this with a couple of quotes from a document from the Diocese of Sheffield, where they do not use the term, 'Lay' in the role title and are a bit more open to who may fill that role.

Each congregation needs either one person or a small team as the 'face of the church' for both congregation and wider community. The focal minister might be a locally ordained minister, retired clergy, licensed lay minister, church warden, or simply the obvious 'pillar' of the congregation. What Steven Croft calls 'pastoral churches' with 50+ members may require a team of two or three. The role is likely to vary with the context and the person called. Crucially, the focal minister is not expected to shoulder all the burdens of a traditional vicar.

Selection [of these Focal Ministers] will include a discernment process which will look for support/affirmation from the local church. The character traits of a Focal Minister will include someone who is prayerful and motivated by the love of God; mature and able to carry responsibility; committed to allowing God to shape their lives; open to God's leading and vision; able to work in and as part of a team; servant hearted; will we also be looking for risk-taking entrepreneurs. Each Focal Minister will be expected to engage with appropriate personal development as they embark on and continue their Focal Ministry. A training suite is being developed that will offer both induction and ongoing training that can be accessed in a range of ways and will be appropriate to context and need, taking into account the prior learning and role of the Focal Minister.

[A video about Focal Ministry can be found here.](#)

Further Reading - Bob Jackson Leading One Church at a Time Grove Leadership L34 (2018)

DIOCESAN VISION 4. CHURCH PLANTING

Within the Diocesan Vision much is made about Church planting. There are church planting initiatives in Derby City and good things are beginning to happen. We ourselves 'planted' when we created Messy Church. With that in mind you will appreciate 'church planting' encompasses far more than just creating a new church. It is not something wildly different to our own experience but has a broad interpretation.

We tend to think of Church planting as being the creation of a whole new church, or a congregation worshipping in a place different from the parish church - and this thought can be unsettling. But with a broader understanding it may well be that in our using church planting we might find a way forward for growth. For instance, at this time Messy Church needs a lot of input to ensure it continues and the idea of starting another occasional service

to meet the needs of those who outgrow Messy Church is beyond our ability to kick-start. However, we could ask the larger churches in Derby if they have people who feel called to support our Messy work and create a new service to meet those needs. Others could plant in our field and together we could raise a good crop!!

What follows is a much abbreviated [it was 6 pages long] document from the House of Bishops – published in 2018. It explains more about Church Planting as a concept but will help you understand the drive for planting contained in the Diocesan Vision.

CHURCH PLANTING AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The Church of England is part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. These four inseparable ‘marks’ of the Church.....convey first and foremost what the Church receives by God’s grace,. They also indicate how it should live and act in the world because of that grace. Having heard and heeded the gospel proclaimed by the apostles, the Church is sent out as the apostles were to declare the one gospel in every generation and make disciples of all nations. It is shown to be ‘apostolic’ as it participates in the apostolic mission.

Church planting is one among a variety of ways by which the Church of England seeks to share in the apostolic mission by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and drawing people into the adventure of discipleship. It is complementary to, and not a replacement for, other vehicles for mission, understood according to the breadth of meaning set out in the Anglican Communion’s Five Marks of Mission.

The Five Marks of Mission are: To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; To teach, baptise and nurture new believers; To respond to human need by loving service; To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth. (*Bonds of Affection-1984 ACC-6 p49, Mission in a Broken World-1990 ACC-8 p101*)

As bishops, we are committed to adopting an approach to mission and church growth within our dioceses that embraces both the contribution of traditional forms of ministry (e.g. through our parishes, chaplaincies and schools), and the contribution of newer forms (e.g. through our church plants, fresh expressions etc). Bishops undertake to pursue and support the full range of contributions to mission and church growth, creating and normalising a pattern of diversity, of parish and other traditional forms alongside newer forms. This pattern of diversity is the ‘new normal’. It requires leadership from bishops in leading our dioceses into understanding and embracing this diversity. The nature and composition of the new diversity will vary according to local context. But there is a role for both traditional forms and new forms in all our dioceses and in most areas.

Planting new churches is a long-established and effective means of establishing the presence of a Christian community to witness to the gospel in new places, and of enabling that witness to be shared with more people in all places. All our churches were once planted. There have been previous periods in Church history of intensive planting of churches: notably for the Church of England in mediaeval times, Queen Anne’s 50 New Churches, the Victorian era, and the interwar period.

In the past, church planting in the Church of England generally led to the formation of new parishes. The parish system has long been the Church of England’s way of establishing

churches, proclaiming the gospel and providing pastoral care in every community. That system has however never been fixed, and it has always evolved to adapt to new cultural and social conditions, for example through medieval chantry chapels, chapels of ease, or Victorian parish creation. In our day, Bishops' Mission Orders, church revitalisation and church planting are some of the ways in which this very adaptable system continues to evolve.

