

The Spirit of the Lord fills the whole world, alleluia!

In the Diocese of Liverpool we say, *we are asking God for a bigger church so that we can make a bigger difference: more people knowing Jesus, and more justice in the world.* We believe that when we ask God for these things we are asking for something that reflects God's own purpose and desire¹, and so as we work and pray for these things we become more **Jesus Christ shaped**.

It is the one Christ, though the Holy Spirit, who calls people to himself (Introducing People to Jesus²), conforms them more fully to his own character (Deepening Discipleship), invites and equips them to share in his work (Developing Christian Leaders) and makes present in them the beginning of his kingdom (Working for Justice). None of these can be separated from the others, together they are Christ at work on the whole of people's lives and in the whole of society, and this is reflected in our conviction that each of these kinds of missional work enable and reinforce each of the others.

In our diocesan Rule of Life, too, we seek to follow more closely the Christ who both draws us closer to himself (as we Pray, Read and Learn³) and sends us to participate in his work (as we Tell, Serve and Give). This Christ is the one who is revealed to us in his incarnation and in his resurrection, and who by the Spirit forms his followers into his body on earth.

Shaped by the **incarnation**, we see Christ present in every part of our diocese and its communities, and especially in the most humble. Christ expected much from those who had been given much, and we expect to see growth and blessing wherever there are resources and opportunities; Christ was gracious to the brokenhearted, and we desire to see those who are heavy laden set free from their burdens: the same Christ and the same Spirit at work both in weakness and in power.

Shaped by the **resurrection**, the people of the Diocese of Liverpool have not lost heart even in difficult times. We have not been able to build bigger barns where a plentiful harvest is already being gathered, but we are asking God to bring life everywhere, even where human power and human plans would give up hope. And we desire surprising results: lives changed and God's children served, a handful of grain yielding thirty, sixty, a hundredfold.

The **body of Christ** in the Diocese of Liverpool bears the many scars (the result of our commitment to ministering over the long term in challenging circumstances) and weeps many tears (as we recognise the deep needs of our communities). It reflects only imperfectly the divine image, but in every place in the communities we serve we see people offering their lives in God's service, sometimes at great cost, and his justice being done.

In this spirit we welcome the integrated vision of a whole-system approach, shaped by the knowledge of Christ who is all in all things. We seek to recognise the value and the potential of all, knowing the need for the whole of lives and the whole of the Church to be transformed into a

¹ Diocese of Liverpool Vision and Purpose statement (2021), s8.

² Diocese of Liverpool four agreed missional priorities.

³ Diocese of Liverpool Rule of Life in six words: Pray, Read and Learn; Tell, Serve and Give.

strange new resurrection future that God has in store for us, and seeking not to lose any of those whom the Father has given us.

In the Diocese of Liverpool we work hard to recognise ourselves as one body, whether we are bringing people to faith or working for justice; one body, whether in new worshipping communities or in traditional churches; one body, whether a single-church parish or a larger parish; one body, whether in the parish or at diocesan level; one body, whether discerning at the SMMI board or doing frontline ministry in the Diocese of Liverpool. And the Spirit of the Lord fills it all, praise God.