

CARLISLE DIOCESE

*Growing Disciples:
Maturity in faith,
Lively prayer and worship,
Community engagement,
Evangelism,
Quality of relationships.*



Carlisle Diocese, Church House, West Walls, Carlisle, CA3 8UE

Telephone: 01228 522573 Fax: 01228 815400

www.carlisediocese.org.uk

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GROWING DISCIPLES

Vision and Strategy: 2011-2020

*Heavenly Father
your son called His disciples to watch
and pray for the coming of your Kingdom;
by your spirit make us more and more
ready to learn true discipleship of
Jesus Christ our Lord*

Amen

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This document sets out our Vision and Strategy for the next ten years.

We hope you will read it carefully and prayerfully, and that it will help us to grow together as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle



INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This document sets out where we believe God is leading the Diocese. It also explains how we propose, over the next ten years, to get from where we are now to where we would like to be then. We don't pretend to have all the answers. There are several enormous issues to be addressed (including widespread indifference to the gospel; the age-profile of our congregations and clergy; and the number and cost of our buildings). But we are confident that, with God's grace, a combination of good leadership and clear vision at every level will result in sustained growth.

Process

This Vision and Strategy for growing disciples is the direct outcome of eighteen months of prayer, consultation and discussion by the Bishop's Staff and Bishop's Council with clergy and lay leaders across the diocese. On the one hand the Vision and Strategy provide continuity with the programme 'From Survival to Revival' which prompted Parishes throughout the diocese to gain confidence by tackling the projects they set themselves. On the other hand the Vision and Strategy provide a single focus (Discipleship) and a plan with a fresh start and a realistic, though challenging, way forward. We will be building on what has gone before, in particular the Rural Manifesto and Young Diocese Project, while at the same time venturing into some previously uncharted territory.

Pre-suppositions

Throughout what follows we are assuming three things. These run through every part of our vision and thinking like golden threads. They are:

- The eternal message of the **Gospel** and our calling to teach and proclaim it in and out of season.
- The pastoral nature of our **Ministry** which means that relationship is at the heart of everything we are and do.
- The imperative to engage in **Mission** which is the main reason (together with worship) for which the Christian Church exists.

Programme

This is not about 'the Diocese' attempting to control the Parishes in a detailed and meddlesome way. It is, though, an attempt to chart a direction of travel which we can take together, each Parish looking to God for the detail of how they take the journey. We want this to be a shared venture in which Diocese, Deaneries and Parishes work to support each other in our shared task of growing God's Kingdom in Cumbria. So we hope it will stimulate discussion, motivate action and provoke prayer.



MISSION (what we are called to do)

Our specific (and we believe, God-given) vision needs to be interpreted within the context of an overall mission:

By God's grace, to grow God's Kingdom in Cumbria

That is what the Christian Church has been here to do for hundreds of years, and despite immense goodwill and a significant presence at the heart of nearly all of our communities, the task today is as challenging as it has ever been. Church attendance has been steadily declining for more than a century; decline in the attendance of children and young people has been particularly sharp; and the financial pressures (especially in the present economic situation) are enormous. Cumbria is not immune from the blight of secularist consumerism, and a reduced number of clergy now face demands scarcely imagined by their predecessors. The role has changed - but local expectations have not, and we recognised the force of the old truism that for things to remain the same there must be constant change. That is why our mission statement is so important. It reminds us that:

- We must always rely on God's grace rather than our own strength. By ourselves - we can achieve nothing, but with him anything is possible.
- Growth remains our fundamental aim - in spiritual depth, fellowship, giving, service to others and numbers. Jesus' parables make it obvious that he was committed to growth, and that He wants us to be as well.
- The Kingdom of God is what all our efforts are about. It is what Jesus came to preach - and to bring.
- In Cumbria - because we are concerned not just with the church in Carlisle Diocese but with the whole county and everyone in it.

VISION (what we hope to see)

To see our churches growing Disciples of all ages.

Being a disciple means being a committed follower of Jesus with all that involves for belief and lifestyle. It is the key to growth of every kind, and everything we do as a Diocese during the next ten years will be geared to enabling this vision for discipleship to be realised. "Go and make disciples of all nations" said Jesus in what is now seen as the 'Great Commission' (Matthew 28) - and that is what we believe He is now saying to us. We long for Cumbria to be a place where disciples both grow, and help to grow, other disciples.