In this context, church plants can include entirely new church communities, or fresh expressions of church, or new congregations within existing church communities. The concept of church 'planting' can also include initiatives to revitalise existing churches through 'grafting' leadership, people and/or resources into them. We encourage and commend all such initiatives. We welcome planting new churches as a way of sharing in the apostolic mission by bringing more people in England to faith in Christ and participation in the life of the Church. We will encourage it, and not seek to limit it, wherever the good practice in this statement is being followed.

Planting churches is an activity for all traditions and expressions of the Church of England. It is not limited to any one tradition. Those traditions with recent experience of effective planting must share that experience with others. Nor is it only relevant to some social and geographical contexts, it helps the Church of England to reflect more fully the diversity of the society we serve, and thereby to demonstrate its catholicity.

Church plants aim to attract more people to faith within the life of the one body of Christ. They will therefore also aim for those people to be drawn into the Church's unity and holiness, as both gift and calling. They must never become isolated congregations separate from other parts of the Church of England but should be fully involved in wider church structures, contributing to and gaining from the wider mixed economy of the diocese. There are responsibilities that follow from this for established parishes and diocesan staff, as well as for new church plants.

Thriving parishes are required to be open to sending people and resources to support church plants, and also to receiving church plants within their parish boundaries, wherever this can benefit the Church's mission. Ministerial development must provide the training and support clergy need for this work. New church plants need to work within a church ecology of long-established parish and other churches, and also with other new churches. It is essential that churches of all kinds, new and old, work supportively together in every place.

DIOCESAN VISION 5

Having considered various aspects of the Vision we return this week to a reminder of what it is about – with words from Bishop Libby, that you may have read before but are well worth sitting quietly and contemplating.

'Strive first for the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.' (Matthew 6)

This is my desire for our diocese: knowing we are loved beyond measure in Christ, we are able to offer, with generous faith and courageous hope, life-giving love without restraint.

This gift of love, transforming our lives and translated into love passed on, is how I understand the Kingdom of God.

Through 2020 we discerned our vision: 'the Kingdom of God: good news for all'. The outworking of that vision will shape the coming decade. We are called to proclaim afresh, in this generation, the good news of that Kingdom, seen in transformed lives, through growing church and building community. Who we are, as much as what we do, proclaims the Kingdom - so we will live out our values of generous, faith, courageous hope and lifegiving love.

To enable us to fulfil our calling we will invest, over the next 5 years, in equipping people, shaping structures and sustaining resources for mission. In 2027, our centenary year we will celebrate 100 years of the work of the Kingdom of God in the life of our Diocese. We will then reflect and review, in preparation for our continuing call for the following decade.

Of course, this is not new. It is a reiteration of ancient, unchanging truth. And, there is much in what we are exploring that has echoes of previous endeavour in the diocese, and deliberately so – we are not reinventing for the sake of it. As we strive to be faithful and fruitful, we must be attentive to those who remind us to be careful as well as bold, who counsel us to look back as well as forward and take our time, who ensure we treasure what we inherit as well anticipate all that God has in store for us.

And we also know that the coming of the Kingdom is God's business: the world, and every community in it, are God's creation; the Church is not what we make it – but the Body of Christ; lives are transformed by the work of the Spirit. The coming of the Kingdom is God's business and does not depend on any strategy and is not constrained by any schedule. But, wonderfully, God invites us to join in. That's an undeserved privilege which we are to treasure beyond price – so we do take seriously our plans and choices and decisions.

I have found the image of weaving helpful for thinking how our Vision might work out in practice:

We will frame everything in prayer:

in our public worship and private devotion and discipline. This is the necessary reminder, always, that this is God's work.

Our outworking will be given structure by warp of the 5 marks of mission [see previous newsletters]. These are the things that will give consistency to our weaving. I will give them priority in my own life and ministry, and I will insist they are given priority in the life of the diocese.

The weft of the tapestry are the threads of every aspect of all our lives - every aspect not just the 'religious' bits but also the threads of compassion, creativity and culture, of commerce, of connection, in every context of our diocese. That's extraordinary variety and richness, all shades and tones, all textures and fibres. Everyone can participate and contribute. Our tapestry is reduced and diminished when anyone or anywhere is excluded.

Our Vision is 'the Kingdom of God: good news for all'.

So, what does the Kingdom of God mean to you and for you – in your everyday life, and in the life of your worshipping community? What will generous faith, courageous hope and life-giving love look like for you?

The Kingdom is good news not only for us, but for all - for all 1.1 million people in the diocese, including 250,000 children, the 38 million visitors a year, and the nation and world beyond.

And what about all of us?

In the Diocesan Information is this statement on equipping people for mission:

The diocese is making resources available to help everyone grow in their discipleship and enable them to develop new skills as we are transformed and equipped to serve God in the future. This includes training ordained leaders in developing their skills of enabling the gifts and call of others and supporting lay people as they develop their gifts to find new ways of serving in their worshipping communities, and everyday lives. We will provide opportunities for people to serve in exciting new ways and as our lives are transformed, we will be given resources to help others respond as they experience God's love.

