# Directions of travel?

If our diocesan vision is to be people who are ‘living and telling the story of Jesus’ then might our broad ‘directions of travel’ under that vision be as follows:

# Valuing and cherishing the people we already have

Our starting point needs to be that of valuing and cherishing the people we already have so that we can live out our calling to be light and salt within the communities in which we live. Our churches, chaplaincies and schools have committed people, blessed with a rich variety of skills, held in the trust of their local communities, inheritors of an amazing heritage of history and buildings.

Under this heading we could then ‘nest’ a series of areas that we need to work on e.g. ministerial welfare, financial sustainability, support for church wardens and other church officers, development of a buildings policy etc.

1. New worshipping communities

At the same time, the ways in which our traditional congregations worship doesn’t seem to be so attractive to people of younger generations. We’re all conscious that most of our traditional congregations are aging. Yet we see that when we provide ways to express faith in ways that are different from the usual Sunday offering, people who’d never normally come on a Sunday morning seem keen to get involved – especially children, young people and families. So how we are experiencing offering the substance of our faith but in new forms? Across the diocese – how are we forming new worshipping communities in our different contexts?

1. Shared local ministry

When the Church began, the model it worked on was one in which many different people had different roles to play. In many cases we've ended up with a Victorian model which assumes that the Vicar will do almost everything. Not only is this a crying waste of different people’s talents, gifts and passions, it’s increasingly leaving our clergy tired, overstretched and liable to burn out. The development of shared local ministry is crucial: both to use the gifts that all people have and to ensure that the load is shared.

1. Developing our faith

Faith is at its most attractive when it’s an experience of being on a journey – of growing, changing, developing. Where there is attentiveness to faith development, things happen. We’ve a whole range of examples of offerings that help people put their toe in the water. But how do we help people try out what it’s like to go ankle, knee deep or beyond? And how do all of us keep growing in faith? None of us have arrived at the destination.

In all of the above it will be important that

* One size can’t fit all – any direction of travel must be adaptable to the needs of local contexts and must be locally owned
* We must work out of what we have, not out of concern for what we lack
* Our directions of travel must be owned by all parts of our diocese – parishes, schools, chaplaincies, support services, synods, Bishop’s Council, bishops
* and archdeacons

All that we do must be based on prayer, thinking, conversation and consultation.