



**Diocese of  
HEREFORD**



**Spring 2010**

## ***2015 Onward***

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## **2015 Onward Foreword**

*“The One who calls you is faithful. He will do it.”*

*Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry.”*

It is not often that I begin with two verses of Scripture (1 Thessalonians 5.24 & St. John 6.35) but what follows in this important document prompts me to recall both of them, and certainly throws me back into the arms of God. We are trying to discern where God is leading us as his Church. We cannot do that other than prayerfully and relying on the insights of one another.

All those of us who have been involved with “2015 Onward” have tried to see what tomorrow is going to be like. It will be different! That is hardly a surprise. But it may be *very* different – depending upon your starting point. For some congregations, parishes, laity and clergy it will be quite a change: for others who are already living Local Ministry the change will be a natural development.

For all of us, though, there is the need to recall what is primary: it is God’s Church, serving God’s world. It is God who loves us. It is God who calls us. It is God who empowers us. It is God who will do it in us and through us, if we let him and want him to. (*“The One who calls you is faithful. He will do it.”*)

There is a temptation when trying to look into the future to become fearful. Perfect loves cast out fear. God knows the gifts and ministry that his Church needs, and he provides it. It is up to us to discern in whom and how, and then to encourage, train, develop and trust those men and women, and work with them.

All of us are called to follow Christ, to be disciples. This involves our learning and growing. That needs us to be fed. Hence my second choice of verse at the start. The theme of Jesus feeding the 5,000 runs through the whole of this document. Jesus feeds us. He also takes our inadequate offerings and wonderfully transforms them to meet the needs of others. We have to trust him. We have to be prepared to offer what we can.

“2015 Onward” is part of our offering. As is said later on in this document:

*“We will want to grow in confidence and knowledge so that we are able to tell our stories and share our faith in God with those around us. We will want to deepen our prayer lives and grow closer to God.”*

Yes, indeed! We shall be *“living in the new landscape”*. It will involve us all in change. But our God is the One who makes new – constantly. May He change us to be the people He wants us to be and that we can be at our best, in His strength.

A changed people, in a changed Church for a changed world, but it must be in God’s way. Let us go forward!

+Anthony Hereford

## ***Introduction***

The Working Party that produced this report was asked by the Bishop's Council to consider the Diocese's needs and priorities in mission and ministry for 2015 and beyond.

We soon realised that there are enormous implications for all of us as a diocese, whether lay or ordained, if what we began to see as the future is right. There will be a very particular impact on the role of our parochial clergy.

We have already shared the thinking with a wide cross-section of clergy and lay people - we listened carefully to their thoughts and concerns. Their input has fed our discernment of the issues we will be facing together in the coming years.

The Bishop's Council has now received this report and given it formal approval. It is time to share our concerns, our hopes and our vision much more widely.

We set that vision in the context of Jesus feeding the five thousand.

*On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. He took them with him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. When the crowds found out about it, they followed him: and he welcomed them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured.*

*The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, 'Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place.'*

*But he said to them, 'You give them something to eat.' They said, 'We have no more than 5 loaves and 2 fish - unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, 'Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each.' They did so and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.*

*Luke 9.10-17*

*[NRSV]*

## **1. Who Are The Hungry We Are Called To Feed In Our Generation?**

As a servant church, we need to ask this question. So what might our part of the world look like in 2015? Given the volatility of the current financial markets and the predicted down-turn in most major economies, looking ahead to 2015 can only be something rather more fragile than our 'best estimate'. However, there are still some certainties! One of those is that we believe Hereford Diocese in 2015 will remain one of the most deeply rural dioceses in the Church of England. It will continue to reflect the many issues facing rural communities, such as the viability of services provision, low incomes and access to work and housing.

### ***Population***

The most likely scenario is that the population of the Diocese will have grown slightly to around 300,000 (currently around 290,000). **Numbers of under-16s**, which will have continued to fall until 2015, **will begin to stabilise at around 29,000**. However in 2006 **over 80% of 18-19 year olds left the County of Herefordshire. This figure is likely to continue** into the future. **The numbers aged 65 and over are forecast to continue to increase, but more rapidly than in recent years** so that by 2026 there will be a 68% more over 65s than in 2006. In the same period those aged 85 and over will have doubled.

### ***Health and Education***

These demographic changes - an increasingly ageing population - will have a direct effect on provision for both health and education. The falling numbers of school-aged young people will mean school rolls will continue to decline **accentuating the pressure to close small rural schools**. This will increase the need for young pupils to travel greater distances. **The dramatic rise in the numbers of those over 65 and over 85 will put an increasing strain on GP practices, the provision of residential care homes and specialist nursing care provided by Social Services and others**. As the trend continues for specialist medical care to be provided only in large general hospitals it is likely that people from the diocese will have to **travel greater distances** for treatment. It will also mean **greater isolation** from family and friends.

### ***Housing***

Even if there were to be no changes in the population, anticipated changes in household formation would yield **an increase of around 1600 households by 2015 in the Diocese**. More people will be living alone (now 30% of the population nationally) and fewer as part of a couple. Housing is very much under pressure from both the indigenous population and those moving here from other areas seeking a better lifestyle in this part of the country.

Just how much new housing development we have will be determined in the Regional Spatial Strategy, which won't report until at least 2009, so it is impossible to know what this will mean locally. Until the recent down turn in the property market it was assumed that a combination of **such factors could well result in more development in the countryside**.

### ***Employment***

The fact that Hereford Diocese falls within the only Rural Regeneration Zone to be identified in the West Midlands Region underlines the fact that **rural deprivation is a reality across the counties that make up the Diocese**. Deprivation is not just about poverty or lack of money: it is about social isolation, lack of access to services and jobs.

As a result of partnership working at county and regional levels, and the Rural Regeneration Zone, there is great potential in the next few years for inward investment. Land for employment sites, such as business parks, has been located in Hereford City and market towns across the Diocese. But how will recession affect us?

