

**DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD****DIOCESAN SYNOD**

Title: **TRANSFORMING PRESENCE**

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The purpose of this paper is to set out some strategic priorities for the diocese for the next fifteen years.

As well as being a discussion paper for Synod, it is also written as a first draft of a paper and study guide that I want to send to every parish and ministry in the diocese, so that there can be a continuing and widespread discussion of how we better become the church God wants us to be, and are better able to serve God's world.

This paper is itself the product of a process of discussion and consultation of which we have all been part of. But I am also hoping for a high level of agreement so that we can, as a diocese, unite around these priorities and begin to work out what they will mean for us in practise.

The motion for the Synod is thus:

That this Synod:

- a) welcome and support the priorities set out in the paper *Transforming Presence*;
- b) invite the Diocese to gather on 21 January 2012 to discuss these priorities;
- c) ask the Bishop's Staff, deaneries, benefices, parishes, Diocesan Boards and Councils to engage with the questions for reflection and action set out in this paper and, where appropriate, to bring back to Synod specific recommendations to develop these areas of our life; and
- d) commend the paper for study in all the diocese.

+Stephen

# Transforming Presence

## Strategic priorities for the Diocese of Chelmsford

### **Our Passion:**

Our Passion is **Jesus** - Proclaiming and Living out God's love for all people

### **Our Aspiration:**

To be a Transforming Presence in every Community,  
Open and welcoming to all, and serving all

### **Our Resources:**

Faithful people, Prayer and worship, Visionary leadership, Liberating gifts

What will the diocese of Chelmsford look like in 2025?

The answer to this question depends to a large extent on decisions we make now.

For too long strategic planning in the church has been limited to time scales too short to initiate meaningful change. We expect too much to happen too soon and end up either disappointed or dis-illusioned.<sup>1</sup> Instead of a five year plan we need a fifteen year plan. We need to reimagine what the church could look like in 2025, and then work back to discern what decisions we need to make now and in the coming years to make this a reality.

This reimagining also needs to be the work of the whole church. Of course it is the responsibility of bishops and synods to lead the church, but this work is too important for it not to be shared with the whole people of God.

Consequently, since coming to the diocese I have been engaged in a listening exercise to discern what might be the key themes for the future mission of God's church in Essex and East London, and what the levers of change might be to enable this hoped-for development and growth to happen. This has involved a visit to each of our 26 deaneries; residential discussions with the Bishop's staff and with the Heads of Department and Officers of the diocese; an away day with the Bishop's Council, as well as other meetings and discussions with individuals and groups. I am also aware of the work I am building upon. Hence the vision for the diocese remains the same, but how we inhabit and develop it changes.

Four key themes have emerged. These were presented to the Diocesan Synod on March 2011 and have subsequently been the subject of much discussion and prayer across the diocese. Although these are things that have my full support, it is important to note that they have arisen from a conversation with the whole diocese, and build on the vision and

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<sup>1</sup> The reason we have been stymied by short term planning is complex. Previous bishops have only stayed comparatively short periods of time themselves. It is hard for any of us to see beyond the next few years. The pressures to keep the show on the road are immense. However, 47% of our stipendiary clergy will have retired in ten years' time. This alone should help concentrate our thinking. Change is going to come whether we like it or not. Our challenge is to be the master of this change, discerning where God might be leading us.

priorities, particularly the centrality of proclaiming Christ and the need for a the church to be a transforming presence, that are already part of our agreed mission statement.

## **I. Inhabiting the world distinctively**

The Christian church is the Body of Christ in the world and each individual Christian a member of it, each called and equipped by God for ministry and service.

In **Romans 12** Paul speaks about the new life in Christ describing the members of the church as being “one body in Christ” (Romans 12.5) He goes on: “We are members of one another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given us.” (Romans 12. 5b & 6) Taking up this same theme in **1 Corinthians 12. 12-31** he speaks about the importance, inter-dependence and mutuality of the different parts of the body. For instance: “The eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of you” (1 Cor. 12. 21). In Romans 12 from verse 9 onwards he also describes the marks of true Christian living and discipleship.

Read these passages through. What do they tell you about the new life we should be living and how we must honour each other and work together in ministry? What changes would we need to make to our lives as individual Christian in order to reflect this vision of the new humanity we have in Christ? What should our church be doing to help people grow in this sort of transparent Christian living? How might an agreed rule of and pattern of life help us?

