

10 July 2015

Dear Friends

**A message from Bishop Tim, Bishop Jonathan and Bishop David**

*I have seen the sun break through  
to illuminate a small field  
for a while, and gone my way  
and forgotten it. But that was the  
pearl of great price, the one field that had  
treasure in it. I realise now  
that I must give all that I have  
to possess it...*

*The Bright Field* by R.S. Thomas

In the parable of the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:44-46), Jesus portrays the Kingdom of God as a moment of profound realisation: *this* is what really matters; *this* is worth spending my life on – what else could it all be about? This Autumn, we are going to be exploring with you what our lives are *for*. To paraphrase R.S. Thomas, what must we give all that we have – and all that we are – to possess?

Earlier this year, the national Church (as part of the Reform and Renewal programme) called us to a renewed sense of being disciples of Jesus. Our concise Annual Report (available on the Diocesan website at: <http://www.winchester.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Annual-report-FINAL.pdf>) summarises some of the ways we have been developing our discipleship of Jesus in this Diocese over the last year. What does that discipleship look like? It looks like the merchant in Jesus' parable – giving all that we are and all that we have to join in with the story and mission of God, the mission of the whole people of God. Over the next few months we want to explore with you how we *lead* and *sustain* the mission of the whole people of God as a 'community of missionary disciples' (Pope Francis), purposefully committed to contributing to the common good.

**1. Leadership vocations ('Giving all that we are')**

In September, Mark Collinson joins us (in collaboration with the Cathedral) as the first Canon Principal of the School of Mission. The School is entering a new phase of equipping and training the whole people of God for mission, as new opportunities are opened up by the national Church's 'Resourcing Ministerial Education' review. Everyone's calling is different, so the School is going to prepare and equip many kinds of disciples and leaders as part of our commitment to re-imagine the Church (our second strategic priority). Starting in September 2016 and over the next few years, the School will be extending its current activities to offer a range of modules, courses and programmes. Some of these could lead to recognition of a lay or an ordained vocation, whether as an evangelist, preacher, youth or families worker or worship leader, or as a local and contextually-trained licensed lay worker, licenced lay minister or self-supporting ordained minister.

How might the Holy Spirit be preparing you (or those you lead) to re-new or re-fresh your commitment to give all that you are? Where is the Spirit calling you to something new and unexpected? We are

looking forward to conversations with you in the Autumn about how the School of Mission might help to test, equip and sustain those callings.

## 2. Generosity ('Giving all that we have')

The merchant in Jesus' story sold all that he had to buy the pearl of great price. Responding to the call of Jesus is costly as we follow the example of the one who emptied himself for our sakes (Philippians 2:7). Practising sacrificial living and exercising good stewardship are commitments we have made to each other in our fourth strategic priority, as part of our belonging together in Christ. We have worked hard over the last year to produce a system for our Common Mission Fund (our 'parish share') which better reflects our priorities and commitments, and to make a good transition to the new system as the starting point of our corporate generosity. This is only the start – it is by becoming *deeper disciples*, living lives of generosity – in fellowship, in life and in money – that we will enable effective leadership and the mission of the whole people of God. As the 'Resourcing the Future' review looks at how the national Church's resources can be most effectively used for mission, so in this Diocese we want to generate the resources we need to be a growing Church that makes a significant contribution to the common good.

Where, now, is the Holy Spirit calling us to be *radically* generous in our financial giving? Might he be calling us, together, to give all that the Common Mission Fund system asks of us, and even more? Does your Parish Mission Action Plan include an objective about stewardship and regular teaching on giving? You may like to know that our average giving has gone up, and is now £11.97 per week.

Bishop Jonathan and Bishop David are keen to visit Chapter meetings, Deanery Synods, clusters of parishes and worshipping communities from this Autumn to explore our responses to the call of God on our lives, particularly in these key areas of leadership vocations and of generosity. They will want to talk about the practical and detailed ways in which we are building them into our personal and corporate lives. Are they hard-wired into our Parish and Deanery Mission Action Plans? Are we planning for new responses to the call of Christ in these areas of our lives? How can we get ready for all that God has in store for us?

We continue to pray for you, rejoicing in our life together.

+ Jonathan Southampton      + David Basingstoke  
+ Timothy Winton

The Right Reverend Jonathan Frost  
The Bishop of Southampton

The Right Reverend Tim Dakin  
The Bishop of Winchester

The Right Reverend David Williams  
The Bishop of Basingstoke