Agriculture remains an important economic activity, **but numbers working in farming have reduced year on year, although in 2007 they stabilised.** Changes in farming methods, a greater interest by the public in direct purchasing and tourism all lead to the conclusion that diversification will be an essential component of the rural economy in the future.

The major employers are often in the vulnerable food processing sectors and the majority of businesses are small to medium sized enterprises. **Employment rates, while appearing to be high, often mask seasonality, relatively low pay, issues of skills development etc. Average earnings probably remain well below the national average.**

The **increasing use of migrant and seasonal workers** in this and other industries has thrown up a range of social, environmental and economic issues for the Diocese.

#### ***Tourism***

**Tourism is highly valuable** to the economy of the Diocese and already many parishes have developed 'welcome ministries' to their communities and visitors. With increased costs of foreign travel, there is already some evidence of growth in UK tourism and there may be more opportunities here.

#### ***Transport***

North/South rail links through the Diocese are good. Generally it is easier to cross the Diocese in this direction than from East to West. Irregularity of public transport creates a high dependence on the car, especially in the more rural parts of the Diocese. This could put further pressure on small schools and make village life appear less appealing to potential incoming families. **Volatility in fuel costs will affect people's ability to move to the area, but may enable creative initiatives to bring people together.**

#### ***Environment***

No means of generating power is without environmental impact, whether it be nuclear, wind or wave power, or fossil fuel burning. A balance needs to be struck between environmentally sustainable growth to alleviate rural deprivation and not destroying what is best about our rural communities. Future development will have to happen within the context of an **increasing emphasis on 'green' policies.**

#### ***The Credit Crunch***

The 2008 economic climate, with a greater than 10% annual fall in house prices, a dramatic slump in new house building and the rise in fuel costs - both for transport and heating - not to mention the stock market crash - make any projections for 2015 particularly uncertain. It may be that the reduction in house building and the resulting shortage of houses actually prompts a recovery in the housing market. However, it is highly unlikely that there will be a return to cheap fuel, and with low wages and rural isolation, this will need to be taken into account in planning for 2015 and beyond.

**The term 'social exclusion' can be said to be a reality within local communities** as a result of all these factors. And this means that social and community life can be restricted, especially for the young upon whom the future of these communities depend.

### ***Opportunities***

The Church of England in the Diocese of Hereford, through its parish system, its network of clergy and laity, its church buildings, its Support Ministers and Diocesan structures **is deeply rooted in the community**. This is especially important at a time when there are few 'professionals' living within the communities and far fewer local amenities. **The Diocese is actively represented in partnerships at local and regional level**. So together, we - the Church - are ideally poised to respond to local initiatives and to work in partnership with communities and agencies as they seek to improve the quality of life for the people right across our Diocese.

The Church offers a valuable contribution to policy makers because it does not just base its arguments upon the values of this world, but brings a prophetic voice and the Christian Gospel to bear upon issues. This may mean that while working in partnership, the Church will challenge and question.

### ***Note:***

***The statistics supporting our look into the future can be found in Appendix2.***

## **2. *This Is The Story Of Our Diocese In 2015 ...***

What sort of diocese would we hope to be in 2015? Contrary to dire predictions, the Church is alive and well, vibrantly carrying on God's mission!

People in our deaneries - both lay and ordained - are worshipping together in newly trusting and committed ways. They are inspired by a shared vision that is enabling mission and ministry to be sustained in all our local communities. More people are coming to faith and worshipping God, sometimes in new ways - Fresh Expressions - that don't look much like the traditional Church.

We are a teaching church, helping people to grow and equipping them to tell their stories, to share with others their experience of God's love.

Together we are growing in prayer and in our spiritual lives, discovering and strengthening living relationships with God in Christ Jesus, through the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

We are working to sustain local communities, both urban and rural, supporting vulnerable groups and families, schools and agricultural industries. We are involved in establishing community among fragmented, isolated individuals and families in our scattered hamlets and housing estates, providing points of connection and fostering friendships and well-being.

Our deaneries all have living international links. These keep our Church horizons much bigger than just our own local concerns - we give and receive generously within the worldwide Christian family. We are challenged, we learn and we grow from these partnerships and also in our ecumenical relationships, which are strengthened and alive at the grassroots.

Most of our deaneries have some 'special flavour' that characterizes their joint sense of mission. For some this has meant putting some of their precious resources into appointing a minister to reach out to young people, in other places they have someone who helps resource mission and ministry among the aged.

All-member ministry is a reality across the whole diocese now, taking different forms in different places. Local mission and ministry are in the bloodstream - in most places there are Local Ministry Development Groups and Teams, while elsewhere it has been developed in a different way. But we are all committed to taking responsibility for being the church where we are, to releasing the gifts God has given to the Church in its baptised members and to sharing leadership. Lay and ordained leaders work together in a mutual sharing of mission and ministry and we believe that each without the other is diminished.

We value the ministry of Readers across the diocese. Their theological training and ministerial presence is vital to our increasingly diverse patterns of ministry. They have a very particular role to play in the further encouragement and development of lay ministry. The Diocese continues to challenge congregations to call out candidates for Reader ministry.

Our ministers are able to have real pastoral links that keep them deeply rooted in their ministry of Word and Sacrament. Whether lay or ordained, they are no longer exhausted by endless admin and by flying around a large group of churches, as pulpit or altar fodder, with little space for building relationships.

We have had to change our worship patterns in some deaneries, especially those for whom the sharp rise in fuel costs has become a major concern. For example, in some places they've changed all the service times in the group to fit in with Sunday buses and in others they just can't afford to meet every Sunday in the church during the winter, so they worship in the village hall instead and find more people come now. Other congregations share worship during the week or on Saturdays as their main service. In quite a few places people have found they need to think about what sort of worship they are able to offer – for some this has meant moving from sharing Holy Communion every Sunday to exploring some different services.