It therefore follows that every Christian has a ministry (more of this later) and that every Christian should live a distinctive life. The way we inhabit the world should be different. This does not mean that we are somehow better than other people. It is manifestly true that there are all sorts of good and generous people who are not yet part of the Christian community. But it does mean that there should be something distinctive and attractive about the way we live our lives. Conversely, if our lives are indistinguishable from anyone else’s it is little wonder that people conclude that the Christian faith is our hobby; a fascinating and exhausting pastime, but not the life changing transformation that is evident in the lives we lead Monday to Saturday.

By 2025 this must have changed. And without this inner transformation no other worthwhile change will happen at all, and we will simply carry on managing our decline as gracefully as possible.

Of course inner transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be achieved by our hard work alone. But just as Elijah dug trenches and made preparations before he prayed that God would answer his prayer and accept his offering (See 1 Kings 18. 30-39) so there are certain things we need to do in order to create the fertile ground in which the Spirit can bring our faith to life, enabling us to live out our faith and give a reason for the hope that is in us. First among these is prayer. More than anything else, we need to place a new priority on becoming a people of prayer, whose daily lives are formed and punctuated by our relationship with God in Jesus Christ. This is what it means when our vision statement say our passion is Jesus. He is the centre of our lives, and this new life in Christ is nurtured and shaped by a life of prayer and a commitment to worship and the discipleship that follows from it.

Therefore – and before anything else – these things must become our priorities and must be reflected in the work that is done at every level of diocesan life: in every church school, in every parish community, in every chaplaincy –

- Teaching people to pray
- Encouraging a much greater biblical and theological literacy
- Developing a diocesan rule of life so that there is a unity between us over the sort of lives we should be leading as God's people in this place and some sort of mutual accountability. This rule will not only be about our prayer – though it will be about this - but will encompass other aspects of Christian living such as giving, participation in worship, ministry in our daily lives and also the way we inhabit the planet itself, including issues of ecological, social and political well-being. It will form a basis of expectation about what it means to be a Christian in this diocese.

**Questions for reflection and action:**

**1. For individuals, parishes, schools and groups across the diocese –**

- ***When it comes to living distinctively and developing spirituality how could I begin to think and act and pray differently in my context?***
- ***What implications might there be for the Christian communities of which I am a part? (e.g. home group, leadership team, church council, church school, Christian Union ...)***
- ***What resources could I/we draw on to help?***
- ***What objectives could we set?***

**2. For Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Council, Bishop's Staff and other Boards and councils –**

- ***Could the Diocesan Spirituality Group put together a range of resources to help parishes teach people to pray?***
- ***Could the Ministry and Mission groups explore ways of enabling biblical and theological education to develop across the diocese and come back to Synod with recommendations?***
- ***Could the Bishop's Council convene a group to produce a simple Diocesan Rule of Life and, with the support of the Director of Communications, a communications strategy?***
- ***How can we ensure that our voice is heard in the public square?***
- ***As well as a place of retreat, could Pleshey become a centre for teaching about prayer and spirituality?***

## 2. Evangelising effectively

For too long the Church of England has either considered evangelism something that other churches do (before a few lucky souls graduate to our obviously superior brand of Christianity!) or simply waited till people come through the door, placing far too much confidence in the hope that our traditional ministry of hatching, matching and despatching will bring people into the church. Of course some people do join us through all of these routes, and it is important to offer these ministries as faithfully and generously as we can. But I have increasingly begun to wonder if it might be better if no one joined us this way. At least it would focus attention on the woeful inadequacies of this as the only approach to evangelism.

So let us begin from first principles. God is the Evangelist. God longs for reconciliation with the whole of the creation and with every person on earth. His great love for the world and his purposes for the world have been revealed in Jesus Christ, and through his death and resurrection Jesus has already done everything that is necessary for us to enjoy eternal life with God. The ministry of evangelism is our sharing with others the good news of what God has already done in Christ and the transformation it can bring to the world and to our lives here on earth and in eternity.

Luke's account of Jesus encountering the two disciples on the Emmaus road on the evening of the first Easter day provides us with a rich and challenging story about evangelism which is hugely relevant for the situation we face today. It offers a model for evangelism which is perfectly in tune with our Anglican and pastoral models of ministry. Jesus meets them where they are but Luke tells us that "their eyes were kept from recognising him" (Luke 24. 16). He joins their conversation and walks with them while they are going in the wrong direction. He listens to them before he speaks. His first question is one of open vulnerability to their agenda: "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" (Luke 24.17). In response to their questions and accounts of what has happened he then breaks open the scriptures, explaining to them "the things about himself" (Luke 14. 27). Arriving at Emmaus he "walks ahead as if he is going on" (Luke 24. 28). But they invite him in, and as he breaks the bread their eyes are opened. They then rush back to Jerusalem. They can't wait to share with others the good news they have received.

