

Questions and Hopes for the Six Working Groups: from Diocesan Synod 17th November 2017

The 'main' question for each group is shown in **bold** at the start of each group section. Below that is the complete list of questions and hopes generated by the groups. Some of the larger groups were split in two: hence the 'A' and 'B' designation.

Group 1: Make a bigger difference in the world and serve the poor

Recognising poverty comes in many forms, how will we know that we are truly serving the poor by being with and not being to? And, who is the poor in our diocese? What is the flexible and radical way we can use our resources to serve the poor and how will we then work with others to achieve that goal?

Questions for the Working Group (1A)

How will we know that we are truly serving the poor?

I would like the group to consider how we look at the parish system in terms of our resources in serving the: spiritual poor; Financially poor; and the purpose[?] poor.

How can the working group help to give churches the courage to preach a gospel for the (literally) poor.

How can we order our ministry so that it is resourced and resolved to serve by "being with" ahead of "doing for".

Spiritual poverty. Being with not doing for. How do we discern?

More interfaith needed, friendly discussion between Christian and Muslim.

Recognising that poverty comes in many forms how will we know that we are truly serving the poor?

How do we define poor? What specifically can the church do?

Climate change.

Changing attitudes in the society.

Less quarrelling and war.

Parish system, helping spiritually poor.

Serving the poor as a priority.

Make Community Action Central and make it visible.

Theology - ground it.

How will we know that we are truly serving the poor? And who are they?

Hopes (1A)

That the diocese would visibly place community action (including that already being undertaken) throughout the diocese at the centre of its witness to the Christian faith for the whole population of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire and provide coordination and Inspiration to take it forward in the name of Christ.

I hope that this working group would place climate change at the very top of their agenda.

Hope that a greater understanding of Justice will come about in terms of: Tithing to worthwhile projects at home and abroad; the amount of money being spent on ourselves as churches.

Since the church and church people cannot itself feel all the gaps in social provision, I hope what will come out of the Working Group is ideas and energy to influence and shape the general (political) consensus in society. How we can help form opinion?

I hope for a church which, by resourcing and design, values serving the poor ("ourselves first among them") above valuing tall buildings on a Sunday.

That it will develop a theologically grounded plan for significant engagement with the poor in our Diocese. With practical encouragement to all churches to take this seriously.

I have a problem with the word "serving the poor". How do we define poor: material, spiritual, both? How have people arrived in poverty? What specifically can the church do to lift people out of poverty (not the same surely, as politicians/economists). Many so-called "white middle class" people are in desperate poverty of spirit.

Generosity, to all church or no. Interdenominational unity, donation to food banks.

Questions for the Working Group (1B)

Who is "the poor"?

Sees the most radical and flexible way to use our resources to serve them?

How do we work with and through others to achieve these goals?

How we prepared to ... illegible text ... and model differences we want to see?

Why do we need clergy?

How can we stay faithful to our deep convictions while engaging with those who don't share them?

Recognising the diversity of our Diocese

Engage with SODC, Oxford County Council etc. on the problems of the poor.

How can we open our eyes to where the need is particularly locally?

Do we really understand the needs and limitations of poor parishes and why are we nervous of doing something radical to meet their needs?

“Making a difference” cannot be politically neutral. How do we raise this across the political spectrum?

How can we be as flexible and responsive and generous with our resources to enable radical ideas?

Hopes (1A)

That we will look beyond around concerns.

Nationally, pushing back the media narrative about the church.

That this diocese can take a lead in showing how the love Christ has for us can be spread to all – wherever, whoever, across colour, Creed etc.

We need to hold agencies to account at national and diocesan level, which will allow us to be nearer the needs of the poor.

Hope that we engage as a church with government policy and the agencies who administer to the ‘poor’ in our society.

Hope that courage to live speak and act in this modern world will be the aim of all from individual, church communities and national church.

Hope that we truly serve the poor and understand their needs/barriers to growth; and look to be courageous and Christlike in our response. As a diocese could we sell all our possessions and give to the poor?

Ambition. Partnership with others. That the church isn’t a dumping ground. And we are able to hold others to account.

Hope that all Christians in our congregations “get it”! Not the preserve of a radical few.

Hope that, locally, we will be able to work out a way to re-establish a modern version of the ????? monastic community around Dorchester Abbey. And I at approaches to explore a return to our roots, especially in terms of using community type accommodation for people in need (homeless and over 60s, victims of domestic violence).

