

HEARTS ON FIRE WITH THE LOVE OF CHRIST:

A vision for mission in the Diocese of Southwark

As a diocese, we have devoted much energy to formulating and implementing a Strategy for Ministry. All our ministry, though, exists to serve the mission of God's Kingdom. It seems right to my fellow bishops and me, therefore, that we should offer our overall vision of the mission to which we are all called throughout South London and East Surrey.

In what follows, we build on the vision of Christian living already set out in the Strategy for Ministry, which forms the first part of this document (1-8). It has become clear to me that this in fact sets out a wider vision of our calling as God's people. As I said in my sermon for Pentecost 2015, the joy of having our hearts on fire - loving God, walking with Jesus, led by the Spirit - cannot be contained, but compels us to share in God's mission; indeed, it must be the basis for all that we do as Christians and as churches. In the second part of this document (9-15), I map out the 'Five Marks' accepted by the Anglican Communion as a way of thinking about that overall mission.

This is not a new diocesan initiative; it is not a diocesan strategy for mission; it is not a diocesan Mission Action Plan. Rather, it is an offering to all in the diocese for reflection, study and action, and it is particularly designed to inform parishes in drawing up and in revising their MAPs. For that reason, I have not entered into too much detail about the five marks, as they need to be practically defined and applied in the very different local situations in which our mission is carried out. The vision set out below, though, will provide a framework for the conversations which my fellow bishops and I will be having with parishes about their MAPs, and I commend it to you for your consideration.

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1 Hearts on fire with the love of Christ

- 1.1 All worship, ministry, mission, discipleship, evangelism, loving service, justice, reconciliation and peace flow from a burning, total and all-consuming love of Christ. Jesus is the pattern of our living, the source of our life and the gift of salvation. In everything we are we seek to glorify him who has raised us to the promise of new life. He has opened our eyes and set our hearts on fire; with disciples through the ages and across the world, we know ourselves called to a life of loving God, walking with Jesus, being led by the Spirit.
- 1.2 Everything that we are and that we seek to be must begin with the fundamental realisation and acknowledgement that Jesus is at the centre of our lives as Christians. We must focus on him, giving praise to the Father and seeking the continual outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We need the anointing gift of the Spirit, which animates the church at Pentecost and gives the first apostles the boldness to proclaim Jesus as Lord, so we too are equipped afresh in this time for the same apostolic task. This is the foundation of both the church's ministry and the mission which that ministry serves.

2 Unity in the Body of Christ

- 2.1 In the Letter to The Ephesians, St Paul writes about our unity in the Body of Christ: 'I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.' (Ephesians 4.1-6)
- 2.2 I do not see how we can grow together in Christ-centred discipleship unless there is generosity in our hearts about difference. In seeking to live up to our calling we acknowledge the two strands of our common discipleship, the vocational and the relational. It is through these that we can grow together in trust and solidarity, a solidarity founded on generosity and reciprocity, and beyond reciprocity a self-giving that is concerned for the well-being of all our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have the example of our companion mission links with the Church in Zimbabwe where adversity has strengthened hope and solidarity and common purpose.
- 2.3 A natural outflowing of this is that our ministry and mission are exercised through collegiality and subsidiarity. The area bishops and I have been keen to develop a way of working together which is truly collegial, relying on a sharing of prayer, reflection and purpose which going beyond task-focused business, and we rejoice when we see the same pattern nurtured among all, lay or ordained, who exercise leadership, governance or ministry roles in the diocese. We recognise also that episcopal authority and oversight is to be devolved by being entrusted to the appropriate level of planning and decision-making; we are heartened by the growing evidence of a renewed subsidiarity in the new responsibilities being taken up by deaneries in particular.

3 Partners in Building the Kingdom

- 3.1 We are summoned to a unity in mission that goes beyond our denominational identity. In South London and East Surrey, the Christian church is marked by an extraordinary diversity and vitality; it is as the whole baptised people of God that we are called together to love, serve and evangelise the communities in which we live. This is a time in which I believe that we are being called to a refreshed sense of the importance of our ecumenical vocation. As we are enriched by receiving gifts from one another's patterns of spirituality, worship, discipleship and mission, we are also brought into a renewed appreciation of the treasures of our own traditions, reflecting as they do here insights and experiences from across the worldwide Anglican Communion.
- 3.2 Inter faith engagement is also a vital part of our mission. As we seek to grow the seeds of the Kingdom, particularly among the poor and marginalised in our societies, we will find ourselves being drawn into active partnerships not only with our fellow Christians, but also with people from other faith communities, and with a wide range of groups in civic society. Working together for the common good is the visible sign of our commitment to the world that God loves so much. The poverty, inequality and insecurity so evident in many parts of our diocese sharpen our commitment to seeking God's justice, peace and reconciliation in our communities.

