

Refreshing Our Vision

Renewing **HOPE** Pray • Serve • Grow

“I planted...but God gave the growth”

From 1 Corinthians 3:6

A) INTRODUCTION

This paper provides background information on “Refreshing Our Vision”, outlining the purpose of Refreshing our Vision, the journey we have collectively embarked on, who and how we serve, our priorities for growth, how our ambitions need to be supported by a sustainable financial framework and our Diocesan commitments.

B) PURPOSE OF REFRESHING OUR VISION

Hope is a defining characteristic of the Christian Church, founded upon the saving work of God in Christ. This hope, for the renewal of all things in the coming Kingdom of Heaven, gives meaning and purpose to the life of each Christian community.

To renew hope, then, is to refresh our Christian vision, so we may see the Kingdom come.

Since the introduction of the Diocesan Vision in 2014, **Renewing Hope - Pray Serve Grow**, there has been a strong commitment across our Diocese to these aspirations, not least because they are not top-down and directive but allow for interpretation and application in a variety of ways. Our shared Vision provides direction and inspiration as we grow in faith, number and impact.

Now, after 5 years, the Bishop’s Council believes it is time to refresh our Diocesan Vision; while continuing to work with Renewing Hope - Pray Serve Grow, we are focussing in particular on the areas which will enable us to grow. In doing so the Council seeks to:

- Identify and commit to diocesan priorities for growth that are the outworking of our ambition
- Invite churches and schools to interpret and live out the shared Vision in ways relevant to the local context
- Provide diocesan-wide support from the DBF and DBE and reshape our work so that it serves the needs of churches and schools in a changing context
- Answer a call for action on the climate crisis and in everything we do, ‘strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth’¹.

Through this, we will continue to build a flourishing Christian presence in every community.

C) THE JOURNEY SO FAR

¹ 5th mark of mission

The independent review and subsequent findings of Bishop John Gladwin's report, based on survey results, interviews and focus groups, provided us with an outward focus and a proposed direction of travel and change. The Gladwin Report was shared and widely discussed in the Diocese between Easter and July 2019.

Through listening to the feedback gathered from our benefices, deaneries and schools as part of Bishop John's Review, we have heard what is working well and the many challenges we face.

At the June 2019 Diocesan Synod, Bishop Karen and David Pain briefed Synod on the next steps for refreshing our Vision. They were to:

- Attend to our priorities for growth as we take the next steps in Renewing Hope.
- Undertake several internal reviews of our Ministry and Mission, our property and glebe portfolio, the diocesan Offices and IT systems, and how we communicate and engage across the Diocese.
- Continue the review of Fairer Share which started in 2018 and consider other approaches to giving
- Develop a sustainable 5-year financial framework to remove our current annual operating deficit of just under £1m

The Bishop's Council tasked a sub-set of members to take these strands of work forward and to articulate our Vision in a way that is succinct, understandable, and applicable to all levels of our life together – in our parishes and deaneries, the DBF and DBE – ensuring it is something we can all connect with.

Between April and November 2019, the ideas and opportunities arising from these reviews were widely discussed. This included discussions at the Bishop's Council in April, May, July, October, and November; the Rural Deans' Residential in May, the Rural Deans' and Lay Chairs' meeting in June, and Rural Deans' in October. The Mission and Ministry Council in May discussed priorities towards 2030. Joint meetings of the staff of the DBE and DBF in April and October. Bishop's Staff in June and October. Deanery synods and chapter meetings in some deaneries discussed the Gladwin Report and offered reflections. The Diocesan Secretary presented the draft priorities and discussed them with deanery synods in Weymouth, Stonehenge, Wimborne and Purbeck and led a workshop with the clergy chapter of North Bournemouth and Poole chapter. A day conference of younger clergy was hosted by Bishop Karen in November to share hopes and visions for the future. Working groups for each of the review areas met extensively and worked with a range of stakeholders including Rural Deans and Lay Chairs.

Members of Diocesan Synod discussed the Gladwin Report in June and took note of the Diocesan Priorities outlined in the presentation at the Diocesan Synod in November.

D) WE PRAY

As a Diocese, prayer underpins and resources all we do. Renewing Hope has encouraged us to make prayer central whenever we meet; inspired us to create more opportunities to pray together and provide resources that help communities develop corporate and individual prayer life.

Our popular Thy Kingdom Come Cathedral event and Praying Together booklet – patterns for shared prayer as we renew hope in churches, schools and households – continue to be popular additions to our Diocesan Prayer life over the last few years.

E) WE SERVE

We as a Diocese are made up of:

- A million people from the M4, through the North Wessex Downs to the Jurassic Coast
- A decreasing and more aged rural population, but a growing and younger urban population along the coast
- A large food-producing area, seeing agriculture in decline, but tourism becoming increasingly important to the local economy
- A significant military presence concentrated around Salisbury Plain
- For younger people, reduced access to training and jobs, and specialist services outside education
- Localities that include some of the wealthiest people in the country, but also some of the most deprived

We know that churches and schools are best placed to understand and respond to God's calling to serve in their local context. Our Vision anticipates, therefore, a genuinely localised strategy in which ministry resources and mission challenges can be mapped and matched.

We acknowledge that while both Praying and Serving have been at the heart of what we do as a Diocese, we have yet to see real signs of numerical Growth.

So, by refreshing our Vision, our aim is to look intentionally at 3 priorities that inspire, support and resource our communities to grow.

F) WE GROW

3 PRIORITIES

Prayer, Serving and Growth are knit together in Renewing Hope. We are all called to love and serve God and our neighbours. We have choices in how best our gifts and resources could be shared and believe in creating space for innovation so new signs of God's Kingdom can emerge. We aim to adapt our structures in order to encourage creativity and flexibility, both centrally and importantly at the local level.