We have fewer priests receiving stipends, but we do have enough clergy to serve every community - new patterns of ministry, new ways of being priests, are established and bearing fruit, but it feels very different. There is a ministerial presence in each locality, which may be exercised by a member of a Local Ministry Development Group, a Reader, a deacon or a priest.

Our ordained leaders are now exercising far more a ministry of oversight, rather than the traditional model of the parish priest we were used to in the past.

The priest's oversight is over a far larger geographical area than it used to be. Parishes are mostly in their same groupings, but 2 or more former benefices are now served by one ordained person who has been given the responsibility of oversight. That person does not necessarily receive a stipend. In some areas oversight may be exercised by a Reader.

Deaneries are much more significant as units of mission than in the past and this includes sharing decision making on how all their ministry resources (lay and ordained) are deployed. Some deaneries have changed shape. Clergy and lay ministers are now much more a deanery resource.

Each deanery has learned to engage in mission and ministry in their own context, praying, planning and working it out together. They are alive and well and able to cope with the fast-changing society around them.

The Diocesan Support Ministers continue to support deaneries as they prompt their parishes to be mission-minded. As people have different views about how to engage in mission, the deanery's role is essential in sharing good practice.

***Is this an impossibly optimistic vision of the future?***

***We trust not.***

***Jesus took the very little the apostles could offer,  
just those 5 loaves and 2 small fish.***

***He offered them to God,  
he blessed them and broke them,  
and thousands were fed!***

***All ate and were filled.***

### **3. Why Do We Think the Future Looks Like This?**

The Diocese has been assessing and responding to its ministry needs for some decades now. Each phase of this has involved looking at our available resources, both human and financial, at social trends and at changes in Church and society.

Our responses through the years and our current Deanery Pastoral Plans have resulted in a patchwork of multi-parish benefices across the Diocese. We now have only 3 single parish benefices - that is, where one parish exists on its own. This means that only 3 of our incumbents and priests-in-charge have just one parish in their care (and one of them has a united parish made up of 3 active churches.) In some areas our multi-parish benefices are very large, with up to 12 churches in them.

The stresses and strains on our present clergy have become increasingly evident. The number of those retiring early on the grounds of ill-health has risen and the level of sick leave due to stress-related illness has risen markedly. This is a matter of national concern for the Church and it is happening here in our own Diocese. Tiredness and over-work is a fact of life for many in ministry and the consequent guilt, of knowing you are unable to minister as effectively as you would wish, saps the spirits of and weighs down many more.

Looking at the numbers of priests who we can predict will be retiring between now and 2015, looking at the possible number of new deacons in each year and taking note of the number of those in ordination training nationally, we are convinced that there is going to be a major shortfall in available priests in coming years.

The number of new vocations to ordained ministry is rising - this is a good news story! But the Church is finding it hard to pay for the additional training costs this brings. Many Diocesan Boards of Finance are saying the Church nationally simply cannot go on regarding the training budget as a blank cheque, because of its effect on the Parish Share. We have seen a big increase in our own vocations – but the majority of those training for ordination in this Diocese are not in the ‘traditional vicar’ mould. Most are offering a self-supporting (ie unpaid) ministry.

So far, when parochial vacancies have arisen we have generally managed to fill them - eventually. Although there have been very protracted vacancies in some parishes and we do at times find it really hard to recruit the right person for our posts. Not everybody feels called to serve in our sort of rural ministry!

All the indicators point to the fact that it will become more and not less difficult to fill parochial posts in the coming years - and if the continuing burden of maintaining our heritage buildings and the credit-crunch have long-term implications for us all, the ability to sustain the number of stipendiary posts presently in our Deanery Pastoral Plans may also be under serious pressure.

***So what can we do?***

We believe we have reached the point where we can no longer simply go on adding vacant parishes into ever-larger multi-parish benefices and expect the incumbent or priest-in-charge to be the Vicar to everyone in exactly the same way that she or he might, if they had only one church to care for. The elastic has stretched as far as it can - in fact for some it is over-stretched already.

We need to find a new way.

It will mean change - happening quickly and in some places quite drastically - change for all of us.

#### **4. How Does That Make Us Feel?**

If we look again at St Luke's account of the miraculous feeding, we can identify with the apostles. They had a vast crowd there with them - the demands were enormous and they felt it was impossible. They begged Jesus just to send everyone away to find their own food. It had been a long, long day. The 12 were probably exhausted themselves and felt they had nothing to offer in the face of such a task. It was quite beyond them.

There is much about the present situation that can leave us, lay and ordained, feeling the same way. It is not only clergy who feel the demands are almost impossible - and who have serious worries about their ability to answer the need.

The prospect of radical and speedy change in the way our church is can be very threatening. Some may feel a real sense of loss when they remember how it used to be - when each parish had their own vicar (although the reality of that is now several generations ago) and could just quietly get on with things without worrying about the future. There may be great bereavement in the thought that things cannot simply go on as they are - that we may have to change our services, change our service times, get used to seeing rather less of our vicar and to more lay people leading our worship and involved in day to day pastoral care.

Often when looking at current demands and their challenges, clergy will voice the lament *This isn't the sort of ministry for which I was trained.*

Change that takes place very quickly can make us feel very unsettled or bewildered, sad and sometimes angry with whoever we think is making us go through the experience.

But if we're right about the future, going on as we are simply isn't an option.

And Jesus didn't let the apostles off the hook - he challenged them, *You give them something to eat.* All they had were 5 loaves of bread and a couple of fish. But they had brought their compassion and care for the crowds to Christ, they had offered to the Son of God the little they had. Jesus was able to take this and bless it - all was transformed from the little into a generous over-flowing in the power of God.

## **5. So What Are We Meant To Be Doing?**

We have already said that things need to change - but how? Our picture of the Diocese in 2015 suggests many of the factors we believe will be part of a very different landscape.

If our Diocese IS to be alive and well and just as vibrant in our mission and worship as we would love it to be, we are ALL going to be part of the process that will be needed to put ourselves on that footing.