4 The pattern of our calling

- 4.1 The Church proclaims Jesus as her Lord and Saviour. Each of us needs to know this reality for ourselves, to know we are part of the Body of Christ, burning with God's love but not consumed by it, built around the cornerstone of Jesus Christ himself and led by Christ who is the light of the world. The Church exists to bear witness to the redeeming death and resurrection of Christ our Lord, by which God has reconciled the world to himself. The Church, more than bearing witness, is also the community of those who believe in the resurrection of the dead, those who live lives of reconciling love and those who extend the hand of welcome to the stranger, outcast, poor and marginalised. In short, the Church becomes what it prays, what it preaches and what it understands to be Christ-like. For through the waters of baptism we who have put on Christ have put on his death and his resurrection. By God's grace rather than our own strength we live according to the pattern of his calling.

5 Faithful to our baptism and joyful in our discipleship

- 5.1 My prayer is that God willing, this Diocese may, above all else, be faithful in prayer, nourished by Christ in Word and Sacrament so that we are equipped for loving Service of all.
- 5.2 Loyalty to our calling as Christians, faithfulness to our baptism and joy in our discipleship begin first with prayer and with worship. We are drawn into a life giving personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus is known to us in our daily rhythms of prayer, in the times of stillness and silence we set aside to be centred on him. Jesus is known in the reading, studying and praying of the Scriptures, which are the constant guide and encouragement of the Christian. Jesus is known in the Church coming together as his body to celebrate with great thanksgiving his Supper. The regular celebration of the Eucharist in which the Word is broken open and proclaimed as we gather around the table of the Lord to be made one with him in the gift of himself is at the heart of the worshiping life of faith.

6 The ministry entrusted to us

- 6.1 A Church that is faithful in these things will also be faithful in much else. Praying, study and preaching of Scriptures, sharing the bread and wine of the table of the Lord is the core of discipleship. I want us to know renewal in our discipleship and in our vocational calling to follow the Lord. In seeking to renew our discipleship we will, I pray, discover afresh who it is that the Lord calls us to be.
- 6.2 Each of us in responding to Jesus has some ministry entrusted to us. In seeking to respond to the Lord there will be those who offer themselves for one of the authorised ministries of the church. Such a calling is to be discerned, cherished and nurtured so it may be of Christ and Christ-like.
- 6.3 Equally well there will be many who are called to other areas of Christian service and ministry, in our churches, in our communities and in loving service to our neighbours. This is equally valuable and important. For this is part of our offering to the Lord; part of our response to his love that first reaches out to us. Indeed this is already part of initiatives to increase vocations from minority ethnic groups.

7 Mobilising the gifts of the whole people of God

7.1 When I became Bishop of Southwark I identified three areas of priority to help mobilise the gifts of the whole people of God. These sprang from the Charge given to me by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and were as follows:

- valuing and empowering laity at every level of Diocesan life. In this we need to ensure that we value not only those in accredited lay ministry but also build upon the wonderful contribution made by lay people who give sacrificially of their time and gifts. Acknowledging that this is the bedrock of our communities of faith throughout the Diocese, we need to help them to grow and thrive
- vocational renewal as we deepen our discipleship and take seriously the promises made at our baptism
- breathing new life into our deaneries and indeed developing the role of deaneries in strategy, deployment of resources and mission.

