

# TRANSFORMING CHURCH

growing churches at the heart of each community





# Transforming Church

## How will it Work?

The Transforming Church initiative has four main ingredients: First, there are the **Seven Areas of Transformation** on pages 1 to 7, which will form the basis of prayerful discussions in every parish, seeking to develop the church's mission in a way that is appropriate and achievable. These are like the stalagmites in a cave – they grow from the bottom up.

Secondly there are the **Ten Diocesan Goals** on page 8, setting out the Bishop's vision of a church growing larger, younger, deeper and wider. These are like the stalactites in a cave – they grow from the top down. Where this process will produce strongest results will be where the stalagmites (the seven areas) and the stalactites (the goals) grow to join each other and form a strong pillar.

Thirdly there are the **Consultants**: skilled men and women, lay and ordained, who have been invited by the Bishop to journey with each parish, offering a fresh perspective and helping crystallise the vision along the way.

And finally there is the **Toolkit**, a useful collection of resources, both local and national, to help each parish to fulfil its mission objectives. Resources include diocesan advisers and directors, conferences, courses and training events, examples of good practice from around the diocese, theological reflections and possible part-funding of Transforming Church initiatives.

## Bishop Andrew

### 2009

September 12th, 11am:	Launch event at St. Martin-in-the-Bull-Ring.
September – December:	Initial meetings between incumbents, consultants, the church council and others to introduce the initiative.

### 2010

January – Easter:	Churches will work prayerfully through the Transforming Church material, gradually crystallising what God is calling them to do.
	Consultants will offer advice and resources.
	The Bishops will make a tour of the diocese.
	Parishes will finalise a Transforming Church plan, and hold a special Sunday to launch it themselves.
Easter – Christmas:	The plan will begin to be implemented.

## A LETTER FROM BISHOP DAVID

In the last three years since my appointment as Bishop of Birmingham I have come to understand some of the huge challenges we face and the massive opportunities that are being offered to us as Christians living in or around the largest city in the UK apart from London.

We have the chance to learn how to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in a region where most of the world's major faiths are practised. We have the chance to learn what it means to build faith communities within diverse contexts and how to bring real hope and joy to a region facing serious economic hardship.

In short we are in a wonderful context to be Christians who are intent on being both transformed by God and being full participants in God's work of transformation of the whole of creation, from global structures to individual's hearts.

God does not ask us to do more than we can bear and I feel confident that we have enough resources to meet the challenges. I have been hugely impressed by the energy and creativity, commitment and passion generated by faith lived out that I have seen in both lay people and clergy across the Diocese.

**Transforming Church** is not about asking people to work harder, but to work sharper – being proactive more than reactive, focussed on what we believe God is calling us to do.

It offers a vision of church for the 21st Century which centres on 'growing churches at the heart of each community' – the strapline we have chosen for this initiative. At the heart of it for me is a longing that we might see the number of Christians double across the region, as people encounter Jesus and choose to follow him as disciples.

Transforming Church is a strategy for the local church, though with a little imagination its principles could be extended to network congregations, chaplaincies and even church schools. It recognises that every congregation has its own distinctive character, and it is therefore a framework not a blueprint, encouraging local initiatives to work towards broader diocesan goals. It provides consultants for every parish – people identified and trained to journey alongside each community in its praying, planning and implementation.

No strategy, however well thought through, will achieve anything of any lasting value unless we keep God right at the centre of it. We have probably all heard the phrase from the beginning of Psalm 127: "Unless the Lord builds the house, we labour in vain..."

This initiative is about our co-working with God and at the heart of all successful teams of workers lies good communication. Our communication is through prayer and I believe prayer is the foundation of this strategy and must be the cement of the building work to be done by each parish. So please pray for yourselves, for each other and for those around you that we all may be transformed by the love of God, for the service of God in his work of redemption, renewal and regeneration.

*+David Birmingham*

**Bishop David**



# Transforming Worship

Drawing us into the presence of the Living God

The breadth of styles and traditions in worship across our diocese is something to celebrate. At their best, church services are a rich offering to God, nourishing for regular worshippers and also accessible to newcomers. Every church will benefit by regularly reflecting on the quality and content of its worship, so that congregations may grow in faith and in numbers.

Consider the style and range of worship in your church, what is valued by those who attend, and how it may be further enriched and extended.

