

Casting the Net

Growing Faith Communities in the Diocese of St Andrews

The Diocesan Review has now been completed. It's time to move on.

Casting the Net is a new initiative that will help us to grow as congregations which are strong in faith and attractive to people who are seeking answers to deep and spiritual questions.

What's involved?

Casting the Net is a simple but powerful approach to congregational growth. It asks us to think about our congregations as living communities of God's people. It asks us to explore practical steps which we can take along the path towards growth.

It asks each of our congregations to do three things:

- Reflect together on what the spiritual and community life of a healthy, growth-oriented congregation should be.
- Apply that thinking to their own congregational life, identify the most important areas for development, and build a coherent 3 year plan to address them.
- Act upon the plan, with regular monitoring and review of progress.

Why is this so important?

- A move from decline to growth is central to the new Vision and Strategy for the diocese. From the review process during 2006/7, however, it became apparent that many of our congregations don't have a clear picture of 'where they are going'. It was also obvious that we lack an integrated picture, spiritual and organisational, of the whole life of our congregations.
- ***Casting the Net*** is a natural development of the MYCMI and Mission 21 programme, but it goes much further. We know that to thrive and grow on a sustained basis we now need a comprehensive framework for congregational life, with a strong orientation towards mission and growth and one simple but powerful process to work with it.

What is a healthy, growth-oriented church?

Within the ***Casting the Net*** programme, the framework that congregations throughout the Diocese will be asked to use is based on “The Nine Marks of a Healthy Mission-Shaped Church”.

The Nine Marks that characterise a healthy mission-shaped church are

- Transformed lives and communities
- Worship that renews and inspires
- Self-giving service to the community - individual and churches
- Being rooted in prayer
- Confident and sensitive evangelism
- Lifelong Christian nurture
- The welcome of new comers
- Becoming child-friendly
- Celebration of people and places

Fuller explanation of these ideas can be found on the website of the Diocese of Leicester at <http://www.leicester.anglican.org/shaped/toolkit.html>.

What kind of planning process is needed?

Casting the Net asks each congregation to undertake a simple strategic planning process. The steps are for congregation and clergy, together, to

- Make time for an assessment of the congregation’s current position on each of the nine marks – a Mission Audit - then agree a strategy for growth guided by
 - Awareness of the congregation’s particular strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats.
 - Knowledge of good practice in each of the nine areas
 - Awareness of diocesan policy
- Translate that strategy into a specific three year plan for growth, which identifies for each of the nine marks
 - what its relative priority will be and why
 - what will be done, by whom, when, to help the congregation grow in that area
 - how progress will be measured
 - what resources will be allocated to the area and where they will come from
- Make time at least annually to review progress against the plan’s aims and objectives, address any emerging difficulties and roll the plan forward by one year
- Make time every three years for a deeper review of strategy

The aim is not just to ‘tick nine boxes’. What matters is that clergy and people prayerfully work out together how they can best move towards enhanced health and growth, and then act upon that in a sustained way.

Casting the Net is more fully explained in Section 5 of the new Diocesan Policy document.

Why will *Casting the Net* make a difference?

First, it puts mission at the centre of our life and work, while taking a holistic view of congregational life in all its richness and complexity.

Second, it flows directly from the new Diocesan Vision and Strategy, and reflects the desire for growth that our congregations expressed overwhelmingly during the review.

Third, its approach builds on thinking, materials and work that have been applied successfully elsewhere.

But ***Casting the Net*** is also different from many other initiatives of this kind. It is not just something which the diocese asks congregations to do. Our aim is to structure and organise the diocese in such a way that diocesan resources are dedicated to supporting congregations as they engage with ***Casting the Net***.

How can we make this a coherent approach across all aspects of the life and work of our Church?

Casting the Net will be accompanied and supported by

Insights from work on Sources of Growth

- Helping congregations make informed choices about where their prospects for growth are likely to be strongest and how to allocate resources accordingly when developing plans.
- A number of groups and types of people were identified who are likely to represent stronger potential sources of growth. For each, a body of good practice has been brought together on how to engage with them, often illustrated by real-life stories of growth from around the diocese.
- This Sources of Growth material is presented more fully on the Diocesan website at <http://www.standrews.anglican.org> and in Section 3 of the new Diocesan Policy document.

New Diocesan structures and processes to help growth happen

Some adjustments to diocesan structures and processes are essential to make growth a real priority in a practical sense. These include

- The development of a small diocesan staff team who will work with congregations. At present we see this as providing support in three areas: the development of Mission Plans, training for ministry, work with children and young people
- A new diocesan structure specifically designed to support these developments and to help the diocese to be more flexible and responsive. This will include a larger and more broadly-based Standing Committee with a strengthened remit to help individual congregations and the diocese as a whole put the strategy for growth into practice.

This is more fully explained in Section 4 of the new Diocesan Policy document.

New policy on Clergy and Lay roles, and training resources for all engaged in ministry

We shall help clergy and Vestries to work more effectively together in addressing the whole range of challenges which face our congregations.

- Ensuring training and support for laity who undertake ministry
- Support to help clergy and laity work together in the most productive way possible, making the fullest use of the gifts available. A leaflet is being produced which sets out in clear terms the mutual responsibilities and expectations of Vestry, Lay Ministry, Clergy and Bishop.

This is more fully explained in Section 6 of the new Diocesan Policy document.

New policy on Children, their parents and young people

- Congregations are encouraged to take a holistic approach to ministry with children and their parents, recognising their importance as a source of growth and looking carefully at the range of needs and opportunities that exist.
- We shall continue to take every opportunity of sharing with other churches and with groups in the community in developing programmes for teenagers and young adults. The SEC's Glenalmond Youth Weeks will continue to be an important opportunity for our young people to develop a sense of our own denominational tradition and life.
- Specialist Diocesan staff will work with congregations across the diocese
- We shall develop a range of resources to help congregations in this important area of ministry.

This is more fully explained in Section 7 of the new Diocesan Policy document.

Consistent and growth-oriented approach to organisation of Charges and deployment of Clergy

- For the first time, we shall develop a process by which we can plan the future for our congregations and diocese.
- ***Casting the Net*** will help us to ensure that decisions in these areas are part of a well-considered and sustainable development plan for growth that meets the needs of the individual congregation and the long term health of the diocese as a whole.

This is more fully explained in Section 8 of the new Diocesan Policy document.

What happens now?

During the summer, aspects of the ***Casting the Net*** initiative will be refined and tailored to the particular needs and circumstances of our Diocese. On September 20, our Diocesan Synod will meet to explore the initiative and to take decisions about how it can be established at the heart of our diocesan life.

More information and support

Casting the Net is part of the new Diocesan Policy and Action Plan, of which a full version is on the Diocesan website at <http://www.standrews.anglican.org/review>

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of the new policy, please talk in the first instance to your Rector.

Also on the Diocesan website is a growing body of material offering good-practice guidance and ideas for many aspects of congregational life.