8 Strategic approaches to ministry and to mission

8.1 The situation we face requires us to be creative, imaginative and resourceful. We need to recognise and honour the baptismal call to ministry of all God's people. All distinctive forms of ministry, whether lay or ordained, licensed or commissioned, authorised at diocesan level or encouraged at local level, are particular expressions of the shared ministry of the whole Body of Christ in which all baptised Christians participate. We need to be far more encouraging in our use of Readers, Southwark Pastoral Auxiliaries (SPAs) and lay ministers, and to explore how the ministry of apostles and evangelists can be developed. We need to be more creative in the way in which we deploy stipendiary priests, and to re-establish the order of distinctive deacons. We need to be smarter about the way we use and support Non-Stipendiary Ministry (NSM), which, freely offered and given, is a huge and sacrificial resource in the Diocese and an important part of the bedrock of mission. I am also keen to acknowledge the very significant contribution made by active retired clergy.

8.2 One outcome of the consultation on ministry with which we have been engaged has been to affirm what is good across the Diocese. My vision for ministry - empowering the laity, renewal of vocation and discipleship, and breathing new life into deaneries - both responds to Gospel imperatives and is mission focused. This lay at the heart of 'Faith, Hope, Love', my Call to Mission. I pray that we shall be renewed and re-energised for mission, the Lord being our helper. At the same time we need to foster more vocations to ordained ministry which represent the wide diversity of our Diocese. What I have heard so far is that there is a widespread desire to nurture an ethos of inter-dependence between parishes so that all may flourish. This needs to be seen alongside taking 'the opportunity of asking if God is calling us to different ways of working', which implies the need to be flexible whilst honouring the parish system which continues to serve us so well.

9 Ways forward in mission

- 9.1 The ministry of the Church is oriented to, and designed to serve, the mission of God in Christ to which we are called. It is clear that we need to prioritise the importance of being able to appoint the right people to the right places in order to best facilitate growth. So it follows that we must equip each community of faith with well-trained visionary leadership in mission. An increased openness to church planting, church grafting and the insights of fresh expressions also reflects widespread encouragement for a mixed economy approach. As we work towards larger parochial structures, the need for more collaborative working and appropriate training becomes ever more pressing.
- 9.2 Funding mission and ministry is dependent on the highest level of support from parishes underpinned by generous and sacrificial giving. Following a major consultation, we now have a new approach to our diocesan economy, a Parish Support Fund based on principles of informed generosity, proportionality, mutual accountability, transparency and aspiration to self-financing.
- 9.3 In order to maintain unity and nurture diversity in our diocese, the devolution of a proper sharing in oversight, in planning and in decision-making must continue to grow through embracing the principles of collegiality and subsidiarity in our working together at every level. In particular, the task of breathing new life into our deaneries continues to be of vital significance.
- 9.4 As we continue to renew, strengthen and reimagine our ministry, we need also to reflect on and plan for our mission in every dimension. My fellow bishops and I see our episcopal role as a collegially shared leadership in mission, and we have been hugely encouraged by the way in which so many parishes have embraced Mission Action Planning (MAP). As a diocese too, we have identified ambitious but achievable strategic goals to aim for in our mission (*Appendix*).
- 9.5 I do not believe a diocesan MAP as such to be either feasible or appropriate. However, through the process called 'Lead, Enable, Serve', staff working for the diocese have committed to a set of values, expectations and goals which will help to give coherence to their activities as they work to their primary purpose: *To serve, support, lead and enable the mission of God as it is worked out in the parishes, deaneries, schools and communities of the diocese.*
- 9.6 In thinking about how local MAPs reflect the balance and breadth of that mission of God's Kingdom, I believe that the 'Five Marks of Mission' provide a valuable framework. We are partners with God, and with our ecumenical colleagues, in a mission which our worldwide Anglican Communion has characterised in these five ways:
- to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
 - to teach, baptise and nurture new believers;
 - to respond to human need by loving service;
 - to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation; and
 - to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

10 **The first mark:**
Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom

10.1 I see this first mark as the summation of the whole of the mission which in Jesus Christ belongs to God and becomes ours. In all that we do, sharing with others the vision of the Kingdom which Jesus proclaimed must come first; the other four marks are the ways in which we work out in our own context what that proclamation means for us. So church growth, diaconal ministry, prophetic witness and environmental care are all ways in which the Kingdom is advanced, yet we can never forget that the primary motivation in our life together cannot be our own plans and activities but God's invitation to us to share with him in seeking his Kingdom before all things.

