



# **OUR LIFE IN CHRIST THE BISHOP'S CHARGE 2015**

## **GROWTH IN HOLINESS AND NUMBER**

### **I. Introduction**

One of the aspects of the life of Jesus that emerges very clearly from the gospels is his relationship with the Father.

Luke's gospel tells us that as a child growing to maturity, "Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour" (Luke 2.52). This statement concludes the story of the finding in the temple and the whole of the infancy narrative, which links Jesus to Jerusalem and the routine of liturgical worship that were part of the holiness code of the people whose divine promises he fulfils.

It is in the temple that the first signs in him of the amazing wisdom of God began to emerge (Luke 2.25-39;46-47). Similarly, it is in the routine of Sabbath worship that Jesus announces this fulfilment as he uses words from the prophet Isaiah to outline his redemptive ministry (Luke 4.16-21).

The routines of Sabbath and festival liturgy regularly draw Jesus to the synagogue or to the temple. In these ways he is profoundly shaped in his incarnate life by the patterns of worship that marked a liturgical year and weekly observance, formalising a relationship between time and eternity, between creation and God the creator.

But these are not the only indications of the spiritual relationship that Jesus has with the Father. "In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him." (Mark 1.35).

Alongside the formality of liturgical worship, the allocation of time to be apart from other people, in silence, in the dark, is also important for Jesus, and especially as a response to incredible pressure. In the instance described above, the "whole city" had been at his door and he had cured all kinds of sickness and "cast out many demons".

The disciples are formed by watching their teacher. “He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples’” (Luke 11.1).

Watching is a strand of learning that should be included with listening, asking questions, the atmosphere of an environment and other sensory perceptions. It reminds us that experience and conscience are shaped and sustained in many different ways.

The life of prayer must, of course, be suited to a person’s particular circumstance. The commuter should be enabled to develop a rhythm of daily prayer and regular worship that is likely to include significant differences from that of the grandparent who lives alone, or of the priest who has just been made vicar of a parish for the first time.

The issue that is central in all circumstances is this. Do you pray? How do you pray?

## **2. Will you be diligent in prayer?**

At your ordination you were asked a very direct question: “Will you be diligent in prayer?” It is a requirement that is further underlined in the canons that shape the Church of England’s life. “Every priest having the cure of souls shall provide that, in the absence of reasonable hindrance, Morning and Evening Prayer daily and on appointed days the Litany shall be said in the church or one of the churches....”

This canon is laying upon us a form of prayer that is shaped by psalmody and grounded in scripture. It rehearses the mystery of salvation through the gospel canticles, reminding us that we are the new Israel, bearing the dignity and inheritance of the old in a new dispensation. The function of the Litany is to turn our attention to patient and reflective intercession for people in every aspect of the human condition.

But the interrogation of candidates for ordination to the priesthood also implies that prayer and reading of Holy Scripture are not merely the means by which we give glory to God and find our own path to salvation. This discipline also directs us to another, apostolic level of commitment that turns our attention outwards to the world: “Will you lead Christ’s people in proclaiming his glorious gospel?” The proclamation belongs to all; we have a ministry of leadership and facilitation in making that happen.

It is only through prayer that we open ourselves to the grace that makes us the ministers God asks us to be. “Pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit” is a line in the rite of ordination that we should recollect each day.

Articles 38 and 39 tackled this aspect of ministerial life fairly directly: “Please describe the practices of prayer that energise your own ministry. What help would you appreciate in sustaining and deepening your personal life of prayer?”

Some important trends emerge from the responses to these presentments, and the very positive headline about them is that clergy are very sensitive to the importance of a spiritual life, even if the quality of that life is not always everything that they would want it to be.

The most common spiritual discipline listed in the presentments is the use of a daily office, or an appreciation of other forms of engagement with God through Holy Scripture on a daily basis.

135 clergy indicated that they use some form of Morning and Evening Prayer. 97 are committed to quiet time and Bible reading. 52 specified that they value the celebration of a weekday or daily Eucharist. A number refer to the benefits of prayer walking or running; the companionship of a dog is also quite a feature of this approach!