For our faithful lay people, that will mean hearing loud and clear the call of Christ that each of us receives at our baptism, to a share in Christ's ministry. God gives each of us gifts to be used for the building up of his Kingdom.

**We need to move from being churchgoers to becoming disciples**, answering Christ's call to follow him in the whole of our lives. We will need to stop looking to the paid clergy-person in our neck of the woods to shoulder all the responsibilities of mission and ministry on our behalf and ask God what it is that we can offer. We may need to change our expectations of what our ministers, both lay and ordained, can do, be realistic and generous in our understanding and attitudes and be ready to take responsibility for being the church where we are. We will need to be ready for our group of parishes to get much bigger. We will want to grow in confidence and knowledge so that we are able to tell our stories and share our faith in God with those around us. We will want to deepen our prayer lives and grow closer to God.

A still much-loved phrase associated with the installation of a new priest is the Bishop's words 'this cure, which is both mine and yours'. Our vision for 2015 and beyond is not that this partnership is diminished, but rather that it is shared more fully with others. Our concept of 'clusters' of mission and ministry units within the oversight and facilitation of a minister is worked out in conjunction with all the other lay and ordained ministers in the area.

For our existing and future clergy there will be very particular challenges to living in the new landscape.

Here are some of the features we believe we will all need to embrace:

- An increasing proportion of the ordained strength of the Diocese will be self-supporting ministers.
- Clergy may be required to have oversight of an area that is much larger than their current benefice. They will not be required to stretch themselves ever more thinly to work in the same way they would if they only had one parish. We will need to think imaginatively and creatively to challenge existing expectations and perceptions, both locally and nationally.

- Much more of the day-to-day ministry and mission in our parishes will be performed by locally-grown ministers, whether lay or ordained.
- Those who are ordained and have the responsibility for a group of parishes will need to exercise a different sort of leadership, which we outline later on. It will be much more a role of oversight, of shared episcopate, than the traditional model of a parochial priest. It will probably look a good deal like a 'hands off' ministry of support, encouragement, teaching and enabling of the local ministers.
- Sharing in ministry with other clergy and lay leaders will be a vital element in the leadership exercised. This will be truly collaborative, not simply a managerial or delegating role.
- Clergy will be offering their particular gifts beyond present benefice boundaries and especially within their own deaneries. This doesn't mean someone who has special experience and gifts for youth ministry would for instance have to do that for the whole deanery, on top of their own local responsibilities, of course. But such a person could act as a resource in other ways, stimulating mission in others, offering practical advice and support at times. New arrangements like this would be built into working descriptions and agreements.
- All of this will require deaneries to work much more closely and collegially than many have done.

## **6. The Oversight Role**

Here are what we believe to be the key elements of this changed style of leadership for our clergy.

We believe the role of the priest is to reflect back to the People of God the holiness that is for the whole *laos*. Time for prayer, study and reflection is essential in this leadership. Being fed is as crucial for the minister as it is for those she or he is called to feed.

### *Leadership and Discernment*

Priests will need

- The ability to read the scriptures and the signs of the times and reflect theologically on them.
- This will lead into the ability to teach – into helping people make connections between faith and the communities they serve, moving them from ‘church-goers’ to disciples.
- The ability to see and discern gifts in all people and to help those people develop their gifts for the future life and witness of the Church.
- The ability to continue the process of spiritual formation, building up their own life of prayer and leading and encouraging others in their spiritual formation, as together we all struggle to be holy.

### *Leadership and Vision*

- The priest will be a leader in mission, enabling others to share in proclaiming the good news afresh in our generation.
- The priest will build on the insights and inspiration discovered through careful discernment, to speak up – voicing the hopes and fears of the community at large and interpreting what God is saying in response to those hopes and fears. This will involve theological analysis of both society and Church, and the ability to teach.
- The priest will be a focus of unity, a focus of reconciliation and a leader in mission. Within the recognition of the gifts of the whole People of God, the priest will enable everyone to see their own part in God’s mission in the context of the bigger picture, national and international, inter-denominationally and multi-culturally.
- The priest will have the ability to stand back and ‘see us as others see us’, sharing insights with colleagues.
- The priest will engage in life-long learning to continue developing his or her own particular gifts.

### *Leadership in Collaborative Mission and Ministry*

Priests exercising an oversight role in the future will need to live out in their leadership these principles:

- Collaborative working is essential to the new vision of oversight ministry.
- The gifts of all are respected, valued and encouraged.
- Trust in others is essential. This requires the ability to let go of some cherished current roles and expectations, as well as inherited ways of working.
- All forms of ministry are equally important. Difference is celebrated rather than suspected. All ordained colleagues are equal, while what God calls them to do and be may be quite diverse. Lay ministers can and do accomplish mission tasks their ordained colleagues cannot. *Fresh Expressions* of church can be encouraged and welcomed in our new 'mixed-economy', alongside traditional church.
- Local Ministry Groups and Teams work precisely because they are not the 'collective vicar'. They put together the best skills of lay and ordained people in such a way as to enable those people to be the best lay people, or the best clerics, that they can be.
- We believe that while exercising the sort of hands-off ministry we are describing, it is crucial that priests are also freed to build the pastoral relationships that are essential to give a sacramental ministry rooted-ness and integrity. However the role will demand of all who fulfil it a move away from being the parochial minister who sees their work as overwhelmingly or exclusively pastoral. If we are right, trying to be George Herbert over such a large patch is setting an impossible target and will be a prescription for burn-out. More than that, we believe profoundly that it is not what is being asked of clergy in our generation and context.

## **7. How Might We Get There, From Here - And What Do We Need?**

It is one thing to analyse what is needed, quite another to move from forming a vision to seeing it implemented!

But work has already begun, so we are not starting from nowhere:

- Local Ministry continues to grow in the Diocese
- There is already an emphasis in our interviewing procedures to find people who will engage in collaborative ministry if appointed
- Following the Bishop's Visitations in 2007, we already have the growing recognition that we need to be a missionary church
- Clergy Leadership training has already begun, to enhance collaborative skills and strengthen many of the characteristics of the new oversight role we outline above.