BIG PICTURE - FIVE MARKS

That is the 'Big Picture', and its ten year time-frame means that it won't be a temporary expedient or flash in the pan. As it takes hold we expect to see many signs of what we believe are the 'five marks of discipleship':

- **Maturity in faith**, which leads to
- **Prayer and worship** which is expectant and lively
- **Community service and engagement** looking outwards
- **Evangelism** sharing the good news
- **Quality of relationships** "see how these Christians love one another"

As we do these things we will grow in our faith; and as our faith grows, we will do these things more and better, so that we will actually be able to see how discipleship is developing throughout Cumbria.

We will need to work

- With mutual **Trust** and openness, not suspicion or self-interest;
- In **Partnership**, not least between Diocese, Deanery and Parish, as well as with Christians of other denominations;
- By various **Means**, recognising that one size doesn't fit all and what works in one place may not be appropriate in another.
- Through a **Confidence** rooted in the timeless power of the gospel to change lives.

The Five Marks of Discipleship

As the vision for growing disciples is realised, these are the sorts of things we can expect to see.

Maturity in faith,
Lively prayer and worship,
Community engagement,
Evangelism,
Quality of relationships.



FIVE MARKS - MATURITY IN FAITH

Jesus' gifts were ... "to equip God's people for work in his service, to the building up of the body of Christ. So shall we all at last attain to the unity inherent in our faith and our knowledge of the Son of God - to mature adulthood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ."

Ephesians 4:11-13

Here are some ways in which our churches could enable disciples to become more Mature in Faith:

- An adult **Christian Basics Course** running annually in each mission cluster or benefice. Understanding and good teaching are vital for effective discipleship.
- A significant increase in **giving** from each of us - to fund mission, not balance books. Our individual giving is currently among the lowest in the country, and financial giving is a barometer of spiritual maturity.
- Every church member recognising and using his/her **gifts** in Christian service. At present many don't - which is why we have created the 'SHAPE' course.
- A steady growth in **vocation** to 'authorised ministries' (including ordination, Readership and authorised Lay Ministry)
- 60 young (and not so young) **interns** growing as leaders in the diocese each year.
- **Discipleship training** at various levels available to everyone (in the Parishes, Deaneries, and across the Diocese - e.g. 'Called to Serve')

Note: Mission Clusters

We know - from national research and our own experience - that the healthiest churches work with other churches; and conversely that isolation causes big problems for clergy and Parishes. So we are promoting mission clusters - informal groups of Parishes and clergy; not too big, not too small, and probably based on friendship; working together not under an imposed programme, but seeing what works naturally.

FIVE MARKS - EXPECTANT PRAYER AND LIVELY WORSHIP

Jesus said to his disciples: "God is spirit, and those who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

John 4:24

If we are truly growing as disciples of Christ, then it should be visible in our prayer and worship. Here therefore are some ways in which our churches could enable disciples to grow deeper in their Prayer and Worship:

- An active **Prayer Group** meeting regularly in every community. A group praying regularly can become the power-house for Parish life and a tremendous growth-point for the individuals who take part.
- A variety of **styles of worship** within each mission cluster. We can't do everything everywhere - but a varied 'diet' is as important and refreshing in worship as it is in what we eat.
- At least one **'Fresh Expression'** (e.g. Messy Church, Café Church) within each mission cluster and an 'after-school' club (in effect, a church/congregation) operating in many of our schools .
- A **'Network Youth Church'** in each Deanery, with local cell groups and worship and teaching appropriate to young people.
- A strategy for making the most of **'Special Occasions'** (e.g. Festivals; Funerals; Back to Church Sunday) in every benefice.
- Church involvement with 'collective worship' and other groups in every **secondary school** in Cumbria.



