



3rd February 2021

Dear Friends,

I last wrote to you in November with an update on *Transforming Church*, and how we are seeking to discern God's vision for our Diocese in the coming years.

All our lives have continued to be severely disrupted because of Covid, and there is still much hardship, loss and challenge in the communities we serve. Through those disruptions the work of the church, its prayer and proclamation have continued. Groups continue to plan for our response to the climate emergency, our work towards greater racial and social justice and our preparation to learn together as a national church through Living in Love and Faith. Over the Christmas season work on *Transforming Church* has continued in earnest.

On 2 February, the Feast of Candlemas, we move our perspective from looking backwards to the birth of Jesus to looking outwards to his ministry on earth, and to considering our part in his ongoing ministry. We will launch, as planned, a wide-ranging engagement and listening exercise, '*Transforming Church. Together*' This process will, we pray, help us to understand what we do well, what we can change for the better and how we can create a positive way forward together in the way of Christ.

As I said in November, I am committed to listening to voices that I don't often hear and to opinions that challenge me and the status quo – and that remains a hallmark of the way in which the listening exercise has been designed. Thank you to those of you who have already written and who have thought deeply about the current questions for our church.

In the weeks ahead, there will be many more opportunities to get involved, to contribute ideas and to share what you long for, for God's Church and for the communities you serve. I want to encourage you to seize this opportunity wholeheartedly and to share openly, frankly and confidently.

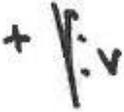
The team, led by our Archdeacons Christopher Bryan and Neil Warwick, have been working hard to ensure that the process is joyful, incisive and life-giving – and all done safely on Zoom! Please pray for the groups that will gather and for those who will facilitate them, that with listening ears and open hearts we may truly discern God's Spirit moving among us.

The listening exercise will continue from February to Eastertide – and you will be hearing from Christopher and Neil in a matter of days detailing how to get involved. Then, during May and June, as we live through Pentecost, we will articulate a vision and some priority themes based on a thorough analysis of the results. Following this, we will move to the development of a new mission plan and a funding application to the Church Commissioners in Advent. The process will be iterative throughout, including as many people as possible in the development of the vision and mission plan.

Like you, I long to see God's love in Christ known and in action in new ways up and down our Diocese, transforming lives and changing communities. My hope is that in the years to come we will look back at this moment and see that the engagement and listening process we are about to begin marked a crucial step towards that future.

As we live through the seasons of this year, Christ is *still* ahead of us in this task and challenge. Let us come together in hope and in joyful anticipation,

Yours in Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. V.' with a small cross or plus sign to the left.