What is more significant, perhaps, is the extent of overlap in people's practice. The tradition in which a person might have been formed, and still inhabits, does not necessarily determine that person's spiritual practice. The observation that "some of the more contemplative forms of spirituality really speak to my heart" is an indication of the interior thirst that prompts a widespread search for fulfilment.

Many people turn to religious communities, or to a particular tradition of prayer, from which to draw wisdom and refreshment. Among those mentioned in presentments are Benedictine, Carmelite, Franciscan, Ignatian, and Taizé influences. There is also reference to different prayer techniques: the Jesus prayer, *lectio divina*, praying in tongues, use of the orthodox prayer rope or a rosary, membership of a group such as Cursillo or a Julian group.

Although the general focus from these sources is on the interior life of the individual, there is also a desire for the experience of prayer that is communal but not institutionalised, in the way that worship might be.

Of course, the genius of spanning personal and communal practice accounts for the origin of much spiritual wisdom within religious communities, and the diversity of those communities is also evident as an expression of the range of traditions within the diocese.

Many people noted the importance of a prayer group. This could be with colleagues, with parishioners, or with friends outside the local context. The importance of networks such as New Wine or Spring Harvest was also mentioned as an example of prayer support and renewal. On-line networks and resources are also being used and the App that provides a daily office, or meditation, was identified important in securing a certain kind of accessibility for prayer time.

It was good to note that the context of the home, the family, or a meal were recognised as spheres in which prayer was a feature, with one person speaking of home as place where his wife presided with abbatial authority.

Also, 56 clergy stated that companionship in a defined spiritual relationship with another person was an important need within the range of resources that sustain the spiritual life, and many more mentioned that need in interview. This was not regulated by theological tradition, and the range of ways in which provision was found is quite varied, although many people identified it as something that they presently lack.

Similarly, time and place set apart for reflection and renewal were also identified as important but not easy to secure. A number of people asked for a diocesan provision of retreats and quiet days; where that has been available it has been well used and appreciated.

Reference to the religious communities at Worth and Crawley Down indicated the extent to which those places make an important contribution to sustaining our spiritual life.

The pattern of spiritual life that emerges from articles 38 and 39 indicates a positive level of commitment to the discipline of liturgical prayer that sanctifies the cycle and routine of time, but with a lively thirst for the use of time and space to explore the aptitude that we have within ourselves for knowledge of the mystery of God that transcends our limitations.

### **3. Prayer in time and place**

In order to move towards drawing together some conclusions about this primary aspect of our relationship with God, I want to consider first the responses to article 43, which deals with worship and buildings. I would then like to make some observations on my experience of daily worship in each deanery visit, and conclude with some recommendations that also draw from reference to article 49, on evangelism.

Article 43 asks, “Does your church building (or equivalent) as an environment for worship strengthen or constrict the atmosphere of a joyful and awe-inspiring encounter with God?”

In some respects, the process of linking this article with 38 and 39 on prayer and the spiritual life, reconnects us with the dynamic of personal and public prayer that we noted as a feature in the gospel record of Jesus and his disciples.

The time apart, in silence, the time with the disciples in formative prayer and teaching, and the time Jesus spends in the temple and synagogue are not self-contained and disconnected activities: they contribute cumulatively to the relationship with the Father that Jesus seeks to nurture in his disciples, giving them the prayer, “Our Father...” as the foundation of that relationship.

So, in a similar way, we must ensure that there is a connection between the spiritual disciplines that expand the interior life of our relationship with God, and that sanctify time and space in our worship of that same triune God through the context of public liturgy in a church or equivalent location.

The presentments indicated that, generally, the clergy love their church buildings, in spite of all the things that we have inherited in them and would desperately like to change. Are they joyful and awe-inspiring buildings? “Yes and no” was a frequent response.

