

From Speaking to Acting

On the Way



The Bishop of Coventry

Trinity 2010

Introduction

I have been very grateful for the way so many people and groups in the Diocese have engaged with my *Signposts for the Future*¹ document published about a year ago and for the general support it has received. Given the interest that it seemed to spark, I have written an update a year on. I have called it *On the Way* because that is where we are, *on the way*. It will give us some idea of where we are with a number of developments in the Diocese as we seek to walk the way signposted a year ago.

+ Christopher

¹ *Signposts for the Future* can be found at www.coventrydiocese.org or ordered from: Sue Hosiene, Diocesan Offices, 1 Hill Top, Coventry, CV1 5AB sue.hosiene@covcofe.org.

Archdeacon Missioner

Signposts signalled the plan to appoint a new Archdeacon to ‘help us over a fixed period of time to merge our two Archdeaconries into one, with the concentration of a statutory archidiaconal ministry in the ministry of one Archdeacon and the redistribution of other responsibilities to enhanced Rural / Area Deans with commensurate resourcing’.² I am glad that Morris Rodham is now in post as our Archdeacon Missioner with a brief not only to steer us through this sort of structural adjustment but to enable the better fulfilment of our Diocesan purpose to *worship God, make disciples and transform communities*.

The Archdeacon Missioner joins the Archdeacon of Coventry and the Diocesan Secretary in a management trio that attends to the efficient day-to-day running of the Diocese in order to free me and Bishop John for more pastoral and missionary activity.

Indeed, all of this is so that the missionary energies of the Diocese – the propensity (the ‘spiritual powers and gifts’) that we are given by God’s Spirit to serve and spread the good news of the kingdom of God brought by Jesus Christ – can be released and liberated.³

Dean of Women’s Ministry

The post of Adviser in Women’s Ministry has been reconfigured into *The Dean of Women’s Ministry*. This is a necessary and valuable role in the Diocese, especially at a time when the Church of England is making critical decisions on the ordination of women to the episcopate. Katrina Scott’s presence as Dean of Women’s Ministry on the Bishop’s Core Staff improves, though it does not solve, the gender imbalance on the Team. Katrina’s place will be covered by an acting Dean during her forthcoming maternity leave.

² *Signposts*, p.11.

³ The call to ‘release the missionary energies of the Diocese of Coventry’ was a major element in the Archbishop of Canterbury’s charge to me when I became Bishop of Coventry in 2008.

Rural and Area Deans and Deaneries

One step already taken towards involving Rural and Area Deans more actively in the leadership of the Diocese has been to extend the Bishop's Staff Team to include them in our monthly meetings. I am greatly enjoying working with this able and committed team of men and women, and I look forward to exploring ways in which we can release them more fully for this important ministry.

On a wider front, our Diocesan Synod has proposed a motion to the General Synod which urges Synod to bring forward legislation to change the functions and powers of Deanery Synods. Currently, Deanery Synods only have a deliberative role. We would like to see them able to take on a more executive function and to become legal entities like PCCs. This will give them the teeth to perform the function that we are asking of our Deaneries.

The changes to our Deanery Share Allocation system (of which more later) will strengthen the responsibilities carried by our Deaneries and their opportunities for strategic planning.

Diocesan Support Officers

In the recent past the Diocese has had a number of Departments and Directors in the areas of Education, Social Responsibility, Ministry, Discipleship Development, Communication, and Parish Development and Evangelism. At present we have a number of vacancies in these posts. This, together with the appointment of an Archdeacon Missioner and an increasingly clear commitment to ensuring that our 'central' resources serve the 'local' mission of the Church, has led to a review of how we organize and make the best use of our support structures and posts.

I suspect that we need to think more in terms of fluid 'spheres of activity', each with a rather different form and shape rather than the more static structures of traditional diocesan organisation. Crudely, we will need more of a 'horses for courses' approach.

For example, our really important statutory responsibilities to our seventy-five Church Schools will require our Education Department, overseen by the Board of Education, to continue to have a fairly formal structure. Even here, though, with all the statutory demands upon our Board, I am continually encouraged by its vision and very thankful for the energy of Linda Wainscot, our Director of Education, as she explores all sorts of opportunities to support and develop our work in primary, secondary and tertiary education throughout Coventry and Warwickshire. We will need this sort of agility as we discern how to respond most confidently and creatively to the new educational landscape set by the recent Queen's Speech.

In other areas of the Diocese's life, other shapes will be needed to meet our needs. The one of these that is clearest in my mind at the moment is in the area of Discipleship and Ministry. I will say more about that in a moment. But before that, let me say that in the general area of mission (in particular, in the Departments previously led so well by John Hall and Roger Morris) we are deliberately giving Morris Rodham, our new Archdeacon Missioner, time to settle in and to assess how the mission of Benefices, Chaplaincies and Deaneries can be most creatively and efficiently supported before making any new appointments.