Read **Luke 24. 13-35**. What does it tell us about how we might receive and share the Christian faith? How can we meet people where they are? How can we ask the right questions and listen before we speak, rather than always being so keen on getting our agenda on the table straightaway? How might we develop relationships that enable us to open up the scriptures to people and help them re-examine their own experiences and assumptions in the light of scripture? Do we recognise that God is the evangelist? God is the one who opens eyes. This is not something we can control or manipulate. But it is a ministry which requires being a faithful, good companion on the different roads of people's lives. And how can we ensure that those of us who have received faith are eager to share it with others? And if we are not, could it be that we need to receive it afresh ourselves?

In the end each individual will have to make their own decision about whether to accept and receive what God offers us in Christ, but it is the responsibility of the Church to issue the invitation: "As the Father sent me, so I send you" says Jesus on the first Easter Day (John 20. 21). We call this ministry evangelism, which is best understood as our sharing in the ministry of Jesus to make God's offer of reconciliation and new life available to everyone. In recent years we have re-discovered that for most people becoming a Christian is like a journey. This changes the way we approach evangelism. For the most part it will mean accompanying people on that journey. This is another reason why the story of Jesus on the Emmaus Road is so instructive. It involves specific ministries (such as a place of nurture

where people can find out about Christian faith), but is also shaped enormously by the witness of individual Christians as they walk with others in their individual daily lives.

There are many different ways in which all this can be done, but in every case it must involve an intentional desire to share with others the good things that we have received from Christ.

There is no guarantee that as a result of this the Church will grow. Similarly, because God is the Evangelist and Lord of the Church, the church may well grow without our efforts or even in spite of them. Nevertheless, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that where a church gives itself to an intentional ministry of evangelism then people do come to faith. We therefore commit ourselves to be faithful in this ministry not because it is a recipe for success, but because it is of the essence of what it means to be faithful to Christ.

By 2025 we need to have become a church where evangelism is in our DNA and where we have learned ways of doing evangelism that work in the different and varied and fast changing contexts that make up our diocese.

In order for this to happen we need to develop the following priorities and also begin to set ourselves some bold targets -

- Every benefice should have at least one diocesan trained Evangelist and preferably a group of people around them who, under the leadership of the Incumbent and the PCC, are responsible for enabling evangelistic ministry to happen in their locality.
- Every benefice should have a place of nurture (that is a ministry given to enable people who are enquiring about Christian faith to find out more.)<sup>2</sup> It should become as normal as running a Lent course.
- Every benefice should regularly put on evangelistic events to enable people to have some experience of Christian community and be challenged by the Christian faith.<sup>3</sup> It should become as normal as holding a Summer Fete or a Harvest Supper.
- Clergy and lay training in the diocese must prioritise evangelism as a core skill that every Christian leader must understand and be ready to lead in. This does not mean that every priest or lay leader will themselves be an Evangelist; but it does mean that every one of them needs to be a leader in mission.
- Training needs to be offered in every deanery for people to be able to talk with confidence about their faith. It should be as easy and natural to talk about Jesus as it is to talk about football or Eastenders.

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<sup>2</sup> In the language of this paper an *Alpha* or *Emmaus* course is a nurture course. However 'a course' is not the only way of nurturing enquirers in the faith, even though it is one of the best tried and tested ways of doing it, proven to be effective in recent years. Indeed, research has clearly indicated that every church that has put on a nurture course like *Alpha* or *Emmaus* more than twice has seen people come to faith. Yet only 40% of churches in the Church of England run nurture courses.

<sup>3</sup> An evangelistic event does not need to be a large event; neither does it need to be run by people from outside of the benefice. Often the best evangelistic events are small, do it yourself, lay led affairs, often happening in people's homes, but providing an opportunity for those who are currently outside the Christian community to find out something about the Christian faith, meet with some Christian people and make a first tentative step towards knowing Christ.

