# Shaping for Mission

Setting a Vision

The aim of the vision–setting process is to discern a picture of what you think God is calling this deanery to be in the next few years. At this stage, you don’t have to know exactly how you will get there, but focus on faithfully listening to God and paying attention to how the Holy Spirit is at work. A process of discerning a vision is rooted in prayer and you will want to find ways of enabling and encouraging the wider deanery to be praying about the calling of this deanery now and in the future.

You have done a lot of work reviewing the deanery, and what you found during that exercise will be the building blocks for thinking about what is next. Knowing where you are now, and the evaluations you have done of the current situation should hold some clues about where you are going next: What is already good and should continue to be invested in? What needs to stop or change? Where are the gaps?

Laying down aspects of our Christian life can be extremely difficult. Asking who we are called to be as a deanery acknowledges that we are not called to be everything it is possible for a church to be but that there is a specific calling for this place at this time. Stopping or changing things that have been part of church life is hard because they may be good and worthwhile things, but these are challenges we have to face if we are serious about change. As you work through the vision-setting process, you will be encouraged to think about what needs to stop or change; try and be courageous in naming the things that, whilst they might be good, are not core to the calling of the deanery going forward.

### Section 1

### What is God’s vision for our deanery going forward in mission?

In this section you will be drawing on the review document to answer a series of questions based around the Diocesan vision prayer. The vision prayer is an expression of who we are as the Church of England in the Lichfield Diocese and who we believe God calls us to be.

## Diocesan Vision Prayer

As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad, we pray that the two million people in our diocese encounter a church that is confident in the gospel, knows and loves its communities, and is excited to find God already at work in the world. We pray for a church that reflects the richness and variety of those communities. We pray for a church that partners with others in seeking the common good, working for justice as a people of hope.

Below the Diocesan Vision is broken down into a series of key points. Drawing on the review document we can summarise the ways in which we already live out elements of the Diocesan vision. The review document will help us decide which areas are already strong, which might be the key areas to develop, and what we may need to lay down.

Set out below is a table with each heading coming from the Diocesan Vision Prayer, under which are three columns for things we are already doing well, things that we need to stop or change, and areas we need to develop. In each section we can take what we have put in our Review Document and use it to fill in each section or it may be that things occur to us that are not in our review document and those can be added too.

# We are Confident in the Gospel

These are the areas we believe we could develop…

These things we believe could change or to stop …

We believe we are strong in this area in the following ways…

# We Know and Love our Communities

These are the areas we believe we could develop…

These things we believe could change or to stop …

We believe we are strong in this area in the following ways…

# We see God at Work in the World beyond the Church

These are the areas we believe we could develop…

These things need to change or to stop …

We believe we are strong in this area in the following ways…

# We Reflect the Richness and Diversity of our Communities

These are the areas we believe we could develop…

These things we believe could change or to stop …

We believe we are strong in this area in the following ways…

# We Partner with Others in Seeking the Common Good

These are the areas we believe we could develop…

These things we believe could change or to stop …

We believe we are strong in this area in the following ways…

The top boxes under each show the key strengths of the deanery and the ways in which we already express the Diocesan Vision.

The middle boxes in each section should alert us to ways in which we are currently using energy and resources but it is not effective, or it is not part of our main calling as a deanery. If you don’t have much in these boxes you may need to go through this process again. It can be very hard, and feel insensitive to identify things which are no longer serving their core purpose, but any significant change is only possible if we refocus energy and resources, rather than just adding more and more things to what we do.

The third boxes give an indication of where we see new priorities for the future. Read through each area that is named and ask whether it is core to the calling of this deanery, or is it a nice idea but not a priority for the next few years. Cross out any ideas that, however good, are not essential to the vocation of the deanery.

The Diocesan Vision Prayer concludes with the phrase ‘people of hope’. It may be useful to summarise some of the sections above by completing the following sentences, based on what you have already written:

## We are People of Hope in our Communities because …

## We Seek to Offer Further Hope in our Communities by ...

Thank God for the ways in which you are already people of hope. Offer to God your vision for the ways in which that will develop in the future. You may want to share these summaries more widely in your deanery and invite people to pray for God to give a clear vision for the deanery.

# Section 2

Through the review process and the first section of the vision-setting process, we have identified strengths and challenges for the deanery. This section will explore them in a bit more detail, beginning to look at some of the energy and resources used and needed in each area.

### Moving on to the difficult questions …

## What is already good and should continue to be invested in?

You have identified a number of areas in which you are already doing well in your deanery. Reflect on any of the following questions that are helpful or challenging in relation to them:

* What resources do we *really* need for that to happen?
* Who can we work with, or who else can be involved?
* Are we using people’s gifts well to continue this work?
* Is this distinctive to our calling as Christians and a key part of our vocation? Does anything need tweaking to make it more clearly mission shaped?
* Are there ways in which this, or some aspects of it can be done as a deanery or at least in clusters?

## What needs to stop or change?

You have identified a number of areas that aren’t quite working, or don’t clearly align with the sustainable mission of the deanery. Reflect on any of the following questions that are helpful or challenging in relation to them:

* Can it be changed so that it clearly serves our mission, or does it need to stop?
* Is it a good thing but not core to our vision? If so are there any other groups, partners, networks or people of goodwill who might take it on?
* Who is invested in this still happening, or holding onto it? How might we understand what’s behind that and help them to let go?
* What are we pouring time and energy into that does not directly serve our mission? What would happen if we just stopped?

## Where are the gaps?

* How could we resource something new in this area? Who will we work with?
* Is anyone else already doing work in this area? Can we join in?
* What will we stop in order to make energy and resources available?
* Is it our calling to fill that gap? Might there be other ways of responding to the need we have noticed?
* What wider resources are available to us from partners, the Diocese, national church and networks etc?

## The Big Five

This final section asks you five key questions about your vision for sustainable mission in your deanery. It is intended both as a summary of where you have got to and a space for you to reflect on and name the types of support you think will be needed to implement change in your deanery in the coming months and years.

1. What might stop you translating this vision into reality?
2. What do you most want Bishop’s Staff and the wider diocese to understand about your vision for your deanery?
3. What culture changes does your vision require and what support might you need to implement them?
4. What are your absolute priorities for sustainable mission as a deanery? How are these reflected in your ideas about areas of strength, what to stop and what to grow?
5. If we were able to implement this vision over the next few years, what would be the five most significant changes in our deanery by 2025?