The diocese has recently appointed to two posts, an Ordained Ministries Development Officer, and a Lay Ministries Development Officer, who will be working with others to provide resources and training online and locally.

And a piece from your Vicar where this relates to our current situation:

There is the underlying emphasis and expectation of ALL member ministry within the Vision, which is in line with Jesus' final words to his disciples before he returned to heaven, sending them out into the world to continue his work.

The most effective churches, and this is true of all different sorts of church, are those where not only is faith strong, worship is wonderful, prayer is at the centre of life, there is a good fellowship and all the rest, but where each member not only participates but plays their part. We are each called by God to serve; we can each add something to the whole. Someone who is no longer able to be so physically active can have a very active prayer life; someone who can no longer get out and about can offer pastoral care and support over the phone or zoom. Any skills we have can be used to help build God's kingdom. He has given us an amazing array of talent to be used.

As you know there are 'up front' roles that require filling in our own churches and there are many 'behind the scenes' things that need doing as well. There are a host of practical jobs from locking the church to leading a craft activity at Messy Church. There are always spaces for welcomers, singers, pray-ers, readers and so on at our services. Those who know the number of things that need doing to keep our churches standing still, let alone moving forward, know I touch barely touch the surface of all that we need to do.

Some people do far too much and we should be incredibly supportive of them and offer them our sincere thanks. But with some people leaving us for pastures new, others no longer able to offer what they have in the past and a few moving into different roles, there are an increasing number of gaps to fill. If we are not able to fill those positions then our mission and ministry will contract and we will be the poorer for it.

This may be part of God's plan. It may be right for us to let go of certain things for a while, a time of laying fallow. [*For those without a farming background – a farmer would let a field lie fallow, not planting a crop in it for a year or two, to allow the soil to restore it's fertility so that it would produce a better harvest in the future*]. What we need to do is ensure we do not lose vital and important aspects of our mission and ministry. We must make certain we put the time, talents and energy we do have into those things that are central to our calling and not spread ourselves too thinly.

Please pray about this, especially for the Church Wardens, Staff Team and P.C.C.'s who are seeking God's way forward in the midst of this time of change. And pray please, for each other, for all our members, that each may offer what they can to help build God's kingdom here in our Benefice, in our communities, in our churches, in our homes.

DIOCESAN VISION 6

I am not offering much on the Diocesan Vision this week – enough has been covered recently and you probably need time to take it in! Needless to say, things keep developing as well. The Diocese keeps revising its timetable of implementation, which is sensible as we open up ‘post-covid’ and get things going again. Bodies such as the Deanery Synods are also exploring the implications of the Vision for them and so for us, and so it goes on. All we can say is that it will not be immediate, but the Diocese is determined to move the vision forward over the next few years.

In many ways it was the wrong time to introduce the vision, but perhaps not for our Benefice where many aspects of our ministry and mission are being challenged by people moving, others retiring from roles they have held for some time, and by the continuing changes in society that have been having adverse effects on our churches for decades. Bishop Libby was right when she said at the launch of the vision, that we have been kicking the can down the road long enough. We either grasp the reality of our situation and respond positively to it or we will find ourselves part of a church that can no longer respond at all.

Many of the things the Vision is promoting are things that we would engage with regardless of the Vision.

- The nature of the role of the Vicar;
- working ever closer together, ignoring the parochial boundaries that have traditionally divided us;
- sharing of the responsibility for running every aspect of the church among every member of the church;
- seeking to do only those things that are vital to our mission and ministry;
- being more effective in our serving others;
- seeking to use all that we do to draw people into God’s family;
- helping to build God’s kingdom;
- equipping our church building and our church members as witnesses to God’s love and living word.

To this end the Church Wardens and Staff have been meeting to discuss various aspects of our church life. This has not been a discussion of the Vicar’s opinions or my suggestions for the way forward but an open and honest exploration of the reality of our situation and how we might begin to discern God’s will for us. The results of our discussions will be fed to the PCCs but what is emerging is our need to take our time and not try to begin everything that used to take place, even if we were in a position to do so, which we are not.

We must accept that there are things, even things we feel to be very important, that we are unable to offer over the coming months. We must have faith and trust in God that this will give us time and space to get right those things we choose to do and can do. If we get those right and re-build firm foundations, we will in time grow to a point where they can be started once again.

One of the lessons of covid is that some things are just beyond our control. Although this is not the most pleasant of places to be, it does remind us that we are called to rely on God’s

strength, on his patience, courage, determination, hope and will. He offers us all of these things and more in abundance! So let us accept them and in prayer seek His will for our way forward as His people.

Martin