



# FUTURE WITH HOPE

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Jeremiah 29:11

A Purpose for the Church, a Vision for the future of the Diocese and an Invitation to Covenant with the Bishop of North Queensland to fulfil the Purpose and Realize the Vision.



*The Purpose of the Church is to Serve the Mission of God*

*The Vision is of Anglican Faith Communities that proclaim and live the Good News of the Kingdom of God*

*The Vision Path*

# The Purpose of the Church is to Serve the Mission of God.

Mission is the creating, reconciling, and transforming action of God, flowing from the community of love found in the Trinity, expressed in the salvation God offers the world in the history, person and work of Jesus Christ the Risen Lord.

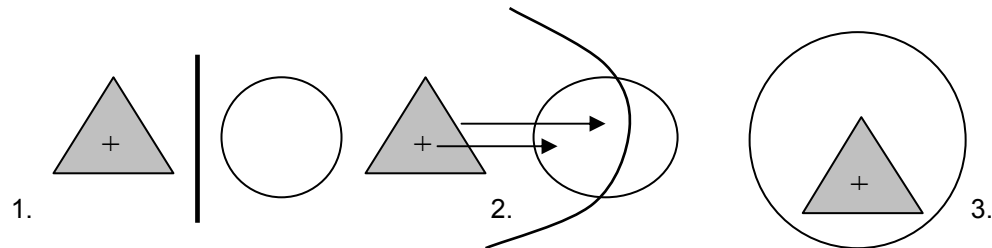
Mission is entrusted to the continuing witness of the people of God, who, in the power of the Spirit are a sign, instrument and foretaste of the Kingdom of God.

## The Kingdom of God.

The second paragraph is the most radical and challenging aspect of this whole document, because we will have to re-learn what we are talking about when we say "Kingdom of God",

and how to recognize it when we see it. If we can't do that we can't carry out the purpose.

Consider these diagrams. Each one is a way of seeing the relationship between the Church and the World.



In Diagrams one and two, the Kingdom of God is external to the world, and with the Church in some way.

In Diagram one, they are disconnected. It may be that they are disconnected because the church has become withdrawn like the exclusive brethren, into a ghetto. It just may be, and for Anglicans more likely is, that parishioners see no connection between Sunday Christian observance and what goes on in the world, Monday to Saturday. Such a Church is usually a worship club with minor and mostly harmless groups and entertainments the rest of the week. Its mission is perpetuating its own existence, especially services and buildings. It is now dying out with the people who are its supporters.

In Diagram two, we have the old version of the relationship of Church and World most of us grew up with. We hear it when someone talks about "extending the Kingdom of God". The diagram shows well the notion of a world where God is not and a Church synonymous with Kingdom, which by making part of the Godless world part of the Church, carries out God's mission.

Diagram three shows a radical shift. The Church is in the world. So is God. God is

working his purposes out in the world, bringing in his rule and reign, but the Church is not the only agent of that work. The God who used pagans like Darius in the Old Testament can work with whomever he wills. The Church has the task of asking "Where is God at work in the world?" "How can the Church point to and co-operate with God in it?" The signs of the Kingdom's presence are to be seen outside the life of the institutional church.

We do not take mission out; we go out to meet the mission already there. We look for the places to which we are called to take our place in that larger, ongoing mission.

We can see the loving, judging, life-giving concern of God for the whole of the created order, a concern that calls all of creation into life and into life-giving partnerships.

We can view the Mission of God as far greater than the mission of our institutions

The Church as Sign points people to God and Jesus Christ; as Instrument, it works for the accomplishment of God's purposes and as Foretaste, it demonstrates what life is like under the rule and reign of God, and anticipates the fullness of the Kingdom by daring to live the future now.

# The Vision is of Anglican Faith Communities that proclaim and live the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

Anglican communities that do this will be seen to:

- Witness to Christ's forgiving, saving, reconciling love for all people
- Build welcoming, celebratory and transforming communities of faith
- Stand in solidarity with the poor and needy
- Challenge injustice and oppression
- Protect, care for and renew life on our planet
- Sustain hope against all false hopes at a time of despair.