Group 2: We want to share our faith with adults, children and young people and grow the local church in every place: rural, urban and suburban

What is preventing us sharing our faith and how do we grow in confidence? and how does the diocese allow us to share or pool ideas for inspirational activities to encourage others to grow the church ranging across different contexts, for example age groups and environmental contexts, including the use of social media?

Questions for the Working Group (2A)

Why do we compromise so much in the CofE? Are we afraid?

Is it possible to have a course or event for encouraging people sharing things that work in their church which may help other churches?

How do you turn outreach work (i.e. with youth groups, carers groups, pastoral work) into a spreading of the faith other than by example?

How does our faith provide added value to the rest of society?

How might the church become a recognised and respected voice in the local community?

How to resource (small communities)?

Parish mission. Give us back some of our parish share.

Are we going to bite the bullet and make dying churches “redundant” in order to resource new ways of being church where the people are (e.g. Milton Keynes).

How will the group define success? What timescale or milestones do you think appropriate to measure progress.

What is preventing us from engaging with children and young families?

What is currently preventing us from sharing our faith?

Hopes (2A)

Hope is that other churches can open up for events for their community which helps to bring about children, young people into churches like the event we held at our church shared with the Baptist Church and the Church of God of ???? light faith with them making things like lanterns, LCD candle, Jesus is the light of the world, bring the gospel to all.

Hope that each deanery can work together in peace - working on the positives not stressing the negatives - sharing face and hopes.

Hope to preach the whole gospel, including mentioning how to avoid hell by trusting in Jesus.

My hope is that a clear way of communicating our face is found.

Hope that the church may become a recognised and meaningful part of the local community as its tried to share the faith.

Breaking barriers. Overcoming suspicions. Communicating visions through Word/living.

That the Good News be proclaimed in our sermons: Christ died for our sins. That leaders know who is taking communion.

That the group can identify the language the church can use to communicate why the church is relevant to people's lives and wellbeing today.

I hope the group will define how much we communicate by words and how much by living the Christian life.

Engaging with children and young families.

Consider how people can grow in confidence alongside providing resources.

I hope that the Working Group can highlight strategies for a way forward: best practice for contemplation at all levels; how to then proceed with the task. with compassion and courage.

Questions for the Working Group (2B)

How do you get children to come to church? (or are we just focusing on schools work?) NB This is not what you do with them when they are there, but how to get them through the doors.

How do we double the number of communicants across the diocese in the next 10 years.

What is being done to encourage or compel churches to engage where sharing face and growth on not priorities?

How can we get examples of inspirational activity (which is achievable) to encourage others to grow the church?

How do we inspire our grassroots congregations to be the workers?

How can we use social media well to share our faith?

In areas of high numbers of new houses, how best to change the NIMBYs (not in my backyard) for the new residents. How to tell the newcomers they are very welcome. Altering peoples perceptions of their "neighbours".

How do we engage with new communities especially large housing developments in our parishes and those who live in them?

The problem of engaging.

Ideas for growing 'church' in new communities where there may be no obvious church focus, including building.

How do we empower our church communities and priests to work in a more collaborative fashion?

Hopes (2B)

I hope that we will be equipped to tell good stories of what God is doing the locally and nationally.

To consider the less proselytising in providing ways to grow.

A “step”/example, so that initial barriers to action can help be overcome by: reducing the perceived first step. One size does not fit all. Richness of examples and situations.

Hope for a better understanding of the working of a village community so that the usually ancient church building can come alive with new meetings and allegiances.

Hope for guidance to lay people on ways of sharing faith that might be helpful and encouraging rather than offputting to people outside to church.

Hope that the church will grow and will be attracted to younger (i.e. under 40 years) people and their families and will not be only a middle class organisation.

Hope that we find a way of doubling the number of communicants over the next few years.

Able to produce “aids” and successful examples of good practice, which other churches can learn from and see if they can be applied (maybe in different form) to themselves. To enable best practice for success to be shared. Note this could be growth generally or specific initiatives for particular age groups.

To share practice of what has worked in other communities in sharing the love of Christ.

My hope is that the church (individuals within it) will have confidence in their faith and have courage to realise we must “think outside the box”. This means recognising doing things differently at grassroots level. In towns and rural areas and new housing.

Hope that all churches in all places will recapture sharing faith and growth as being fundamental to church’s calling.

Group 3: We want to plant new churches and congregations everywhere we can

How do we best release mission strength in one area of church to unlock another and what does planting look like in urban and rural locations and how are plants to be resourced and led across Anglican churches?

