



Faith in
our Future

Diocese of Monmouth
Esgobaeth Mynwy

Vision for our Future



Diocesan Vision - Faith in our Future

Introduction from Bishop Cherry

I am delighted to commend this diocesan vision which has been drawn together through a series of meetings and discussions by over 50 people from across the diocese. It is an exciting document which will shape our life together for at least the next five years and, by God's grace, will bring new life and growth to our churches.

The purpose of this vision is threefold.

Firstly, it is outward facing. Our Christian faith is not a private affair but one that should stir and motivate us to make a difference to the people we live alongside and the various communities to which we belong. God loves and cares for all his creation and so, therefore, should we. Our vision helps us to focus on mission and growth; making the most of the opportunities God gives us to work with him in strengthening the church and building the kingdom.

Secondly, it provides every congregation and every ministry area with five common overarching themes on which to focus its life and work. These themes are intended to inspire creative thinking in the very different contexts of our diocese so that they can be worked out locally in ways that are relevant in each place. Working together, the church communities of each ministry area will be able to plan, support and encourage one another to engage with these themes in ways that are exciting, bold and imaginative; whether the activities are small and local or on a larger scale across a ministry area.

Thirdly, it will enable us to exercise good stewardship – one of our five themes. Our diocesan vision will give us a framework within which the bishop's staff team, the church communities of our ministry areas and the diocesan office can focus and prioritize our resources and our energy and use them to best effect.

With our ministry areas taking shape, and with the pandemic largely behind us, we are looking forward with confidence to the hopeful future we believe God is leading us into. At the heart of our diocesan vision is the desire for God's church to grow and the belief that it can grow. I trust that you will be inspired by this vision to be the good news that we proclaim and to share in God's mission in the world he created, loves and redeems.



The Rt Revd Cherry Vann
Bishop of Monmouth





Diocesan Vision - Faith in our Future

The foundation of our vision is the Five Marks of Mission drawn up by the Anglican Communion.

They are:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The Five Marks of Mission are more than a mission statement for the Anglican Communion. They put into words themes that form branches through which we live out our Christian faith and they call on us, as disciples, to help God's church to grow.

As a foundation for our strategy, they focus our mission as a diocese and call us to be proactive, in each of our unique contexts, to grow God's Kingdom.

To help explore the Five Marks of Mission further within the Diocese of Monmouth, we have five key branches which actively embody their principles.

Our five branches of faith are:

Discipleship. Stewardship. Environment. Social Justice. Equality & Diversity.



The Five Branches

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, and so that whatever you ask in my name the father will give you. This is my command: Love each other." (John 15: 16,17)

The five branches interweave with each other and uplift our own personal relationship with God as well as our relationships with others and the world around us. Our understanding of the Christian faith, and what it means to be people who follow the way of Christ, will influence how we think and behave. As we engage with issues of social justice, equality & diversity, and the environment, our discipleship is enriched; deepening our understanding of God and his purposes for the world. This in turn will impact the ways in which we 'steward' all that God has given us.

Although the five branches could be divided into two categories – the more personal discipleship and stewardship, and the outward-looking environment, equality & diversity, and social justice – they are in fact interlinked.

The five branches will help us to build confidence in our faith and enable us to share that faith with others, to draw the church communities of our diocese together, and enable us to build links with individuals, groups and communities currently outside of the church, to fulfil God's call to love him with all that we have and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

As a church responding to the Great Commission of Jesus, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matthew 28:19), we can and must confidently share the good news with others. We do this through our worship, through our life together and through engaging with our communities on issues that are relevant to everyone. As a church, we have something to offer; born out of our faith and hope in Christ.

The branches are not intended to be restrictive, as each of our contexts is unique. The branches bridge these differences, encouraging our local church communities and ministry areas to focus on growth, and to have the confidence and resources to support that growth.

We don't engage with these branches with the expectation of any reward, but we do so with a real desire to love our neighbour and our environment as we have been called to do. As we live out the good news, we can be confident that people will respond and the church, far from facing inevitable decline, can begin to grow again. A desire to seek growth is essential in our churches and, whilst it is God who gives the growth, each of us has an important part to play. (1 Cor 3:7)

If we work together locally and across the diocese, encouraging and supporting one another, and, above all, trusting in God's faithfulness, we believe that growth can and will happen.



A Summary of the Five Branches of the Vision



Discipleship - "Growing more like Jesus" **Disgyblaeth** - "Tyfu mwy fel Iesu"

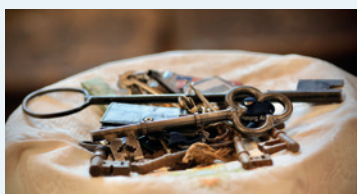
'Disciple' comes from the Greek word that means 'to learn'. Historically, the word recognises a pupil-teacher relationship. In the model of Jesus and his disciples we recognise how Jesus freely gave so much of himself to help his disciples to know and understand him better in order that they may:

- a Share with him the relationship he wants to have with them
- b Become the people he wants them to be
- c Share with others the good news of his saving love

Focusing on our desire to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom, we are seeking to encourage Christians to grow in their faith by strengthening their relationship with God and with one another. As we strive to grow as a church, we recognise this has to happen spiritually as well as numerically. We need to encourage people to engage more with the Bible by confidently reading and talking about it, to pray more comfortably, to recognise the joys and gift of fellowship, and to be equipped to tell others about their faith.