In listening to the needs of the Diocese over the last year, our priorities for growth will be to:

- Develop discipleship and evangelism
- Encourage dynamic and collaborative leadership
- Transform lives and communities

While naming these priorities hopefully encourages focus and identification, much of the work that lies behind them is already taking place in churches, schools and communities across our Diocese.

1) Discipleship and Evangelism

We want to grow **Faith** in order to renew **Hope** and live in **Love**. Therefore, we will develop our approach to discipleship and evangelism in churches, schools and households across all generations.

Discipleship and evangelism are at the heart of our mission. They begin by hearing the good news of Jesus Christ and responding to this in faithful witness. We want to see confident Christian communities, whose growing outreach and vocation overflows from their worship – and whose buildings are a gift to this common life.

Our focus for discipleship and evangelism will be on:

- Intentionally equipping all God's people for discipleship and evangelism
- Inspiring people of all ages to engage with their community and witness Jesus Christ within and beyond their church
- Embedding the Bishop's commitment to be a national Growing Faith trailblazer, embracing children and young people's passions, enthusing them and enabling them to explore and find faith
- Creating opportunities for spiritual encounter through the partnership between churches, schools and households and across all generations
- Extending opportunities that deepen life-long discipleship and lead to people, including children and young people, exploring their vocation and living out their Christian faith in all aspects of life

2) Dynamic and Collaborative Leadership

We want to enable a flourishing Christian presence in every community: therefore, we will need to develop dynamic and collaborative leadership. This must be leadership at all levels, inspiring people to work together across boundaries.

Our focus for dynamic and collaborative leadership will be on:

- Releasing people to share their gifts and skills of leadership
- Encouraging and equipping children and young people in our churches and schools to become the leaders of today, as well as the future
- Sharing a common purpose, as lay and ordained, of being Church and of building community
- Increasing the number of curates
- Embedding a genuinely localised strategy in which ministry resources and mission challenges can be mapped and matched
- Developing local hubs that re-imagine clergy and laity ministry and training
- Working in partnership, as the DBF and DBE, supporting the work of churches and schools

3) Transforming Lives and Communities

We all want our Christian presence to transform lives and communities, as together we pursue all that makes for peace and builds up the common good.

The church's mission follows God's own: who, by the Holy Spirit, leads us towards the renewal of all things. Its manifesto is that of Christ, who brings good news to the poor and freedom to the oppressed.

Central to our diocesan mission, then, is focussed action on issues of social justice and care for God's creation. In a time of climate crisis, we will grow an ecology of hope that pursues the healthy interrelation of communities with their local environment.

To this end, we will work collaboratively at all levels, developing our community hubs and allowing the local context to inform and guide our decisions about resourcing.

Our focus for transforming lives and communities will be on helping our communities in:

- Working through the most appropriate units as centres of mission: benefice, deanery and other groupings, enabling local decision making and resourcing
- Testing and learning including through community hubs where the local context shapes our response
- Encouraging and enabling participation across the Diocese in issues of social justice to grow the Kingdom of God
- Being strong and courageous advocates, hearing and acting on the voices of children, young people and adults
- Opening of new church schools and planting new church communities within them
- The work of mission and ministry influencing and being a voice for the common good at local, regional and national levels

All 3 priorities and our ongoing work of mission and ministry are to be seen in the light of and engaging with the Fifth Mark of Mission – 'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth'.

F) AMBITION SUPPORTED BY A SUSTAINABLE FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

Bishop Nicholas reminded us at the November 2019 Synod "We need to ensure that ambition, expenditure and income are matched. It can be done in a number of ways – a strengthening of vision and purpose through our diocesan priorities, reducing expenditure, increasing income and in all likelihood a mix of all 3".

This balancing act requires us to consider choices in order to work within a sustainable financial framework. In November 2019, Bishop's Council identified 4 areas to focus on in 2020 and delegated the governance oversight of this review work to the Bishop's Council Review Implementation Group.

These 4 areas of focus are:

- Re-imagining patterns of ministry
- Identifying new sources of income and promoting stewardship across the Diocese
- Investing in change
- Developing new ways of working

G) OUR COMMITMENTS

We have listened to the aspirations of the local churches and schools. The DBF and the DBE commit to supporting churches and schools as they shape their ministry and mission in their context, helping them to:

- Re-imagine patterns of ministry and how we measure growth
- Work collaboratively and locally
- Travel light and learn from experience to release resource and energy for mission
- Make our churches and schools a safe and welcoming place for all
- Work in partnerships, relevant to the local context, and rooted in Jesus Christ
- Embrace the passions of children and young people, enabling them to grow in faith and leadership
- Serve our churches and schools
- Establish sustainable finances for ministry and mission
- Invest in change and establish new ways of working

H) EVALUTION

As we embark on the next phase of Renewing Hope - Pray Serve Grow, we will develop several methods to evaluate our success. The dialogue between churches, schools and diocese is vital, ensuring that we all have a part to play in the next phase of our life together.

It is fundamental that our work must be grounded in the gift of the places we serve. Our shared Vision needs to give room for the 'God of surprises' to do new things and allow the local context to inform and guide our decisions about resourcing. With our priorities for growth, our embedding learnings from the Rural Hope programme, and the exciting opportunity as a trailblazer diocese with 'Growing Faith' in schools, we already have a good foundation on which to build.

I) NEXT STEPS

Working together, the DBE and DBF will now be planning their work in response to these priorities and inviting churches, schools and communities to respond in ways relevant to their own context.

**God our Father, renew our hope.
By the Holy Spirit's power,
strengthen us to pray readily, serve joyfully
and grow abundantly
rejoicing in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen**