

## **Courageous Christian Leadership in Making Jesus Known.**

### **AGM 24 July 2024- address from Diocesan Secretary/CEO Board of Finance**

As the Diocese of Salisbury our collective focus is on serving 1m people who live in the diocese. Our goal is to Make Jesus known- responding to what God incarnate is doing in one million lives and our diverse communities. This means we will be supporting and inspiring connected communities where all people can flourish.

At the midpoint of 2023 the synod approved the headlines for the Making Jesus Known vision: this was the culmination of an eight month process of dialogue across the diocese, with hundreds of people joining in the conversation about what we might do in each of our five priority areas.

At last year's AGM we launched a further process of prayerful engagement across the diocese. Thank you for your active participation. The language used was refined and our focus on the mission and agency of the local church in Making Jesus Known is clearer.

With input from people aged 8-80 years we also launched our new visual brand identity- sharing the story of who we are and what we do together as a diocese. The design for me speaks to a strong sense of place and resonates with our central story- the Easter stone rolled away.

In 2023, the heart of the work of the DBF was to support the diocese in the prayerful discernment of this vision and the choices which flow from it- -in deepening engagement, learning and implementation.

Our core questions as diocese and DBF-

- How will we Make Jesus Known in these times and in our places?
- What changes will it lead to in the way DBF resources are deployed?

#### **1 Engagement-**

The vision is an invitation. As a diocese, we are the sum of our parts- decisions and agency rest in many places- including with each of you as Synod members in your church, deanery and community.

The DBF will continue to offer services and support, resourcing and ideas. We will respond to what is needed in mission by the local church to connect communities.

We have recently launched a survey asking the local church about what they need from the DBF services. Thank you to the 300 people who have responded to the survey and 40 who have offered to join focus groups.

#### **2 Learning- going deeper**

At the highlight of 2023 was the visit of Archbishop Justin. I was inspired by the choices he made in his programme and the encouragement this gives us to make choices too.

His time with us was mainly *outside* church, mainly with communities who are missing from church- younger people, refugees, the gypsy traveller and Roma community, people serving time in prison. Being a visible presence in communities across the diocese including the army and schools. Making Jesus known in an open unguarded way, creating space to listen to and pray with people. Making Jesus Known in a kingdom not a church centred way.

Our commitment is to grow younger and more diverse. There is much collectively for us to learn. The DBF has focussed effort in understanding more fully how we might hear and respond to the voice of young people and the missing generations- so that we can support you in doing that.

The Bishops Council established a Nominations Committee with an overview of Equality Diversity and inclusion and we launched the Church Changemakers campaign – and we are starting to see results in our elections.

The Holy Spirit is at work in 1m lives and in our communities- perhaps in places we don't yet recognise. A courageous change in our culture to be more Christ centred requires greater diversity and more openness to listen, to discern the Spirit already at work.

### **3 Implementation**

In 2023 the DBF started to shift how we work so that we can effectively support the Making Jesus Known vision.

We are adopting a more planful approach with a series of deliberate projects funded from a range of sources. This means more visibility and more accountability for what we are doing on behalf of the diocese.

Examples of key project in 2023 include the creation of the Net Zero Carbon plan agreed Synod in autumn, the completion of the share review agreed at the Synod in February this year.

We have secured funding for work on racial justice and a programme called Flourish supporting new worshipping communities for children and young people.

We are building the approaches needed to secure national funding for the local church to innovate in mission. This requires us to courageously name and engage with the challenges we face and how we will do things in response to changes in our context, a clarity in our missional intent in Christ. We will need to pay attention to the evidence and data, plans and results- I believe we can welcome this challenge.

We are seeking to work in simpler ways – both to save time and money and to be clearer in the support we offer-

### **Annual Report and Accounts**

#### **The AGM received the DBF report and accounts for 2023- [link](#)**

#### **What do the figures show?**

1. the operating deficit of £1.2m as forecast, however after revaluation of investments and year end transfers - our General Reserve only fell by £0.8m
2. Share receipts at 87% contribution rate – remained well below pre COVID levels, 70% parishes paid in full- thank you!- but 10% paid nothing at all.
3. Higher than budgeted rate of clergy vacancies. This reflects a growing national shortage of stipendiary clergy.
4. Central costs were higher in 2023 largely due to costs associated with moving the office to Emmaus House.

5. The balance sheet value increased by £4.5m to £130m due to- : a £1m donation to the St. Aldhelm Fund; recovering values of our investments (£1.2m) and the revaluation of our Glebe holdings (which resulted in a net increase, after sales, of £2.3m).

Our financial resources are largely aimed at supporting the provision of people- clergy and DBF staff providing services to the local church.

As part of the MJK strategy the bishops have agreed a figure of 150 clergy roles as set out in the 2025 budget. Ongoing discussions about the nature of clergy roles, what makes them do-able- not least as jobs that attract candidates and in which people can thrive. Being clear on the expectations of clergy roles is inseparable from the affirmation and development of lay ministries and chaplaincies.

Behind this we are all conscious that national recruitment to stipendiary roles, and the rate of retirements mean the net effect will be 20% fewer stipendiary clergy in the coming 10 years- we must prepare for this change and see it as an opportunity to be the church in new ways.

DBF staff costs are also significant in the budget and understandably questions are raised about which roles and what are the costs.

This autumn I am reviewing all DBF staff roles in light of the MJK strategy. Feeding into this review is the work currently being done by Lianne Howard Dace (the survey and focus groups) seeking feedback on the services needed by the local church.

Our new approach to Share means that the total costs of being the church are now transparent and we will be asking for the money needed rather than embedding a loss. We have a significant corner to turn now- either in raising income, or reducing costs- probably both. As we approach the annual generosity week our focus is on supporting clergy to preach and speak confidently on giving as part of discipleship. Alongside this, Anna and her team have supported the roll out of contactless giving. We know that the PGS is a great way to secure regular inflation proof support.

The move into Emmaus House has reduced our office running costs by 50% , slashed our carbon footprint, as well as creating space for a deeper collaboration with the Board of Education and diocesan Academy Trust.

Sales of property and Glebe during 2023 enabled us to pay off the Covid loan and put us in a positive cash position.

2023 marked a turning point in the life of the DBF as an organisation, moving out of Church House in Crane St, our office base since the 1880s. The world has changed a lot since the 1880s! Our new home, with our colleagues DBE and DSAT- was blessed by Bishop Stephen in March and named as Emmaus House.

In presenting this report and accounts to you my message is that our journey of change in the DBF continues, seeking to serve the diocese and provide leadership and resources to Make Jesus Known, connecting communities in our fragmented times.

Like the first disciples- as we travel on the Road to Emmaus, we will continue to be surprised to encounter the risen Christ in unexpected ways, our plans will need to change, we will seek to be responsive daring to believe that God incarnate is recreating the church day by day.