10.2 To ensure that the Kingdom always remains at the centre of our mission, we need to ensure that all our missional activity is underpinned by heartfelt prayer, the study of the Bible, nourishment by the Eucharist, and spiritual discernment. If we fail in these ways to hold the pattern of the Gospel proclamation at the heart of all we do, we will easily lapse into organisational managerialism, vague social service, partisan activism, or faddish campaigning. God's world expects more from us than that, and through prayer, scripture and the sacraments God equips us for much more.

11 **The second mark:**
Teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers

11.1 In each local church, God calls us to purposive evangelism, to draw new members into the community of faith and to deepen the faith of those who are already members. In communities marked by mobility and transience, people will move on from churches as well as join them, so real growth may be taking place even when overall numbers are static. Growth always comes from the working of the Holy Spirit rather than through our own devising, yet we cannot expect to see growth unless we are intentional in passing on the faith, and this includes transmission between generations.

11.2 I believe that we are also called not only to maintain a worshipping and praying presence in each community, but also to increase the number of local expressions of church in our diocese. In some places, this may come through diocesan initiatives, but much more commonly it will be as an outgrowth of the life of the local church - fresh expressions, church plants and grafts, Bishop's Mission Orders all play a part in the mixed economy of our ecclesial life.

11.3 As believers grow in the calibre of their discipleship, many of them will begin to experience a call to ministry of different kinds. The emergence of a range of ministerial vocations is a sure sign of a growing church, and challenge or encouragement to explore the possibility of vocation is a missional responsibility not only for clergy but for all members of the local church.

12 **The third mark:**
Responding to human need by loving service

12.1 Levels of need are very high in many of the communities which we serve, and types of need are very varied. In every case, the ways in which we respond to human need through loving service both prove to others the reality of the faith

we profess and also enable us to participate in the mission of the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus, the one who was sent not to be served but to serve.

- 12.2 Although it is not an exhaustive catalogue of the ways in which we are to respond to human need, I commend to you the traditional list of the ‘Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy’. Largely drawn from the Lord’s parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, these are duties incumbent on all Christians, and I see many ways in which our churches are fulfilling them:
- to feed the hungry: for example, the many food banks in our diocese, where people are supported not only with food but in facing multiple deprivations;
 - to give drink to the thirsty: I think of our support in alleviation of poverty in countries overseas, including our partner dioceses in Zimbabwe;
 - to clothe the naked: this surely refers to all who are stripped of their dignity, not least those without access to affordable finance;
 - to welcome the stranger: refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants, but also all who are new to our communities or who are isolated and lonely;
 - to heal the sick: those in hospital, the housebound, those suffering from poor mental health and from the stigma attached to it;
 - to visit the imprisoned: the five prisons in our diocese are easily forgotten, and there are other ways too in which people find themselves imprisoned
 - to bury the dead: our clergy and lay ministers have an invaluable funeral and bereavement ministry, and our churches need to be places where death can be talked of honestly and faithfully.

- 12.3 The showing of mercy in practical ways like this is a duty for each of us as followers of Jesus, and it is also something to be woven into the life of our communities of faith. Moreover, we are not asked to serve on our own; our diaconal mission grows in strength and credibility when we join with partners locally - particularly fellow Christians in our partner churches, but also people of other faiths, and individuals and organisations in the community.

13 **The fourth mark: Seeking to transform unjust structures of society, challenging violence of every kind and pursuing peace and reconciliation**

- 13.1 In Christian understanding, God’s mercy cannot be divorced from God’s justice, and for us too the showing of mercy cannot be separated from the seeking of justice. The great levels of need to which we have to respond in our society and our world must lead us to ask questions about structural injustice, and to think critically about the values that we want to see prioritised in our public life. While they may feel that their direct impact on great issues can only be small, churches can provide important places for learning about, reflecting on, and praying for the great issues of our time.
- 13.2 In a violent world, where people are vulnerable to hurt of many kinds, on the streets and in their homes, we have a mission imperative to demonstrate the reality of God’s *shalom* through taking seriously our responsibility of safeguarding. Challenging every kind of abuse, as well as caring for the victims of abuse, has to be a deeply felt priority at every level of our church life.
- 13.3 It is part of our distinctive vocation in this diocese, as part of the Church of England, to embody a very wide range of views and attitudes on many subjects, and this is as true of the local church as of the diocese. We do not always agree about everything, and many of our differences are passionately held. What we can all commit to, though, is an honouring of one another even

in our disagreements, so that we can model to our world the reality of a community that truly lives in and through reconciliation.

