



Your Ref:

Our Ref:

November 2010

To all Licensed Clergy, Readers
and Members of the Bishop's Council

GOALS AND ACTIONS

To help prepare the Diocese for the vital work of mission as we move to 2015 and beyond I have reviewed, in conjunction with **Bishop's Council**, the Vision Statement drafted in 2005, the five priorities set in 2007 and the nine Aims established in 2009.

In the light of those statements and Aims we revisited the priorities for the next three year period and concluded that there are two areas on which we especially need to focus more strongly and more clearly. Both are absolutely fundamental to our life as Christians viz:

Firstly, **"Growing in our personal relationship with Christ"**;

Secondly, **"Strengthening our confidence to live and express it"**

We recognise that the first includes the deepening of our prayer life, spirituality and all aspects of our life in Christ. It is also connected with our desire to see a growth in discipleship and indeed for those who begin as "church-goers" to discover the importance of being disciples. Similarly, for visitors to our churches to become pilgrims.

We acknowledge that our second major strand is intimately linked with and flows from the first, namely our relationship with Christ. This second goal is expressed in our Vision Statement about doing things "so that in all our activities" we grow in confidence in sharing God's love, "showing Jesus Christ to those around us". Furthermore, of course, the deeper we go into God's love the more we want to share that love and live it out more fully. Also, the more we share that love, the more that takes us back to growing deeper in discipleship.

We also affirm the importance of the five Marks of Mission and our understanding that they express, in an extremely helpful and comprehensive way, the breadth of our life together: they provide a lens through which we can look at our goals, actions and other work.

Actions

I believe that every Parish, Benefice, Deanery, Board and Committee needs to reflect the vital importance of these two fundamental goals. Unless we grow in discipleship then there is no transforming work of Christ and the Holy Spirit in our lives, no redeeming power, and no grace and energy to rely on to enable us to do His work in His world. Annex A to this letter lists some actions that we considered of particular importance for the two priority areas. I ask you to read and reflect upon those. Not all can be attempted by any one person or parish (!) but they should provide a stimulus to promoting Christ's Kingdom. The list is not exhaustive!

We also warmly welcomed the 2015 Follow-Up Report and have very carefully considered its recommendations. We have prepared a statement about that which is at Annex B.

To give institutional and organisational support to our work of Mission we formed last year two new boards of '*Ministry and Training*' and '*Church and Society*' as a way of ensuring that the Support Ministers were not isolated but both affirmed and accountable and also that the aims and policies of the Bishops Council and Synod could have a means of working as consistently as possible across all the areas of our life together.

Summary

I am acutely aware that the 'actions' referred to above and in Annex A are but a sample. They are offered as examples to feed the thinking of us all. What was overwhelmingly the experience of us all in the Bishop's Council discussions was the conviction that we all need to focus even more on the 'basics', namely the strengthening of our discipleship both in our inner life and the outworking of that in daily living and experiences, all undergirded in prayer, Scripture, sacramental life of worship, and our fellowship one with another.

I ask you to read this letter and its annexes closely; reflect upon it prayerfully; and discuss with colleagues lay and clerical, both those who hold office in the Church and those who from time to time occupy the pews. Meanwhile, I and Bishop's Council members (whose names are attached at Annex C for ease of reference) look forward to learning your thoughts on this and on our way forward together in mission.

+ Anthony
15th November 2010

Actions

Among the actions that we considered of particular importance are:

Growing in our personal relationship with Christ

- Encouragement for every member of every congregation to be involved in a **small group** where they can have the opportunity and encouragement to speak about their faith and the issues that they face with others
- Be involved in prayer, Scripture reading, learning
- Listening to other people's stories of faith
- Having the opportunity to benefit from 'spiritual exercises' and spiritual teaching from the different traditions of the Christian church
- Benefitting from the large range of courses, materials and excellent Diocesan staff including our Local Ministry Team, Continuing Ministerial Development officer, Lay Development officer, as well of course as local clergy, readers, spiritual guides etc
- Strengthening spirituality in schools
- Building on our relationships with others and our desire to get to know them better so, correspondingly, our relationship with Christ and desire to know Him better
- Being encouraged by and benefitting from relationships with other Christians within the 'fellowship of the church'
- Wanting to grow and knowing our need to grow (see the Beatitudes...)
- Strengthening the quality of the leadership at every level within the church
- Overcoming negative perceptions as well as strengthening positive ones
- Giving congregations more opportunities to discuss what is said in a sermon in church and so learning from that and speaking more about their own faith