Of course the first step must be to test whether the discernment of others is that we are right in how we see the future.

If we are, there is a major challenge to engage people across the Diocese in listening to God and to one another. We will need to resource deaneries and parishes with teams who can introduce the material and the questions, facilitating the listening and the need for an urgent local response. Clergy and lay leaders will probably wish to meet to explore the vision in their own groups, perhaps led in their deliberations by our bishops.

All this will have financial implications and also an impact on other work, which may need to be left to allow the individuals involved to undertake an additional, major programme of visits and meetings.

When change needs to take place, it can cause pain and sadness and demand of us the letting go of things cherished. We may all be asked to come to terms with difficult things in the Church's future, things we don't like, or find hard to live with. We may feel totally inadequate to cope with it all. A major challenge will be to allow clergy the space within already pressured lives, to understand and grow into the new role. Most of us would probably agree with one person's reflection on being part of church life in 2008: 'now we have to work hard even to stand still.'

Where do we find the spark for the renewal we will need if we are to move with increased heart and hope into God's future for us and for the world He calls us to serve?

If we are right about our needs for 2015 and beyond, our hope is that, like the apostles, we will discover just how little we need for the task and what wonderful things God can do when we bring Him our brokenness and what we believe to be the little we can offer.

***And taking the five loaves the two fish, he looked up to heaven,  
and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples  
to set before the crowd.***

***And all ate and were filled.  
What was left over was gathered up,  
twelve baskets of broken pieces.***

## **8. *Voices From The Future***

We offer in this section a few 'voices' from 2015 and beyond.

These are not prescriptive models and are definitely not intended in any way to provide blueprints for what we think parishes or deaneries should look like in the future!

They are here simply to provide an opportunity to think about and discuss some of the issues raised in this paper - to tease out what the changes that will come may mean at the grassroots.

- 8.1 A Voice from the Hills
- 8.2 A Voice from Humbleyard Deanery
- 8.3 An Urban Voice
- 8.4 A Voice from St Sufficient

## **8.1 A Voice from the Hills**

Our vicar retired 6 years ago. We had a bit of a shock when the Archdeacon came and told us we wouldn't be getting a new one. We were 5 churches then. Now we're part of a much bigger group and the Vicar actually lives about 15 miles away in one of the bigger villages up the valley. We're more hill country here and quite a long way from the nearest town. I think everyone thought we'd dwindle rather without a Vicar in our own group and it was really hard at the time. To start with it felt as if we were just being swallowed up in a group of parishes that already had 15 churches and people got niggly, thinking we'd be overlooked if we didn't make a bit of noise. But when we got through that, it turned out reasonably ok.

When we got to know our new Vicar he asked us about what we thought was really important. We told him we were very concerned about having no children in church, although we've got a school up here and there were youngsters around. He told us there was a Local Ministry Group in the other parishes he looked after and invited us to think about having some folk who could share in that. We didn't really understand for a while, but now we do have people who've joined the Group and we also have 3 lay people who can lead our services when it's not communion. One of our Local Ministry people is training for ordination now so we'll have our own OLM in a couple of years. We get to meet most of the other Local Ministry Group during the year and they've helped us organise some new things that didn't used to happen, like how we make sure people get a visit and that we keep an eye on those who can't get to church any more.

We have workshops for the children up here in the hills now, when there's a festival - we can't do Sunday School every week, but we can get them together around Harvest and Easter and Christmas. There's quite a good hall in our village so we meet there and do lots of messy craft things with them. Then we have a story and sing some songs they like and say a prayer. I never thought we could run something like that, but it's going quite well, although we did have one week when we were double-booked with the Chrysanthemum Society, and another time we did all that work and then only two kids turned up. But they do seem to like to come on the whole.

Most of the younger children go to school in one of our villages, so now a couple of us go into the school and take assemblies - over in the other parishes they were using *Open the Book* and we wanted to know what that was all about. They came and showed us and then helped us get started when they knew we wanted to have a go.

So it's not really been as bad as we feared. Tom, our vicar, drops in from time to time and he's on the end of the email or the phone if we need some advice or training. He's been really good at building up our confidence when we have to tackle something new we're not sure we can do.

It's still not easy keeping our buildings going and the fuel costs have gone up so much we decided not to try and heat two of them in the cold months. Instead we have a service somewhere else - in the hall, or the school. We can't have Holy Communion as often as we used to on a Sunday and a good few people still moan about that. But actually, since we've been having a Family Service or Morning Worship more often and it's not in church, we do find we get a few more people coming along than we ever used to.

## **8.2 A Voice From Humbleyard Deanery**

Combining our two deaneries has been hard work. When we were doing the thinking about joining together it was actually a really exciting and rewarding process for a while. Bishop's Council challenged us to rethink how we could organize ourselves to meet the future needs of our communities and maximize our potential. Humbleyard Deanery was going to be a new creation! We're actually two deaneries: one deeply rural called Humbleby and the other centred on the market town of Littleyard. I'd like to be able to tell you that we're now just Humbleyard, but it hasn't been as easy as that.

**In Littleyard Deanery**, everything tends to happen in the market town of Little Snoring. Although we've got numerous picturesque churches scattered around in the villages everyone has been expected to attend St Anthony's Church - people say because they have the best facilities. All deanery events tend to be held there, but because people rather resent the place, other parishes aren't usually well represented.

**In Humbleby Deanery**, it's a struggle to have any sense of being a Deanery at all. Parishes are so caught up trying to maintain their own churches and services that there's not much enthusiasm left for anything else. As for knowing what's happening in the Diocese, very little managed to drip down to this level. Our geography is against us with a river running through the middle, remote communities and a peculiar horseshoe shape to the Deanery.

