

Renewing **HOPE**

Pray • Serve • Grow

Developing Disciples, Nurturing Vocations and Sustaining Ministry

As a Diocese, we want a thriving Christian presence serving God in every community through which our hope will be constantly renewed.

This paper leads on from the 'Renewing Hope – Vision and Priorities' paper and expands on three main priorities from that paper: Developing Disciples, Nurturing Vocations and Sustaining Ministry.

Developing Disciples

Making disciples is at the heart of our mission. We must not be ashamed of talking about numbers, or of making the effort to speak of as well as show the good news of Jesus Christ.

Archbishop of Canterbury, 27 January 2014

Discipleship is a distinctive way of life seeking understanding and wisdom with others. It is nurturing a faith which has an impact on every aspect of life and every relationship. It is a path of growth and it starts with hearing the good news of Jesus and responding in prayer and in action.

Our aim is to grow in depth, confidence and the impact of our discipleship. As a Diocese, we are committed to encouraging a thriving discipleship culture in each parish.

- We will provide assistance and resources to parishes and benefices for example in relation to different forms of prayer and discipleship programmes
- We want to explore with you how diocesan teams can help individuals and groups to explore their discipleship

Jesus asks us to go and make disciples and grow in number. With strength in numbers, we can reach many more people and be more effective in mission and social justice.

Discipleship is also the beginning of a 'virtuous circle': growing disciples in numbers and depth leads to more vocations to all forms of ministry which develops disciples who disciple others. Discipleship is the seedbed out of which churches grow and individual vocations emerge.

Nurturing Vocations

Vocation flows out of discipleship as people respond naturally to God's grace at work in their lives by looking for opportunities to participate in building the kingdom.

In our shared life together, ministry takes many different forms. Alongside the historic threefold order of deacon, priest and bishop, there are authorised or commissioned lay ministers and lay people who serve in other capacities. The inter-animating nature of lay and ordained ministries is at the heart of what it means to be members 'one or another' and Christ's body, the Church.

Our clergy have a clear leadership role and provide the foundations for growth through preaching, teaching and the sacraments. They provide a focal point for organizing local teams. Out of this rich mix of ordained and lay ministries emerges the vital and growing Christian presence in the community.

Sustaining Ministry

Significant factors affecting ministry in our Diocese include

- The percentage of our population that attend church is relatively high yet we have one of the fewest number of people per church building of any Diocese in the country according to the 2015 Church Buildings Review.
- Over 100 (about 35%) of our parochial clergy are over 60 and will retire in the next eight to ten years.
- We are seeing a steep decline in self-supporting priests and markedly fewer self-supporting ordinands and curates.
- While we continue to receive good applicants for some posts, there are more vacancies, low numbers of applicants and some advertised vacancies which attract no applicants.

If, in 15 years, we want to have *even* the same number of clergy as in 2015, though their work will be different, we will need to identify and train 60 priests (stipendiary and self-supporting) in addition to the current expectation of 80 stipendiary and 40 self-supporting priests from 2017 to 2027 - and that is our aim. We believe that is essential to achieving our goal of growing church membership by 10% over the same period.

Given the steps the Diocese through the Learning for Discipleship and Ministry Team (LDMT) has already taken and the greater resources that are being committed to developing vocations (particularly focussing on younger vocations) we are confident that with prayer, sustained effort, and adequate resources, this aim can be achieved.

Renewing Hope together

Our strategy is ambitious and it needs the support of the people and parishes of the Diocese, financially and in prayer..

The Diocese's financial position is healthy. Investment income and income from other sources has grown and the net Share payment level for 2014 was 99.2%. For the first time, the 2016 per capita Share is lower than the previous year. And £3m was raised by parishes for local mission in 2014.

Assumptions inevitably have to be made when forecasting for the next 10 years such as the patterns of retirement, the number of vacancies, the number of ordinands and curates, what general inflation is likely to be in this period and what costs will be borne by the Diocese and which by the National Church under its Reform and Renewal agenda.

The costs of 60 additional ordinands and clergy are likely to be *circa* £1.75m between 2020 and 2024 and a further £2m for 2025 to 2029 based on assumptions of 4 additional stipendiary curates and 2 additional non-stipendiary curates per year.

If we are to achieve our Diocesan aims, the DBF will no longer be able to maintain budgetary increases below the rate of inflation. While overall Share will go up, the Share per member may go down or up depending on how our numbers grow or decline overall. If churches decline, the impact of any increase is heightened. If churches grow, the impact is lessened.

During the period 2004 to 2015, the Share increase was 19.3% and the costs of supporting individual clergy rose by 36.9%. We cannot therefore, continue to contain share increases to below inflation as that would require a significant and possibly permanent reduction in the number of stipendiary clergy. Our understanding of the role of the clergy would then have to change.

Measures have and will continue to be put in place to determine whether the additional resources are having the expected impact in growing disciples and nurturing vocations. A full review will be conducted in 2019.

We are acutely conscious that in the next decade or so, there will be an even heavier burden on the clergy, an issue which we will be addressing in the near future.

The vision of Renewing Hope: Pray, Serve, Grow has been taken up by many parishes. The process does seem to be changing the culture into one in which we recognise that God is transforming lives and communities. Our hope is constantly being renewed.

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