Strengthening our confidence to live and express it

- Learning to share our experiences and speaking more openly of God in small groups and worship
- Helping those who preach and teach in their work of enabling others to catch the wonder of God's forgiveness and love for us in Christ, and how that affects every part of our life
- Strengthening our work with young people and schools
- Continuing to develop our use of our church buildings, in partnership with others, to serve local communities more and more fully
- To work in partnership projects with others, including our overseas work with Tanzania and Nuremburg especially
- Caring for the environment, including reducing our carbon footprint
- Taking advantage of the teaching and mission opportunities presented by the occasional offices
- Involving lay members of the congregations in faith sharing groups
- Exploring opportunities for services at different times and in different places and other Fresh Expressions of church
- Increasing the people with whom we are in touch about our outreach work through more and more and ever better communications and contact
- Auditing needs of the local communities and seeking to discern which are the most important ones or the most fruitful ones to address and taking action, with others, to do so
- Always working together with other people
- Setting priorities and managing the action into 'bite size pieces' that people can manage rather than be overwhelmed by the scale of the issues
- Working at our Stewardship and giving to resource properly the work we are called to do

Bishop's Council Discussion in the light of the 2015 Follow-up Report

The Bishop's Council warmly received the "2015 Follow-Up Report" as a valuable piece of work that provided a clear analysis of the perceived and real views and opinions arising from the "2015 Onward Report". It expressed its appreciation of the work of the group.

Over a two day residential on 24/25 September the Council considered each of the specific 19 recommendations in the Follow-Up report and other proposals/recommendation arising from the text of the report.

Council's response to each of these is as follows:-

Recommendation 1

The diocese engages in strategic planning on a three-year cycle. [1.1.5]

Council agreed to continue the work already in hand with regard to strategic planning and to consider drawing on the skills of some of those, identified through the preparation of the "Follow-UP Report", that have particular experience and knowledge that could help in the further development of Diocesan strategy. The Council noted that while it had developed over the past six years a Vision document, Strategic Aims, a further focus of 9 Aims and, of course, the 2015 Report itself, as well as the restructuring of Boards to make these more effective, some of this needed to be better communicated to the Deaneries and parishes

Recommendation 2

Bishops Council take responsibility for the change management required by the diocese. This should be a standing item on the Council's agenda requiring reports from deaneries, boards and committees. An annual report should be presented to Synod on progress achieved, and an "enabling group" should be established to oversee the process. [1.1.7]

It was agreed that Council should provide oversight of developments within the Diocese but considered that an additional layer of bureaucracy was not required and that change management should be achieved through the Deanery and Archdeaconry Mission & Pastoral Committees developing realistic and achievable Mission Action Plans with Deaneries for every area of the Diocese.

Council should not "micro-manage" Deanery plans nor present a "top down" directive but rather assist in identifying and meeting resource and training needs.

When the Council set up the new Boards, it also began a process of them reporting to the Council on their work.

Action:

- 2.1 Concept and delivery of Mission Action Plans (MAPs) to be communicated to every Deanery.
- 2.2 Training for and resourcing of the development of MAPs to be provided.

Recommendation 3

More opportunity should be given to joint training and discussion between all types of accredited ministry, with clearer guidelines of their respective roles, leading to greater appreciation of the resource that is to hand. [2.1.3]

Joint training opportunities already exist, particularly in the development and training of Local Ministry Teams. It is accepted however that more needs to be done to advertise the availability of joint training opportunities and to encourage participation.

It was recognised that improved internal communication on the roles and functions of various accredited ministries, particularly Support Minister, would continue to be of benefit.

Action:

- 3.1 Availability of training opportunities to be more widely communicated.
- 3.2 “Factsheets” to be made available on the website.
- 3.3 NewsPaper to provide regular “Focus” on the role and function of particular ministries including Support Ministers.
- 3.4 Reduced list of common acronyms to be up-dated and re-issued.
- 3.5 Booklet on the roles of ministries to be produced and issued.
- 3.6 Board for Ministry & Training to be asked to take the lead on these actions and to consider whether other actions are appropriate.