Then came the idea of reorganization - and actually people really came together. Changing the shape of both deaneries and joining us together seemed to get over a lot of our difficulties and provide some real benefits. We did a lot of careful consultation and after months of thinking it through with help from the Archdeacon, the deanery Pastoral Committee decided to go for it and the Diocese backed us too. All of that took about 2 years.

I should be able to tell you that Humbleyard Deanery is now in place. Much thought and planning went into what would give us a sense of identity. It was all there in the plan and we talked it through very carefully with the parishes and the clergy in both the deaneries. Everyone seemed on board.

A really important bit of the plan we put forward involved changing round some of the clergy and asking them to work over different areas. Two actually had to move house to make it all work. We came up with this idea so we could have a minister to lead our deanery in working with young people. They all said yes, right up to the last moment - and then one of these two priests pulled the plug on it all. Doesn't want to move house.

Those of us on the Pastoral Committee feel like resigning. We've put so much effort into getting this far. We've had regular 'Humbleyard' events - both times of worship and social gatherings - so we've been getting to know each other better. This gives us time to hear about local issues and to share good ideas. Communication across the Deanery was a priority and knowing we'd have a bigger population, we really wanted to encourage and support our tiniest parishes. We'd made a concerted effort to move around the Deanery and have got a lot more creative about car-sharing!

It's so frustrating. Things were beginning to get better - we had a real sense that we were moving on in the right direction and people in some of the small churches have definitely felt more involved and committed. We even had someone come to look round and talk about the youth work.

But now it's all come unstuck and the real trouble is we can't be cross with the person that doesn't want to move. Since we made the decision about the deanery, one of her children has been identified as having some quite serious special needs. If she moves house to where we'd planned, he's not going to be able to stay in the same school and he's only just got used to his support worker. It means changing local authority too and she just can't face starting again. Personally I think it's more about how she feels than a real problem, but I can't say that - and I can't blame her for wanting to put her child first.

The trouble is, there was a real sense of energy around for the Humbleyard plans and we were beginning to form a strong sense of identity. What on earth do we do now? Will people stick with it or just feel demoralised?

Would I recommend changing your deanery to anyone else? Well, yes, because of all the good things that could grow here IF we could get it moving again - but I didn't realise one person could just say 'no' and scupper all the plans.

### **8.3 An Urban Voice**

We are an ecumenical experiment on a relatively new estate - we don't like being an experiment but even after 25 years that's what they still call us. Despite a track record of faithful sustained ministry to the local community we are still thought of as a threat to the surrounding churches of all denominations.

The estates which make up the district [we are just one third of an Anglican Team Parish and our Minister has to double up as Team Rector of the whole parish] now have some 18,000 people living on them. Some of the original housing - double-decker blocks of maisonettes with flat roofs - proved a disaster and have been replaced by less dense housing. The Shopping Centre next to the Church is due for demolition and rebuilding, which is likely to change the dynamics of the area - along with the potential for vandals to have an arsenal during the work! The Church, built in the eighties, originally had a variety of Clergy associated with it. A full-time Anglican Team Vicar or Team Rector, plus Curate and Reader, half a Methodist Minister and a third of a URC Minister. Now our one Minister doubles up as Anglican Priest and Methodist Minister. She's exceedingly hard working and always seems available, but at times is completely overwhelmed by the size and complexity of the task. The occasional offices could take up all her time - people still want their babies baptised - despite a falling birth rate there are still 8 to 10 baptisms per month - there is a steady stream of weddings and there can be up to 9 funerals per week!

Thank goodness, perhaps thank God, we've always had a policy of encouraging every member of the Church to reach their maximum potential, practically and spiritually. From the earliest days we encouraged everyone to take part in whatever they felt called to do: helping to lead and facilitate worship, giving out information leaflets on a range of life and social skills to those in need and running a luncheon club for single lonely people. Of all the things we have done that final one has been the most lasting and of most benefit to most people - there are so many lonely people around here. It's also been the greatest source of people for the adult confirmation group and our various training courses.

Early on one of our newer members summed up the experience of us all:

*We came in need - We stayed in thankfulness - Now we go out with joy!*

People can only say that from the heart when they've experienced it in their heart. That's what lets us make a connection with the local culture. We don't come in our cars for a special service. We live in the local community. We are rooted here. The trouble is when you are in the poorer estates you feel vulnerable. At the first sign of cutbacks in the Local Authority, or in the Church, we know that they are likely to fall on us. That's why we were relieved when one of our members qualified as a Methodist Local Preacher and another was accepted for training as an Ordained Local Minister. If the rest of the Church walks away from this "experiment" we hope now we'll be able to sustain ourselves.

#### **8.4 A Voice from St Sufficient**

I'm Churchwarden of a parish in the leafy suburbs. We had everything going for us, one Church which everyone could walk to, even if most drove to our extensive car park, a good congregation, no worries about finance. And a Vicar who was a real saint, always there for us, did everything we asked, always ready to tell us what to do. Being a Churchwarden was a real doddle - I couldn't understand how onerous others thought the role was in other parts of the deanery.

That was until a few months ago. I got a phone call from the Archdeacon. He told me that our Vicar had had a kind of breakdown and the Doctors had signed her off for a considerable period of recuperation. He went on to say that the Diocese would take care of the Vicar and her family but that it was my responsibility to work with the Rural Dean to arrange Clergy to take services, to look after the Church and bookings for weddings and funerals and to take all the decisions necessary. I was in a flat spin, my fellow Churchwarden works abroad at this time of the year. I didn't know what to do. No one had prepared me for this. We were used to the Vicar doing everything - why ever did she go and have a breakdown?

I felt like giving up, but the next day, while I was in town, I met another Churchwarden from the other end of the deanery. We'd had a chat at Deanery Synod. I must have looked as if there was something wrong, because he asked me what the problem was and then we went for a pint. I explained what had happened and how I felt. To my amazement he said he understood. Something like it had happened to him a few years before. At that point his parish lost its resident Vicar - it was put in with five other parishes in a multi-parish benefice. The new Vicar explained that he couldn't possibly do all the things his predecessors had done on his own. He said that each of the parishes would have to stand on its own feet and he would support and encourage. He had started training courses to help them do the local organisation, chair meetings, visit those in need, take communion to the house-bound and many other things.

