

June 2009

Dear colleague

I'm delighted to be sending you your 'Living Faith' resource pack.

'Living Faith for the Future' is the result of conversations that took place around the diocese throughout last year. The original document went through a number of revisions as together, members of our parishes, deaneries, boards and committees worked to find the best way of creating a framework for the future. The final version was approved by diocesan synod in November 2008 as the vision for the Diocese of Oxford for the next five years.

I've always been clear in my own mind that the health of our diocese lies not at the centre, but in the vitality and imagination of the local parish or arena of ministry. What we have attempted to do with 'Living Faith' is to provide a vision, and a set of priorities, to help you frame your thinking as you live out your faith together.

I wanted to make sure that every parish had the opportunity to make use of the 'Living Faith' vision. In this bag you will find a poster, a short DVD, a 'Health Check' resource pack, a Bible Study guide, leaflets and calling cards. They are all intended to help you explore and make sense of 'Living Faith'.

The **leaflet** offers a beginner's guide to 'Living Faith'. The **DVD** explores the five priorities, with snapshots from around the diocese. You may like to show it in a PCC meeting, during a service or in small groups – indeed anywhere where it might stimulate further prayerful thinking about your mission.

The '**Health Check**' offers a useful tool for assessing where you are now, and where you'd like to travel as a church. The **Bible Study** guide is designed to help you dig deeper into the theology that underpins 'Living Faith'. And the little **calling cards** are designed to be carried in a wallet or purse, or stuck to a computer or fridge – anywhere where they might serve as a useful reminder of our five priorities.

Please also refer to the 'Living Faith' pages on the diocesan website for the basic **policy paper**, together with lots of illustrations of possible actions based on these five priorities, to stimulate your local thinking and planning.

Please share the resources with your congregations as you think best. If you run out of materials, speak to the Communications Team (01865 208225) who will do their best to help. I'm intending that there will be a continuing roll-out of resources, material, ideas, workshops, training and encouragement over the years ahead to keep the 'Living Faith for the Future' vision fresh and lively. There will be archdeaconry evenings in the autumn to develop the ideas further. Please note the dates now: 5 October (Buckingham); 6 October (Oxford); 23 October (Berkshire).

The goal is growth - unashamedly. In a sense growth is what you think it is! Growth in numbers, in prayerfulness, in social engagement, in Christian maturity and confidence. But we want to grow the Kingdom, not manage decline.

Thank you for all you're doing to share God's love in so many exciting ways. There's an amazing amount of wonderful work going on in this diocese. 'Living Faith for the Future' is simply intended to provide a supportive framework for local initiative around common priorities. So let's paint something beautiful for God in the diocese of Oxford!

Yours in friendship, and in Christ,

+John