I want us to become Anglican Communities whose life exhibits a distinct and appealing counter-culture; a city set on a hill that makes visible the reality of God's reign in the midst of the old order, such that others will see it and give glory to our Father in Heaven.

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Some may struggle with the idea of being called to be a distinctive movement, or counter-culture. It is part of the struggle with the idea that we are no longer a "Christian" society, or recognizing the end of "Christendom". The context in which we live our Christian lives is no longer benign or neutral towards the practice of Christian faith. Anglicans are more used to the idea of being a church that blesses the powers that be and supports the status quo. People in powerful positions dislike it when we have something critical to say because they expect us to remain silent on matters that affect earthly well-being. Yet we have been taught to pray, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." So we can't ignore the state of affairs of the society we live in. We need to look critically.

Our relatively affluent way of life places us among the "haves" of this world. The majority

of the world's people "have not". We have to challenge why that is so, and stand against it. We live in a system that seems to value most, matters to do with the production and consumption of an ever increasing array of goods and services. Money, power, and sex seem to dominate. What persuades people is a popular world of advertising and entertainment that never lets up for a minute, as they lift us up out of ourselves and bond us together. They commit us to their values which emphasise power, success, wealth, and comfort in limitless proportion. This system with its relentless use of resources is using up the planet, and creates open despair in the 'have nots' who can never hope to have our life-style and affluence, and hidden despair in the haves, who find that their life-style and affluence lack depth of meaning and fulfilment.

**Will you covenant with me to fulfil the Purpose and Realize the Vision?**

We commit ourselves to the fulfilment of this Purpose and Vision for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

# The Vision Path

“Vision Path” is a way of talking about the path we take to get from where we are now, to where the Vision becomes a reality.

## 1. The Starting Point.

The Biblical metaphor of Exile is widely used to describe where we are now. The Vision Path then is the way we follow, in order to move out of Exile into God’s Future.

Though the path is not altogether clear, we have enough to set directions and take the next steps in faith. We need to keep the Vision in front of us and work to make it real here and now.

I am convinced God is our guide.

I am convinced God is leading us to look again at our origins, and question deeply our present life and practices as Church.


The inherited way of being Church appears to be dying. That is why we are “in exile” and have been for some time. If we stand still now, we die. We can try to direct some of the changes that are happening, and find a path forward, or be overwhelmed by them totally.

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We do not have much time. Our inherited parish system which came into being in the 7<sup>th</sup> century in England is getting beyond many communities to sustain.

What we have now as parishes are only pale shadows of what was originally intended; ie to bring the total life of the local community within the mission and ministrations of the Church.

They have become now a compromise – privatised enough to be largely invisible to most people, as they get on with life without God, but public enough to take a place alongside the many private activities permitted citizens who like that sort of thing, and can afford it.



*The truth is that many parishioners looking at this now will want any plan to answer first and foremost –*

***“How can we keep our independent parish, our stipended priest who provides the ministry in this community, and how can we keep our cherished buildings and the activities we are used to”.***

*That’s the wrong place to start and may lead nowhere.*

*The path for many of our present faith communities will very likely lead them away from these into some other way of being the local church, simply because now the time has come – due to age, weariness, smallness of numbers and resources, and inability to keep up with costly maintenance.*

*A better question is:*

***“Can we still be the Church in some way in this local place, even if we lose these things we thought we needed, to be the Church here?”***

## 2. First steps – Committing to the Journey

To fulfil the Purpose and realise the Vision requires first a renewed understanding of the Kingdom of God, and of Ministry.

### **Therefore will you commit yourselves to begin with these foundational steps to renewal?**

We commit ourselves to gaining a fresh understanding of Jesus and his Kingdom, and his call to Ministry as sign, instrument and foretaste of the reign of God.

