

Discernment of Diocesan Vision: Parish Consultation

With 2026 not too far away, now is an ideal time to be considering what will come next to follow 'Vision 2026', our current diocesan vision (see [here](#) for details of Vision 2026). Over the last decade, Vision 2026 has had a transformative impact on our diocese as parishes across all contexts and church traditions have creatively engaged in what it means to grow a 'healthy church that transforms its community' in their context. So where are we now and what should come next? Critically, where is God leading us? In late 2024, all parishes (and church schools via a separate exercise) are being invited to help to respond to those questions. Other groups will be consulted in early 2025 to ensure that a wide range of voices are heard in the consultation, for example the new Youth Forum will be contributing their voice to the discernment of the new vision at their January meet up.

This document lays out a conversation which all PCCs are asked to engage in over the next few months and to provide responses by Friday 13th December 2024. It provides a suggested format for a PCC conversation which is expected to take about an hour though this could be shorter if all PCC members have received the questions well in advance and had time to consider them. You could also have a more in depth chat at a Standing Committee meeting or other group when there may be more time, then feed the outcomes into the PCC meeting conversation.

In addition, you may also like to listen to some wider voices to inform your PCC's response eg the views of members of the congregation, lay volunteers, young people, any paid staff and even members of your community who don't come to church.

A suggested format for the conversation is as follows:

- 1) Opening reflection (provided) and prayer
- 2) Vision: Looking back, looking ahead and how we get there
- 3) Strapline
- 4) Closing prayer

Please provide your answers via the form at the link below by Friday 13th December 2024:

[Click here for the Diocesan Vision Discernment Form](#)

It's important that this deadline is met as a summary of all responses (anonymised) will be provided to the new year deanery synods which begin in January. These deanery synods, each hosted by a bishop and an archdeacon, will be open synods to which all clergy, church wardens and vision champions will particularly be invited to attend.

They will be an opportunity for us to collectively and prayerfully discern the next steps as we look to focus in on what God is saying to us a diocese.

To help to structure the conversation, a 'ready to go' format is provided below with the specific questions to be answered highlighted in red. Feel free to use this and adapt it to what works best in your context.

PART 1: OPENING REFLECTION

- It would be very easy to launch into an exercise and come up with a new vision that we all think sounds right....but completely miss where God is leading us.
- Our vision refresh is therefore primarily a discernment exercise, what is God's vision for Lancashire? What is God's vision for the Church of England in Lancashire?
- Please spend some time individually quietly reflecting on the following verse from Romans 12 v2:

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

- Then share thoughts on what we learn from this verse about discerning God's direction.
- Next, open the conversation in prayer – you may wish to use the following words:

*Lord God, through your grace we are your people;
through your Son you have redeemed us;
in your Spirit you have made us your own.
Forgive us when we conform to the patterns of this world and go our own way;
Renew our minds such that we are transformed more and more to the likeness of Jesus Christ;
Please guide and inspire us during this conversation as we look towards the future of our diocese, that our thoughts and actions would reflect your will.*

Amen

PART 2: VISION - LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD, AND HOW DO WE GET THERE?

This part of the conversation has three main parts. Feel free to discuss these in whatever order works best for you locally.

i) Looking back: What has Vision 2026 looked like in your parish?

Our diocesan vision for the last 10 years has been to see 'Healthy Churches Transforming Communities'. See the final page of this form for a vision summary.

Please discuss what testimonies you have of what God has done in people's lives over the last 10 years and then answer the following questions:

- *Which aspects of Vision 2026 have particularly flourished in your parish and why?*
- *Which aspects of Vision 2026 have been more challenging and why?*
- *What difference has Vision 2026 made in your parish?*

ii) Looking ahead: Next Diocesan Vision

We are now looking ahead and discerning our next diocesan vision which will take us to 2033, 2000 years since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Please spend some time in prayer at this point considering:

- The people who live in Lancashire and the rich diversity of our communities including diversity of age, wealth, context (rural, coastal, urban), ethnicity and faith.
- The Diocese of Blackburn including our churches, new local congregations, schools, chaplaincies, Blackburn Cathedral and Whalley Abbey.

...and asking for guidance as to where God is leading us as we look to towards 2033.

Then share thoughts on:

- *What do you think God's vision is for Lancashire and the Diocese of Blackburn?*
- *What would our churches, schools and chaplaincies look like in 2033 if everything has gone really well?*
- *What would our local communities look like in 2033 if everything has gone really well?*
- *What do you think God is saying to us at this time?*

iii) Looking ahead: How we get there

Once we have discerned our new vision, we will begin the process of discerning how we get there. It is however helpful to reflect now on the priorities that have been in focus under Vision 2026 which are:

- Making Disciples of Jesus Christ
- Being Witnesses to Jesus Christ
- Growing Leaders for Jesus Christ
- Inspiring Children and Young People

As we look ahead to 2033, bearing in mind the above priorities and what these have looked like in your parish:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>What new emphases do we need or what do we need more of?</i>➤ <i>What must we keep, not lose sight of?</i>➤ <i>What can we lose or do we need less of?</i>

PART 3: STRAPLINE

Finally, what are your ideas on the following question (feel free to propose more than one idea):

<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>What would you call our next diocesan vision and what should its strapline be?</i>

PART 4: CLOSING PRAYER

God of Mission,
Who alone brings growth to your Church,
Send your Holy Spirit to give,
Vision to our planning,
Wisdom to our actions,
Joy to our worship
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you,
And in service to our local community,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Vision 2026: 'Healthy Churches Transforming Communities'

We will realise our vision through:

Making disciples of Jesus Christ

- Knowing the Scriptures better and equipping confident Christian disciples
- Praying with greater depth and urgency for the Kingdom of God to come
- Offering worship in spirit and truth through the ministry of word and sacrament
- Giving generously of our time, talents and money to the cause of Christ

Being witnesses to Jesus Christ

- Sharing the Gospel of salvation with confidence
- Enabling human flourishing through social action
- Planting 10 Strategic Church Plants and 200 New Local Congregations
- Caring for God's creation

Growing leaders for Jesus Christ

- Developing a diocesan-wide culture of vocational discernment for all God's people
- Forming theologically literate Christ-centred lay and ordained leaders
- Nurturing healthy partnerships between clergy and laity by fully implementing the Lay Majority Ministry framework
- Generating a pipeline of highly motivated deacons and priests to enable the Diocese's clergy deployment strategy

Inspiring Children and Young People for Jesus Christ

- Nurturing children and young people in their faith and supporting them as disciples of Jesus Christ
- Holding regular worship that is accessible and appealing to children, young people and their families
- Enabling growth in the numbers of leaders of children and young people
- Pursuing a step change in ministry with those aged 11-16
- Facilitating effective partnerships between churches and schools