Questions for the Working Group (3A)

Would it be possible to have links between churches that have planted churches, for congregations can give advice and support to others wishing to do so?

Tension of planting churches as Anglicans: what is the role of churches together/working with other churches? How can we plant churches well, working with Churches Together in the locality?

How can we provide resources and support to enable people to reach others where they are.

Every church depends on its leadership. Is a top down approach the right way to develop the necessary skills in our church leadership?

To what extent does the form of service limit [sufficient?] and attendance? To what extent is the division between denominations harmful?

Suggestions. Why is it so much easier to plant in the London Diocese. Can we not adopt their approach here?

Hopes (3A)

Hope that every community (where housing is) has a Christian presence that is transformative and Kingdom proclaiming.

Hope that experience can be shared to encourage and enable churches to experience.

Hope that we can be 'church' where people are - not expecting people to come to 'us'. That church doesn't have to be in a 'building'.

Hope for a stirring Spirit-led revival of Christianity in each community.

Hope to increase participation from young people (to offset declining congregation). To match increase in housing estates.

That it will become much easier to overcome parish boundaries and plant where there is a dearth of Christian witness. And the resources (people and pounds) are available from another parish.

Questions for the Working Group (3B)

Rural not just urban? Will new congregations be explicitly CofE (liturgy, sacrament of the Eucharist) and that they (the new groups) aren't patronised.

Have we put enough resources into the potential new housing areas?

How do we manage and encourage planting without causing problems / resentment and disrupting CofE parish system?

That existing structures do not allowed for fresh/creative expressions of church and time/resources not given.

How willing is the Diocese to cross parish boundaries. REALLY? (sorry, not very sensitively phrased)

How can we become churches that grow through planting new congregations/churches?

Hopes (3B)

Hope that the group will provide ways of, giving confidence to existing traditional churches to explore how they make explicitly plant and integrate new congregations.

Hope to identify ideas and requirements for church planting and growth. To hear of others expressions and learn.

I hope the group will consider how best to use all the church buildings we already have.

I hope that the group is able to encourage and enable church planting so that we can grow in our ability to reach people with the good news of salvation in Jesus. Hope that principles can be established to make planting easier without causing division or resentment.

Hope that people will feel emboldened and given tools for developing fresh expressions of church in many contexts.

That church planting becomes a normal part of being church.

Hope that the Diocese will stop "retreating" from the villages (church planting in reverse) and encourage larger town and city churches to send their people back to the villages to reach their communities.

Group 4: We want to serve every school in our community

How do we map and network the many good news stories across our different schools?

Questions for the Working Group (4)

Putting schools on the agenda

- Deanery engagement
- Equipping parishes to be involved in schools.

Hopes (4)

[None recorded]

Group 5: We want to put the discipleship of all at the heart of our common life and set God's people free

How can we arrive at an integrated and broadly accepted understanding of discipleship and how to support and encourage it so that it becomes foundational to our Christian identity? What can we learn from others both within our dioceses and other dioceses, and what does setting people free look like?

Questions for the Working Group (5A)

How can we facilitate a common style of leadership (attitudes) that will recognise the 'ministry' and discipleship of all including those who feel alienated from the church.

How is the church to spread the word through discipleship in such a way that people will listen and respond?

How do we encourage Christian attributes and discipleship in the workplace?

Do we actively and intentionally encourage church communities to see the relevance of discipleship for all the people they touch/meet?

How are you proposing to communicate: what you want doing, when you are doing it and how can churches input to this process?

Discipleship: our present generation do not like this. How do we encourage learning more about the Christian life (regular Bible Reading, prayer, church membership)?

Closer integration of parish[?] and lay ministry (including common modular training) and quite[?] recognition of parental industry in its ??? ??? [sorry, illegible handwriting]

How to breakdown the barriers between some clergy and laity to help grow to church in this community and improve its direction. Improve communications at a task to improve discipleship.

How do we balance being salt and light? We need to set God's people free to be 'salt' in their front lines, scattered in the world during the week. We are wanting to serve our communities gathered as church (light – parent/toddler groups) but there is less and less volunteer time available. i.e. church Scattered vs gathered.

How can this be done better with our ecumenical partners?

How is the training of lay people to be supported in and across our Archdeaconries? Empowerment and engagement of Christians are very important.

How can we encourage a more contemplative/counter-cultural style of discipleship? Rooted in relationship which develops over time?

In a world of lots of discipleship resources, how do we break through the low levels of discipleship encouragement found in some churches?