But what surprised me most was that he said it went beyond doing things. The Vicar had started regular meetings with all the Churchwardens at which they shared their thoughts and vision for the future of the parishes and then they shared the responsibility for implementing agreed policy.

As we parted, he agreed to be as sort of mentor, so I stopped feeling alone in all this. If I have a problem I can't resolve I have somewhere to go, without always plaguing the Rural Dean or the Archdeacon.

As I look back on the past few weeks, I realise how much I have grown through the experience. I'm a different person now. It's had a positive effect on my faith, and my knowledge of the Church has grown so much.

Word from the Archdeacon is that our Vicar is making good progress in therapy and should be back with us before the end of the year. That's good news, but I'm left with two questions - what happens if she wants to go back to how it was in the past and how do I get her to work together with those of us who have taken responsibility while she's been away?

## ***Appendix 1***

### **Members of the 2015 Onward Working Party**

The Rt Revd Michael Hooper, Bishop of Ludlow - Chair

The Revd Robert Daborn, WEMTC

Lady Sue Darnley

Ms Jackie Boys, Social Responsibility Officer

The Revd Preb Graham Earney, Local Ministry Officer

The Revd Mary-Lou Toop, Diocesan Director of Ordinands

## ***Appendix 2***

### ***Facts and Figures about the Diocese of Hereford***

#### ***Population***

**The most likely scenario is that the population of the Diocese will have grown slightly to around 300,000** (currently around 290,000). The average annual rate of growth in 2015 is about 0.4% - lower than in recent years, based on 2006 forecast figures for Herefordshire. Forecasts for Shropshire Council (as it will be) suggest that the South Shropshire district will experience growth up to 17.7% from 2004-2029 and Bridgnorth district the lowest at 4%.

Numbers of under-16s, which will have continued to fall until 2015, will begin to stabilise at around 29,000 (9.4% below 2006 levels). The numbers aged 16 to 64, having risen slightly, will begin to fall steadily beyond 2011 as the post-war 'baby-boomers' move into retirement age.

The numbers aged 65 and over are forecast to continue to increase, but more rapidly than in recent years (at about 3.4% pa compared to 1.4% currently). Projections suggest that by 2026 there will be a 68% increase of over 65s from 2006 and that the numbers aged 85 and over will have doubled, South Shropshire district having the highest proportion within Shropshire Council. There will be about double the number of people over the age of 65 than under the age of 16, with concomitant likely pressures and opportunities of a pensioner population.

**The continuing trend towards a growing-older diocese is more marked than elsewhere in the country.** Herefordshire Council has predicted that by 2020, 50% of the population will be aged 50 or over. Shropshire predicts all age groups below 44 years will decline (except 20-29 year olds). There is also a notable gap in the young adult age-groups. By 2011, the numbers of 5 to 14s in England and Wales are projected to rise by 12.9% but locally they are forecast to fall by a similar magnitude (11.9%).

#### ***Housing***

Even if there were to be no changes in the population, anticipated changes in household formation would yield an increase of around 1600 households by 2015 in the Diocese. The assumptions driving this change are an increase in the proportion of people living alone and a decline in the proportion of people living as part of a couple. The number of one-person households now stands nationally at around 30% of the population and is still growing.

Housing is very much under pressure from both the indigenous population and those moving here from other areas seeking a better lifestyle in this part of the country. All local authorities in the Diocese have committed themselves to increasing housing provision and there will likely be an emphasis on affordable housing given the house price to earnings ratio. Nationally the demand for housing provision looks set to increase under the combined effects of more single person household requirements, longer life expectancy and the eventual shortage of urban building land. **Such factors could well result in more development in the countryside.**

The levels of new housing development will be determined in the Regional Spatial Strategy, but the Government are currently considering the feasibility of higher housing numbers in the West Midlands region. This work will not be completed until at least 2009 so it is impossible to know what this will mean locally.

### ***Employment***

The fact that Hereford Diocese falls within the only Rural Regeneration Zone to be identified in the West Midlands Region underlines the fact that **rural deprivation is a reality across the counties that make up the Diocese**. Deprivation is not just about poverty or lack of money: it is about social isolation, lack of access to services and jobs. As a result of partnership working at county and regional levels, and the Rural Regeneration Zone, there is great potential in the next few years for inward investment. Land for employment sites, such as business parks, has been located in Hereford City and market towns across the Diocese.

Agriculture remains an important economic activity, **although numbers working in farming have reduced year on year**. Changes in farming methods, a greater interest by the public in direct purchasing and tourism all lead to the conclusion that diversification will be an essential component of the rural economy in the future. The predictions bear out the fact that diversified business and non-farming income will be the future for agriculture. The development of farmers' markets and food purchased locally by supermarkets are to be encouraged.

The major employers (outside of the Local Authority) are often in the vulnerable food processing sectors and the majority of businesses are small to medium sized enterprises. **The rate of employment while appearing to be high often mask seasonality, relatively low pay, issues of skills development etc. Average earnings probably remain well below the national average.**

The **increasing use of migrant and seasonal workers** in this and other industries have thrown up for the Diocese a range of social, environmental and economic issues.

### ***Tourism***

**Tourism is highly valuable** to the economy of the Diocese and already many parishes have developed 'welcome ministries' to their communities and visitors. With increased costs of foreign travel, there could well be a further growth in UK tourism.

Future jobs may well come from small to medium businesses and services in localised areas. A greater use of information technology will be one way of moving forward.