## Questions for reflection and action:

### **1. For individuals, parishes, schools and groups across the diocese –**

- **When it comes to developing a ministry of evangelism how could I begin to think and act and pray differently in my context?**
- **What implications might there be for the Christian communities of which I am a part? (e.g. home group, leadership team, church council, church school, Christian Union ...)**
- **What resources could I/we draw on to help?**
- **What objectives could we set?**

### **2. For Diocesan Synod, Deanery Synods, Bishop's Council, Bishop's Staff and other Boards and councils –**

- **As we begin the next round of deanery planning, could deanery plans include details of how benefices propose to develop evangelistic ministry and look towards ensuring, wherever possible, there is a lay evangelist and an evangelism team in each benefice?**
- **The work of the diocese at every level needs a new and renewed emphasis on teaching about and equipping people for the ministry of evangelism.**
- **We need plans, targets, resources and training for more lay evangelists and for evangelism training in every parish and deanery. How will we do this?**

### **3. Serving with accountability**

Making spirituality and evangelism two clear priorities inevitably begs the question, what should the other priorities be? Or put it another way: is there a bottom line? Is there a set of ministries and activities that we should expect to find in every Christian community, whatever its context and circumstance, and about which we should hold ourselves accountable? Is there a rule of life for the local Christian community? Are there a set of ingredients that constitute a faithful, healthy Christian community?

In a single verse **Acts 2.42** describes the life of the very first Christian community. It is a community which is faithful to Christ. It is a community that is growing as the Lord adds more people to its number. It is a life of clarity, integrity and mutual accountability. The apostles teaching, fellowship with each other, the breaking of bread and the life of prayer constitute and characterise the life they have in Christ.

How are these things evident in the life of your community? What else would we add to this list? Or put another way, what aspects of the apostles teaching need to go alongside these other three basic priorities of our life together?

I believe it would be helpful for the diocese if we could agree on this. Just as we take it for granted that every church will be holding services every Sunday, what else should we take for granted? And just as if one church decided to stop worshipping and cancelled all its

services you would expect the bishop and the diocese to hold that church to account, how might we hold ourselves mutually accountable over an agreed core of ministries and activities which we hold to be essential to our faithful witness to Christ?

There has already been lots of discussion about this, and although most people agree on the attractiveness of working this way, actual agreement on the ingredients themselves is more elusive. There is a danger of over simplifying the ministry of the church and reducing it to a number of tickable bullet points; but an equal danger is over complicating the task and hemming ourselves in with a thousand sub clauses. Therefore what is probably needed is a process as well as a list.

Discussions are already beginning to see how the annual Archdeacon's Visitation might be developed to become the place where this sort of accountability to each other is expressed. To a certain extent this is already happening, but there is a definite attraction in taking something we are already doing and seeing how it can deliver more. Therefore the list of ingredients might be better understood as a list of questions which relate to a sort of health-check of the local church.

Let me stress again: for this to work there needs to be agreement – agreement about the process and agreement about the questions. I will leave the process to the group that I hope we will set up to take this forward. But the questions that are emerging are these –

- What are you doing to teach people to pray?
- What are you doing to teach people the faith and help them in their discipleship?
- What are you doing to share the faith with others and what have the results been in the past year? And does your church have a place of nurture?
- What are you doing to nurture and develop the ministry of the whole people of God including enabling people to come forward for authorised lay and ordained ministry?
- How is your church a blessing to the community you serve? And how is it witnessing to God's kingdom of justice and peace?
- What are you doing to ensure your church is a place of safety and welcome for all ages and for people of all backgrounds?
- How are you working in partnership with other Christian communities in your locality and at the diocesan, national and global levels?

Of course there could be more, but these seven questions seem to represent some sort of agreed bottom line that our churches should be places of prayer; places where people learn about the faith and are active in discipleship; places where there is a ministry of evangelism; places where ministry is shared and developed; places which serve the local community; places that are inclusive and welcome to all; places which are seeking the unity of all God's church and working with their neighbours locally and globally.

The way the questions are worded is designed to start a conversation. There won't be forms to fill in nor boxes to tick, but at the end of the conversation there would be agreement on certain priorities for the coming year, and an expectation that something now has to be done about it. If this happens alongside the annual Visitation where other matters

of church life are discussed and inspected there is every hope that, in time, we might develop a culture of expectation and accountability where everyone knows that to be a Christian community in this diocese requires us to develop these ministries, activities and attitudes. Much of this is already happening. It would be beneficial to all of us if it happened more. The gospel of Jesus Christ is far too important and precious for any of us to think we can go it alone. It is also worth noting that at the Bishop's Council away day in March this was the other recommendation that received the most support.

This is a culture change for the church, there is no point in pretending otherwise, but it seems to me to be one that is cried out for, and which is consonant with the need for us to live a distinctive Christian life as individuals and as communities of faith.