As we share the Good News, we pray for new relationships to be formed and for the church. This branch incorporates the first and the second of the Five Marks of Mission – to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom and to teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

Then Jesus said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it." (Luke 9: 23,24)



Stewardship – "Living as thankful and generous people" **Stiwardiaeth** – "Byw fel pobl ddiolchgar a hael"

God gives to his people and his whole church many gifts. We are not the owners of these gifts but guardians being called to use them wisely. Christian stewardship is, therefore, the Gospel in action and a good steward is one who has responded to the good news with all that they have and all that they are.

Stewardship is closely connected with the preaching of the Gospel and the response to that Gospel. One definition says, 'Stewardship is a response to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It can never be separated from the Good News itself.'

People often assume stewardship is about money, but that is only a part of it – it is our whole life which we are living out day by day. Good stewardship helps us to meet each of the Five Marks of Mission, particularly: To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom, through exhibiting a faithful and generous response to the gifts that God has given. We respond to human need through loving service by using our gifts wisely and generously for the good of those who are struggling in any way.

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)





Environment – “Caring for God’s creation” **Amgylchedd** – “Gofalu am greadigaeth Duw”

One of the major issues confronting the world today is the need to care for God’s creation. An offshoot from the branch of stewardship is the knowledge that the world is entrusted to our care. As people of faith we are called to care for what God has given us, and to use it wisely and fairly.

The fifth Mark of Mission is to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew

the life of the earth. This is a fundamental part of our calling as disciples, as we are called to love our neighbour, including our neighbours in other parts of the world where whole nations are already being adversely affected by climate change. We are beginning to realise just how much the way we live here, today, impacts others across the globe and we must consider how we might do things differently to help mitigate the effects of climate change. We need to think of our neighbours in future generations too, our children and grandchildren, and the kind of world they are going to inherit from us.

Care for God’s creation is not something that we can leave until tomorrow, it is a priority for us all today.

The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters. (Psalm 24: 1,2)



Social Justice - “Serving together to strengthen our communities” **Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol** - “Cydwasaethu i gryfhau ein cymunedau”

It is easy to care for those we know and love. But loving our neighbour means looking out for all, whoever they may be! This often calls us to look out for those who are vulnerable and in most need, serving our whole communities, and challenging injustice where it arises.

Many in our church family are involved in a variety of social projects, reaching out to those in need,

recognising that each person is created and loved by God. We are not only called to love our neighbour whoever that neighbour is, but we have an absolute duty to help them recognise their importance to God. Part of the way we do this is by trying to enable people to live life in its fullness. We may not change the world overnight, but we can change the world for some by helping to make their lives a little easier.

But, just as we have a duty to the individual, we also have a duty to challenge any ‘systems’ that bring about hardship. As well as addressing the immediate need, we must also seek to try and change the barriers that cause people to struggle. These elements make up two of the Marks of Mission: To respond to human need by loving service and to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation

You see that faith was active along with his works, and by works faith was brought to completion. (James 2:22)



Equality and Diversity – “Welcoming all” **Cydraddoldeb ac Amrywiaeth** – “Croesawu pawb”

Equality and Diversity is about recognising that all are made in the image of God. There is a danger when we think of equality and diversity that we focus on particular issues. Those issues

are incredibly important and sit within the wider consideration that we are thinking about in this branch. This branch calls us to recognise who are ‘missing’ from our church communities and to face the question of how we can build our common life, so we are truly welcoming to all people.

This is a challenging and wide-ranging topic but one that we have to address in order to faithfully proclaim the Gospel and ensure that the church will grow. Again, this branch can meet a number of the Marks of Mission but primarily meets our desire to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

Accept one another then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Romans 15:7)



Diocesan Goals

As a result of extensive discussion and reflection across the Diocese, we have come to the following 'Goals'. In a diverse diocese, context is everything. You know your communities, the stories, circumstances and individuals. So these goals are not a blueprint for action telling you what you should do. They are written to inspire you to think of ways in which you may engage and create a local vision that will make a real and lasting difference in your community. There may be projects or initiatives inspired by these goals for the whole ministry area to work on together. Others might lead to more locally-based activities focused on certain churches or peer groups. In addition, we have included some individual goals intended to influence and inspire small changes in personal day-to-day behaviour and actions.

