

What else is happening?

The accompanying leaflet for all members of churches will give you an update on what's been happening on Generous Churches Making and Nurturing Disciples in 2012.

At the beginning of December sermon notes and collects on the five areas of growing will be made available - we hope that you will be able to use these to preach on the five Sundays between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday.

Finally, there's one question for you and your PCC to consider in the meantime ...

Where is your church growing?

This growth in the five marks of Christ-likeness, commitment, partnership, influence and numbers is an ongoing call for every church across our diocese. Change won't happen overnight, but each of us can start looking at how our church is part of the body at benefice, deanery and Diocesan level.

We each need to be looking at the way we work and where we put our gifts and resources – how does what we do locally impact in one or more of the five growth areas identified in the Diocesan Vision, and how are we supporting others in these areas ?

We've provided some resources to help individual PCCs start to look at this. You can find them in this pack or on the Diocesan website at www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/diocesan-info/generous-churches



Generous Churches Making & Nurturing Disciples

Supporting Notes

This booklet provides some background information on *Generous Churches Making and Nurturing Disciples* and is based on the notes prepared for the Archbishop's Council in October 2012.

Generous Churches Making and Nurturing Disciples is not a new initiative or programme – it's a focus on how we work out God's mission in our Diocese. It's about growing, and working together.

In addition to the outline of the programme, these notes provide some theological pointers to help you share the messages of the Diocesan Vision with your congregation.

AIMS:

- To enhance the mission of the Diocese of York, on a sound theological and practical basis.
- To maximise responsibility at individual and parish level for mission and resourcing.
- To improve and secure the resourcing of mission in the diocese for the longer term.
- To remedy problems that are evident or anticipated in the present financial system.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure that individuals, parishes, deaneries and the whole diocese focus on mission priorities.
- Ensure that the need for resourcing is seen as flowing from that mission focus.
- Put in place for 2014 a free-will offering financial system based on the Christian virtue of generosity and growth that will deliver a realistic amount of money for mission, rather than compulsion and taxation.

Programme outline

PREPARATION

(1) Part One:

Encouragement, teaching and reinforcement, backed up by communication and accessible material, so that everyone in the diocesan family understands:

- (i) how the mission priorities of growth in Christlikeness, commitment, partnership, influence and numbers are essential to what we are and do, as Christians and as generous churches nurturing and making disciples;
- (ii) that this mission requires resourcing by all of us;
- (iii) that providing money for this mission is essential and worthwhile, and is integral to discipleship;
- (iv) that the use of money for mission through the mutuality of the diocesan family needs to be seen as efficient and effective. That is, the best use of resources available;
- (v) that this part of the preparation programme deliberately contains little detail because there is an essential element of positively encouraging each other to 'think and feel' our way into a new approach.

(2) Part Two:

- (i) Introduce the principles and practicalities of a new free-will offering financial system across the diocese.
- (ii) Ensure that we all understand the responsibility and accountability it will bring.
- (iii) Nurture a culture that understands resourcing, as a way of achieving future levels of giving for ministerial deployment.

Influence (salt and light - Matt 5:13-16)

As disciples we are called to be salt and light to the whole world (Matt 5:13-16), having influence by preserving what is good, and reflecting God's light into dark corners.

- The theme of influence is picked up in 1 Peter, in a challenge to live such good lives that the Gentiles glorify God (1 Pet 2:12)

Numbers (the Great Commission - Matt 28:18-20)

Focusing on the number of people coming to faith is often counter-productive, the evidence is that looking to improve the quality of church life is better. But that does not mean growth in numbers is not important: in the first history of the church, Acts, there are frequent references to growth in numbers (Acts 2:41,6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20).

Jesus' last recorded command was to make disciples (Matt 28:16-20)

Here are some reasons why our numbers are significant:

- Increasing numbers is often a sign of spiritual health
- Best indicator available of people with a vital Christian faith
- Measure of the Church's potential and capacity to do 'kingdom' work
- Counters the negative impression of the Church in the media

Commitment (seek first God's kingdom - Matt 6:33)

Life can be tough, we can easily get distracted and blown off course, so commitment and perseverance are needed in the Christian life.