The problems are not difficult to identify. Heating, clutter, inappropriate location, pews, and poor sightlines would be the list of negatives, and in that order. But there was also reference to a building having “an evangelistic quality for the non-regular worshipper”. The incumbent of an 11<sup>th</sup> century building identified it as communicating “a real sense of spiritual connection with the past”.

It is not in any way evidence of the clandestine existence of a ‘diocesan arsonist’ that 16 presentments spoke enthusiastically of the dramatic benefits of a major re-ordering, sometimes following a serious fire. 10 benefices registered engagement in major re-ordering projects, and this gave rise to requests of help with fund-raising advice, a review of the faculty system, and the ability to appoint a “fast-moving architect”.

My own experience of visiting 245 of our churches for a mid-week act of public worship that did not have the accoutrements of the Sunday routine also proved to be a useful experience and briefing, prior to discussion of the presentment.

It often felt as though clergy and laity were not familiar with the practice of praying together liturgically outside the routine of the Eucharist or a Sunday liturgy based on matins or evensong or some other alternative. The uncertainty that seemed to surround the task of saying the office together suggested some areas for exploration that are worth pursuing at this point.

First, it raises the question of what our church buildings are for. It raises the question of how often they are open and accessible and if they are open, to what extent they are used for worship mid-week.

Clearly, there can be no hard and fast expectations that apply to the vastly differing contexts in which those buildings stand. But there are some interesting examples of practice.

In terms of being open, it was evident from responses to article 63 (“how many hours is your church open...”) that many of the rural parishes are very well organised in the process of keeping their buildings open every day (in a few cases they are never locked). Similarly, there are churches in central urban areas that also ensure they are open every day.

The attitude of insurers today has shifted in favour of open churches, mindful of the damage that can be done, and cost incurred, through trying to break into them. But there is a more pressing issue about the subliminal message a locked church gives.

A century ago the travel writer, E V Lucas, commented on this point in his guide to Sussex. He notes that “the soul even of the stranger whose motive is curiosity is often comforted” by the ability to enter a church building. Lucas continues, “The arguments in favour of keeping churches closed are unknown to me. Doubtless they are numerous and ingenious, but, doubtless equally, a locked church is a confession of failure.”

One would like to dismiss this comment as the sour observation from bygone age. But it might be rash to judge so rapidly.

A commentator closer to our own time, the poet, Philip Larkin, was avowedly resistant to the claims of Christianity but also fascinated by the impact that a church building could make on the mind and imagination.

His poem on the Arundel tomb in Chichester cathedral is one of his best and most popular, as is *Church Going* in which he speaks of the compulsions in some anonymous other person that meet and surprise “A hunger in himself to be more serious,/And gravitating with it to this ground,/Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems*, Faber (London) 1988, p. 98. The poem, *An Arundel Tomb*, written in 1956, two years after *Church Going*, has a similar regard for the mysterious management of life and time that a church building undertakes. In the Arundel case it prompts an observation that proves “Our almost-instinct almost true:/What will survive of us is love.”

The open church says to the passer-by that it is in business as a place to “grow wise in”. That, of itself, will not necessarily convert the passer-by, but it will communicate something of our purpose.

But if a person were to enter, what would he or she experience?

Here again, the rural churches have done a lot of work to place themselves in the position of tourists, walkers, cyclists and anyone else who crosses the threshold, and to provide for their needs. The provision of a visitors’ book will often yield comments on how well the church is kept. Visitors often note that a church is loved and used, when that is so, and often they also indicate some of the gravitational pull towards faith that Larkin identifies.

There is no reason why this cannot apply, in some way, in an urban context. But whereas the likelihood of tourists, walkers and cyclists is remote, the availability of a place where human need, suffering and fear are recognised and understood is at least as important.

It is in this context that the question of what a church building is for and what happens within it becomes important. Like any home, a building that is locked and uninhabited for 6 days a week has a very different feel from one in which the family is at home all the time.

The signs of use for prayer are very simple and largely made up of unimportant things. Some of the most prayerful gatherings for the office took place in town centre or suburban churches where the incumbent prays the office each day with a group of lay people.

