



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

STATEMENT OF NEEDS

VACANCY IN SEE

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OUR VISION & OUR VALUES

Three values have long been central to our understanding of our calling to be instruments of God's mission in England's most northerly diocese: generous, engaged, open. We have recently revisited these values to help inform our Diocesan Strategy and seek to be:

- Open – to God's transforming love
- Generous – with God's transforming gifts
- Engaged – in God's transforming work in the world.

The three values underpin our vision of a Growing Church Bringing Hope.

Our next Diocesan Bishop will be arriving at a critical moment in the delivery of our Strategy, a moment of challenge and change but also of huge opportunity and potentially of rich reward.

THE BISHOP WE SEEK

In this context and following extensive consultation and discernment, we pray for a Bishop who:

1) Will be a Collaborative Leader, who

- has the vision to challenge, inspire and enthuse us as we evolve and adapt to our changing context.
- with grace and humility nurtures a culture of shared and 'distributed' leadership.
- builds effective and trusting relationships within and across dioceses and with other church and secular partners, and will empower and support our capable and continually developing senior team.
- will be a unifying force who will nurture and release the gifts and vocations of all God's pilgrim people and create a sense of togetherness across our diverse contexts and traditions.
- is a calm, wise and prayerful guide, who listens attentively and is comfortable navigating through difficulties with hope-filled and faithful discernment.
- is a wise and timely decision-maker, who understands how to steward our resources (human and financial) to engage wide support and the investment we need to deliver our strategic priorities.

2) Will be a Pastor of the Pastors, who

- being empathetic and compassionate by nature, values, affirms and nurtures the distinctive ordained and lay ministries.
- is visible and accessible, connected to the reality of the joys and challenges of ministry and mission across our diverse urban and rural communities.
- can draw on experience of parish ministry and chaplaincy in varied settings.
- has the pastoral gifts to encourage, challenge and care for all our clergy and lay leaders, building trust and growing their confidence to serve with increased joy.

3) Will be a Courageous and Prophetic Voice, who

- has a heart for the people of the North East of England and a commitment to speaking out for and with the people of the region in the cause of social and racial justice and tackling the climate emergency.
- will have the courage and confidence to challenge the status quo when necessary, speaking out against policies within the Church and government that get in the way of justice and create inequalities.
- understands the national role of the office of Bishop and will act as an authentic voice for the region and the Diocese.
- will be a visible presence not just in the Church but in the public square and will be able to build effective partnerships with civic, business and faith leaders on issues of importance for the region.
- is an effective and natural communicator, skilled at sharing the Christian message with relevance into our region using a range of channels, including by utilising the power of social media to reach a wide audience.

4) Will be a Persuasive Advocate for Mission and Growth, who

- whilst deeply committed to parish ministry and the important chaplaincy role of the Church of England, also has experience of establishing new ways of being church and growing new worshipping communities in diverse settings.
- has the theological and spiritual resources to inspire new ways of communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ that nurture and grow discipleship.
- promotes our mission as disciples of Christ to serve those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage or who are otherwise marginalised.
- is an enthusiastic sharer and teacher of the faith who naturally communicates the truth and joy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and embodies a spirituality shaped by prayer, scripture and the Holy Spirit.

5) Will be Inclusive

- is welcoming to all, committed to the Five Guiding Principles and affirms both the ministry of women and the contribution of all the diverse traditions in the Diocese.
- is willing to ordain women and men.
- is deeply committed to walking with and giving a voice to those currently marginalised or vulnerable, including survivors.
- can help us reflect theologically in continuing our work of building a safer church in which all are included.
- is also committed to the Living in Love and Faith process and to helping build understanding between those of different views on this and other contentious issues.
- values the voice of and engagement with children and young people.
- is at ease in a diverse range of church and non-church settings.