We commit ourselves to renew the way we relate to the world, to build community and to reform the ministry practices, organization and structures of the Diocese as needed.

We commit ourselves no longer to perpetuate a 'C of E Culture Christianity' based on mere inheritance, folk religion, convention and respectability.

We commit ourselves to the learning and personal growth needed in every one of our faith communities if we are to realize the elements of the Vision.

We commit to an *audit of our parish as soon as possible* to see if the following is true of us, and to change if needed.

As a Faith Community we....

- Take corporate responsibility for being the church and seeing that it 'happens'.
- Love people by relating to them in a just and caring manner.
- Worship and pray, both on our own and with others, in ways that are lively and playful as well as reverent and holy.
- Witness to what it is to be a Christian and how faith relates to everyday life within a changing culture; communicating the Christian Gospel in ways people can actually understand.
- Serve by recognizing our own gifts of discipleship and using those gifts collaboratively for the benefit of others, especially those in need.

### 3. Next Steps - Renewing and reforming Ministry.

This Vision Path requires a renewed understanding of *Ministry*, a renewed and reformed practice of the *Ministry of the Baptised*, and the renewal of the *Ministries of the Clergy*, as part of *Ministry Teams*, within *Ministering Communities*.

Reform is needed in North Queensland where, though teaching on “Total Ministry” has been circulating for many years, we have only half grasped the ideas. The underlying misunderstanding is;

The Church = the Clergy  
Therefore Ministry = what the Clergy do  
Therefore Lay Ministry = lay people doing what Clergy do.

As a result ministry in everyday life has been the loser.

The following 9 Principles are the basis on which a renewed understanding of Ministry must be built.



### *9 Principles of Ministry*

- *All ministry arises out of faithfulness to baptism. There are various forms of ministry that are interdependent, thus reflecting the image of the organic nature of the church, itself repeated three times in the New Testament (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4)*
- *The ministry of the laity (in the sense of the non-ordained) is primarily their engagement with others in their arenas or work, social interaction, community involvement and family life. Some of this engagement will be within the congregation and thus will be ministry within the church. Much of the expression of active faith will be in witnessing to the faith, and serving others beyond the gathered Church.*
- *It is important to place some limits on what is described as ministry. Ministry is any service rendered in the name of Christ and because of Christ, rooted in Baptism and to be done by every member of the church. Activities like cooking for the comfort of Church members at a social function for their own benefit and enjoyment should not be regarded as ministry in this definition, but cooking as pastoral care of a sick person or to offer hospitality to newcomers and strangers would be.*

- *Licensed ministries are forms of Christian service rendered in the name of the church and for the sake of its mission, rooted in an act of designation by the church through the issuing of a licence by the bishop. Lay Ministry Licences are a good example.*
- *Some ministers are ordained. The task of the ordained ministry (bishop, priest, deacon) is to “equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12) These ordained ministries function to enable the mission of the whole church, and especially the laity in their various settings. The Pauline pattern is that these ministries support the Church. In so far as present practice has turned that around, to Church (laity) supporting the (ordained) ministry, it is corrupted and in need of reform.*
- *The ordained ministry is a distinctive form of leadership that develops the function of the whole body, although each order of ordained ministry expresses different dimensions of ministry that belongs to the whole body of the church. Thus ordination requires leadership capacity to be signs of animators (living reminders) of what the whole Church is and is called to become.*
- *Ministry requires collaboration of all the members. Each community will be sufficiently gifted for its mission and ministry in its most local setting, the congregation. The formation of ministry teams will be one means of collaboration.*
- *The local Church is called to engage in the discernment of, recognition and calling into practice of the gifts of the members, in collaboration with the Bishop.*
- *Each community should be able to function as a community of faith, a church. There is a necessary level of community viability in being a community of faith, but the financial component is not the be all and end all of it.*