Some questions to prompt discussion:

- How is the liturgy, sung worship, intercession and preaching in your church reviewed to keep it fresh, rooted, inspiring and relevant?
- How does your church encourage people to be participants in worship and not simply onlookers?
- It is important that children and young people engage in prayer and worship. How does your church help this to happen, and how might this area be expanded further?
- Which sections of the community are best catered for in the worshipping life of your church, and which are notable by their absence? What change or addition to your existing pattern might you consider so as to connect with new people?
- How might the prayer life of the church be developed, so as to create a deeper sense of faith and expectancy in the life of the church community?



**The call to baptise**

Aston Parish Church has responded to the needs of a changing worshipping community by building a baptistery suitable for the total immersion of adults. The baptistery is in the shape of a cross, reviving an ancient tradition.

Parishioners at the church have been working towards the development of a new baptistery for the last 20 years as more and more adults in Aston requested baptism. It has been built in the middle of the church building and can be covered with a glass

platform when it is not in use providing a space within the church for community showcase events.

Vicar of Aston, the Rev'd Dr Andy Jolley said: "This is an exciting part of our plans to ensure this landmark church can continue as a centre of Christian worship and welcome for local people in the 21st century. It is wonderful that so many adults are finding faith and asking for baptism and we are confident that both the baptistery and the platform will be well used."



**Splash, splash, splosh**

Splash is a monthly service for five to eleven year olds which began over six years ago in Tanworth in Arden, and is going from strength to strength. Splish splosh has been set up for Under 5s, older children are helping as leaders, other churches are taking Splash to their churches, and occasionally, there are more people at Splash/Splish Splosh than in church!

The children have great fun whilst learning about and living the

Christian experience. Regular features include prayer time, games, a memory verse, praise and worship and the chance to respond to a prayer of commitment. A team of planners, musicians, team leaders and helpers make the sessions run smoothly, and we find that in preparation, we are learning more about our faith. We feel that God is at work in this wonderful ministry.

# Transforming Relationships

Finding healing, encouragement and challenge through our life together

Many people across the diocese don't know where they'd be without the love and support of their church community. Jesus' commandment to 'love one another as I have loved you' is a challenge to which we all aspire, calling us to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

Consider the reasons why people have made your church their home, and the strengths and weaknesses within your life together.

Some questions to guide your response:

- How are people welcomed into the life of the church and helped to make it their home?
- How does your church encourage people to relate to one another openly and generously?
- Are there fresh areas that the church could explore to create a deeper sense of Christian community?
- What is the level of pastoral care for those going through tough times, and how might this be improved?
- Does your church offer a regular ministry of healing and forgiveness?



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## A healing ministry

At every communion service held at St David's Shenley Green, worshippers are offered the laying on of hands for healing. The church has a rota of healers who pray for local people and churchgoers each Tuesday and Thursday morning in the dedicated healing room which has been set up in the church complex. Referrals for prayer come from some local medics, from friends or family and from within the church.

Vicar, the Rev'd Nick Evans, said: "The healing ministry has

expanded throughout this year. A number of people have started to come to church as a result of this ministry. I believe that this new church attendance as a result of healings of body and spirit is highly significant in the life of the church in this area. These healings, and those which have not resulted in regular church attendance, are a sign to us that God is working here. Overall many have turned to Christ during the last year and I think there are more to come – from within and outside the flock!"



## Building the way

"Building projects can be enormously demanding but they also have the potential to break new ground spiritually and provide a context and vehicle for mission." This was the experience of Lickey Parish during the process of developing their facilities, which they labelled 'Building the Way'.

The developments at St Catherine's, Holy Trinity and the Parish Office have greatly increased the flexibility of the facilities and given a renewed

vision of the mission of the Parish. The project has stimulated various new events including a Fun Day, 'Tiny Church', Art Exhibitions, a Christmas Labyrinth, retreats and new ways of worshipping.

Rev'd Philip Swan said: "we have now moved into a fourth phase of 'Building the Way'; investing in and building up people for the Kingdom of God, encouraging and finding new ministries in the church and wider community."

## Transforming Discipleship

Enabling us to grow as confident followers of Jesus

We are disciples in every part of our lives – at home and at work (both paid and unpaid), in our relationships and leisure time, and through our contributions to the ministry and mission of the church. For this, we need confidence in our knowledge of the Christian faith, and in our ability to act and speak as followers of Jesus.