The impression of the church being used was not simple subjective, on my part. In each case there was a space set aside for a group to gather and pray. It contained seating (generally not pews) that was conducive to stillness and recollection. There was a simple devotional focus, such as a lighted candle, icon, altar, etc. These were churches where prayer boards were more evidently live. And they spanned the theological traditions of the Church of England.

The point I wish to make strongly is in response to the clergy who, very understandably, made a presentment that contains a *cri de Coeur* in saying that they find it difficult to pray alone.

As the sequence of the interrogation of the ordination rite indicates, the question about your own diligence in prayer leads to the task of ensuring that you lead others in the proclamation of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, a task that can only be done in the power of prayer that is itself the work of the Holy Spirit in us.<sup>2</sup>

But the point is not simply a liturgical or canonical one. It also draws us back to the gospel record of the life of Jesus spending time alone, time with the twelve, time with other people. The formation of the disciples, whom he calls apostles, is quality time. It is where they are unafraid to be themselves with each other (“who is the greatest” Mark 9.33-34), and with him (“Why could we not cast [the demon] out?” Mark 9.28-29).

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<sup>2</sup> “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8.26-27).

No small part of our commitment to prayer, and the canonical requirement for its public expression, is the desire that this commitment of time should be the foundation of that same school of gospel life that Jesus himself exemplifies.

More work needs to be done on the imaginative use of resources for accessing this aspect of the school of gospel life. The use of an App for prayer for meditation is just one example of potential for further development that extends the invitation to anybody who wishes to enrol in this free and public academy of the Lord's service.

The fruit of a renewal through the enterprise of prayer is a critical commitment and a source of energy and vision that can assist us to turn our buildings from burdens into beacons of life and hope. As clergy, attention to the renewal and sustaining of our spiritual life is the best start we can make in leading this transformation in our congregations.

Canon Andrew Mayes has been tireless in providing resources to assist us in this process of renewal. In preparation for the writing of this charge he sent me this quotation from one of the tutors who works with our curates in the continuing formation. It's worth quoting here as a challenge to all in ministry, and as springboard into the next section of this part of the charge.

If we are to have a potency in our past-enlightenment, post-modern world, we have to recover confidence in what is less measurable, less quantifiable, much more fruitful and more relational...in a sense, this is the big *metanoia* for the Church: it's returning to its roots in the mystery of Christ.

A key word for us to take seriously here is *metanoia*. This is the change of mind and heart that enables us to look around for a different lifestyle from the one that is predicated on the transient fashions of our own making. We find it in the life of Jesus Christ. It is a joyful thing to find, and celebration is the hallmark of the new lifestyle that Christian *metanoia* leads to.

#### **4. Transforming worship**

Finally, in this section, I want to consider that aspect of our life in Christ that is related to article 49: "How often does your PCC discuss the task of making new Christians as a matter of urgency?"

The question is intentionally phrased in terms that are contentious. Why should this be the responsibility of the PCC alone? Does the term "new Christian" imply an inappropriate distinction between believer and non-believer? And who "makes" a Christian? Is it not the work of the Holy Spirit? It is not also the personal decision of the individual?

Full marks to those who engaged with these questions in their presentment. I hope the debate also got through to the PCC agenda and you shared the discussion with them. If you have not done that, it's still not too late to do so now!

The question about what makes a new Christian is what turns our attention to the areas of consideration I want to raise here. They are the area of *metanoia*, the change of heart, or returning to our "roots in the mystery of Christ", and of joy and its inclusion in the celebration of public worship.

“The only director of souls is the Holy Spirit” was the instruction on discernment about the Christian life that was drummed into me in the early years of ordained ministry. It is vital that we proceed with care when speaking of a person’s identity, commitment, and spiritual life as a Christian. However, we can detect the work of the Holy Spirit in a number of ways. One way is the determination to develop a capacity for the worship of God.