Discipleship and Ministry

The mission of the Church belongs to us all as Christ's missionary people – the people who are sent by him (Luke 10.1; John 20.21; Acts 1.6-8). Hence, we need to be disciples who are confident in our faith, and we need to be built up in the faith and led in the faith by committed and competent ministers and leaders.

In order to help deepen discipleship throughout the Diocese and to select, educate, train and form those called to ministry and leadership, I have asked Richard Cooke to head up a Diocesan Training Partnership. We will probably need to come up with a snappier name but this working title does, at least, signal that any training in Christian Discipleship and Ministry provided centrally by the Diocese is carried out in partnership with the Benefices and Deaneries on the one hand, and with the Regional Training Partnership, of which our Diocese is part, together with national training institutions on the other.

In Richard's planning for the launch of the DTP in September, he will be looking at the current responsibilities of the Department of Ministry. It may be that some of its present tasks will fit more naturally into other spheres of activity.

In the meantime I would like to pay tribute to Roger Spiller who will be standing down as Director of Ministry after the summer and will be focusing his ministry on his work as Director of Ordinands (DDO) until his retirement towards the end of 2011. Eventually Roger will be succeeded by a half-time DDO and two Assistant DDOs.

Appointments

The appointments system, previously distributed between three offices, is now concentrated in the Archdeacon of Coventry's Office. We have had a significant number of vacancies over the last year. This has created a lot of work for Ian Watson but it has allowed us to make some really good appointments. It has been gratifying to hear that *Signposts*, and the direction of travel it describes, has played a part in attracting such fine priests to the Diocese. I would like to pay tribute to Ian Watson, and to the strong support he receives from Yvette McDonald, for an extraordinary amount of hard work in steering the appointment process through to such promising ends.

Communication

Signposts acknowledged the need for good communication in the Diocese. This is essential if we are to feel and act like the family that any Diocese is called to be. We need efficient and effective ways of communicating both essential information internally within the Diocese and the exciting stories of what God is doing among us to those beyond the Diocese. Simon Lloyd, our Diocesan Secretary, is working with a small group to firm up how we can best do this and what personnel we need to do it.

Finance

Another way in which the family of the Diocese expresses itself is through its financial arrangements. These demonstrate our commitment to, and care for, each other and recognize that we are bound to each other in the Body of Christ and that Christ's mission is greater than what happens in our own particular place and way. They also reveal whether we are being good stewards of all that the Lord has given to us.

I was very glad to join a Diocese that was in good shape financially and that was committed to ensuring that money was directed towards the needs of the Church on the ground. I was also glad to see that a review of the Deanery Share Allocation system was underway which was itself based on the values of transparency, simplicity and fairness. Diocesan Synod has now adopted the proposals that emerged from that Review. I am delighted about this not only because they are more transparent, more simple and more fair than any other system that I have come across in the Church of England, but because they very much work with the grain of enhancing Deanery responsibility. I am hugely grateful to the extraordinarily thorough work of the Review and Consultation Groups.

It has been good to welcome David Oglethorpe to the Diocese as our new Director of Finance and Administration. David will be closely involved in the implementation of the new system.

Again, on the financial front, I rejoice that savings over recent years and bold decisions by Diocesan Synod have allowed us to create the two funds for initiatives in mission trailed in *Signposts*. Details of how to apply to the Diocesan Mission Fund can be found at www.coventry.anglican.org

Pastoral Care of the Clergy

A sense of being a family together also relies on taking good pastoral care of each other. A vital element in this is the pastoral care of our clergy on whom so much of the life of the Diocese depends under God. Bishop John's review of ways in which we can best care for clergy mentioned in *Signposts* is now complete. I am very grateful to Bishop John for leading this review and to others who have also contributed to its outcome. *Pastoring the Pastors*, a document giving advice and information to clergy and to their wardens, is now available for distribution and can be found at www.coventry.anglican.org

Ministerial Development Review

As clergy will know, our Ministerial Development Review (MDR) scheme has been under review itself for some time. I am glad to say that a new MDR process will be ready to run in time for the proposed implementation of the new Terms and Conditions of Service for Clergy (Common Tenure) in February 2011 and I am grateful to all those who have designed it. It will be a four-year cycle providing different sorts of review in each of the four years. Year 2 of the new MDR has been trialled for some time now and a good number of clergy have been through it. I am conscious, though, that the turnover in Bishop's Core Staff, together with the impending introduction of a new process, has meant that not everyone who should have been reviewed has been reviewed. I apologise for this and look forward to our new and thorough process being up and running soon.