- commitment to God (e.g. devotion in the Pss, such as 63, 84, 131)
- to seeking God's kingdom (e.g. Matt 6:33; Mark 1:15, 10:13-31;)
- to Christ's body the Church, (e.g. Acts 2:41-47; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 4:1-6)

Partnership (love your neighbour as yourself - Matt 22:39)

At its heart partnership grows from the call to love our neighbours. With other Christians we use the term koinonia, fellowship, and it is both local and global. Beyond the Christian fellowship, partnership builds on our common humanity, seeking to discover where God is at work.

- Loving our neighbours as ourselves (Matt 22:39)
- In the early church support was given across churches (e.g. 2 Cor 8-9; Phil 1:5, 4:15-19)
- With other groups and organisations it is partnership in seeking to discover where God is at work through his Spirit: we see examples in Scripture of believers working with others for the good of the community (e.g. Joseph in Egypt [Gen 41-47]; seeking the welfare of the city [Jer 29:5-7]; taxes and political involvement are seen as appropriate [Rom 13:6-7]).
- More widely, working for the common good is often done on the basis that all people are made in God's image (Gen 1:27-8).

DELIVERY OF MUTUAL RESOURCING

(1) Part One needs to be owned and communicated by a wide variety of people, including Archbishop's Staff, parish clergy, Readers, etc, and we hope this booklet will support this.

(2) Part Two will include more by way of a flow of specific information from the Archbishop's Staff and diocesan officers to deaneries and parishes.

A timetable for parts one and two looks like this:

- **November to January:** Awareness building in parishes about the five marks of growing and *Generous Churches Making and Nurturing Disciples*.
- **January 2013:** The Archbishop's 'Thank You' letter to Parishes for 2012 Parish Share payments.
- **February to April 2013:** Mutual Resourcing events to discuss the new approach to raising money to support the Mission of the Diocese.
- **May 2013:** Supporting information will be sent to parishes/benefices and deaneries, together with guidance on making generous offerings for 2014.
- **Summer 2013:** Parishes/benefices will make their generous offerings for 2014.

Whilst there may be an element of overlap in presenting the two parts, Part One is a foundation that must be understood before Part Two is tackled. Part One consists of building up a mission-focused culture, by means which include, for example, discussion and preaching, rather than anything that can be achieved by a single presentation or event.

Theological background notes

The Revd Dr Gavin Wakefield

Coming out of the Mutual Support consultations and the reflections of the working party that analysed the results we have recognised that as a church we are about growing.

We also recognise that growing is multi-dimensional and we have identified Five Marks of Growing:

- Christ-likeness
- Commitment
- Partnership
- Influence
- Numbers

In a moment we will look at why we have these goals, but first a little about what they might look like.

Christ-likeness

Becoming like Christ is the fundamental call of Christian discipleship. It is not always easy to assess, but we often recognise the flavour of a life becoming more godly. How we pray and worship is a key element in this mark of growing.

Commitment

Commitment itself has several features, including: commitment to God, to seeking God's kingdom, to Christ's body the Church. The outward signs might be measured in terms of those engaged in nurture Courses, Baptisms and Confirmations, Vocations to lay and ordained ministries, Stewardship.

Partnership

Working with other churches, locally and globally, with schools, community groups, people, organisations for the common good, peace and justice.

Influence

Seeking to influence attitudes and behaviours in our communities and wider society.

Numbers

Increasing the number of people associated with our churches, as worshippers and disciples.

Why do we have these goals?

The reasons for these marks of growing needs a bit of spelling out in terms of our Christian faith. Each of them is a big topic, so here are a few headlines, each starting with a reference from the gospel of Matthew, a gospel for making and nurturing disciples.

Christ-likeness (the call to follow Jesus - Matt 4:18-22)

- As disciples, we are called to follow Christ, which is a picture of becoming more like him, day by day. (e.g. Matt 4:19, 8:22, 9:9, 16:24 and more)
- St Paul write movingly of imitating Christ (e.g Gal 4:19; Eph 1:3-14; Phil 2:5; 1 Thess 1:6)
- In Christian history, there are many spiritual classics which encourage the growth of Christ-likeness. For example, Thomas a Kempis The Imitation of Christ
George Herbert The Country Parson (Chapter 1: 'a Priest is to do that which Christ did, and after his manner, both for Doctrine and Life.')