AND WHY WE SEEK SUCH A BISHOP

Our next Diocesan Bishop will find us in good heart, committed to co-creating, in a changing and challenging world, new ways of growing faith that help nourish a strong Christian presence across our diverse communities. Like God's people of old, we look to our next Bishop for encouragement to be the hope-filled people of God, realistically looking to the future and so able to 'Sing the Lord's song in a new land' (Ps 137).

Our Diocesan Strategy – [‘Growing Church Bringing Hope: Next Steps’](#) - is well developed and the result of wide consultation. For example, in the autumn of 2021 over 80% of our parishes completed a self-review to help ascertain their missional strengths and the areas where they could benefit from or offer others support at a local or diocesan level.

Our discernment of the qualities needed in our next Bishop is rooted in our understanding of what we as a Diocese are now called to be and do. We have identified six priorities for mission and ministry in the next phase of our journey:

- Turning outwards in mission in every place
- Energised and equipped missional leaders, ordained and lay
- New Christian Communities and new Christians
- Making disciples who build up the Church for mission
- More children, young people and mission with schools
- Financial flourishing: giving generously, planning strategically, building sustainably.

These priorities seek to respond to God's call across the rich diversity of contexts that exist throughout our Diocese:

- rural
- rural coastal
- commuter rural
- market town
- urban/ urban estate
- suburban
- city centre.

We are confident our heart-felt energy for partnership working is equally relevant in each of these diverse contexts. Whether we are looking at the recently re-ordered Newcastle Cathedral, St Thomas' Newcastle: our Resource Church, the Mission Initiative North East: our established Bishop's Mission Order, Hexham Abbey, or exciting cross-licensing arrangements in rural Bellingham Deanery, partnership working is empowering outward-facing mission, the development of new leaders, engagement with all ages and new ways of being church. So we discern that God is calling an outward-looking and collaborative leader of wide ministry experience and vision, who will work with the grain of our strategy, attentively valuing each context and its distinctive strengths.

PRIORITY 1: TURNING OUTWARDS IN MISSION IN EVERY PLACE

Our community, civic, ecumenical, regional, national and international engagement are important aspects of our Diocesan identity. The opportunity is there to build on this and to further discern ways of being church in God's world. Our next Bishop will have knowledge of and confidence in ways of better connecting the local church to its community. We pray for a Bishop who has a strong grasp of 'Missio Dei' theology, someone who knows that the God of mission is head of the church, rather than believing that the church owns mission.

We discern the need for a Bishop who has an understanding of the North East and who has a track record of speaking out on important issues, such as poverty, the global climate emergency and mental health; someone with a clear and prophetic voice who is ready to speak up against injustice. We believe God is calling someone who has a specific sense of call to this region, to minister to our people in all our places. Our next Bishop may or may not be *of* the North East, but they need to be boldly *for* the North East.

So we seek a Bishop who will be courageously looking outward to God's mission in God's world; cherishing old partnerships and building up new ones; prophetically speaking into the issues of our day at local and national level; theologically joining the dots between people's search for meaning and faith in our God, the God who so loves the world that he sent his one and only Son that all might be saved - and who will encourage by example clergy and laity to do the same.

PRIORITY 2: ENERGISING AND EQUIPPING MISSIONAL LEADERS, ORDAINED & LAY

One of the greatest strengths we have in Newcastle Diocese is our people. Whilst the Diocese covers a vast geographical area, and all kinds of communities, we have a small enough population that people are involved and interconnected with one another relationally. Our next Bishop will be able and willing quickly to learn to love and cherish the people of these places, rapidly building trust and inspiring confidence, thereby further unlocking the confidence of our clergy and people to serve with increased joy.

Our new Bishop will provide theological as well as practical and personal leadership in mission, so that clergy and lay people can be affirmed in all they give. We seek a Bishop who will value the diversity of vocations among all of God's people and encourage our developing creative partnerships.

