



Naming our Hopes

Bishop Stephen Conway



Naming our hopes

This document is a conversation with you about what a rich future might look like. Bishop Stephen invites your responses to his vision, so that together we will develop a vision that is not his or yours, but ours.

Begin by reading Luke 24.13-35

What had you hoped for?

What unfulfilled dreams about the Church do you still cherish?

When you have named these hopes and dreams, you will need to decide what to do with them. Lament, the longing to hold on to the past, the desire to recreate the past in the present and future are all natural responses. Jesus did not condemn the two disciples for walking away from Jerusalem. He simply joined them on their journey. But as he walked with them, expounded the scriptures, and then broke bread with them, their eyes were opened. What they saw was not disappointment and death, but hope to be proclaimed and new life to be lived.

Reflect on the prospects for new life, hope and growth in your situation and with your current resources.

In a time of prayer, name before God what you had hoped for and pray that he will walk with you into a new and vibrant future that is greater than you can imagine at this time.

Creating a culture and setting a tone

Reflect on the five Ps – Purpose, Passion, People, Place, Plan.

What makes this way of imagining a way of living out our calling different from a diocesan strategy? Why is that difference important?

Read Matthew 5.13-15

These are vivid metaphors drawn out of a culture which prized spices because they were expensive and used them sparingly, a culture which lived by the light of oil lamps and candles, not the bright illumination of electricity. But in a world which did not know light pollution, a small light could be seen from a long distance.

Inhabiting the culture

Bishop Stephen asks us to imagine how we might radiate the love and light of Christ in mission, example and engagement. We might start with the Five Marks of Mission which the Anglican Communion has defined as a blueprint for living in the world:

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| • To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom | TELL |
| • To teach, baptise and nurture new believers | TEACH |
| • To respond to human need by loving service | TEND |
| • To seek to transform unjust structures of society | TRANSFORM |
| • To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation
and sustain and renew the life of the earth | TREASURE |

You can follow Bishop Stephen's development of these ideas in a video on Mission, available to view on the Diocesan website.

Go to www.ely.anglican.org/news_events/youtube.html

- Reflect on other practical ways in which you are, and might become, salt and light in your communities and further afield.



Purposeful engagement, purposeful investment

All we can do, locally and as members of the whole body of the Church, requires investment of time and talent. Nor should we expect to do this on our own.

- How does your benefice work with local voluntary organisations, councils and businesses to enrich the quality of life in your area? How are you working with ecumenical partners to achieve projects which could not be tackled alone?

We are also asked to be serious about money. Bishop Stephen writes, ‘We need to refresh our approach to giving which will make new mission possible. When I arrived last year, I introduced three goals for our parishes: to become self-sustaining, contributing and investing’.

Being part of a Church that must pay for its ministry has implications for all of us. What will it mean for your parish(es)?

- Consider how you might become self-sustaining. How might you grow from there to contributing to the work of places less well-resourced, and ultimately to investing in a diocesan mission fund that will ensure that there is ministry in places which will never be able to meet the real costs of maintaining a priest?

People fully alive as God’s companions

We are called into relationship with God and with each other by the gift of baptism.

It takes a conscious change of culture to move from ‘helping the vicar’ to recognising our call and the gifts God has given us to respond to that call. Only then can we begin to imagine a future where there will be more ministry, not less.

- Continue to reflect on the kind of ministry your congregation and community need. Does it need to be exercised by an ordained person? Could someone else do it? Could you see a role for a stipendiary specialist post e.g. a deanery schools’ minister, a youth missionary, or a community worker?



Places — when & where we worship — how we use our buildings

Bishop Stephen has challenged us to think about a different pattern of ministry in the future. Regular times of worship will be the foundation of this. That is a pattern as old as the history of our relationship with God. The Psalmist says, 'Seven times a day will I praise you.' Jesus went regularly to the synagogue (**Luke 4.16-22**). The fledgling Church in Jerusalem met for the breaking of the bread and the prayers (**Acts 2.41-42**). Not all regular acts of worship will be services of Holy Communion. Nor will services of the word always be led by a priest.

Yet the eucharist continues to be at the heart of our Christian identity as the place where we gather in obedience to the command of Jesus, hear again the story of our salvation, bless bread and wine, and rejoice in Jesus's presence with us. There should always be a 'hub' within a benefice where the eucharist will be celebrated regularly at a time when the greatest number of people can be there. In some places, this may not be on a Sunday morning.

- Reflect on the importance of having worship at the same time in a benefice each Sunday, even if the venue changes from week to week.
- Discuss the practical steps towards ensuring that elderly and disabled people, those without cars, and children whose parents are not churchgoers, are able to attend worship in a church that is not within walking distance. Can you arrange a car pool? Who will take responsibility for this?

As well as being places of worship, your churches have the potential to be community assets.

- Discuss what facilities not currently available in your community, or under threat, could find a new home in the church. What would be required to effect these changes? Who can you engage in conversation to discover what might be possible? How would you go about discussing your ideas with your Parish or Town Council?

Visit this website for useful guidance on caring for and developing the use of your church building:

www.churchcare.co.uk

Plans

We hope that you keep your Mission Action Plan up to date. It is not Bishop Stephen's intention to tell you what to do. This document and the discussion material aim to provide a starting point for the development of your own plans for a future which is imaginable, sustainable, and full of promise.

Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. . . I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. (John 10.7 & 10)