FIVE MARKS - COMMUNITY SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT

Jesus said, "If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."
John 13:14

If we are truly growing as disciples, then this should overflow outwards from the church as we engage with our community and serve it, following the example of our Lord. Here therefore are some ways in which our churches could enable disciples to engage more fully in Serving their Community:

- At least one **Social Action** project for every local church (e.g. credit unions; working with offenders and victims; environmental issues; migrant workers; the low paid; victims of domestic violence; lunch clubs for the elderly; parent/toddler groups; good neighbour schemes)
- Significant (50 per cent?) increase in **church buildings** equipped and used for multi-purpose service within the community. Making good use of our buildings (we have about 350 of them!) is an important part of our stewardship.
- Every congregation regularly informed about and **giving generously** to at least one national and international project or charity. Part of our discipleship is an engagement with, and service of, the wider world beyond our own needs - and this could include safeguarding the environment.
- A network of **Urban and Rural** contacts working with the Urban and Rural Officers to promote social responsibility in town and countryside.
- A scheme for encouraging and supporting **Ministry at Work** in every benefice. We need to help people understand that Christian ministry doesn't only happen in church.
- Every Deanery actively linked with the (Ecumenical) **Social Responsibility Forum**, and the (Anglican) Church Social Action Network

FIVE MARKS - EVANGELISM

Jesus said to his followers: "Go and make disciples of all nations."

Matthew 28:19

If we ourselves are truly growing as disciples, then we should be helping others to know Jesus and become His disciples. Here therefore are some ways in which our churches could engage more in outreach and evangelism:

- A significant increase in **Church Attendance** (both on weekdays and Sundays); especially an increase in children and young people, and people aged 20-45
- A **Mission Action Plan** for each church and mission cluster, locally tailored and including plans for work with children, young people and schools.
- A **'Process Evangelism'** course (eg 'Exploring Christianity', 'Alpha', 'Emmaus Nurture course') run annually in each mission cluster.
- At least two people in each benefice who feel confident to think of themselves as **'parish evangelists'**. One in every ten Christians has evangelistic gifts, usually undiscovered.
- All church members equipped to **tell others** about their life as a disciple of Jesus (eg the 'Lost for Words' course).



FIVE MARKS - QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:34,35

As Jesus' disciples, His character and love should be visible in the way we relate to others. Here therefore are some ways in which our churches could further develop that Quality of Relationship:

- Cumbria to become a designated **'Ecumenical County'**. We aim to see Anglicans, Methodists and the United Reformed Church (and other denominations) increasingly sharing resources (including buildings); ministry (including clergy); and plans for mission.
- **Small Groups** meeting regularly in every benefice for Bible study, prayer and fellowship. These can and do happen in both urban and rural communities and are vital for relating faith to life and deepening relationships.
- Regular **Social Activities** in every Parish, with a particular emphasis on welcoming non-churchgoers.
- **Trained welcomers** in each church. If people don't feel that they 'belong' they won't stay.
- The provision of courses which demonstrate our **support for family life** (e.g. Parenting and Marriage Enrichment)

Many of the things mentioned under the five 'marks of discipleship' are already happening somewhere. Our vision is to see most of them happening everywhere. This is challenging and stretching, but by God's grace certainly not impossible, especially over a 10-year period. That would certainly be evidence of a sea-change in our discipleship.

STRATEGY

It is one thing to 'have a vision' - and quite another to make it happen. That's why we need a strategy for getting from here to there.

The strategy we have devised has four main ingredients.

First is **Leadership**, which needs to be both faithful and inspirational in Diocese, Deanery and Parish. Leadership is one of the key tasks of the clergy, but it needs to be shared with others in a collaborative (power-sharing) way. We regard the ongoing training of clergy and lay leaders as one of our foremost priorities.

Second is **Local Ministry** because it is 'on the ground' that lives are transformed and discipleship grows. Identifying gifts, building confidence and helping individuals experiment and develop is central to everything we aim to do.

Third is **Focussed Planning** which makes sure that effort and resources are not dissipated or wasted. We all know how easy it is in Parish life for a few people to spend a lot of time going round in circles! So we will be making sure that every benefice creates a 'Mission Action Plan', and will provide the necessary help for clergy, leadership teams and PCCs to do this. Three important parts of this planning will be: doing a few things well (and having the courage to stop doing some things), exploring ecumenical initiatives, and ensuring that our buildings are used creatively. Deaneries also have an important role to play in this focussed planning - some things will be better done at Deanery level than any other!

