

- *Growing in prayer*
 - *Making new disciples*
 - *Serving the people of Devon with joy*
-

OUR VISION AND STRATEGY

OUR VISION

'I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.' Jeremiah 29.11

We seek to be people who together are:

Growing in prayer

We want to grow in prayer, living a life close to God. This means taking risks as we become more honest with ourselves and more honest with God. Prayer opens up deep places within us to God's grace which is why it is such a life-giving activity. Growing in prayer is essential if we are to witness to God's Kingdom and become the people God has called us to be.

Making new disciples

A disciple is someone who follows Jesus Christ. With him as our companion and guide we can travel through life differently, and we hope others will share the adventure with us. We want to be more faithful in our discipleship and allow God to shape our priorities and values. The Christian gospel is good news and we need to find new ways of telling the story, of explaining the faith and giving a reason for the hope that is in us.

Serving the people of Devon with joy

We want to make a difference in the world and witness to God's love and justice, especially in the communities and schools where we live. Working in partnership with others who are transforming lives, we seek to address the global issues confronting our generation so that everyone may flourish.

OUR STRATEGY

We seek to work together in Mission Communities

There are around 120 mission communities across the Diocese of Exeter. We aim to be **mission-oriented, community-focussed and locally-rooted**. As God's people we are called to live out our faith and continue the mission of God as revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Communities are how we relate to one another. We discover both what we need from others and what we can offer so that all may flourish. In the same way Mission Communities help us as the Church to work together across boundaries and break down a sense of isolation. They enable us to be flexible in our mission and more adept at responding to the different contexts and cultures of Devon.

Not every parish can offer every aspect of the Church's life and ministry, but by joining in partnership with neighbouring churches and forming a Mission Community we can work together more effectively. This will involve a commitment to:

- regular prayer and worship
- pastoral care
- evangelism and mission, often in collaboration with ecumenical partners
- opportunities for learning, teaching, nurture and growth for disciples of all ages
- youth and children's work and worship
- equipping members for ministry and the development of ministry teams
- ensuring our churches are safe places for all God's people by working together to prevent abuse
- connecting with the local community especially in service to the marginalised
- good administration and stewardship of time, resources and buildings

Mission Communities will vary from place to place, but will usually involve 150 or more worshipping adults, together with children and young people, in order to form a critical mass. The commitment to work together may be formalised as a united benefice or Team Ministry, or be expressed through a looser partnership.

Each Mission Community is encouraged to have a **Mission Action Plan**. This should be a working document which helps the local church look outwards, to grow in prayer, to make new disciples and to serve the people of Devon with joy.

The parish share scheme is designed to distribute the financial costs of the Diocese equitably. The **Common Fund** pays for the clergy, their training, housing and central costs, but it only works if each Mission Community contributes regularly. We support all Mission Communities in their financial administration to develop efficient ways to collect and manage resources through the **Parish Giving Scheme**.

If our Mission Communities are to flourish they need to be more than economic units or legal entities. They need to embody the life of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and to share that life with others. Jesus came so that we can have life in all its fullness. This is our prayer for the renewal of the Church in Devon.

We will resource our Mission Communities by

1 Fostering more vocations

'The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ' Ephesians 4:11-12

We will foster more vocations to resource our mission communities by:

- Setting up local training
- Supporting clergy to develop people's gifts for use in the church, community and work place
- Increasing flexible and local pathways for lay training
- Encouraging young vocations
- Developing rural pathways for ordination training
- Developing specialist curacies

2 Resourcing Ministry

'Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.' 1 Thessalonians 5:11

There is no one recipe for growing healthy churches, but we know that churches that grow are ones which are willing to work as a community. There needs to be effective leadership and careful deployment in order to make the best use of all the gifts of God's people. To that end we are committed to:

- **Improving recruitment by**
 - Creating attractive posts
 - Reviewing our recruitment process
 - Ensuring safer recruitment policies are implemented
 - Supporting the development of more imaginative parish profiles
 - Developing flexible appointment processes to retain curates
- **Improving deployment by**
 - Developing more flexible deployment of clergy (Stipendiary and Self Supporting)
 - Flexible use of Readers
 - Developing turn around teams and interim ministers
 - Resourcing ministry in new housing areas
 - Encouraging church plants, Bishop's Mission Orders, Fresh Expressions, Minister Churches and Resource Churches
- **Reviewing the use of Mission Enablers and Mission Community Advisers by**
 - Reviewing the allocation and use of their time
 - Developing new opportunities to exchange good practice in mission