Consider the different ways your church values discipleship and offers help, encouragement and training (e.g. opportunities for meeting together to discuss issues of faith and life, to study the Bible,

to pray for each other, and to deepen your prayer and spirituality). These might be regular or occasional, local or shared with other local churches. Some may be diocesan programmes and opportunities.

Some questions to help develop this further:

- Given that discipleship covers every area of our lives, what might be needed to provide training and support where this is not yet given?
- In what ways are those of all ages being equipped to live as Christian disciples on a Monday as well as on a Sunday?
- Are there ways in which what is offered in public worship, preaching and prayer can encourage people to see their Christian faith at work in their lives and inspire them to tell the story of their discipleship?
- Jesus taught, 'where your treasure is, there will your heart be also'. How far does the congregation have a generous commitment to Christian giving, and how could this be developed further?



**Living faithfully in a consuming world**

It was April 2008 when we decided that Lent 2009 would be a great opportunity to engage with the issues of 'Living Faithfully in a Consuming World' – long before the words 'credit crunch' had ever been heard.

And so it was that a small group of Black Country Anglicans was joined by friends, young and old, from other traditions and other places, to tackle issues from 'employment and unemployment in a consumer society' to 'shopping addiction and the fantasy of happiness', to

'destitution and domination in the capitalist empire'. Passionate and experienced practitioners included a parish priest from Hockley Heath, a Methodist tutor from the Queen's Foundation, a co-director of the Ekklesia think-tank, the coordinator of the Churches Industrial Group Birmingham, and a member of the Catholic Worker Farm. Together, we got our teeth into the challenges of contemporary Christian discipleship, through bible study, theological reflection, prayer and conversation.



**Keeping to the main thing**

The Cathedral is exploring creative and relevant ways of connecting with the thousands of people who either work on their doorstep or spend time in the square either relaxing or on their way to work.

Each Tuesday, a lunchtime talk is given, in partnership with ChaplaincyPlus, a chaplaincy organisation for the business community. This aims to relate everyday and current issues to faith and discipleship. Recently an initiative called APR (Avoiding

Personal Recession) was launched, aimed at city centre workers who may be affected by the current financial climate.

Canon Nigel Hand said: "the business guru Stephen Covey once said, 'the main thing, is to keep the main thing, the main thing'. And that thing is stated in the Declaration of Assent which says; for all Christians are to speak and live out our faith, 'which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation.' "

# Transforming Leadership

Releasing and harnessing the gifts of all God's people

Christian people are often called to positions of leadership, whether in the church, the workplace or the local community. There has never been a greater need for leaders of integrity and humility, those who can draw out and develop the gifts of those they lead. Each church should increasingly become places where such leaders are formed and mentored.

Consider how many members of the congregation are already involved in leadership roles in their families, communities, schools, workplaces and within the church.

Some questions for reflection and action:

- How might those who lead within the church be better trained and supported?
- What further support might be given for those with leadership responsibilities outside the church?
- Have your church members ever taken part in a leadership development programme (e.g. a Diocesan course or CPAS' Growing Leaders)?
- How might you develop leadership gifts among your children and young people?
- How many readers or other leaders are there within the church? Is this an area for further thought and action?
- How does your church seek to foster leadership vocations among those from ethnic minorities?
- How is the church's leadership encouraged and enabled to take time out for personal encouragement and renewal?



**Growing leaders**

Inspired by the vision to equip and release leaders, and to further the work of the Kingdom, St John's Harborne began using the CPAS Growing Leaders Course.

Rob Bewley, the associate vicar, has since opened the initiative to the deanery welcoming leaders from surrounding parishes. Over fifty young leaders within St. John's and a dozen from other churches in the Edgbaston Deanery have followed the 12 month course which is now in its second year.

The course, which includes a mentor for each participant, helps people to think about their life's calling and to use that knowledge to make decisions about ministries and other life choices. They are also equipped to think strategically and to pass on their learning to others. As a result of the course, some people have taken on new areas of leadership, some have changed direction, while others have been further resourced for the ministries in which they already serve.



**Leading your church into growth**

Over the last few years many clergy from across the diocese have attended the Leading Your Church into Growth Course (LYCIG).

For Sue Height, Vicar of Christ Church Shirley, one of the real strengths of this course was that: "It reiterated a simple non-party imperative of mission – in its broader sense." Rob Fieldson, Vicar of Cofton Hackett and Barnt Green, reflected that the broad based leadership showed good

understanding of the challenges of parish ministry, as well as enthusiasm for its opportunities.