Fourth is **Comprehensive Mission**, which reaches out to the large number of people in Cumbria (including tourists) who currently have little contact with (and even less knowledge of) the Christian faith. This mission and outreach will need to be tailored to be appropriate to different groups. We have begun this already with the Young Diocese project and its focus on children and young people. One of the primary tasks of the Bishop of Penrith will be developing and driving this, with an emphasis on helping us all to listen to what God is saying so that we can follow where He is leading.

With these four ingredients in mind we have determined a number of 'stepping-stones' to get from here to there. These are the things that **as a Diocese** we are committing ourselves to do during the next ten years to enable our churches to grow disciples of all ages.



STEPPING STONES

The most important part of the work of moving the Church forwards is done in the Parishes. To support the work of the Parishes, this is what we as a Diocese will do:

- **Recruiting**, supporting and training excellent ordained and lay ministers. We have already doubled our CME budget; we are extending our 'Clergy Leadership Course' with a fourth module geared around 'making disciples'; and we propose to 'market' Carlisle Diocese as 'probably the best Diocese in the world' in which to live and work.
- **Developing** new models of ministry to address the future when there will be fewer stipendiary clergy to go round in the UK.
- **Providing** a programme through which every benefice can develop a Leadership Team.
- **Investing** at least 80 per cent of our annual budget in local ministry (rather than central costs)
- **Creating** a new strategy for outreach to those who are currently not involved much (if at all) with the church. This includes young adults and young people; and takes in the expanding 'OpShop' network as a base for Christian community support and witness.
- **Adopting** a 'Mission Action Plan' approach for every Parish and benefice with consultancy support for its implementation.
- **Promoting** the adoption of Cumbria as the first 'ecumenical county'.
- **Encouraging** Deaneries to implement innovative strategies for the use and management of church buildings.
- **Implementing** the 'Giving for Life' programme as an aid to more committed discipleship.

WHAT NOW?

The most immediate steps to be taken are:

a) For the Parishes:

- Start praying and listening to God as the first (and central) part of developing a local 'Mission Action Plan'.

b) For the Deaneries:

- Work on creative plans for deploying ministers and using buildings.

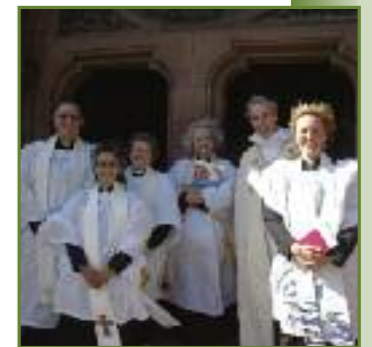
c) For the Diocese:

- Appoint a new Bishop of Penrith with responsibility for developing 'Mission' strategy.
- Continue to work on identifying a fairly small number of things which the Diocese "must do" to make sure that the Vision and Strategy is a success
- Revise the portfolios of individual Bishop's Staff member so that each of the 'must do' things has a person on the Bishop's Staff who is looking after it
- Make sure that all diocesan policies, resources and posts 'line up' with the Vision and Strategy. (There are lots of good things we could do, but we won't if they are not part of the Vision and Strategy.)
- Begin 'marketing' Carlisle Diocese more widely.
- Work out how to measure progress in order to make sure that the plan is succeeding.

d) For All:

Identify partners with whom to work closely - including:

- Other denominations and Churches Together groups in Cumbria
- Schools
- Para-church organisations - for equipping and training and helping to implement; examples are: Church Pastoral Aid Society; Church Mission Society; Additional Curates Society, Northern Inter Schools Christian Union
- Neighbouring dioceses
- Neighbouring / and 'twin' Parishes
- whole Deaneries
- Local councils and all those working for the good of Cumbria and its communities



CONCLUSION

Despite the long process of thought, prayer and discussion that has brought us to this point, our vision and especially our strategy are not now 'set in concrete'! As well as monitoring progress in the coming months and years we will continue to listen and talk and then amend as necessary.

But our prayer and our work so far give us confidence that this is the direction God is calling us to follow, and we look forward with excitement to working together in and for God's kingdom during the next ten years.

James Newcome

on behalf of The Bishop's Council

January 2011.

*Generous God,
you call us to follow you and send
us out to make more disciples.*

*By the grace of your Holy spirit,
may we grow to your glory and
the flourishing of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Amen