3 Encouraging growth

'Encourage one another daily' Hebrews 3:13

The role of the Bishop's Senior Staff and Diocesan Officers is to support our Mission Communities by:

- **Developing local mission and ministry teams**
 - Ensure there is a visible and named pastoral presence in every church
 - Develop 'school teams' in Mission Communities to engage with local school communities
 - Develop leadership models which equip clergy and lay ministers for ministry in multi-parish benefices
 - Raising the quality of worship in our parishes, schools and chaplaincies.
- **Supporting Mission Communities**
 - Bishops in Mission: a programme of visits by the Bishops
 - Clearer use of Archdeacons' Visitations
 - Exploring the role of the Cathedral as the Mother Church of the Diocese in apologetics
 - Enhance the role of the Archidiaconal Mission and Pastoral Committees in strategic planning and enabling Mission Communities identify the best legal structure to support their life
 - Support the development of simple, but effective Mission Action Plans
 - Streamline paper work for Churchwardens
 - Using the Diocesan Mission and Growth Fund to support local initiatives in mission
 - Apply to the Church Commissioners for the funding of major projects.

4 Providing Training Resources

'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.' 1 Corinthians 12:12

Mission Communities require ministry and leadership of different kinds. Gifts need to be nurtured and encouraged through an integrated pattern of lay and ordained training.

- **Supporting Clergy**
 - Investment in Ministerial Development Review
 - Consistent investment in regular and up-to-date safeguarding training
 - Greater support for those making the transition into their first incumbency
 - Support and permission for those looking to do things differently
 - Encourage appropriate leadership and oversight of lay ministry
 - Investment in quality Clergy Ministerial Development
- **Developing Lay Ministry**
 - Create accessible and flexible training for lay people in pastoral care, worship and discipleship, stewardship and grant applications and youth, children's and family work.
 - Create training for parish and Mission Community Administrators
- **Supporting Mission and Ministry Teams**
 - Training for leading teams and collaborative ministry
 - Set up learning communities
 - Working with and leading volunteers
 - Training for overseeing a multi parish benefice
 - Working with school communities
 - Conflict transformation training
 - Developing mentoring

5 Developing online resources

'We have different gifts according to the grace given us' Romans 12:6

A healthy church uses a variety of gifts, learns from others, and is willing to change. This will be facilitated by online resources on the Diocesan website.

- **Resources for enabling Mission Communities**
 - A model Mission Action Plan
 - A range of legal/governance arrangements for Mission Communities
 - Practical guidance for managing finance and risk
 - Materials to support worship audits

- **Resources for supporting church growth**
 - Information about healthy churches e.g. Five Marks of mission, Evidence to Action
 - Making effective use of buildings including Festival Churches
 - Discipleship courses: e.g. Alpha, Pilgrim and Emmaus
 - Prayer and Spirituality e.g. prayer spaces, Cursillo
 - Improving the quality of worship in our churches, schools and chaplaincies
 - Sharing good practice

6 Serving and working with the community

'Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action' 1 John 3:18

A healthy church looks outward to its local community, engaging with contemporary issues and fostering partnerships which promote the common good. We will facilitate this by:

- Providing resources to help Mission Communities engage with partnerships and projects that promote justice and inclusion e.g. community food projects, parish nursing, family support, Fairtrade, refugee initiatives, Shrinking the Footprint
- Investing in our diocesan links with the Diocese of Thika and Cyprus and the Gulf so that we create learning partnerships
- Sharing best practice through stories and web-based resources
- Recognising the distinctive age profile of Devon to draw upon the experience and gifts of older people in the community
- Nurturing a distinctive Christian voice to challenge injustice
- Helping churches adapt and use their buildings as a resource for their communities
- Responding to the needs of schools through initiatives such as Open the Book and Faiths Speakers Project
- Facilitating conversations about family and community issues in partnership with the Mothers' Union
- Promoting physical and mental health e.g. dementia friendly churches.

+ Robert Exon

The Feast of the Epiphany 2016