Recommendation 4

The diocese examines ways of reducing the managerial and administrative burden on stipendiary priests, and experiments with alternative ways of maintaining the fabric and functionality of church buildings that does not require an incumbent having the legal responsibility. [2.2.5]

The aim of the recommendation was supported but changes to the legal responsibilities of the incumbent would require changes at a national level which, while not impossible, would take considerable time to achieve.

That said the managerial and administrative load on clergy can be reduced under the existing rules and every opportunity to do so should be taken, as has been widely said, but not very widely acted upon.

A paper by Bishop Alistair on “Reducing the managerial and administrative burden for our stipendiary clergy” is Appendix 1.

Action:-

- 4.1 +AM’s booklet on the Mission & Pastoral Measure to be given wider circulation.
- 4.2 Administrative load on clergy to be addressed when making appointments.
- 4.3 Administrative load on clergy to be addressed during informal discussions with parishes prior to commencement of the formal appointment process.
- 4.4 Advice to be provided to clergy on how to utilise secretarial/administrative assistance, perhaps as a CMD course.

Recommendation 5

More attention is paid to developing greater theological awareness of modern practices of priesthood. [2.2.6]

In part, this has been taking place with the Leadership Development Groups that most of the stipendiary clergy have now attended and some of the self-supporting. However, there is always a need for clergy to be more aware. It is recognised that multi-parish benefices have increased the pressure and compounded the pace of change.

The Council also recognized that there needs to continue to be education of both congregation members and the wider community about the changes. All too often, non-church goers think that “the church” has not visited if the Vicar has not visited.

Action:

- 5.1 Continuing Ministerial Development Officer to continue to address issue.
- 5.2 Development of greater awareness among congregations and the wider community that the role of the “Vicar” has changed and that more lay people are now involved in parish ministry.

Recommendation 6

A “hand-over” book is prepared for those who are new to the diocese including a diocesan directory, information on the role of support ministers, together with key diocesan contacts, and a mentoring system is adopted to support those newly in post. [2.2.7]

Already in hand. There is a mentoring system in operation and a new Clergy Handbook will be issued as part of the introduction of “Common Tenure”. A new directory will be available by the end of October 2010.

Recommendation 7

The diocese licenses SSMS to the widest possible role reflecting the diverse nature of their ministry. [2.3.2]

The terms in which a licence must be drafted restricts the ability to reflect the broadest nature of particular ministries. However “Role Descriptions”, to be issued as part of the introduction of “Common Tenure”, may provide an opportunity to specify particular areas of interest and recognise wider aspects of ministry.

Action:

- 7.1 Explore ways in which the wider remit of individual posts may be articulated and acknowledged.

Recommendation 8

Guidelines be developed and implemented so that ministers seeking PTO status have the best possible fit with the needs of their receiving parish(es). [2.5.2]

Council perceived difficulty in implementing this recommendation on the basis that the location to which clergy retire is up to them and may not provide a “best fit” to local parishes. Council considered that this recommendation might be subsumed by Recommendation 9

Recommendation 9

The Diocese should appoint advisers for retired ministry development whose role is to engage in an exploration of ministry with all clergy seeking PTO status. [2.5.3]

Council welcomed this recommendation.

Action:

- 9.1 Bishops and Archdeacon to reflect on the further development of Retired Ministry and appointing advisers to assist.

Recommendation 10

The diocese undertakes a comprehensive mapping exercise of Reader skills and aspirations and explores how this resource can be more effectively deployed. [2.6.3]

It was pointed out that there has been such a list compiled in the past, but this might be a good time to up-date it. This recommendation is to be taken to the Diocesan Readers’ Committee, who will see how best a mapping exercise of Readers’ skills and aspirations can be expedited. The findings can then be disseminated, through the Warden, to the Chairmen of the suitable Boards, as appropriate.

Action:

10.1 Diocesan Readers Committee to consider mapping Readers' skills and aspirations.

Recommendation 11

All Readers should have a working agreement that is monitored by the diocese, and this should be aspirational - outlining how the post-holder wishes to develop their ministry and what they require to achieve this. [2.6.4]

All Readers do have a working agreement, which is monitored by the Warden of Readers. The tenor of these documents should be realistic, rather than unrealisable aspirations.

