

Dear Friends

I am delighted to share with you the draft vision for the next five years of the life of the Diocese of Gloucester.

Developing this vision

In 2012 the diocesan vision statement of 'Journeying Together' identified four areas of commitment in our desire to share the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ with people in and around Gloucestershire. The four areas focused on being people who worship together, who share our Christian faith and values, who provide a visible Christian presence in every community and parish, and who serve the wider world. These aspirations and commitments remain unchanged.

Since Ascension Day, we have journeyed on through a vision process of prayer and conversation involving approx. 6,000 people. This has led to the emergence of some key priorities for our mission and ministry over the next five years.

Context of our Vision

The vision priorities have deliberately not named every aspect of our Christian mission and ministry. It is important to note that whilst there is much we need to reimagine, we also want to celebrate those things, which are being done well. The intention is to turn up the volume on specific things and make purposeful decisions about where we will focus the majority of our time and energy. This will inevitably influence the culture of our life together and the way we live out our love of God and neighbour.

Our vision priorities are set within the bigger picture of what it means to be part of God's worldwide Church, not least in our care of creation and the use of our environment.

We have important partnerships with the Church across our world and we minister alongside Christians of other denominations. Furthermore, our identified priorities resonate strongly with much of the National Church of England programme of Renewal and Reform. Our vision sits firmly within this broader framework, including a commitment to increasing our number of ordinands by 50 per cent. Furthermore, it is important to underline that our desire for people to know life in all its fullness means that our commitments regarding safeguarding need to continually flow through everything we are and do.

In committing together to these priorities, decisions will have to be made not only by diocesan bodies of governance, but also by local worshipping communities, chaplaincies and schools, about what we need to stop doing and where we will focus our time and resources. Partnerships with key individuals, charities, organisations and institutions will be vital in supporting and resourcing our vision as we seek to celebrate and create community amidst the joy and pain of life.

Next steps

Between now (12 September) and 28 September, I invite you to reflect and share your thoughts with your local clergy who will be attending the Diocesan Clergy Conference. Alternatively each deanery is hosting an open meeting – details can be found at <http://www.vision2016.org.uk>.

- **What particularly excites you about this vision and why?**
- **What do you find challenging and why?**

The final vision document will be circulated on **18 November** and there will be a **big party to celebrate this vision on Saturday 26th November, 4-6.30pm, at Francis Close Hall in Cheltenham**, please find your invitation in this newsletter.

And Finally

We have many riches in this Diocese: between us we have financial wealth, rich experience and the treasure of many people's gifts and skills. It is my hope that as we journey on and live these priorities, we will grow in our generosity both towards one another and beyond this diocese, as we seek to resource ourselves and others in our continual response to God's immense generosity. As followers of Jesus Christ on our journey together, may we discover yet more of life in all its abundance as we pray for God's Kingdom to come on earth as in heaven.

**“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”
(John 10:10)**

We commit to go out and share the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ, so that people may know life in all its fullness

We will do this with:

Leadership: Committed to transformation

- Creating dynamic networks for shared learning between leaders, both lay and ordained
- Developing lay and ordained leadership, which reflects the diverse communities we serve
- Piloting liberating models of leadership and ministry in multi-parish benefices

Imagination: Opening new paths to faith

- Investing in our engagement with baptism families to spark an amazing adventure with Jesus Christ
- Placing schools at the heart of our mission with creative connections between churches and schools
- Encouraging new and courageous ways of worshipping, in different places, which connect with more people
- Approaching the use, upkeep and future of our church buildings in bold and creative ways

Faith: Growing adventurous followers of Jesus Christ

- Enabling people to discover new depths to prayer and spiritual growth, individually and together
- Nurturing disciples to be confident in living their faith Sunday to Saturday
- Sharing our stories in new and different ways through digital media

Engagement: Living out Christ's love and hope

- Being advocates for human flourishing, through initiatives which combat injustice, destruction, exclusion and isolation
- Using sport, music and art to build relationships and share the Christian faith
- Connecting with new housing developments in innovative ways
- Investing in people and programmes, which excite young people to explore and grow in faith

As the Holy Spirit breathes life into what this vision will mean for each of us, we will find joy in the unknown and familiar. We can be confident that each action we take, big or small, will transform lives and communities.