By 2025 we need to have become a church where there is real clarity about what it means to be a faithful Christian community. Just as worship is expressed in a huge variety of ways, so these ministries will also be expressed differently according to the circumstances, context, personality and ethos of each community. But we must move to a situation where it is no longer possible or acceptable for a church to say, for instance, 'we don't do children or young people' or 'evangelism isn't our thing.' Each community will, in its own way, be developing a common set of ministries so that we might be a church that is faithful to its apostolic calling.

And if, as your bishop, I am asking that every priest and every parish be held accountable for the ministry that God calls us to, then I too except to be held accountable myself. With my colleagues in the Bishop's staff I will ensure that each of us has an annual ministerial development review and that we are reporting regularly to Synod about progress towards this vision. It is Christ himself who entrusts his mission to us, and it is mutual accountability for the sake of the gospel that I seek. It is about our faithfulness.

### **Questions for reflection and action:**

#### ***1. For individuals, parishes, schools and groups across the diocese –***

- ***If we conducted a health-check of our community based upon these seven questions where would our strengths and weaknesses be ? What needs addressing and developing?***

#### ***2. For Diocesan Synod, Deanery Synods, Bishop's Council, Bishop's Staff and other Boards and councils –***

- ***Could the Bishop's staff/Bishop's Council set up an advisory group to work with the Archdeacons in order that their Visitations to all parishes could become a means of holding ourselves accountable to an agreed list of core ingredients that we believe constitute the life of a healthy, faithful Christian community?***

## 4. Ministry

The final question is this: what sort of ministry do we need in order to become this sort of church?

There are many constraints upon us. 47% of our stipendiary clergy will retire in the next ten years. The numbers of those coming forward for ordination is worryingly low, the age profile worryingly high. The future health of the church requires us to have a good number of people for whom the ordained ministry of the church will be their life's work. The main reason we have asked deaneries to think about cutting stipendiary posts is not inability to pay for the clergy, but the ticking time bomb of clergy retirements.

However, asking people to do this in a five to seven year time scale has meant that many deaneries have seen themselves as a special case, and argued for cuts happening elsewhere; or have simply planned ahead on the basis of who is going to retire next. What we have not yet done is any serious re-imagining of what the ministry of the church might look like.

Here are some basic principles which, with our agreement, could form the basis of a more radical forward thinking look at the ministry of God's church in our diocese –

- Ministry belongs to the whole people of God. Every person, because of their baptism, has a ministry. We must nurture an expectation that every Christian gives expression to this ministry in their daily life and in their participation in the life of the Church.
- Ordained stipendiary ministers will be thinner on the ground in the future. We need to agree what figure we are working to, communicate that figure effectively to the deaneries, and then give each of them a target to work to. If at the same time we allocate a number of stipendiary posts (say five to ten in each Episcopal Area) as Mission posts, this can give strategic flexibility at a bigger level, allow new initiatives to flourish and ease situations of painful transition.
- These stipendiary priests will need to be more *episcopal* in the way they understand and express their ministry. This is not new. As the Institution Service reminds us, the Church of England has always believed that the Incumbent in the parish has a share with the bishop in the ministry “which is yours and mine”. Now they will become much more obviously those who have oversight of the ministry of the church in a cluster of rural communities, or in a town or suburb. Their role will be to lead and facilitate ministry in that area, not provide all that ministry themselves. They will, of course, be involved; but their main task will be to animate the ministry of the whole church.
- For this to work, there also needs to be a huge flourishing of authorised lay ministry (especially youth and children's workers, authorised preachers, catechists, pastors and evangelists) and ordained self-supporting ministry. And of course we already have many Readers. Alongside some priests being more episcopal we need many others who will be more *diaconal*, taking on a pastoral, catechetical and evangelistic ministry at the local level. Each local church needs to have some sort of ministry

team and, preferably, some minister to whom they identify as the worship leader and pastor of that community. Sometimes this will be a lay person, such as a Reader, and we should encourage lay led worship and ministry in many of our churches. In many cases I hope it will be an ordained self-supporting minister, so that the sacramental life of our church continues to flourish. But where there are lay led services of the Word it will still be possible within the cluster of communities under the oversight of the (probably) stipendiary priest, for there to be regular Sunday by Sunday Eucharistic provision. Some SSM priests will themselves be the leaders ('episcopal' priests) in these benefices.

In **Ephesians 4** Paul says that "each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4. 7). Building on the same image of the church as Christ's body and of the different parts we are all called to play, we are told that "some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4. 11-12). We need to ensure that the leadership in the diocese includes the apostolic and the prophetic as well as the pastoral and the catechetical. We have already mentioned the need for evangelists. But this leadership exists to equip and encourage the ministry of everyone.