The Working Agreements are normally reviewed annually, at the time of the Readers' Annual Reports.

Consideration has already been given to including Readers in the Ministerial Development Review process which is currently used by clergy. It may be possible to extend this MDR process to Readers in the future, but the changes in the scheme for clergy need to settle down first.

Recommendation 12

Raising awareness of SSM and Reader vocations should be encouraged with suitable supporting material prepared and circulated, perhaps on a specified day during the year. [2.6.5]

This already happens on Vocation Sunday (4th Sunday after Easter) when Readers and SSMs are encouraged to preach and the roles of all forms of ministry are highlighted. Currently there are 6 Readers in training.

Action:

12.1 Supporting material on vocations to be part of internal communications strategy (see Recommendation 20)

Recommendation 13

The Lay Development and Local Ministry Officers work to raise the profile of locally delivered and accredited courses. [2.7.1]

The popular perception of the church is that it is a charitable organisation which consists of paid professionals and volunteers. Using this model the church would need to be better at training parish priests to work with volunteers to encourage them and to enable them to develop their gifts.

The model of the church which we find in the New Testament is rather different. The church is made up of the whole people (*laos*) of God, some of whom are ordained and receive a stipend. Using this model for church life the congregations need to be helped to see that the ministry and mission of the church belong to the whole people of God and that those who have been ordained are part of the laity. Also training needs to be provided to help everyone to deepen their discipleship and develop their gifts.

Some deaneries are already providing training programmes. There seems to be a general lack of awareness of the considerable amount of training material which is available to them from the diocese. There is a widespread feeling that training needs to be more flexible and delivered locally.

Action:

13.1 The Lay Development and Local Ministry Officers to work to raise the understanding of the church as the whole *laos* of God working together in ministry and mission, and to raise the profile of locally delivered and accredited courses.

Recommendation 14

The diocese creates a network of Parish Development Advisers who can work with parochial clergy, providing additional capacity to support parishes to take their next step(s), whatever may be appropriate. [2.7.3]

Council considered that Mission Action Planning (see response to Recommendation 2) and Local Ministry Team training would provide the necessary impetus and support to parochial clergy and parishes.

Action:

- 14.1 Board of Ministry & Training staff to work with and provide necessary support to parishes without necessarily expecting parishes to move to a Local Ministry Development Group, although that will continue to be encouraged as a key part of our diocesan strategy.

Recommendation 15

The report “Administration and Your Parish” be reviewed, updated and re-issued. [2.7.5]

It was agreed to look at this, though also recognized that there might be better, more up-to-date material available from other dioceses. See also response to Recommendation 4.

Action:

- 15.1 Copy of original document to be obtained, reviewed and, if appropriate updated and re-issued.
- 15.2 Other resources to aid administration in parishes to be researched.

Recommendation 16

The diocese produces a clear, accessible, report which explains what it is, how it works and what it does. [3.1.1]

Council considered that, rather than a report, a simple document explaining what how the various elements of the Diocese (Parishes, Deaneries, Boards, Councils & Committee) worked as a whole would be beneficial.

Such a document, which would include how the diocese works, the roles of SMs and some financial data, could be part of an overall internal communication strategy (see Additional Recommendation 20 below).

Action:

- 16.1 Logistics and costs to be investigated.

Recommendation 17

The diocese undertakes a comprehensive review of deanery boundaries to assess whether they represent the best way of grouping our parishes, both geographically and socially. [4.2.1]

Council took the view that a comprehensive review may not be the most cost effective and timely way of achieving the spirit of this recommendation.

Instead Council considered that the Archdeaconry Mission & Pastoral Committees should continue to look at the potential for informal clusterings (potentially across Benefice, Deanery or even Diocesan boundaries) that better serve particular geographical areas.

Such “clusterings” could be set up under a “Bishop’s Mission Order”, if appropriate, and would encourage innovative thinking but would not involve the delay or permanency of formal boundary changes.

Clusterings can be trialled for a period (say 2 years) after which consideration could be given to instigating formal boundary changes, or continuing the informal arrangements.