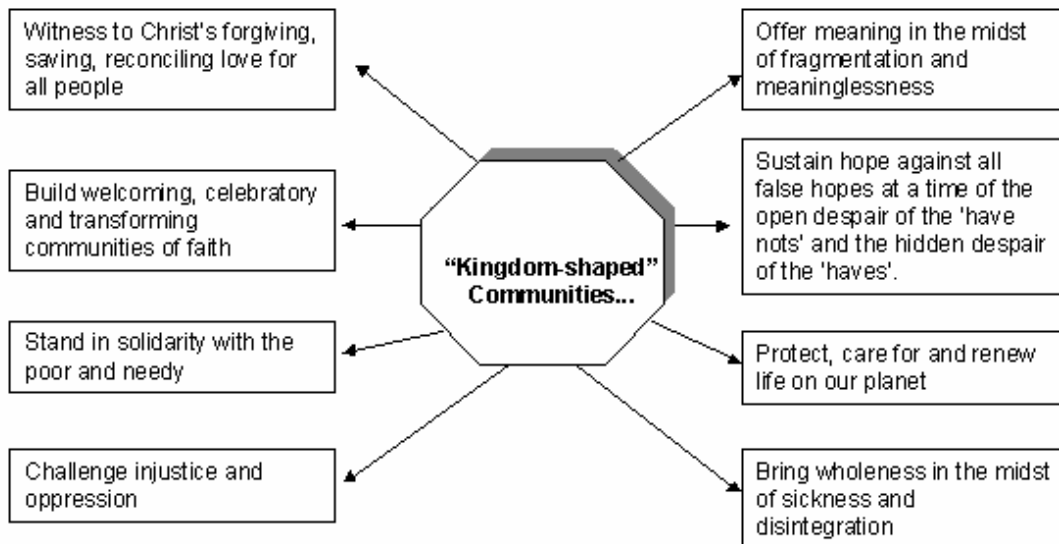
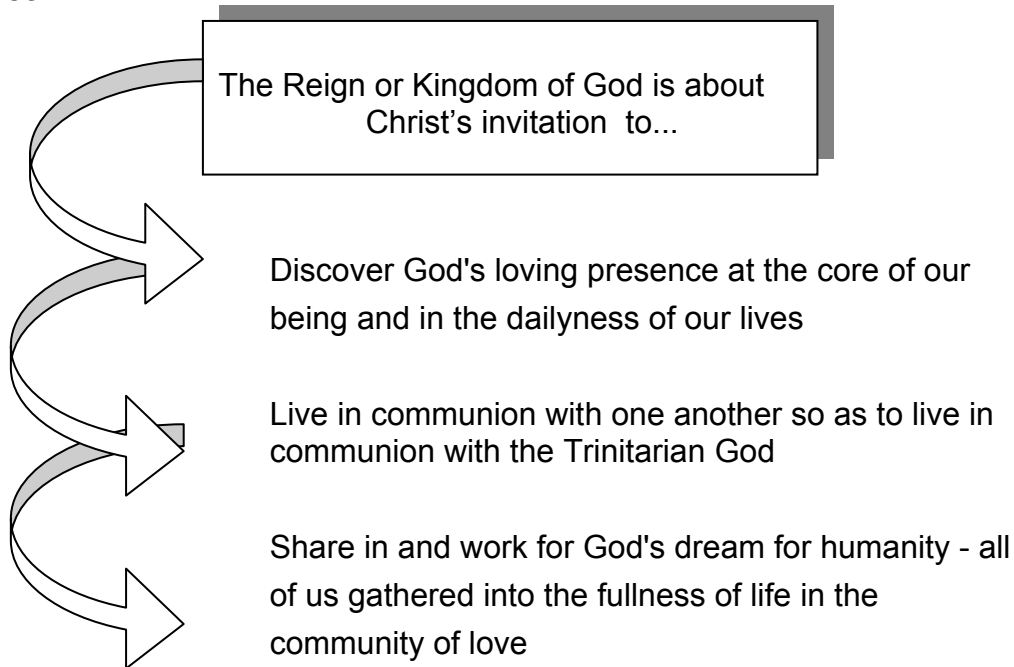
**Therefore will you commit yourselves and your faith communities to this renewal and reform?**

We commit ourselves afresh to learning and practising a renewed understanding of Ministry and to recovering in full the Ministry of the Baptised, and with that, a renewed practice of the Ministry of the Ordained and of Team Ministry, so as to develop Ministering Communities.

