



A. Bedrock

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever.*¹

1. Christian faith is built on the unchanging love of God, on the saving work of the risen Jesus, and on God's promise that the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts.

"If 'church' is what happens when people encounter the Risen Jesus and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounter with each other, there is plenty of theological room for diversity of rhythm and style..."(Rowan Williams)²

2. Provided we really do encounter the Risen Jesus in our prayer and our togetherness, we can be relaxed about "diversity of rhythm and style", in other words about the extraordinary diversity of our Church.
3. The look of the church, the distinctiveness and tradition of our ways of worshipping and serving; these things vary enormously within our Anglican diversity, but in the end they are secondary to our purpose and mission.
4. Similarly the laws and structures of the Church of England are there to serve our purpose and mission. It is the job of the senior leaders of the Diocese to see that they are fit for that purpose, and to use them to enable that mission, as well as advocating for change if they fail to do so.

B. Vision and Purpose

*Meanwhile the church... had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.*³

*They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do.*⁴

5. In the Diocese of Liverpool we say that we are **asking God for a bigger church so that we can make a bigger difference: more people knowing Jesus, and more justice in the world.**
6. That more people should know Jesus, and that there should be more justice in the world, is our vision.

¹ Hebrews 13:8 (all Biblical passages are from the New Revised Standard Version).

² Rowan Williams, *foreword to "Mission-Shaped Church"*, 2003.

³ Acts 9:31.

⁴ Galatians 2:10.

7. Working under God's guidance to build a bigger church and to make a bigger difference is our purpose.

C. Asking God.

*Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.*⁵

8. We believe that when we ask God for these things we are asking for something that reflects God's own purpose and desire. Because God loves us, and loves the world of which we are a part.
9. Knowing Jesus, we are drawn through him to worship his Father in the power of the Spirit. Filled with the Spirit's power, we follow Jesus to serve the world God so loved.
10. But God's desire is not for our good alone, but for all those who may come to believe and to be blessed through our service. As we come to understand this, so we come to know our mission.
11. Our mission is not an optional addition to our life, but is essential to it. *"It is not the church of God that has a mission, but the God of mission who has a church"*.⁶
12. We know our hearts, and so we lament and confess our own conflicting desires and attachments, our own faithlessness and lack of courage, our own distractions and worries.
13. But we also know that *God is greater than our hearts*⁷, and so we will continue gladly asking God for a bigger church so that we can make a bigger difference: more people knowing Jesus, more justice in the world.

D. Goals

*When the days drew near for [Jesus] to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him.*⁸

14. We need not fear the changes of the world, for example the diminution of the influence of the Church on our culture, or the numerical decline of the people of God. We need not strive to recover a lost past. Our energies can be directed to an unknown future.

⁵ Ephesians 6:18.

⁶ *Beyond Duty: A Passion for Christ, a Heart for Mission* by Tim Dearborn, 2nd edition, 2013, p.2

⁷ 1 John 3:20.

⁸ Luke 9:51,52a.

15. To make this future known and real, as we seek the bigger church making the bigger difference, we believe that God is calling us to build capacity in two areas. These are Christian Discipleship and Christian Leadership. Building and developing these are our goals.

16. Our goals serve our purpose. The commitment to develop discipleship and leadership flows from our prayer for the bigger church making the bigger difference. We will work as hard and as skilfully as we can to achieve these goals, knowing all the time that our work begins and ends in dependence on God: *"So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth".*⁹

E. Serious Christianity

*The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers.*¹⁰

17. To reach our goals, we are developing two rules.

*"The Latin word we translate "rule" was originally the word for a trellis in a vineyard. In the same way a vine needs a trellis to lift it off the ground so it can bear the maximum amount of fruit, and keep free of predators and diseases, we need a rule as a kind of support structure to organize our life around "abiding in the vine,"¹¹ as Jesus imagined.*¹²

Rule of Life

*My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.*¹³

18. We have described what comprehensive discipleship looks like in our six-word diocesan Rule of Life. We are called to an inner journey where we *pray, read and learn*, and sent on an outer journey where we *tell, serve and give*.

19. The two dimensions of the Rule of Life correspond to the two dimensions of our prayer for more people knowing Jesus, and more justice in the world. On the inner journey we deepen our knowledge of God, and on the outer journey we learn to serve God more effectively.

20. The Rule of Life is widely known across the Diocese, but we need to use it more effectively to test our work of developing effective Christian discipleship at diocesan, deanery or parish levels. We want to see a Diocese where every church member has

⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:6

¹⁰ 1 Peter 4:7.

¹¹ John 15v1–8

¹² www.practicingtheway.org

¹³ John 10:27.

the opportunity to learn and put into practice the disciplines of the Rule of Life.

Rule of Leadership

And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership...¹⁴

21. Similarly we aim to develop a "Rule of Leadership" to describe what comprehensive and mature Christian leadership looks like, so that we can test our future work in this area.

F. Mission and Priorities

And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?¹⁵

22. Putting together our prayer for a bigger church making a bigger difference, and our identification of discipleship and leadership as the drivers of our mission, we can describe **a four-fold mission: introducing people to Jesus, deepening discipleship, developing Christian leaders, and working for justice.** These are our priorities.
23. Everything that we do should be directed to, or should support the delivery of, one of these four priorities. We are prepared to test our actions and our programmes by that measure.
24. Around the Diocese of Liverpool there is much good work done in each of these four priority areas. But we will only serve the people of our diocese fully when all four are on offer consistently and well to everybody living in our Diocese. Everybody living in our Diocese ought to have the opportunity to come to know Jesus Christ, every Christian to deepen their discipleship, every disciple the opportunity to develop as a Christian leader, and by these means we should be working for justice in every place.
25. A number of practical implications emerge for us all:
- a. In a transformed diocese of Liverpool everybody will have the opportunity to come to know God in Jesus Christ, and to join a community worshipping God which is both available and accessible to them.
Therefore **every church community and body will need to take intentional steps to encourage invitation and evangelism, and to start new as well as maintaining existing healthy worshipping communities that are accessible**

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:28.

¹⁵ Romans 10:14b,15a.

all people in their communities.

- b. In a transformed diocese of Liverpool every church member will have the opportunity to know God more fully, and serve him more effectively, by learning and putting into practice the six disciplines of the Rule of Life.
Therefore **every church community and body will need to have a culture of expecting deepening of discipleship, and practices which mean all six disciplines are taught and modelled in ways appropriate to their members.**
- c. In a transformed diocese of Liverpool every disciple will have the opportunity to discover and use God's particular calling for them at home, in school, at work, and in digital and social spaces, as well as to all forms of leadership within and beyond the institutions of the Church.
Therefore **every church community and body will support and enable Christians to live out their discipleship wherever they are and to consider where God may be calling them, and will specifically identify and develop those who God is calling to leadership in the Church, whether within that community or elsewhere.**
- d. In a transformed diocese of Liverpool every church community and body will model justice in its own life, deal justly with others, witness to God's call to justice, and serve the needs of its community.
Therefore **every church community and body will need to be at work to treat all God's children with justice, whether inside or outside the church; to find ways for Christians to have influence in God's world and to support and enable their members to take them; and to discern the particular needs of their communities and find ways to serve them.**