

Themes for the New Quinquennium

Report by The Archbishops' Council

GS 1399



1. *Working as One Body* recommended that one of the most important functions of the Council would be to help the Church develop “a clearer sense of its needs and priorities ... drawing on the guidance of the House of Bishops and offering the result for the approval of the General Synod”, so that policies and strategies could be developed to meet them. That “clearer sense” would in turn draw on the House of Bishops’ vision for the broad direction of the Church. This document is our considered response to that task and we invite Synod members to help us refine and carry this work forward.
2. At our very first meeting (in January 1999), we received a document from the House entitled *Steps in the Creation of a Vision Statement for the Church of England as the Archbishops’ Council begins its work* (GS Misc 563) which was a reflection by the Bishops of the Church of England. This set out seven distinct steps, starting with the Vision of God and a sketch of the important features of contemporary society; and proceeding to focus on the Archbishops’ Council, the life of the Church of England in its various forms, the new way of working which the Council might model, and the priorities which might be adopted within the aspirations of the Church’s continuing agenda. We have drawn on this document as our thinking has evolved both on the Council’s role and style of working, and on the needs and priorities of the Church. In particular, we have constantly reflected on the very first step commended by the House that all our actions and intentions should be rooted in the Vision of God and the divine life.

3. *Introduction*

- 3.1 In our first Report to the General Synod (GS 1346) in July 1999, we set out the Council’s vision, purpose and values, together with twelve possible themes and priorities. We expressed our vision of a Church of England which is:-

outward-looking (sharing in the mission of God for the world; & working for God’s justice and peace for all);

united (growing together in the love of God); and

confident (living and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ).

- 3.2 We described the twelve possible priorities as helping to give shape and substance to the national work of the Church over the next five years and to *"help the Council focus its energies and give a direction to the development of future work which will deliver the vision"*. They were not intended to encompass the considerable diversity of work done under the Council's auspices and we recognized at the outset that having priorities should not mean that work falling outside them (much of which delivers key services) should be neglected. **We will continue to give careful attention to all the work, not least through the process of agreeing annual budgets and scrutinizing quinquennial plans.**
- 3.3 However, it soon became clear to us that we needed to reduce the number of themes to provide a manageable focus for the Council. After much listening and discussion, drawing in the initial reactions of the House and the General Synod and the more detailed reactions of the members and staff of the Divisions, Boards and Councils and other partners, we have agreed on the following **four themes** whose purpose is primarily to direct our own work but which we hope will also resonate with dioceses and parishes – both to affirm the value of much that is already happening and to reflect perceptions of the needs and challenges which face us all now and in the years ahead. :

Engaging with social issues

To assist the Church to speak and act prophetically on the issues of the day, and particularly alongside those who are marginalised.

Equipping to evangelize

To co-ordinate a strategy for encouraging and equipping church members to further the task of evangelism.

Welcoming and encouraging children and young people

To welcome and encourage children and young people, and to be encouraged by them, and to engage with them on their spiritual journey wherever they are.

Developing the ministry of all

To encourage the development of lay and ordained people in faith, discipleship, leadership, mission and evangelism.

- 3.4 These themes do not and cannot cover all the important and valuable work within the Council's oversight. We cannot focus on everything nor should we. By the same token, we hope that these themes will complement rather than displace the work of others – and in particular the House of Bishops – with whom we share the responsibility of leadership.
- 3.5 There are two particular strands – worship and the quest for full visible unity (whose indissoluble biblical connection to mission we acknowledge) – which we hold to be integral to the very being of the Church and all that we do and which will find their own explicit focus in the way in which the work to pursue these themes is done. Although we have not specified them as separate themes, we are very much alive to the opportunities which lie ahead in worship and in the ecumenical scene consequent upon the work and achievements of recent years. We are very conscious of their theological and practical importance to the Church and remain committed to them and to their proper resourcing within the total available.
- 3.6 We also emphasize at the outset the importance of effective and imaginative stewardship and proper financial planning in resourcing the work which is to be done.
- 3.7 The four themes are not self-contained or in competition with each other. They all of necessity inter-relate; evangelism, for example, should walk hand in hand with a prophetic engagement with the issues of the day (a point made many times at ACE '99); and the development of the people of God must include children and young people if it is to be credible. Part of our task as a Council will be to ensure that the right and most fruitful connections are made between these themes in the way that the work is designed and implemented.
- 3.8 We see all these strands of activity being developed :
- in the fullest partnership with other national Church bodies such as the House of Bishops, the General Synod, the Church Commissioners and the Pensions Board;
 - in consultation with dioceses and parishes, through General Synod, the listening groups and other means;

- in co-operation with our partners in other Churches, bearing in mind the principle that we should not do work separately where it can more effectively be done by the Churches together.

3.9 What follows is our vision of how the themes can be pursued and expressed in terms of particular pieces of work and broad "intentions" which reflect work already in progress and work to be planned and prioritized over the next quinquennium. Our proposals do not represent a flood of new initiatives but are intended to focus and sharpen both work already in hand and what may follow. It is a vision which we hope will be shared and iteratively developed with the House of Bishops and the General Synod, and by the Boards and Councils and Divisions who actually deliver the work. The House of Bishops discussed the themes in their meeting in October and we have reflected in what follows a number of points made then in a very helpful and constructive dialogue.