LYCIG has helped Rob sharpen the priorities of his church, particularly within the PCC, which now has 'church growth' as a permanent item on the agenda. Rob said: "What the course really spelled out was how a church can be evangelistic by simply putting a new focus on things it already does rather than by turning itself upside down".

## Transforming Presence

Living out God's love in our communities and the wider world

A living church will naturally have an impact on the people in its area and beyond. Every Christian community should speak of God's goodness by its vitality, its attitude to issues in the world, and its commitment to serve others. Churches are widely recognised for their involvement in community service, but there is a need to reflect on how a church's energies can best be channelled to enable them to be effective partners in transforming their local neighbourhoods.

Consider how your church already engages with the wider world, and how it is 'Good News' in the local community.

Some questions to help your thinking:

- How could your church contribute to improving the quality of life for residents in its local neighbourhood – especially those who are marginalised or disadvantaged?
- Is there an enthusiasm within the congregation for any new community initiative? How would such a ministry be released and resourced? It is also worth asking if any existing initiatives have had their day.
- In which community groups or campaigns are your church members present? Which local groups or agencies could work in partnership with the church to serve or change the neighbourhood? How can you bring a Christian understanding to local discussions?
- To what wider issue(s) in society does your church give thought, prayer and energy? How seriously have you taken the environmental agenda? How might this be developed further?
- What impact does your parish have on its local schools (church or county)?
- How committed is your church to Christian work worldwide, whether via the Malawi link or in other ways, and how might this commitment be strengthened?



**The heart of the community**

The Church of St Thomas, Garretts Green is on one of Birmingham's outer estates in the east of the city. The church has a well-used community project running at the site which provides services for children and young people. Adam Larkin is the church's Community and Regeneration worker

He said: "If we did not have this church and the project, there would be nothing else here. There

is very little youth work and hardly any community work run by anyone else – it is just the church that does it."

Recently the church hosted a Planning for Real day. They built a map of the area and 600 people came for the day. Using the map these people were able to express their views about the area and make complaints and suggestions for the area.



**Worldwide partnerships**

In July 2008 Roger and Margaret Buxton from St Michael's Solihull were in Malawi to establish a parish link with Jali in the Diocese of Upper Shire. Since returning to Solihull a linking group of eight has met regularly to pray, to hear about life in Jali, and to share information with the wider congregation. During Sunday worship prayers are said for their parish link and for life in Jali, and updates are circulated.

At Christmas there were terrible

storms in Malawi, and one of the churches in Jali Parish lost its roof. The sympathy that has been created by the link stimulated generosity during the Christmas period that raised almost the entire amount needed to make repairs.

"There has been a great feeling of vocation and excitement from the linking group" said Simon Marshall the Vicar of St Michael's. This enthusiasm has been infectious and is beginning to spread like ripples into the church.

# Transforming Outreach

Leading others to believe in Jesus and belong to his Body

The church has always recognised its calling to reach out to others with the Good News of Jesus. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' in evangelism, but every church needs to seek an approach that is achievable and fruitful, going with its missional grain.

Consider the contacts your church already has with those who are not yet Christian disciples (e.g. neighbours, work colleagues, Christmas attenders, local school families, users of community projects, contacts through baptisms, weddings and funerals).

Some questions to help your thinking:

- What strategies might be developed to draw those on the fringes into the worshipping life of the church?
- Are members of your church confident to invite friends along (especially around Christmas or on Back to Church Sunday)?
- What changes in the life of the church might give them a greater confidence?
- Does your church run a regular Christian basics course? (e.g. a confirmation course, Alpha, Emmaus, Christianity Explored etc)? What kind of course might be most fruitful in your context?
- Have your church leaders (ordained and lay) attended a Leading your Church into Growth course, or something similar?



**Time to Start! outreach**

In the cluster of churches in Rowley Regis, Rounds Green and Blackheath lay people have developed a pub-based outreach and enquirers ministry using the Start! Course. The course is designed for those with no prior knowledge of Christianity, who may not be ready to cross the threshold of a church building.

Confirmation candidates and couples getting married in the churches are now encouraged to attend and it has

attracted people from the fringes to go a little deeper. Several members of the congregations have gone on the course.

Mike Sermon, vicar of St Paul's Blackheath said: *"What has been interesting is how it has evolved, and lay folk have been instrumental in that. It has been like a pub crawl around the area; really positive relationships with people in the community such as pub licensees have developed"*.



