

Strategy

A central priority within Jesus' ministry was his calling of twelve disciples - "appointed... to be with him and to be sent out" Mark 3:15. He devoted much time to teaching and mentoring them. He sent them out to continue his work of announcing and giving signs of the kingdom.

The Diocese of Leicester has similarly chosen to focus on this priority of discipleship.

Shaped by God in our lives and communities we seek the growth of His Kingdom in:

- ◆ the depth of discipleship,
- ◆ the number of disciples of Jesus,
- ◆ loving service of the world.

We have therefore asked our parish churches, our fresh expressions of church, our chaplaincies, and our schools to work to these priorities. Each Christian community must discern for themselves how to act on these priorities in their own context.

The work of our central support staff is focused on enabling this discernment in each context and helping each community to channel their resources to these priorities.

The role of the bishop is to hold each individual minister and each community to account for how they are doing this ("low control, high accountability").



Three Questions

For individual prayer and discussion at PCCs and in small groups

1. How are you growing, and enabling others to grow in the depth of their discipleship?
2. How are you enabling growth in the numbers of disciples of Jesus?
3. How are you serving your community, and enabling others to love and serve those around them?

The answers to these questions should naturally lead to both gratitude for what God is already doing, and discernment about how God is leading us in the future. This discernment will in turn result in an action plan which will shape the use of the resources God has entrusted to us e.g. our own time, money, buildings etc. Such plans will need regular reviewing and updating. God's Spirit will move in surprising ways and we must always be ready to respond ("walk in step with the Spirit" Gal 5:25), but good planning is essential to good stewardship.

He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it?"

It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

Luke 13: 18-19



Our Vision, Purpose & Three Key Questions



Vision

Our vision is the kingdom of God. Jesus announced the kingdom, gave signs of the kingdom and taught us to pray for God's kingdom to come. When thinking about our vision, we start with the teaching of Jesus about God's kingdom.

Jesus used many images for the kingdom and the Diocese of Leicester has chosen, for this period of our history, to focus on the mustard seed and the tree. It is an image of growth – we are invited to wonder at how something so small can grow so big. It is an image of hospitality – the birds of the air come to rest on the branches of the tree. It is an image which makes clear the importance of deep roots.

There is no more compelling vision than the kingdom of God. Our privilege as ministers of the gospel is to lay this vision before people in words and actions, and to do so with language and cultural forms which the people of this generation and these places will understand.

Purpose

The Church has been described as “a sign, instrument and foretaste” of God's kingdom. We are imperfect, weak and fragile, but our purpose is to point people to God's kingdom, pray and work for God's kingdom to come on earth, and give people a glimpse of the fullness of this kingdom.

“Shaped by God we seek the growth of His kingdom” – the Diocese of Leicester has chosen to summarise our purpose in this way. This recognises firstly, that our character, desires, and values must be shaped by God and our church culture and structures also. As this happens, so an environment for growth is created: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Cor 3:6).

Values

Our values also have their origin in the kingdom of God. Much of Jesus' teaching focused on the values which should shape our lives e.g. “strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well” (Matt 6:33).

The Diocese of Leicester has identified ten 'marks of mission' which are in effect a statement of our values. We have articulated these values in the hope that they will shape our culture (the way we do things here) and infuse all our actions:

- ◇ *noticing God at work among us*, and continually asking: what are we learning, and how do we join in with God's activity? ; **(discerning)**
- ◇ *lives and communities transformed*, through the Good News of Jesus Christ; **(transformational)**
- ◇ *worship in a way that renews and inspires*, echoing the praise of heaven; **(inspirational)**
- ◇ *self-giving service to the community*, because the Church is called to be local and outward looking; **(self-giving)**
- ◇ *being rooted in prayer*, because prayer is part of our loving response to the needs of the world; **(prayerful)**
- ◇ *confident and sensitive evangelism*, responding to Jesus' call to share our faith in word and deed; **(confident)**
- ◇ *lifelong Christian nurture*, because our mission overflows from our own discipleship; **(nurturing)**
- ◇ *the welcome of newcomers*, helping those who come close to the church to feel cherished by God; **(hospitable)**
- ◇ *becoming child friendly*, following our Lord's example of putting children at a central place in His ministry; **(child-friendly)**
- ◇ *celebration of people and places*, because godly celebration is at the heart of the gospel; **(celebratory)**