4. *The Themes*

4.1 *Theme One: Engaging with social issues*

To assist the Church to speak and act prophetically on the issues of the day, and particularly alongside those who are marginalised

Part of the duty entrusted to the Church by Christ is to witness to Christian values in the life of the nation, to speak and act prophetically on the issues of the day alongside those who are marginalised and disadvantaged. In order to fulfil this duty, the Church of England needs to be properly resourced at national level, so that it can give a credible and well-informed lead in addressing issues of concern to all in society.

We intend:

- (a) *to encourage the Church to help tackle poverty, injustice and social exclusion at local, national and international levels*

We will:

- help determine an appropriate response to the report of the CUF Review Group;
- encourage collaboration, partnerships (including other Churches and Church agencies such as the Childrens' Society) and local initiatives addressing social exclusion and poverty;

- ensure that socially excluded and marginalised people are included as full partners in initiatives on these issues in Church and society;
 - continue to ensure effective support and briefing for bishops and others who speak for the Church on social exclusion and poverty and justice issues, and other critical contemporary issues such as the environment;
 - continue to develop our relationships with the Department for International Development and the aid agencies, following the visit of the Secretary of State to Synod and the contribution of the Jubilee 2000 campaign;
 - support the ongoing conversations of the Archbishop of Canterbury with the World Bank;
 - continue to encourage the developing project and network on urban mission in a global context, within the Anglican Communion.
- (b) *to enable the Church to understand and confront the reality of racism both in society and its own life*

In implementing the action plan drawn up in response to the Report of the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry and other related work, we will:

- undertake appropriate training to raise our own awareness of racism in Church and society (both urban and rural)
- develop the next stage of an action plan in response to the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry (the subject of a separate report to the General Synod);
- support the work of the Board for Social Responsibility's Home Affairs Committee on the experience of minority ethnic people in the justice and penal systems (thus following up the General Synod's debate on prisons in November '99);
- monitor the work of the Church with refugees and asylum seekers following the passage of the Immigration and Asylum Act;

- review the Church's current commitment to racial justice work and education through CMEAC, the Church and World Division, the Division of Ministry and the Churches' Commission for Racial Justice, and the opportunities for further ecumenical engagement in this area.

(c) *to seek to develop the Christian presence in education*

We will:

- consult widely and, subject to the response, seek with our ecumenical partners to carry forward the results of the Dearing Review of Church schools and colleges;
- support the work of the Board of Education in pressing (with our ecumenical partners) for the effective implementation of a curriculum embodying spiritual values to be reflected in our schools;
- work with dioceses, deaneries and parishes to ensure that the Church is fully engaged in the development of opportunities for life-long learning for the whole community.
- seek ways of encouraging more Christians to see teaching as a Christian vocation and of supporting Christian teachers in education;

(d) *to support those who work to sustain marriage and family life*

We will:

- work with the new Marriage and Family Policy Officer to strengthen the Church's contribution to public policy debate and to encourage effective work in dioceses and parishes;
- consider the results of the Bishop of St Edmundsbury's review of aspects of marriage law (expected 2001);
- support the Board of Education in its efforts to ensure effective implementation of the national curriculum, particularly with respect to marriage and family life.

4.2 *Theme Two: Equipping to evangelize*

To co-ordinate a strategy for encouraging and equipping church members to further the task of evangelism .

The Decade of Evangelism has resulted in heightened awareness within the Church of the importance of the evangelistic dimension of Christ's Great Commission [Matthew 28:19-20] and of ensuring that lay people and clergy are equipped for their part in it. We intend:

a) to learn and build on the lessons of the Decade of Evangelism

We will:

- produce and commend accessible resources to enable churches and individual Christians to be increasingly confident in their witness and faith sharing;
- encourage churches to develop appropriate opportunities for faith discovery and development among those outside the worshipping community;
- look for and promote examples of good practice in evangelism;
- work with dioceses and parishes to encourage a warm and effective welcome for those who come to faith;
- work closely with other Churches in the overall task of sharing the Gospel in England.

b) to see evangelism as an essential dimension of the Church's wider mission

We will:

- seek to improve our understanding of and response to those who have little or no contact with the Christian faith;
- to develop effective resources in apologetics for use (for example) in schools and universities;

- ensure that training for lay and ordained ministry reflects the mission and evangelistic context in which the Church of England is now placed, and equips ministers to minister beyond their congregations in mission and evangelism;
- explore ways of resourcing mission and evangelism more flexibly (including the sharing of those resources) in particular areas of need and opportunity, and review current legal and other constraints.

4.3 *Theme Three: Welcoming and encouraging children and young people*

To welcome and encourage children and young people, and to be encouraged by them, and to engage with them on their spiritual journey wherever they are.