**Using every occasion**

Over the last ten years St Mary Temple Balsall has been developing outreach through occasional offices and has seen huge growth during this period.

During baptism services a visual talk is given that explains the significance of the office and following baptism each year the families are invited to a Mothering Sunday service. They have also developed an innovative series of workshops for children that include teaching and activities around the major festivals.

Wedding couples are invited to a service around Valentine's Day that celebrates loving relationships. The church is currently developing its ministry through funerals, including a pastoral team to visit bereaved families and cards on the anniversary of death.

Rev'd Kathy Lloyd-Roberts said: *"We see each service as an opportunity to open our doors, and we then work very hard to make sure that the door remains open."*

## Transforming Partnerships

Working together with people of goodwill to see God's purposes fulfilled

Only a few churches have the number of leaders and helpers required to fulfil all the ministry and mission expected of a parish church. Most churches need to go further in building partnerships so that together their plans and initiatives can be achieved. Developing existing partnerships and creating new ones can create a pool of volunteers, of expertise and leadership, making sure there are adequate resources to carry through the plans.

Consider what links you already have which assist in engaging with others (e.g. local Anglican Churches, other local churches,

community and regeneration projects, local schools and colleges, hospitals and primary care facilities, residential homes, businesses and factories, neighbourhood organisations or civic bodies, those of other religious faiths).

Some questions to ponder:

- How might strengthening these links assist your church and its partners in achieving the plans and goals you have set?
- Which local partnerships might be further developed or got off the ground?
- Do other church groups make use of your buildings? If so, how might you develop a greater sense of gospel partnership together?
- Does your church have resources that might be shared (including people who can help as school governors, trustees, treasurers etc)? Might your church be willing to explore a mutually enriching partnership with another church elsewhere in the Diocese?
- How fit-for-purpose are your church buildings? In what ways might you improve your buildings and what partnerships (e.g. with other local groups and grant-making trusts) might help in this?



**God's love in the community**

Outside the church hall at St Christopher's Springfield once hung a huge poster emblazoned with the words: "God's love in the Community". From this basis of faith a remarkable series of partnerships has sprung leading to the transformation of the building from a church hall into a state-of-the-art Children's Centre

But what makes this project so special is not the smart buildings but the commitment to relationship. Of the 90 adult members of the church, around 40

either work in the project through the week or volunteer there. God's love, agenda-free, has underwritten so much of what happens.

Now parents, black, white and Asian, entrust their children to a church-based project where their children play together, each being valued in the name of Jesus. These children will grow up appreciating and enjoying diversity. They will have found at Springfield that the Christian faith can be the difference that permits difference and will have been loved unconditionally.



**God's love on the high street**

"Visiting the shops and businesses is the chaplaincy way of sharing God's love with the world and demonstrating that everyone is important to God", says Beryl Moppett of Solihull Town Centre Chaplaincy.

The ecumenical team of 10 delivered Christmas cards to all the stores in the town centre and recently revisited with an information sheet for those affected by the credit crunch.

In the workplaces they visit regularly they try to be the face of God as they talk with staff and offer a listening ear. Affirming people in their work is at the heart of the visits whether they are relieving someone's stress or sharing in the joys of life.

Their visits are much appreciated and Beryl says more chaplains are needed to serve the retail and business community who would welcome their presence.

# Transforming Church

## Growing churches at the heart of each community

### Diocesan Goals

- To grow the number of adults, young people and children within the worshipping Christian community year on year.
- To make the most of opportunities presented by the occasional offices, the church calendar and invitational events such as Back to Church Sunday.
- To develop an understanding of communications in every parish, promoting a church that is visible, welcoming and accessible.
- To develop a spiritually-enriching children's and youth ministry in every parish and church school, encouraging clustering where appropriate.
- To ensure that a Christian Basics course of some kind is offered in every parish at least once a year.
- To implement in every parish an appropriate strategy for making confident, prayerful disciples in their daily life.
- To encourage an increasing number of worshipping Christians to take tithing seriously, and to give at least 5% of their income to the local church.
- To increase the range and spiritual fruitfulness of partnerships and community initiatives across the Diocese.
- To increase the number of leaders of all ages, and drawn from every ethnic group, who are trained and deployed in the church and wider community.
- To encourage every parish community to think through the challenges of relating constructively to those of other faiths.



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