### ***Transport***

The high dependence on the car and lack of public transport, especially in the more rural parts of the Diocese, remains a major issue. This could put further pressure on small schools and make village life appear less appealing to potential incoming families. **High fuel costs will mean creative initiatives are required to bring people together.**

### ***Environment***

The balance to be struck is how we can achieve environmentally sustainable growth and alleviate rural deprivation, whilst not destroying that which is best about our rural communities. Future development will have to happen within the context of an **increasing emphasis on 'green' policies.**

### ***The Credit Crunch***

The 2008 economic climate, with a 10% annual fall in house prices, a dramatic slump in new house building and the rise in fuel costs - both for transport and heating - make any projections for 2015 particularly uncertain. It may be that the reduction in house building and the resulting shortage of houses actually prompts a recovery in the housing market. However, it is highly unlikely that there will be a return to cheap fuel and with low wages and rural isolation; this will need to be taken into account in planning for 2015 and beyond.

**The term 'social exclusion' can be said to be a reality within local communities** as a result of the above factors and social and community life can be restricted, especially for the young upon whom the future of these communities depend.

## ***Appendix 3***

### ***Glossary of Terms***

#### **Structures**

<b>Church of England</b>	The Church of England is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion. It is comprised of the Provinces of Canterbury and York. It is made up of 43 dioceses with the Diocese in Europe.
<b>General Synod</b>	The senior legislative body of the Church of England.
<b>Diocese</b>	An area of the Church of England under the jurisdiction of a bishop. It is a legal entity. <i>The Diocese of Hereford is one of the 30 dioceses in the Province of Canterbury.</i>
<b>Archdeaconry</b>	A subdivision of a diocese, administered by an Archdeacon. It is a legal entity. <i>The Diocese of Hereford is divided into 2 Archdeaconries, Hereford and Ludlow.</i>
<b>Deanery</b>	A deanery is a group of neighbouring parishes. <i>The Diocese of Hereford has 14 deaneries [8 in the Hereford Archdeaconry and 6 in the Ludlow Archdeaconry – at present 2 of those in Hereford Archdeaconry are working together as one.]</i>
<b>Deanery Synod</b>	This acts as a forum for the parishes to exchange views on issues, decisions and problems affecting the deanery. It is also an important layer in the governance of the Church. Deanery Synods can work together on ministry and mission matters and engage in learning about the Church.
<b>Parish</b>	England is divided into parishes. There are about 16,000 of these. The parish is a legal entity. Every parish has an incumbent, who may be designated as Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge. <i>In the Diocese of Hereford almost all the parishes have been grouped together in multi-parish benefices, which may also be Team or Group Ministries.</i>
<b>Benefice</b>	An informal grouping of parishes within the oversight of one priest/minister. <i>In the Diocese of Hereford all but 3 of the parishes are grouped into benefices.</i>

<b>Parochial Church Council</b>	Each parish is administered by a Parochial Church Council [PCC] in conjunction with the Incumbent.
<b>Teams, Groups and Clusters</b>	Formal or informal groups of parishes working together in ministry and mission.
<b>Local Ministry Group/Team</b>	A group of lay and ordained people commissioned by the bishop, working collaboratively and exercising shared leadership in a parish/group of parishes.
<b><u>People</u></b>	
<b>Bishop</b>	The chief pastor of all members of the Church of England in a diocese. 'A bishop is called to lead in serving and caring for the people of God and to work with them in the oversight of the Church'. Every diocese will have the diocesan bishop (in this diocese, the Bishop of Hereford) and may have one or more additional bishops, Suffragan (here, the Bishop of Ludlow) or Area bishop.
<b>Incumbent</b>	A priest/minister who shares the cure of souls of a parish or parishes with the bishop of the diocese.
<b>Reader</b>	A lay minister who holds the bishop's licence and so has the authority to lead worship and to preach, and to share in such pastoral ministry as is entrusted to him/her by the parish priest.
<b>Self Supporting Minister</b>	A priest or deacon who shares in the ministry of the Church and does not receive a stipend. These ministers used to be known as Non Stipendiary Ministers, or NSMs.
<b>MSE</b>	A Minister in Secular Employment: someone who is ordained and whose mission and ministry focus will be in their workplace, rather than the parish(es).
<b>Support Minister</b>	A minister, lay or ordained, with a diocesan-wide role in a particular field of mission and ministry. Some Support Ministers work very much with the people in the parishes, while others work with different and specific groups/networks. Support Ministers may be paid by the diocese or self-supporting.

## Appendix 4

### Analysis of Clergy Leaving Training and Approaching Retirement / PTO

Year	Stipendiary Curates moving out of IME 4-7	SSMs moving out of IME 4-7	Stipendiaries who can retire at 65	SSMs who move to PTO at 70	Potential loss of Licensed clergy
2008	3	5	7	1	8
2009	3	5	3	1	4
2010	3	4	6	0	6
2011	4	5	6	4	10
2012	4	5	3	1	4
2013	4	5	6	3	9
2014	4	5	8	3	11
2015	4	5	6	3	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>61</b>

Figures corrected to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008.

#### Notes:

1. Not all those who are able to retire in 2008 will do so. Some of the retirements in 2008 were not expected in these figures. This means that the figures for 2009 onwards will be higher than indicated.
2. On the data provided this means that of the current strength of 98 stipendiaries, 45 could retire at 65 by the end of 2015 [46%]. Not all these will remain in the diocese and some may not wish to apply for Permission to Officiate (PTO).  
If all stayed on till 70, the figure will fall to 15 [15%].  
In the same period 16 of the 41 SSMs will reach 70 [39%] and need to move to PTO. At this point there would be changes in working agreements and some may not wish to remain in active ministry.
3. None of the figures above include vacancies, parochial or within Support Ministers, some of whom may be ordained.
4. To offset against these figures are two 'incomes':
  - a. we continue to be asked to place 4 stipendiary curates each year, but not all these may wish to stay in the diocese after their curacy.
  - b. we continue to have a supply of home-grown talent offering for SS ministry and we are further encouraging this trend. The figures up to 2011 are for those we have already ordained who are currently in post ordination training. The assumption is that for 2012 onwards we will at least maintain the average current figure per annum.