We have recently strengthened our Mission and Ministry Team with investment in Continuing Ministerial Formation and Lay Ministry Development. This investment is helping to create an ever more joined up strategy in the vocational discernment, training, formation and support of all ministries, as we seek to demonstrate that authentic collaboration between ordained and lay ministry is key for healthy and flourishing ministry across our communities.

We are concerned at the number of clergy and lay leaders in the Diocese who are reporting levels of stress, anxiety, and despondency. No doubt the Covid-19 pandemic has played a part in this, but there are other factors at work. We seek a Bishop who will be 'a pastor to the pastors', who understands episcopal pastoral oversight as essential to successful ministry and mission.

PRIORITY 3: NEW CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND NEW CHRISTIANS

There are diverse opportunities for mission throughout the Diocese. We seek a leader with a robust missiology which is entrepreneurial in its attitude to risking new things, sensitive to context and rooted in wide experience of what works. Specifically, we see opportunities in the following areas:

i) New housing

The large number of new housing estates throughout the Diocese are the focus of much mission interest from our churches: through schools' work, Anna Chaplaincy, community events and pioneering initiatives. As the population grows and the Diocese becomes more recognised as an attractive place to live with increased home working since the pandemic, incomers to the region as well as those moving locally to new housing are a mission field for local churches.

ii) Church Planting

Our Resource Church leaders are well-networked nationally and are praying and exploring with the Bishop's Staff Team about how and where to plant from St Thomas's elsewhere in Newcastle. We also want to explore how sensitive pioneering church plants might be appropriate in some other contexts, especially further North where population is sparser and there are fewer younger people. Some of our beautiful historic market towns might be future mission hubs and we seek vision and wisdom in developing this new venture.

We pray therefore for a Bishop who can help local worshipping communities in discerning where God is at work, encouraging mission, evangelism, pioneering and planting that is sensitive to context and a range of church traditions; someone who has experience of the planting and the nurture of healthy, thriving all-age church communities.

PRIORITY 4: MAKING DISCIPLES WHO BUILD UP THE CHURCH FOR MISSION

We pray for a Bishop able to show and teach what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ today. Our diocesan consultations have confirmed the widespread desire for this. We discern particular energy, worthy of attention, in the following current initiatives:

i) Internship Programmes

For a number of years, we have been investing in young vocations through both the Church of England Ministry Experience Scheme (CEMES) and, more recently, the New Wine Discipleship Year. These schemes draw participants from all over the UK and have borne much fruit in the form of ordinands now in training and a number of curates. Some of these curates are also taking on incumbencies in the diocese, part of a growing trend for our home-grown curates to express a desire to minister in the Diocese of Newcastle on the completion of their training. Our strengthened Mission and Ministry Team includes an Intern Ministry Officer to help develop pathways from internship into appropriate additional training and ministry opportunities.

We look to our new Bishop to help us make these interns and young vocations feel fully valued in the revitalising contribution they are making to our wider mission, especially amongst younger people.

i) Heritage and Pilgrimage

The North-East enjoys a very rich Christian history and there is a significant opportunity to draw on this wonderful spiritual legacy to connect with people seeking spiritual nourishment who fall outside 'usual' church structures.

We pray for a Bishop who understands our heritage of faith, can speak into such spiritual searching, and who can help us build effective and innovative partnerships to grow opportunities, through our landscape and places, for encouraging people in their journey with God.

ii) Digital on-line and hybrid worship

A feature throughout the Diocese, as elsewhere in the Church of England, this has been significant, for example, in some of our deep rural areas where isolation is an issue. Improving broadband infrastructure and mobile signal since the start of the pandemic (although not yet universal) have given rise to some perhaps surprising growth in the use of technology, including among older generations.

We pray for a Bishop with a 'can-do attitude' who can help us make sense of these multiple opportunities in order to make the most contextually appropriate use of the new technologies across the Diocese.