As you work on creating your own vision in response to this overarching vision, you will hopefully feel assured to strive for growth both spiritually and numerically. The Marks of Mission, like these goals, stretch our comfort zone, but we are setting out this vision with confidence. We are looking to be ambitious, as we grow with faith in our future.

This vision is for everyone in our Diocese of Monmouth, whoever you are, however long you have been part of a church. As well as encouraging our churches to be a life-giving and transformative presence in our communities, we must also recognise the importance of seemingly small, prayerful actions. Our worshipping communities should encourage each of us to practise an everyday faith as the growth of our churches involves the commitment of us all.

Ultimately, we hope this vision will help you to feel excited. Words on paper don't change lives, but with God's help we, as a church, can. We know that God loves us and he loves the people and communities we serve, so let us show them that love.

Working together we can have
Faith in our Future.

Discipleship – "Growing more like Jesus"



- To embed a culture of discipleship throughout our Diocese
- To promote discipleship in our everyday faith
- To support and nurture our life-long discipleship journey to reflect God's calling and to enable discipleship groups to flourish
- To encourage a culture of invitation and growth through life events and occasions such as festival services
- To develop and support the journey of discipleship within our church and community schools, helping teachers to reflect on their vocation as educators



Stewardship – "Living as thankful and generous people"



- To teach and encourage a generous response to God's gifts, and share a message of God's unconditional and limitless love in all that we do
- To value people of all ages as our most precious assets; recognizing that all we have, and are, comes from God
- To appreciate that our church buildings can be a powerful tool for mission and welcome – as both sacred spaces and community spaces
- To develop an open, transparent, and generous approach to our finances



Environment – “Caring for God’s creation”



- To become a transformational influence within our communities and to be proactive in seeking to challenge climate injustice
- To mindfully consider the impact, as individuals and as a whole Church, of our decision-making on the environment – living out our commitment to God’s creation
- To promote and encourage the seasons of the church calendar to engage with our communities and highlight an awareness of God’s creation
- To develop the relationships and opportunities between our community groups, including schools, to engage with and learn from one another on local, national and global environmental issues



Social Justice – “Serving together to strengthen our communities”



- To prayerfully promote and demonstrate fairness as we share our faith through words and actions within our communities
- To challenge economic inequality and to speak out against injustice wherever it arises
- To develop congregations that know their community well and actively work with others in identifying and meeting needs
- To help our church and community schools explore through faith what it means to be ethical and informed citizens of Wales and the world



Equality and Diversity – “Welcoming all”



- To live out our faith expressing God’s love and welcome for all
- To reflect on those within our communities who are missing or excluded from our activities and commit to bringing about the change needed to engage with all
- To recognise the importance of equality and diversity in all spheres of church life and to mindfully consider the impact of our decision-making on accessibility and inclusion
- To celebrate the diversity within our church and community schools, and inspire and empower these to be places of sanctuary for all
- To develop a culture of openness and a willingness to learn from those who are different to us





Ministry Area Visions

Many of our ministry areas have already begun a programme of building a vision together; and the good practice amongst our ministry areas will be shared and celebrated.

It is the intention of our diocesan vision that our five branches should be embraced by each of our ministry areas who will be able to find their own ways to live out the goals of our diocesan vision.

Our newly-appointed Director of Mission (and Archdeacon of the Gwent Valleys) Archdeacon Stella, together with the Director of Ministry (and Archdeacon of Monmouth) Archdeacon Ian, will come alongside each of our ministry area councils over the next 12 months to further develop their visions: to explore ideas and projects that can be developed, to celebrate all that is good and to see ways in which we might resource your work to grow God's kingdom.

Each ministry area, and every church community, is a key element in our mission strategy as a diocese. It is at the local level that relationships are made and developed. It is in the ministry of local people and churches that new disciples are drawn in and nurtured. Part of the vision of ministry areas is to enable every church to be as strong as they can be, to be encouraged and supported, whilst remaining, or in some cases re-establishing themselves, as centres of their community.

What next?

This is an exciting time for the Diocese of Monmouth. We hope and believe that our vision will inspire confidence, encourage creativity and generate enthusiasm amongst the people of God and the churches they represent. This is not a document to be put on the shelf and forgotten about. It is a living document that we are committed to implementing in all of the wonderfully diverse churches and communities of our diocese.

Whatever the make-up of our worshipping communities, we each have a part to play.

We can all commit ourselves to **Growing** more like Jesus, **Living** as thankful and generous people, **Caring** for God's creation, **Serving** together to strengthen our communities and **Welcoming** all whoever they are.

It is God who gives the growth and with him all things are possible. As an Easter people, we trust in a God who is forever drawing us into new life and renewed hope. May we be faithful in praying, worshipping and working together; so that through our words and actions, others may come to know the One who has called us all out of darkness into his marvellous light.





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England and Wales.

Company no: 003489945
Charity no: 1067653