Action:

- 17.1 Archdeaconry Mission & Pastoral Committees to look at further potential for “informal clusterings”

Recommendation 18

There should be a strategic assessment of our buildings and their long term sustainability. [4.4.1]

While we all agree about the need to understand the material condition and potential of our buildings, the Council was keen to emphasize that it was not and is not Diocesan policy to close or even encourage the closure of Churches.

Currently there is the possibility that an externally funded “Buildings Officer” post may be established and the post holder could be tasked to carry out a comprehensive review of all churches with the aim of identifying existing needs, facilities and material state and the potential for community use or other development in support of mission.

Action:

- 18.1 Progress identification of external funding for Buildings Officer.

Recommendation 19

More formal links are established between the Mothers Union and the Board for Training and Ministry. [5.2.2]

The Bishop’s Council expressed its deep appreciation of the work of the Mothers’ Union. Close links already exist between the Diocese and the Mothers’ Union with joint training, a MU officer within the Bishop Palace complex and a link in the Diocesan Website to the national MU site.

That said such links can always be improved.

Action:

- 19.1 A member of the Board for Mission & Training to be nominated as the point of contact for Diocese and MU matters.
- 19.2 Opportunities for joint initiatives and/or training to be widely communicated.

Additional Recommendation 20

A comprehensive communications strategy should be developed [2.4.2]

The Terms of Reference of the Diocesan Communications Officer deal, in the main, with external communications whereas much of what is contained in the “Follow-Up Report” requires improved internal communications to address the perceived and real views and opinions arising from the “2015 Onward Report”

Action:

- 20.1 A Communication Group to be set up to examine and make recommendations regarding areas where improved internal communication is required and the means of achieving such.

Reducing the managerial and administrative burden for our stipendiary clergy:

The 2015 follow up report highlights the urgency in addressing the issue of the administrative burden placed upon our stipendiary clergy. We need effective and sustainable patterns in a rapidly changing context. Part of the new context is a reduced number of stipendiary clergy, although not of all clergy. In living memory we have moved away from a pattern of ministry where a stipendiary priest had a manageable sole charge for a parish or set of parishes which allowed them to undertake all the administration, care of the buildings (with some help from churchwardens), parish visiting, ordering and leading of worship, occasional offices and PCC meetings. As far back as 1987 John Tiller in 'The Gospel Community and its Leadership' recognised that there can be an unwillingness to change from both parties: the people because they fear change and cling to the familiar dependant relationship and the clergy because of the status and significance the traditional role provides. These blocks to change can still be the unnamed elephant in the room whenever these issues are discussed. Theologically there is now a clear recognition that leadership must be shared and practically the larger multi-parish benefices do not allow the old patterns to thrive.

Laities may indicate that they do not want their stipendiary priest to be overburdened but this does not necessarily translate into a willingness to change patterns. This is particularly so if it is perceived as taking them into radically new ways of working. Even when the new ways are accepted as being more theologically in line with a ministry that affirms all who are baptised into Christ there can be a reluctance to move from the familiar. The matter needs addressing. How can the burden be reduced? There are a number of practical steps that are worth consideration.

1. Appoint a benefice, multi-benefice or deanery administrator.

With the availability of high quality IT, good administration and communication can be radically reconfigured. Again the barrier to change may well be more emotional than practical. It is often perceived as easier to continue with what is known rather than develop and learn new patterns. It is surprising how many stipendiary clergy still undertake administrative tasks like producing the weekly news sheet or the parish magazine rather than take time to train up and support others in doing these tasks. In a deeply rural context sharing an administrator/ secretary across several multi-parish benefices may be a good way to afford a high quality office.

2. Reduce the number of PCC meetings a stipendiary priest attends.

It is not always understood that the incumbent or priest in charge does not need to chair the PCC meeting or necessarily be in attendance. There are a number of routes that can be explored to minimise the number of meetings needing attendance.