Those who were present at the clergy conference in Canterbury will remember the excellent keynote address by Mike Ovey, Principal of Oak Hill College, on this subject. In his address he explored the distinctively Anglican contribution to the experience of repentance and amendment of life as it is enjoined upon us in the routine of worship. He directed us to its provision in the daily office and holy Communion and expounded on the experiences of *metanoia* in response to the presence of Jesus at the meal table, as Luke records them.<sup>3</sup>

As if to reinforce the wisdom of Mike’s address, and coming from a different perspective, the Principal of Pusey House in Oxford, George Westhaver, nonetheless draws attention in a recent article to the importance of the themes of repentance and amendment of life in the writing of Dr E. B. Pusey, the 19<sup>th</sup> century tractarian reformer.

Common ground between Ovey and Westhaver is found in the second book of Homilies, published in 1571.<sup>4</sup> Pusey in a letter to the bishop of Oxford in 1840, quotes from the Homily that speaks of the believer who looks with faith upon “the holy Body and Blood of our God”, saying that “we touch it with our mind; we receive it in the hand of our heart; we take it fully with our inward man”.

But this is not merely piety. Pusey’s commitment to an understanding of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist in Anglican teaching (he distinguishes this from the concept of transubstantiation) also leads him to advocate the search for its fruit in penitence and amendment of life.

For his sermon, *On the Holy Eucharist and the Comfort to the Penitent*, preached in 1843, Pusey was suspended from preaching in the University of Oxford for two years. A decade later he returns to the same theme in a sermon entitled *The Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist*. Pusey makes the point that in communion, the words of Jesus, “this is my body” teach us that Jesus “re-forms our nature and conforms it to His own; re-creates us to newness of life; binds us and cements us to Himself as Man; washes, beautifies, kindles our minds, strengthens our hearts...giving us the victory over sin and death.”<sup>5</sup>

The fundamental point here is the reality of delight that attaches to liberation from sin and death and is integral to the experience of worship, particularly in the Eucharist.

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<sup>3</sup> See diocesan website.

<sup>4</sup> These collections of sermons, were published in the reign of Edward VI and Elizabeth I, in order to provide teaching for priest and people. These collections have in previous generations been regarded as part of the Church of England’s “historic formularies”, though they are not mentioned in the Declaration of Assent.

<sup>5</sup> George Westhaver, “A Catholic View of the Eucharist: the Prayer Book and E. B. Pusey” in Faith and Worship, No 77, Trinity 2015, pp 29, 34.



The theme of joy and celebration as a symptom of *metanoia*, the turning of the mind to Jesus, was also explored recently by the Catholic Franciscan, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, at the International Church Leaders' Conference in London, organised by the Alpha network.

He reminded us that the word "gospel" means "happy news" and that the call to repentance, to "turn your mind around", is central to that happy news. The danger is that onto this cause and opportunity for celebration there is too often projected the impression that "God is the enemy of all celebration". God as the enemy of freedom and happiness is the beguiling lie that we too easily allow our detractors to perpetrate. "Prior to the category of duty comes the category of gift," Cantalamessa, declared: "Christianity is the religion of grace".<sup>6</sup>

How do we harness all this and use it to inform the urgency with which we are sent to make new Christians?

Like a golden thread, running through the history of the Church of England's core purposes, there is a sense that worship should connect us with joyful release from all that is deadly. It is the environment in which we enact what we believe. In worship we "touch with our minds", to use Pusey's phrase, the reality of the life of God.

Does our worship always communicate this with joy and confidence for everyone who seeks to grow in understanding of the "happy news", the gospel of Jesus Christ? With what degree of confidence would we always, and spontaneously say to someone who has never been to church, "Come to church with me; it's amazing. You'll love it."

In some places that is exactly what people do and they know that the worship will do the rest. In others it seems that it might not.

I wish to suggest that the range of responses to article 50 calls into question the confidence with which we would invite others to our worship or expect lay people to. In some parishes the issues of new Christians was not "a matter of urgency", "never" discussed, not "the role of the PCC", seen as "the vicar's job", "a bit presumptuous".

