



Our Diocesan Strategy 2010-2015 is shaped by a number of theological principles.

Our whole Strategy hinges on the amazing truth that God’s whole motivation in sending His Son into the world is his love for the world (John 3:16). Love governs God’s purposes for the world and also defines what Jesus called the Kingdom of God. And it was the Kingdom of God that Jesus came to usher in to the world. We believe that God has freely sown seeds full of “kingdom” potential in the world (Matt 13) and He wants to see these seeds flourish and grow – to see the energy released.

It is in the light of the Incarnation and God’s Kingdom that we think about the purpose of the Church. God’s love for the world is to be reflected amongst the new community of God’s people, the Church, as we participate in the mission of God. The greater calling of the Church is to realise God’s Kingdom in the world. We want to grow as churches in order to make the world a more whole place. This is a radical departure from the small-minded introversion which we know haunts some of the decision making groups in the Church.

For growth is not only the natural condition of the Kingdom of God, but of every believer and His Church. The Church must remind itself of this truth and encourage such growth in its life (Eph 4:15-16). Our call for greater commitment stems from this belief. We are called to be transformed, a process which will not be complete until that day when “we shall see Him face to face” (Rom 12:2). If one can speak of the genius of the Church it is that God in His wisdom decided that this process of discipleship was best done in community – the local church.

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The local church has done this for centuries by recognising where God has gifted believers in different ways and encouraged that spiritual gifting to express itself in releasing the energy of the whole Body of Christ (Eph 4:7-13). The Church has historically recognised three orders of ministry – the diaconate, the priesthood and the episcopate. These callings each have a specific and important part to play in the life and purpose of the Church. We want to complement those orders by a proper recognition and releasing of the whole people of God. When Peter told the recipients of his

first epistle that they (the whole Church) were a royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9), he didn’t mean literally that everybody is a priest, but he did mean that every baptised person has a ministry to offer. This Strategy aims to release the energy of those leaders who are called and gifted to release the energy of others.

It is in the light of the Incarnation also that we think about what it means to have a local mission – an engagement in our varying contexts. The resources that God has given us must be used to further that engagement, to release more energy into the local context.

However, recognising the importance of the local does not mean that local churches can simply exist in isolation and independence. We are called to be partners in mission (Phil 1:5). Our churches are grouped in deaneries and, in part, they are an expression of not only our local identity, but also our interconnected identity. Let us embrace our identity as one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

Mike

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