#### 4. The Local Context and God's Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is the very presence of God among us.

God is already at work in the world. The Church must point to His rule and reign and co-operate with it. That is as true of our own local area as anywhere else.



Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the Kingdom of God" can be translated, "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now."

When Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God had drawn near and called for a response, he was asking his hearers to give their entire attention to what God was doing right then and there, in their midst if they would but open their eyes.

### **Will you attend to God in your own life and in that of your communities?**

We commit ourselves to discerning where God's Kingdom is emerging, and work with it, in the *local* place where we live.

We commit ourselves to asking together, in prayer, "What does God want of us now?" attending to God and following the answer which comes.

## **5. Financial and Material Resources**

One important reality check for our commitment to our Purpose and Vision relates to how we are prepared to commit our resources.

Experience suggests that in many places, congregation will do anything rather than have to change the long-established patterns and priorities held for how they go about being Anglican Christians. Such funds as they have and material resources such as property they possess are devoted to keeping the status quo.

Some parishioners have put it in terms of keeping "our man, in our church building, taking the services we prefer, for our benefit as an independent parish." Preservation of buildings overshadows all, even when their upkeep is beyond the parishioners and they are no longer well placed to serve the Mission.

While for such folk, thinking of the Church and its purpose in any other terms is difficult and hard to change, the Vision asks that a different set of priorities be adopted and financial and material resources be committed to serve that Purpose and Vision.

### **Are you prepared to put the Mission of the Church ahead of preservation of the status quo in your parish?**

We are prepared to commit our resources to the service of God's Mission and to give that the priority over preservation of what is 'ours'.

## 6. A Changing Episcopate for a Changing Church

The Church is a system. In a system, if you change one part of it, that change will flow on and affect other parts of the system. Changes in the Church will cause, even demand changes in the way Bishops go about exercising their ministries. I do not think that I can or should be expected to leave the manner of exercising my ministry as Bishop unchanged in a changing Church. I need to be empowered by the Diocese to respond to change by taking part in the coming reform of the way *Episcopal* Ministry is to be exercised. The shape of that is still emerging, but it is certain that it must be focussed on leading the Diocese on the Vision Path.

This will mean setting priorities that may cut across cherished expectations of Episcopal Visitation of a purely formal, ceremonial and liturgical nature, to engagement with a Church in Mission. It means seeking to unclog some of the administrative bottlenecks. It means resisting when people escalate issues by 'taking them to the top'; people who ask the Bishop to fight parish bushfires and resolve conflicts that could be handled directly by the people involved.

It will mean giving me time to do the *Important* rather than responding to the tyranny of the *Urgent*, leaving little time and energy for Strategic Leadership.

**Will you Covenant with me to allow me to learn and put into practice, what it may be to be Bishop in this Changing Church?**

We will encourage and enable you to do what is needed to be a Bishop for us and with us in this Church on the way to God's Future.

*Come Holy Spirit:  
Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding  
Spirit of Right Judgment and Courage  
Spirit of Knowledge and Reverence  
Spirit of Wonder and Awe,  
Give us always a sense of your presence.*

*Be with the people of our Diocese  
as we seek to fulfil your purpose  
and work to see the Reign of God fulfilled.*

*As we read the Signs of our Times  
let the problems challenge us,  
the discoveries exhilarate us,  
its injustices anger us,  
its possibilities inspire us.*

*Guide us by your light,  
enliven us with your breath,  
enflame us in your love.*



*Amen.*