PRIORITY 5: MORE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & MISSION WITH SCHOOLS

There is a widely recognised need across our Diocese to strengthen the ways in which we engage with children, young people and families. Many of our churches do not currently engage young people or children in worship, although partnerships with schools are often strong. We discern the following areas of growth and potential:

i) Engaging worship

To support parishes, a Diocesan Children and Youth Team Leader has been appointed to develop and encourage ministry and mission for families and young people. Prior to the pandemic, family worship and child-focussed activity such as Messy Church were thriving in some churches but, despite many innovative ways of keeping in touch during recent times of lockdown and ongoing restriction, families and children have been among the groups least likely to make a regular return to worship and church activity.

Engaging and re-engaging with this younger age group is something we recognise as an area needing careful attention. We will welcome wisdom, energy and enthusiasm for this from our new Bishop.

ii) Church Schools and the Diocesan Board of Education

Our diverse range of church schools offer a significant opportunity for mission, as indeed do our local authority schools. Across the Diocese, there are many examples of good and emerging practice which connects schools, parish churches and households and we are committed to the Growing Faith initiative. However, we recognise that this needs to be further progressed. The opportunity is there to secure and align resources to harness the potential of church/school partnerships, place our work in education at the heart of our strategy and enable the voice of children and young people to be clearly heard.

We pray for a Bishop who is committed to the work of our schools and our wider ministry with children and young people; has experience of listening to children and young people and a track record of building effective partnerships between schools and the church; and can help us discern where there are opportunities to extend our work with young people in Colleges, Universities and other settings.

PRIORITY 6: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY & DEPLOYMENT STRATEGY

i) The Role of National Church Funding

Historically, as one of the less well-resourced dioceses in the Church of England with limited historical reserves and as our average personal income per capita is below the average for all dioceses, we have been recipients of Lowest Income Communities Funding from the National Church. Recognising the need for a sustainable plan to resource mission and ministry, we have been working with parishes for a number of years and, in the context of our Next Steps strategy, are in the process of discerning and implementing a re-imagined ministry provision that is financially sustainable and missionally focussed.

Our first project funded by Strategic Development Funding (SDF) was our Resource Church in the centre of Newcastle. It is showing all the early signs of being a success story. Discerning how best to build on this success will be important.

However, our application for Strategic Transformations Funding, tailored to facilitate the diocesan wide roll-out of our Next Steps strategy, was unsuccessful. The Bishop's staff team has critical work to do in order not to lose the widespread support and engagement of parishes with this work and in building our relationship with the National Church as it seeks to invest in our missional priorities. Our next Bishop will play a key role in continuing and developing our dialogue with parishes and with the National Church.

ii) Financial Resilience

Whilst a great deal has been achieved in recent years, there is more to be done to encourage parishes and deaneries to take full ownership of the resourcing challenge. Comparison with other dioceses with similar levels of socio-economic deprivation highlights that we have lower levels of financial giving.

We seek a Bishop who will boldly and clearly help us encourage a culture of generous giving, especially financially, reinforcing our message that this is crucial for the mission of the church, our rootedness in our communities and our ability to effect change at a local level. We are praying for a Bishop who understands how best to steward our resources, both human and financial, and who can help spot with fresh eyes where our culture needs challenging.

iii) Pastoral Re-organisation

Given the changing nature of ministry resource, the opportunities of serving new communities, and the financial challenges facing the Diocese, pastoral re-organisation is both inevitable and necessary. Indeed, in rural Northumberland, where population is sparse, it has been normative for many years.

We are fully aware that as well as excitement about new possibilities, such changes can provoke anxiety and a sense of loss and pain. Difficult decisions will need to be taken with prophetic and pioneering vision and courage, as well as with prayer and deep pastoral concern. We pray for a Bishop with the insight and resilience to lead senior level decision-making informed by a properly theological sense of the church's call and identity.

iv) Deployment Strategy

We are in the early stages of developing a strategic deployment strategy which will work at deanery and parish, as well as at diocesan level. This aims to assist planning and give us tools for generating agency, dialogue and self-analysis and thereby to render decisions more transparent. This is a particular challenge in a Diocese of such diverse geographical contexts, limited financial room for manoeuvre and with many parishes which, according to the ONS Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), are significantly more deprived than the national average.