We recognize and affirm our strong and good heritage of work with children and young people: baptism, schools, youth and children's work, growing resources in youth work and family worship. But we also acknowledge the uncomfortable message of the statistics that children and young people are increasingly absent from our churches and from contact with the Gospel. We recognize the challenge to engage more confidently and hopefully with children and young people in order to learn from them and create a Church in which they can feel more at ease, and with them, to reach out to those beyond.

We will:

- work for a Church whose place and people continue to provide excellence in worship and family support and fun at church;
- support the Archbishops in building on the success of *The Time of Our Lives* by providing further opportunities for young people to meet together;
- build on the growing experience of churches employing youth workers to spread good employment and training practice and to enable the clergy to develop greater confidence and skill in this work;

- develop practical and imaginative ideas for evangelism among children and young people (especially in deprived areas) and gather the resources to support the work;
- work with ecumenical and education partners and Church agencies when appropriate and with government and others to ensure that the spiritual development of children and young people is given proper priority.

4.4 *Theme Four: Developing the ministry of all*

To encourage the development of lay and ordained people in faith, discipleship, leadership, mission and evangelism.

The Council has already started to discuss the crucial long-term strategic questions about what sort of Church we should be – what sort of ministry, missionary development, clergy numbers, their roles, deployment and remuneration and how they are to be resourced.

We will:

- look afresh at the structure and funding of training for the ordained ministry (including the possible sharing of resources with other Churches);
- assess a review (in progress) of the clergy remuneration package, i.e. stipends, housing and retirement provisions;
- assess the (possibly far-reaching) implications of the Employment Relations Act for the clergy (and other Churches) and associated issues of clergy conditions of service;
- consider a major report (in preparation) on the Continuing Ministerial Education of Clergy and Readers;
- initiate studies into deployment/employment and mission/evangelism issues with respect to those who are disabled;
- continue to work with other groups on issues to do with training in leadership for clergy and laity;

- encourage all dioceses, deaneries and parishes to develop a policy for lifelong learning, in particular strengthening adult Christians in their discipleship at work, at home and in the community;
- promote the effective initiation of adult Christians and the renewal of Christian commitment through the catechumenate and other means, based on a more focused understanding of the faith and practice of the Church of England;
- develop new means of supporting lifelong learning, especially through electronic communication and the world-wide web.

5. Resourcing the Vision

- 5.1 We see resourcing not as a separate theme but as a necessary dimension of all our work.
- 5.2 God in His goodness has given the Church all the gifts needed to undertake His work. As the Turnbull Report argued, there is a particular responsibility on us to foster the development and best use of these resources to underpin and support the themes set out above.
- 5.3 Planned objectives to achieve that aim are set out in **Annex 1**.
- 5.4 Resourcing is likely to be an increasingly critical dimension in the years ahead as the Church nationally and in dioceses and parishes seeks a more missionary focus within the reality of stretched resources. We must find a path through these challenges together, sensitive to each other's pressures.

6. Conclusion

We look forward to hearing whether the General Synod feels we have got the right themes to focus our work and to help the Church as a whole to meet the challenges and opportunities facing it.

+ George Cantuar

+ David Ebor

Church House, SW1
13 October 2000

On behalf of the Archbishops' Council

Annex 1: Resourcing Objectives for the Council

(a) *To gain an understanding of the overall resources of the Church and plan accordingly by:*

- continuing to collaborate with the Church Commissioners in preparing a *Financial Outlook* report which looks at the future financing of the whole Church over the medium term and sets the broad framework for strategic planning. This report will be compiled annually;
- taking opportunities through the established consultative processes (and in one to one discussions) to ascertain the financial position of individual dioceses and their prospects for the future;
- publishing a five-year financial plan covering the Council's Budget (central apportionment) as a permanent feature in support of the annual budget process.

(b) *To improve communication within the Church on financial and resource issues, including the prospects for the future:*

- communication needs to be a two way process. In terms of communication with the wider Church the Council will utilize the full range of media now available, for example:
 - The Council's Annual Report and other formal publications;
 - The Church of England's Web Page (www.cofe.anglican.org);
 - The programme of talks about the Council's work;
 - A new monthly *Gazette* which will be sent (normally electronically) to all ministers and office holders at parish level.

(c) *To devise an action plan to ensure the best use of resources both in terms of money and buildings by:*

- following up with dioceses the recommendations in *First to the Lord (Financing the Church's Mission)* which provides an update on the progress made in raising giving from Church people and others against the context of the changing financial picture and the challenges which need to be met in the future;
- continuing to pursue our campaign to obtain a fairer VAT regime for the Church;
- exploiting to the full the opportunities offered by the new Gift Aid scheme to increase the amount of tax efficient giving within the Church;
- investigating ways in which new sources of funding can be developed, including fund raising in the wider community particularly for specific projects and revisiting the way we currently organize our legacy campaigns;
- to continue the work with dioceses in exploring the opportunities for furthering the principles of mutual support in the way the Church's finances are organised;
- within the limits of the funding available to us, we intend to seek to provide each strand of activity with the appropriate resources, whether human or financial, to accomplish the task and with suitable IT and communications support. We have set out in our third report to Synod (GS 1375) the communications strategy and approach we intend to adopt in support of each of these objectives.

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