Episcopal ministry

Signposts promised that Bishop John and I would seek to attend Clergy Chapter meetings on a fairly regular basis. In fact, from September we will be experimenting with a pattern of a three-part Deanery Day involving a Quiet Morning for the clergy, a visit of some sort in the afternoon, perhaps to a community project, a school, factory or some other place of work, and an evening event for the whole Deanery. The pattern of the day is one example of our attempt to reflect the Diocesan understanding of its purpose in our ministries, focusing in the morning on *worshipping God*, in the afternoon on *transforming communities* and in the evening on *making disciples*.

2011-2012

The Jubilee celebrations of the New Cathedral in 2012 are beginning to feel quite close. I am very pleased that the anniversary edition of *Fire in Coventry*⁴ is now published as this will help us to re-live the deeply

⁴ *Fire in Coventry* is available by mail order from The Diocesan Offices, 1 Hill Top, Coventry, CV1 5AB.

spiritual process that surrounded the Cathedral's consecration and help us to discern more of what God is calling the Diocese to be and to do fifty years later. I enjoyed writing a new introduction in which I explore some of the abiding themes of this 'small book whose importance is out of all proportion to its size', as Donald Coggan, former Archbishop of Canterbury, described it. I hope this spiritual classic will be widely read in the Diocese and beyond.

Whatever God might call us to in particular, there can be no doubt that it will involve a continual openness to the renewal of our lives in Christ. Spiritual renewal will always be at the heart of God's work among us, so it is very fitting that our diocesan haven of retreat, Offa House, will also be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 2012.

Spiritual renewal is inescapably bound up with a renewed engagement with God's word. As 2011 will be the 400th Anniversary of the Authorised Version of the Bible, and as General Synod has challenged all the Dioceses to use this as an opportunity to promote the Bible, I have invited the Diocese of Coventry to make 2011 a ***Year of the Bible***. Rex Pogson, a member of Bishop's Council and Chair of the Board of Education, has agreed to head up a task group that will help us all – in the words of the General Synod motion – 'to celebrate and teach the Bible both within the Church and throughout wider society'.

2011 is also the 200th Anniversary of the National Society which began its nation changing work in 1811 with the aim that 'the National Religion should be made the foundation of National Education'. The Society's pioneering work led to the introduction of free education for all and a distinctively English partnership between Church and State in its provision. I am delighted that our own Board of Education is taking full advantage of this opportunity not only to commemorate this important history but also to celebrate the vital place of Christian faith and values in our schools. There will be all sorts of connections with the *Year of the Bible* and an anticipation of the Cathedral's Jubilee with a pilgrimage of the Cross of Nails around all our schools, reminiscent of the original pilgrimage around the Diocese of which you can read in *Fire in Coventry*. There will be many opportunities for parishes to engage with these celebrations in our schools.

And finally . . .

In my address to Diocesan Synod in March 2010⁵ I talked about the *thinness of the Church* and the *thickness of Society's problems*. By this I meant, on the one hand, the enormity of the problems that our society faces on so many levels as it reaps the consequences of its slippage from the virtues once embedded into it by Christian faith. And on the other, I meant the numerical vulnerability of the Church at the present time as we suffer the effects both of a long-standing drift towards a practical secularism in our culture and a lack of intentionality in our mission to make disciples of all people (Matthew 28.19-20).

There is a challenging road ahead for us to walk along together as we seek to renew the life of the Church, rebuild Christian commitment and reshape society's values and assumptions. But we do so in the presence of the Christ who set his face to Jerusalem and to the coming of God's kingdom and who calls us to go on *worshipping God, making disciples and transforming communities*. Like the Church of the New Testament period we have been given - and will be given more of - the 'missionary energies' for this missionary journey.

And like our forebears then, we will inevitably face tensions between us as we seek to be faithful to the 'boundless riches of Christ' and to all the 'rich variety' of 'God's wisdom' (Ephesians 3.8) as we reach out into the realities of the contemporary world. In a missionary situation it is more important than ever to 'cherish' (as the Archbishop charged me when I became Bishop of Coventry) the 'precious gift of mutuality' that we have been given by our common life in the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' great prayer, on the eve of his death for the reconciliation of the world, he prayed fervently for his future followers to be one because he knew that *only then* would the world believe 'that Father sent him' (John 17.20-21).

For all that lies ahead for us together *On the Way*, let us pray:

Come, Holy Spirit.
fill the hearts of your faithful people,
and kindle in us the fire of your love.

⁵ The full text can be found at www.coventry.anglican.org/admin/boardscommittees/diocesansynod