- i. A multi-parish benefice can set up a Benefice Council and it is this that the Incumbent /PiC chairs. If this is quarterly then perhaps as need requires attendance at a particular PCC can be arranged as necessary. The rest of the PCC meetings in this arrangement would be chaired by a nominated lay co-chair. Of course if the stipendiary attends all the PCC meetings and the benefice council meeting it simply adds to the burden.
- ii. A second model being adopted in a number of larger multi-parish benefices is for all the PCCs to meet contemporaneously on the same evening. When effective this considerably reduces the meetings a stipendiary attends and frees them up to use the now released time for better things such as teaching, training and pastoral care. The pattern works something like this: All the PCCs meet in a suitable building (Village Hall or School) that allows both time for joint benefice business and then time in separate rooms for each individual PCC to meet and conduct its own business. The priest can as required allocate time to individual PCCs attending specific agenda items as their own business agenda requires. This approach does not seek to alter any legal status or amalgamate funds. Each PCC remains as before a distinct legal body. Each PCC continues to have its own treasurer and clerk its own business. The fears of consolidation or

amalgamation or usurping funds are in fact groundless. This model encourages working in a way which is preserving each parish's individuality and ensuring their long term viability by addressing clearly what best can be done together. This approach allows both the flourishing of a benefice identity as well as parish identity.

- iii. A third and more radical approach is to put into effect a Pastoral Scheme that changes a multi-parish benefice either into a multi-parish benefice with a reduced number of parishes or even into a single parish benefice. If such arrangements are undertaken there are a number of significant questions that will need to be addressed:
- Will the new arrangements wish to keep all its parish churches with parish church status or re-designate some as chapels of ease? All possibilities remain open.
 - If the new arrangements reduce to a single parish and keep several or all of the churches as parish churches how many churchwardens will be required and named in the new scheme? Any new scheme can make provision to determine the number of churchwardens required.
 - Will the new arrangements wish to retain separate funds with designated or restricted accounts for what were the previously separate parishes? Again such legal arrangements are possible. There is no need to fear that all the funds will be put into one common pot if that is not desired. Separate funds can be legally written into the new arrangements.
 - Changing a multi-parish benefice into a single parish benefice will reduce the number of people eligible for synodical representation unless this is written into the new scheme. However a reduction in representation is not inevitable and again can be overcome by the desired requirement of retaining the same amount of representation being written into any new scheme.

The benefits surrounding this more radical approach include the release of laity from duplicated committee meetings to more pastoral ministries.

- iv. A fourth option if parishes wish to remain separate is for the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to set up a Joint Parochial Church Council. Again this is a formal arrangement and the details are laid out in the Church Representation Rules (Section 19). While this does not reduce the number of officers it may reduce the number of meetings as several meetings are now combined. There is latitude in the scheme for the bishop to direct as to the number of separate meetings if less than four per PCC.

At present the impetus to consider new ways rests with the clergy. Several clergy working to create a lighter structure feel isolated and unsupported in moving through helpful change. Consideration should be given as to how Bishops Council and the Diocesan Synod might endorse new patterns and support those benefices where change is desired.

Members of the Bishop's Council

<i>Ex Officio Members:</i>		<i>Post</i>
Rt Revd A Priddis	C	Bishop of Hereford
Rt Revd A Magowan	C	Bishop of Ludlow
Very Rev M E Tavinor	C	Dean
Ven P Benson (frOm January 2011)	C	Archdeacon of Hereford
Mrs R K Lording	L	Chair of the House of Laity
Preb B P Chave	C	Chair of the House of Clergy
Mr C W Hunter	L	Chairman of the Board of Finance
Revd R D King	C	Chairman Diocesan Board of Education
Mrs J Marston	L	Chairman Diocesan Advisory Committee
<i>(Currently Archdeacon of Ludlow)</i>		Chairman of the Board for Church and Society
<i>(Currently Archdeacon of Hereford)</i>		Chairman of the Board for Ministry and Training

<i>Lay Representatives</i>		<i>Deanery</i>
Mrs M A Brooks	L	Bridgnorth
Mrs A E Corby	L	Hereford Rural
Mr G W Hopkinson	L	Ledbury
Mr B Palmer	L	Clun Forest
Mr P F W Pember	L	Ross & Archenfield
Mr D C Turner	L	Kington & Weobley
Mrs J H Wesson	L	Condover

<i>Clergy Representatives</i>		<i>Deanery</i>
Revd R F Daborn	C	Leominster
Revd C A Lording	C	Ludlow
Preb A Talbot-Ponsonby	C	Ross & Archenfield
Preb A N Toop	C	Pontesbury

<i>Co-opted</i>		
Lady Darnley	L	Bishop's Nominee

<i>In Attendance</i>		
Mr J E Clark		Diocesan Secretary

10 Clergy; 11 Laity