These comments are in marked contrast to the positive responses about the spiritual life. They suggest anxiety and defensiveness, rather than refusal to recognise the importance or urgency of the challenge.

By contrast, there are many church congregations that are growing, and for a variety of reasons. I believe that the quality of worship is both conducive to, and symptomatic of, that growth. And there is one area of growth that continues to defy all the trends towards decline: it is in the congregations attending cathedrals, midweek and on Sundays.

The recent report, *Spiritual Capital: The Present and Future of English Cathedrals* presents an interesting analysis of the role that a cathedral has as "a centre of worship and mission".

That phrase is the first statement made about cathedrals in the Cathedrals Measure of 1999; it has subsequently been uniformly embedded into the constitution of the Church of England's cathedrals. *Spiritual Capital* gives considerable attention to the ways in which a

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<sup>6</sup> Alpha Leadership Week 2015

cathedral can be a bridge between Christianity and a range of interests and institutions in and beyond the life of the church.

The report identifies a number of ways that people account for cathedral worship in relation to faith. For some it complements their experience of life in a parish church; for others it has been a place to recover faith or to find faith for the first time. Statistics for cathedral visits and attendance released in August 2015 indicate that in 2014 numbers continues to rise.

The announcement on the Church of England's website stated that "key aspects of growth were in "creating a sense of community, quality of worship, service, preaching and music, exploring new patterns of service, spiritual openness and emphasis on families and young people".<sup>7</sup> This is a fairly comprehensive list of what would constitute the apostolic life of an expanding and outward looking congregation.

This analysis, its weight of authority as defining the contours of a proven area of growth, indicates that we should not underestimate the evangelistic importance of attention to worship, especially in the Eucharist. The themes of the "happy news" of repentance and forgiveness, the cementing of our life in Christ, and through him the recovery of connectedness of the earth with a destiny that is in heaven and eternity – these clearly resonate well beyond the realm of those who are already committed church-goers.

In this survey of our common life in Christ, we have looked at our spiritual life, as lay and ordained, within the people of God. We have noted the use of our church buildings for the expression of that life as it nurtures Christians already committed Jesus Christ, and as it gives public space to the foundational activity of worship as a converting ordinance.

In these ways we seek to connect with the gospel and the formative processes of discipleship that it outlines. The experience of the worshipping community, modelled on the template of the paschal mystery of Easter – dying to sin and rising to new life in Christ – is also one of the ways we witness to a society and culture in which the language and terminology of Christian faith has little or no meaning. But language is not the only means of communication at our disposal.

Music, drama, an awareness of history, art, symbolism, and love and its reckless generosity are modes of modes of communication that hold good when language falters. These other modes are also the instruments of our prayer and worship. Let us with joy and confidence remain steadfast in praying to know, love, follow Jesus.

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<sup>7</sup> CofE website.

## **5. Recommendations**

### **5.1 Will you be diligent in prayer?**

- 5.1.1 Every licensed priest should have a defined discipline that outlines a pattern of daily prayer. Attention should be given to the where and how this prayer is undertaken, acknowledging the responsibility upon those who have the cure of souls to pray for the people in their charge.
- 5.1.2 The use of someone completely independent of the diocesan structures of governance for spiritual companionship is a responsibility that should be taken seriously by every licensed priest or deacon.
- 5.1.3 Provision for time to reflect and pray, away from the demands of daily life and ministry, should also be part of the defined discipline of spiritual life.
- 5.1.4 The existence of this discipline should be a considered part of the MDR, and discussed in that forum.
- 5.1.5 Guidance on what the financial other practical arrangements are for making time to be away should be agreed as part of the role description of every licensed priest or deacon.
- 5.1.6 Prayer with colleagues, within the parish, among a group of clergy, in the deanery, at chapter meetings, etc, should be regularly considered as a means of bearing one another's burdens, sharing joys and celebrating our unity in Christ. This should also recognise the partnership in the gospel that we share with Christians outside our own communion.