Read Ephesians 4. 1-16. How are the gifts Paul mentions evident in the church community where you live and serve? What other ministries are needed? How is the leadership of the church equipping the ministry of everyone, especially in their daily lives?

By 2025 we need to have reached a place of sustainability where we have found a way of maintaining and growing the church with less stipendiary clergy but with a growing number of other ministers. We need to be clear about how much this costs and about how many new ministers we need to select and train each year. We need an end to that debilitating and depressing approach to ministry where it feels like an endless game of knock out whist: every time the cards are dealt there is one less. We must transcend this situation, by looking slightly further ahead and developing a bold ministry plan that is based on sustainability and growth. We must stop spreading diminishing resources more thinly. This has been a disaster for clergy morale and a massive disincentive to giving. (After all it is the laity of the church who pays for our ministry, and why should they give to an organisation which plans so haphazardly and with short term expediency as the only apparent driver of change.) Instead, we must use our resources differently and plan for growth. If we fail, let us fail with a gospel of expectation on our lips.

Crucially, we need to close the gap between the leadership of the diocese and the parishes. This will mean looking again at the role of Area/Rural Dean, and also considering the role of our Archdeacons and whether we need more of them. An increase in self-supporting ministry and authorised lay ministry will create a growing workload of training and oversight. Effective strategic leadership at the deanery and archdeaconry level will be vital. This needs to be much closer to the life of the church in the parishes than it is at the moment. The Archdeacon of Harlow is already chairing a group to look into this and crucially important proposals are being brought to the Diocesan Synod for discussion and approval.

### **Questions for reflection and action:**

#### **1. For individuals, parishes, schools, groups and leaders across the diocese –**

- **When it comes to developing the ministry of the church, which includes nurturing more vocations to authorised lay and ordained ministry, how could I begin to think and act and pray differently in my context?**
- **What implications might there be for the Christian communities of which I am a part? (e.g. home group, leadership team, church council, church school, Christian Union ...)**
- **What resources could I/we draw on to help?**
- **What objectives could we set?**

#### **2. For Diocesan Synod, Deanery Synods, Bishop's Council, Bishop's Staff and other Boards and councils –**

- **Could the Director for Ministry and Mission bring a Ministry Strategy Paper to Synod outlining new targets for stipendiary numbers and other proposals of how we can develop a new approach to sustaining and growing lay and ordained ministry across the diocese; and to work with the Finance Committee on how best to resource this ministry in to the future?**
- **Could the Diocesan Director of Ordinand's Team work with Vocations Advisers with the aim of increasing the number of those offering themselves for ordained ministry each year?**

### **Finally...**

There remain all sorts of other issues that this paper could have addressed. However, these are the priorities that have emerged, and they set an agenda for the diocese. I believe that if we address them faithfully then God will bless his church, and guided by the Spirit we will see people come to Christ and our impact in the world increased.

On 21 January 2012 one thousand people from across the diocese will be gathering in Brentwood to discuss some of these priorities and take this agenda forward. But we are also looking into other ways of collecting feedback and responses from across the diocese. I also invite each deanery to devote time in 2012 to discuss this paper and the responses of its parishes.

The only other thing I need to mention again is worship. Because this paper does not speak about worship directly it is important to point out that worship remains a central priority for our life in Christ. Indeed, it is what characterises Christian life. We are made for community with God, and through Christ that community is made possible. It is in worship, particularly through the sacramental life of the church, that this covenant relationship is celebrated and nurtured. It will, therefore, be part of any individual's rule of life, and central

to the agenda of any church. It is also worth pointing out that in today's culture worship will be one of the best ways of evangelising. We have seen this in fresh expressions, in imaginative alternative worship as well as in the continuing growth of cathedral congregations.

I commend this paper and the priorities and recommendations it contains for further study and prayer across our diocese, and for the support of this Synod.

**Motion:**

**That this Synod:**

- a) **welcome and support the priorities set out in the paper *Transforming Presence*;**
- b) **invite the Diocese to gather on 21 January 2012 to discuss these priorities;**
- c) **ask the Bishop's Staff, deaneries, benefices, parishes, Diocesan Boards and Councils to engage with the questions for reflection and action set out in this paper and, where appropriate, to bring back to Synod specific recommendations to develop these areas of our life; and**
- d) **commend the paper for study in all the diocese.**

+Stephen Chelmsford