

Renewing *HOPE*

Pray • Serve • Grow

Our Vision

February 2016

Since his arrival as Bishop of Salisbury in 2011, Bishop Nicholas has engaged the Diocese in a careful and prayerful process of exploration and discernment. Through 'Let us Talk' and through Deanery Visits, he invited us to explore who we are as a Diocese, where we are going and how God wants us to move forward, leading to the formation of a new Diocesan vision – Renewing Hope: Pray, Serve, Grow.

Hope is a defining characteristic of Christian believers. Hope holds together our past, present and future and gives meaning and purpose to our existence.

Our Diocese

As a Diocese we want a thriving Christian presence in every community: our parishes are central to that. In this Diocese,

- Our church attendance is the second highest in the country at 3% of the population.
- In some places in the Diocese, more than 50% of the population are on the electoral roll and congregations swell at Christmas, Harvest, Easter and Remembrance services.
- We have 42,000 children in our church schools.
- Our church buildings, visible symbols of Christian presence, have never been so well cared for.
- Population is rising: 60,000 new homes will be built in the next ten years.
- The percentage of share paid is amongst the highest in the country

Close to two-thirds of the population (64.7%) identified themselves as Christian in the last census and nationally, there are more members of the Church of England than of all the political parties combined.

In many places the inherited forms of Church, adapted and developed for the present, serve us well. In others, new forms or expressions of church have helped us engage and grow. We relish this diversity.

Parishes in the Diocese are generally in good heart but there are pressures both for those parishes that are growing significantly and those in decline or struggling financially. Recruiting to PCCs has become more difficult. Sustaining ministry can be challenging: 50% of us live in 92% of parishes. Overall, church communities are ageing compared to the national demographic and Dorset will soon have the oldest population profile in Europe. Whilst there is growth in many places in the Diocese about 80 parishes have declined year on year since 2005 (resulting in an annual decline of 0.7% overall).

We believe decline can be reversed and growth accelerated. Our aim is to grow in church membership by 10% over the next 10 years.

Priorities

In 2015, the Bishop visited all Deaneries to share his overview of the Diocese and get people telling stories of hope. At these visits he met 2,000 people and distributed nearly 20,000 prayer cards. He left the local church with three challenges:

- What do you pray for?
- Whom do you serve?
- How will you grow?

If a vision is to have substance, it needs resource. And it is at the local level that this resource works best.

The Bishop's Council agreed the following priorities in response to these questions by focusing directly on how parishes, schools and deaneries might be helped to achieve their plans.

Pray

"There can be no renewal without prayer. Jesus said we should pray for what we want. It is the heartbeat of the Christian and the Christian Community." Bishop Nicholas Holtam

What do you pray for? That worship and prayer will be at the heart of each Christian and Christian community in our diocese.

What will we do?

- Make prayer central whenever we meet
- Create more opportunities to pray together
- Provide resources to help parishes and individuals develop their prayer lives

Serve

But I am giving you a new command: love each other, just as I have loved you. If you love each other, everyone will know that you are my disciples. John 13:34 - 35

Whom do you serve? We serve our parishes, communities and neighbours and will work to help them make Christ known through loving service.

What will we do?

- Increase the support and resources for promoting social justice

Grow

"I planted, Apollos watered but God gave the growth" 1 Corinthians 3: 6

How will you grow? We support parishes, schools and their leaders to grow in confidence, in numbers, in depth and in impact. If our primary focus is on prayer and serving others we believe we will flourish.

What will we do?

- Increase the training and support for nurturing disciples
- Increase vocations to ordained ministry by 60%
- Increase the training and support for rural ministry
- Support new forms or expressions of church and worship
- Provide direct support to help parishes grow
- Aim to grow church membership by 10% over the next 10 years.

Our Prayer

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.

Endorsed by Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod February 2016