### **5.2 Prayer in time and place**

- 5.2.1 The establishment of a prayer network of some kind in every benefice should be a priority for the nurturing of our life in Christ and for equipping ourselves for serving God's mission of love and salvation.
- 5.2.2 Attention to the possibility of sharing responsibility for saying the daily office should be a consideration, where appropriate, with care being taken to publicise the sharing of the responsibility, to nurture those who take part in it, and ensure that the invitation to others to participate remains open and attractive.
- 5.2.3 Provision for use of the church for some form of daily prayer should be considered by the PCC, with particular attention given to what creates a prayerful environment for this ministry – heating, lighting, seating, ambiance, etc.
- 5.2.4 Arrangements for those who may wish to pray the office, or commit to some other routine of daily prayer should be part of the life of every benefice.
- 5.2.5 Finding opportunities for praying with other Christians, especially in the context of serving together for the common good, should also be undertaken.
- 5.2.6 Establishing and publicising a ministry of intercessory prayer should be an obvious part of the ministry and outreach of every benefice, ensuring as far as possible, that those who are not members of the congregation, know how to ask for prayers to be offered for their concerns.

- 5.2.7 The use of social media and electronic communication for informing the prayer life of networks and individuals within a congregation is a responsibility that would form a distinctive ministry.
- 5.2.8 The diocesan cycle of prayer should be reviewed through a simple and brief process of consultation.
- 5.2.9 Deanery cycles of prayer, organised locally, are to be commended as ways of deepening the sense of a common life and mutual responsibility.
- 5.2.10 Review of resources for the work of the diocesan adviser for spiritual life should be undertaken, with the possibility of a consultation process to identify what spiritual needs people, ordained and lay, have, across the diocese.
- 5.2.11 Publication of resources should be addressed, including places, events, people, and funding.

### **5.3 Transforming worship**

- 5.3.1 An advisory worship group should be established to review good practice in liturgy, music, use of liturgical space, and the processes of reordering.
- 5.3.2 Close liaison should be established between the advisory group and the DAC.
- 5.3.3 Diocesan events (synod, confirmations, licensings, ordinations, etc) should be reviewed to ensure that they model good practice.
- 5.3.4 Public access to churches should be reviewed to ensure it is easy and well publicised, together with an audit of information on church notice boards, the quality of their condition, and the profile of every benefice on the internet.
- 5.3.5 Assessment and review of heating and energy costs and possible savings should be undertaken in conjunction with the diocesan adviser for sustainability.
- 5.3.6 The diocesan website and database will be upgraded, in order to give better access to information about personnel, parish statistics that should be in the public domain, and other resources that would strengthen prayer and worship as they undergird our apostolic activity.

### **5.4 The Year of Prayer: 2018**

The Year of Prayer will begin on the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, 2 February, 2018. That festival will remind us of the value of age and wisdom, represented by Simeon and Anna, and of the gift of life and the importance of its nurture in the very young and vulnerable, as exemplified in the Christ child and the experience of the holy family.

The Year of Prayer will be an opportunity for every parish to develop its own rule of life. This rule is intended to be a covenant that enfolds a whole congregation in a mutually agreed bond of prayer, determined by circumstance and ability.

The Year of Prayer will also invite every parish to review the resources it has for worship and to renew and improve them where necessary. A diocesan worship group will be available to offer assistance in undertaking this review and in implementing decisions. It will also be a year in which all diocesan liturgical provision is renewed.

The Year of Prayer will invite people individually to explore their own patterns of prayer and the things that encourage and sustain them. There will be opportunities to explore patterns of prayer and worship that are new or unfamiliar and to benefit from on-line prayer material.

The Year of Prayer will also call upon God the Holy Spirit to make fruitful all that we do, to the glory of God the Father, and the increase in number of the church in our land and in this diocese.

*You are at liberty to reproduce the text of this Charge. However, please acknowledge Bishop Martin as its author.*