Hopes (5A)

Hope that action takes place to implement the 'Setting God's people, Free' report soon.

Hope that we may communicate (by all types of means) to the present generations. That we may be a prayerful people.

Hope that the Cursillo movement to train lay people in discipleship in leadership may be promoted and supported by the diocese and locally.

The Christian communities in Deanery and benefices and parishes working more v???? in ????? and mission. (sorry illegible handwriting)

Hope that the church can learn to reach out in a common way - to look out of the box, to the whole community. Laity can be more engaged to assist the clergy.

Hope for creating a culture in our churches that help church members flourish as disciples of Jesus on their 'front lines': workplaces, homes and community groups.

Hope everyone in the church knowing and living as a lifelong disciple of Jesus Christ An end to tiers of discipleship e.g. lay, ordained.

All God's people released into living out fully God's purpose for our lives.

Hope that every believer discovers the value of 'discipleship' - living with Christ, following his teaching, going deeper, in whatever way is relevant in their lives.

That people have the time and opportunity to encourage Christian attitudes in the workplace.

Hope: to increase the numbers attending church is by spreading the word through discipleship.

Confident Christians in every community who live and practice the transforming love of God.

Questions for the Working Group (5B)

How can we ensure space and priority is given to faith development? Grow on fire for God, not serving the CofE

How can we free people from the constraints and limitations imposed by a structures?

How can churches work together to develop a strategy for mission and ministry by lay and ordained?

How will you include all church groups in your deliberations and mission objectives?

Setting God's people free: Free from what? Free for what?

Are not people free now?

How can we promote discipleship best in this secular and unchurched age?

How do we encourage sense of vocation for all this disciples in their everyday life?

How can we help our congregations to move from people who are passive receivers to those who take responsibility for mission and ministry in the parish?

How can we bring the spirit of ????? ????? [illegible handwriting]

Why does the report “Setting God’s people free” assume that the laity cannot appreciate/ identify the relevance of the Gospel delivered by the clergy to their life and work?

Hopes (5B)

Commitment to implementation of ‘set my people free’ report.

Hope to hear what other churches in parishes and deaneries are doing to grow spirituality in faith and prayer.

Hope that the diocese will. Look at other dioceses who are light years ahead of us in developing lay ministry. For example, Hereford, Lincoln and the Methodist Church.

Hope to learn how to encourage people to become less engaged with the ‘administrative’ business of the church and concentrate together on discipleship.

To consider what discipleship means for us as a diocese and how we should promote it.

Hope to avoid the trivial and superficial.

Hope for people to realise that we need to acknowledge diversity in our ways of engaging as disciples?

Hope to understand what discipleship is.

Help to understand what discipleship is in a broad way, which creates thirst for openness to God.

Hope to feel that His grace now has been productive, not rushed!

Group 6: We want to celebrate and bless our largest, fastest growing city: Milton Keynes

Will the working group develop a vision for 2050 in Milton Keynes which integrates with: the diocese; an entrepreneurial city; ecumenical partners; and with an indefinitely growing city?

Questions for the Working Group

How distributed is the knowledge of these areas of strength?

What is your dream for the Milton Keynes church in 2050?

Can we improve the image of Milton Keynes and attract clergy of all denominations?

How can we more effectively link what we develop locally with the wider regional and diocesan developments?

How might this working group relate to the other fastest growing town of reading?

How will you engage with the population of Milton Keynes?

How will you address the “failing” churches and move them on or out?

Can we be courageous and plant an HTB style church for the city? Is there room?

Do we need a distinct Anglican vision or should it be a wider ecumenical one?

Hopes

That we may better service shops and offices in central Milton Keynes. A city centre Chaplain?

That we remain committed to being ecumenical in our mission.

That Milton Keynes Can be evangelised.

That Milton Keynes can cease to be a fear [threat?] to surrounding benefices.

That the ecumenical vision can be revised and made to work.

That we can establish good multi-faith relations.

A large and brave bid to the church commissioners for a grant to plant new churches and schools.

To achieve growth in the churches.

Witness of an area of strength to continue to be seen more.

- Ecumenism.
- Action on inequality.
- Good working of business leaders together to support one another.
- Ethical practice, including social enterprise projects.
- Electrical [car?] charging points at Milton Keynes Centre.

I hope that what comes from the group will have a uniquely Milton Keynes flavour.

That we might be courageous in reshaping the church for mission in a city facing massive growth.

A sense of being part of and supported by the wider Diocese.