Some of our newly defined roles pose exciting opportunities for experienced incumbents to undertake innovative transformational work as part of our Growing Church Bringing Hope Strategy – and some of these are attracting strong candidates from outside our Diocese. We are also keen, however, for the overall deployment strategy to include posts shaped to be suitable for first time incumbents, given the number of our curates in recent years expressing a clear desire to remain in the Diocese.

Our next Bishop will join us at a time when we are progressing this plan and moving towards implementing it, and so will be key to discerning its final form. We pray for a Bishop who will be courageous and bold in envisioning the future, inspiring excitement about the opportunities opening up whilst attending to the real emotional and spiritual costs of change. We look for a Bishop who will inspire faith and trust and hope.

EVERY VOICE MATTERS IN THE DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

We are a broad, open Diocese, inclusive of all, with a diversity of traditions flourishing alongside one another. Our next Bishop will be called upon to build and strengthen relationships between church traditions, affirming the rich diversity of worship styles and theologies that increasingly thrive together here.

Our wide diversity is also seen in the contrast between the considerable wealth of major landowners, senior professionals and executives and people who have made lifestyle choices to live here on the one hand, and areas of significant deprivation (demonstrated by IMD scores) on the other. These latter are often, but not exclusively, in former mining and industrial areas. There are people who feel 'left behind' as a result of educational disparities, low income and zero hours contracts, long term unemployment or infirmity, and who may find it difficult to access the new economic opportunities which are starting to emerge. We pray for our next Bishop to be someone who will feel at ease with people of all backgrounds and help all to be valued, heard and respected for who they are and what they bring.

While we are predominantly white British in this region, we nonetheless seek to include ethnic diversity in our committees and synods. Our next Bishop will fully endorse the 'From Lament to Action' Initiative of the Church of England and help us to grow in better integrating and empowering people of different races, currently hugely under-represented in the Anglican church in the region, although present in larger numbers in non-denominational churches and elsewhere, particularly in the city of Newcastle.

As a Diocese we are committed to receiving the Bishop we discern God to be calling, whether that be a man or a woman. In addition to a Bishop committed to the Five Guiding Principles, we pray for a Bishop who will ordain women as well as men. We also seek someone committed to the Pastoral Principles enshrined in the Living in Love and Faith process, in the development of which our previous Bishop was instrumental. Our Diocese is engaged in the Living in Love and Faith process at diocesan, deanery and parish level.

We may not quickly change our minds on important issues of difference in any of these areas, indeed our differing experience is a rich source of learning for us all. However, there is an important theological and leadership task in encouraging us to grow closer together through exploring our differences rather than allowing them to push us apart.

Our strength in valuing diversity is closely allied to our deep commitment to making our churches safe places for all people to flourish and explore their faith and vocation in life. We seek a Bishop who is deeply committed to promoting awareness of the ways that intersections between privilege and vulnerability can generate either safe or unsafe culture, a Bishop who will want to defend survivors and will fearlessly challenge unsafe practice and behaviour - a person of courage, high integrity, resilience and self-awareness who will give a lead in educating us all towards a church which is safer for all.

Above all, we seek a Bishop who will be a figure of unity, enabling all voices to be heard, including those not in the room at any given time, whether it be on issues of ethnicity, churchmanship, gender and sexual identity, age, economic deprivation, ability and disability, or indeed any other issue on which power dynamics can become complex.

So We Pray for a Bishop Who.....

- **Will be a Collaborative Leader**
- **Will be a Pastor of the Pastors**
- **Will be a Courageous and Prophetic Voice**
- **Will be a Persuasive Advocate for Mission and Growth**
- **Will be Inclusive**

Among, to and for Us, the North East and the World.