

## 2. As we seek to 're-imagine the Church' for the next 30 years what are the changes and developments you would hope to see?

Our culture is changing fast, so we need to be a Church that is light on our feet and is ready to be flexible, proclaiming the unchanging message of the Christian gospel in new and exciting ways.

Here are just a few thoughts:

- ❖ Ready to do church in new ways and in different? places. God's great love is for people. So I expect that this will mean that we meet not only in traditional church settings but in lots of other places as well.
- ❖ We will need to continue to be doing church but also using para churches and working with other denominations in fresh adventures of faith like deploying to chaplaincies, networks and pioneering communities.
- ❖ The doors of our churches need to be wide open so that people can come in but that we can go out wherever and however people gather.
- ❖ There will be I believe a renewed focus on discipleship and witnessing, equipping every Christian to be good news wherever they live, work or play.

Greater collaboration with other Christian communities. **(Peter Breckwoldt)**

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I hope to see a much greater investment of resources in developing confident articulate disciples, leading to a resurgence of vocations to all forms of lay and ordained ministry. I also hope to see a stronger emphasis on ministry in rural contexts. 65% of Church of England churches and 66% of our parishes are in rural areas yet we still tend to operate models of ministry which are more suited to urban and suburban areas. Shifting the discussion around rural ministry is, I believe, one of the keys to church growth. **(Jane Charman)**

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What I hope to see and I will see may be two different things. Below is a broad list of issues and development which I expect to see in the next 30 years.

1. A growth in personalised spiritualism and non-Christian religious practises.
2. A growth in extremism of different religions. Particularly Islam, and the growth of the demand for Sharia Law.
3. A growth in new disciples who cannot access books and complicated teachings. These disciples will come through para-church projects such as "Christians against Poverty", "Foodbanks" and the like.
4. A growth in non-churched based worship and congregations.
5. The issue of uses and upkeep church buildings and their relevance.
6. The use of electronic devices within worship. Eg., Smartphones, projectors, etc.
7. A growth in more complex medical and social issues requiring the Church of England to make some further difficult decisions and advice.
8. An increase in paganism, and witchcraft, and progressive growing interest in the occult practises. The growth of independent Anglican Church congregations. **(Tim Gomm)**

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An increased and renewed awareness of the **vocational** aspect of ordained ministry followed by an increase in candidates seeking that ministry, particularly the stipendiary, ordained ministry.

A strengthening, rather than a weakening, of the parish unit. Bishops abandoning committees and initiatives and becoming themselves more pastoral, not least as pastors to the pastors. Whilst retaining some essential administrative functions, dioceses could revert to themselves being, and being seen as, pastoral units overseen by the bishop.

More active and meaningful local ecumenical units with churches **actively working** together rather than being excuses for yet another committee. The need for **Unity** and **Sameness** not being accepted as synonymous. An awareness that strength is often a product of diversity.

An essential change and development would be for the Church no longer to hide its light under a bushel, but be prepared to fight its corner in an increasingly secular and non-Christian world; a Church cognisant of, but not subservient to the perils of, increasing secularisation. **(John Hawthorne)**

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I don't believe we can properly answer this question until we as a Church ask ourselves— what will be the changes and developments as a country and society in 30 years? I think that the gap between the contemporary culture and the Church of England will be as challenging as we find it today! We should be always asking if we are seen as a credible church, proclaiming afresh the Gospel to each generation. We will hopefully have dealt with the issues that appear not relevant to anyone outside of the church – gender, and sexuality, and working to provide spiritual guidance and direction for those issues that really concern our nation. As an ordained member of the Church I am hopeful, and optimistic that we will be more outward looking, understanding and seeking to meet the needs of the communities we serve. I hope that we will have more lay people involved at all levels of our church leadership and so would be advocating for more resources for training and formation for ministry leadership teams – laity and clergy. Vocations to the ordained ministry will need to have a better understanding of the role of priest in the community, and a more clearly defined responsibility of sacramental pastoral care, and community bridge building. What will parish clergy be asked for in 30 years? Will a parish system still be the backbone of our community engagement? I am keen to explore a chaplaincy model of ministry that will see a focussed ministry to the community, schools and other places where we can offer a real incarnational ministry. I will continue to support the place of Church of England schools as high achieving centres of learning based upon Christian values and standards. I trust that we will continue to build up our resources to engage with social justice issues. In our present time we as a National Church have been recognised in supporting Credit Unions, Food Banks, and Domestic Abuse, amongst others, and we are preparing to make a significant response to the refugee crisis. Will these still be on our agenda in 30 years time? We must continue to ask ourselves – who is my neighbour? And then show them God's love. **(Alan Jeans)**

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- a) A more outward looking church, less inclined to its own agendas and more focussed on the issues Jesus focused on: poverty, justice, healing and reconciliation, simplicity, care for the planet, respect for all people, and holiness;
  - b) Simplification of the arcane regulations of the Church of England;
  - c) Better use of church buildings as community space;
  - d) More investment in Fresh Expressions of Church.
  - e) Better support and focussed training for clergy, especially those in the rural context.
- (Chris Tebbutt)**

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It almost seems impossible to predict what the Church will be like in 10 years time let alone 30! However, if we believe that having a relationship with Christ is the greatest adventure anyone could have, we need to find new ways to reconnect and live out this reality, living as ambassadors of Christ who are passionate, purposeful, adventurous, and take appropriate risks for the Kingdom of God, resulting in transformed lives and reconciled communities.

The heart of this must be found and rooted in the development of life giving communities of God's faithful people (missional communities) engaging creatively with their local communities free from the burdens of maintenance and the unnecessary bureaucracy that tends to hamper mission and discipleship, as well as draining enthusiasm and energy. Raising a question / challenge for the National Church of how she can best channel her resources (human & financial) to support and release mission, discipleship and evangelism at a local level and for all ages.

The programme of 'Renewal & Reform' that has recently been presented to General Synod, should re-focus the mind and heart of the Church of England as she seeks to bring a fresh understanding and interpretation to prayer, mission, evangelism and discipleship. In other words helping the Church to return to her core business, that of mission and discipleship.

There is also a challenge and question about the shape and training of future leaders of the church (not just Senior Leadership!), both those called to lay as well as ordained ministry. What is clear is that the current model isn't sustainable as we prepare for a whole wave of clergy to retire in the next few years. We need to be thinking more creatively and boldly about the shape and patterns of leadership, pathways of training and equipping and the allocation of resources and posts. It is really encouraging to see the number of those putting themselves forward for ordination has risen, especially amongst younger vocations.

Above all we need to develop opportunities to enable the people of God to grow in confidence in their faith, knowledge of scripture and courage to share their "God" stories with their families, friends, neighbours and colleagues. As a Diocese under the 'Renewing Hope: Prayer, Serve, Grow' initiative we are being encouraged to begin this journey and already we see signs of new life emerging, this needs to be celebrated and communicated.

Underpinning the future must be a renewed commitment to prayer in order to grow a church (local, rural and national) that is confident, prayerful and generous in the use of the tools and gifts given by the Holy Spirit. **(Jonathan Triffitt)**

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A re-imagined Church of England is a Church taking seriously its responsibility to work across the whole community: open to engaging with the issues of the day and courageous in making necessary changes.

We need be excited by the possibilities these conversations bring, eager to encourage new relationships, open to being transformed and willing to give leadership when appropriate. **(Thomas Woodhouse)**