**14 The fifth mark:
Striving to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth**

- 14.1 As those who know ourselves to be entrusted with the stewardship of God's good yet vulnerable earth, each of us needs to reflect on the lifestyle choices we make - energy consumption, diet, means of travel are just three of the many practical ways in which we can exercise ecological wisdom in our daily living. These are a part of our mission both in themselves and in the witness they give to others of Christian commitment to safeguarding creation.
- 14.2 As organised communities of faith also, we have responsibilities for buildings and activities which need to be managed in ways that demonstrate a commitment to the good of our local environment. Our diocesan environmental policy offers helpful pointers to ways in which we can organise ourselves as eco-congregations, recognising that our churches are found in a very wide range of settings - inner city, outer urban, suburban, rural and others beside.
- 14.3 Vital as practical efforts are both for individuals and for communities, they will be inadequate unless they are informed by a theological recognition of the importance of the whole creation in God's purposes, and a contemporary grasp of the many ways in which its integrity is imperilled by collective irresponsibility. Study, teaching and raising awareness of these issues is an essential part of our mission to sustain and renew the life of God's earth.

15 The overflowing gift of the Spirit

- 15.1 In all the breadth which these five marks display, the mission entrusted to us in the power of the Spirit flows from the joy of knowing and following Jesus. I conclude with words from the address I gave at the 2014 Pentecost celebration in our Cathedral:
- 15.2 This joy, the joy of the Good News that cannot be contained and must be shared, the joy of an encounter with the risen Jesus, the joy of being a community that knows this - this is what I want our Diocese to be. I want us to be people so filled with the overflowing gift of the Spirit we are compelled to serve our communities and share our faith and to do this with great joy and gladness. And St Luke uses a wonderful phrase to capture all of this: 'were not' one disciple says to the other, 'our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' Were not our hearts burning within us, were not our hearts on fire with the power and knowledge of his love?
- 15.3 I want our hearts to be on fire, just as those disciples hearts were on fire because of their encounter with God, because of that conversion and that moment of revelation. My friends, as God's people in South London and East Surrey, as we pray for the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us, let us pray that we will be people with Hearts on Fire, who love God, who walk with Jesus and who are led by the Spirit. Throughout the Diocese of Southwark may this be seen in our worshipping, in the service we offer in our communities, in how we live and in the way we speak for the marginalised and weak. And so as those

who love God, walk with Jesus and are led by the Spirit I also now re-articulate the priorities I have set for the Diocese. For in response to our generous God we will release gifts, renew vocations, deepen Discipleship, be the Church. This is my vision for us as God's people and I commend it to you in the knowledge and hope that you will take it to heart and to prayer.

APPENDIX: Strategic goals for the Diocese of Southwark

The following have been agreed by the Diocesan Council of Trustees as goals for those who work across the diocese as a whole. They are ambitious but by God's grace are achievable through our working together at every level of church life in Southwark.

As a diocese, we commit:

1. **over the next ten years**, to grow our average weekly attendance by 5% by 2025 partly through having each church develop a high-quality Mission Action Plan (MAP) which includes a course for evangelism and discipleship;
2. to increase the number of worshipping communities with a primary focus on areas of population growth through investment in Fresh Expressions (fxC) in the areas where the data suggests the existing congregations are increasingly unrepresentative of the resident community and therefore unlikely to be successful in reaching them without intentional intervention;
3. **over the next five years**, to grow a financial resource base that allows investment in growth for the future. Key measurable include: annual financial surplus, working financial reserves equivalent to 6 months operating costs by 2020, 1% of diocesan turnover annually dedicated to major diocesan ministry and mission projects beginning in 2016, rising to 2% by 2020;
4. to grow the number of ordained vocations by 50% and lay vocations by 50% by 2025 by enabling and discerning licensed ordained leadership, training and licensing of lay and pioneer ministers to work in Fresh Expressions, youth and family workers, and developing other authorised lay leadership roles;
5. to grow leadership and representation that reflects the rich diversity of our diocese and especially focusing where the data suggests groups are currently under-represented: through ethnicity, age (especially 18-40), educational opportunities, material well being, tradition.