



Diocese of Gloucester: Diocesan Partnerships Overview

Over recent years the Diocese of Gloucester has built up 5 mutual 'partnerships' with dioceses around the world with which we are in communion. The background to the establishment of the partnerships in each case has varied but each has involved personal relationships with present and previous bishops (including those developed through the 'indaba process' of the 2008 Lambeth Conference) and other senior clergy and laity. Whatever the background, our intention as we look to the future is to build on all partnerships in ways appropriate to each relationship, as we seek to further the mission of the worldwide church of Christ.

The Diocesan Partnership Group is tasked with acting as a **catalyst** for developing these relationships, coordinating some aspects 'centrally' and encouraging and promoting links between parishes and schools across the Diocese of Gloucester with those of our link dioceses.

The Purpose of our Partnerships

There are numerous rich themes from scripture that we could draw on to remind us of the centrality of partnership in the gospel. From Paul's picture of the church as the interdependent body of Christ with its many parts (1 Cor 12), the birth of the church at Pentecost across cultural and linguistic barriers (Acts 2), Paul's focus on two becoming one in Christ (Eph 2) to our commissioning as ministers of reconciliation in a divided world (2 Cor 5) we are reminded again and again that the mission of the church in God's world is one we share across all cultures and backgrounds. Diocesan Partnerships remind us that, as Disciples of Christ located in the UK or in any of our partnership dioceses, we are part of a much bigger family than we often experience in our daily lives. Partnerships can and should challenge our (often) culturally conditioned reading of scripture and allow us all – whatever our context - to grow deeper and wider in our faith, our worship and our mission.

The Diocesan 'LIFE' vision, centred around Jesus' invitation to people of every nation to enter into life in all its fullness, includes at least 4 priority areas that are particularly pertinent to our international partnerships and these will help direct our priorities as we look to develop the relationships in the future:

LEADERSHIP Committed to Transformation: *Creating learning networks for lay and ordained leaders.* International partnerships give us, and our partners, opportunities to create learning networks that broaden our everyday connections. Cross cultural experiences can provide us all, whether we live in an Indian city or a Cotswolds village, with a greater understanding of, and depth to, our journey as Disciples of Christ. They can help us lift our eyes to the bigger picture, to lose our natural obsession with ourselves and our own concerns and see the *Missio Dei* in its broader context.

IMAGINATION Opening new paths to Faith: *Placing schools at the heart of our mission with creative connections between churches and schools.* Our international partnerships have already had significant impact on some of our schools. Used well they can be a significant tool in bringing churches and schools together to serve the 'common good' in its widest sense.

FAITH Living as adventurous followers of Jesus Christ: *Nurturing confident disciples to live out their faith seven days a week.* International partnerships can have a significant role in helping to form disciples who understand their part in the world wide church, who recognise diversity as a gift and not a threat, who recognise the privilege and responsibility of sharing God's resources, who gain a wider perspective on our partnership in God's Mission in God's world and are prepared to take a fresh look at their priorities. In a different diocese a visiting priest from Asia was quoted as saying '*Christians in Britain – lay and clergy alike – seem depressed and discouraged. You brought the gospel to us, yet you don't seem to believe in God's power to change things any more. Perhaps you are too busy mending the church roof.*'



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One mark of our confident discipleship will be a desire to learn from and with each other as we seek to discover new depths to prayer.

ENGAGEMENT Living out Christ's love and hope: *Being advocates for human flourishing, through initiatives which combat injustice, environmental destruction, exclusion and isolation.*

International partnerships give us an opportunity to reflect on the interconnectedness of our world; to recognise the impact that our choices in one part of the world have on others across the world. They can give us a fresh perspective on our own society (sometimes to celebrate what we have, sometimes to be deeply challenged) as we reflect on these issues in other societies.

The Role of the Diocesan Partnership Group

In pursuing and being guided by these priorities the Diocesan Partnership Group will:

- **Organise** and encourage visits and connections between members of our diocesan partners, seeking to ensure that these include a good cross section of ages and include members of the laity, clergy and schools.
- Seek to **inspire** growing links with our international partners across the Diocese of Gloucester, including our schools and churches. Being 'ambassadors' for our partnerships and sharing stories.
- **Facilitate** links wherever possible by making introductions and sharing contacts.
- Act as **sponsor** for these growing links, including through seeking funding (and assisting with fundraising) for visits and other means of building mutually enriching relationships.
- Seek to **collaborate** with other worldwide partnerships active within Diocese, including parish to parish links and international mission agencies.

The Membership of the Diocesan Partnership Group

The Diocesan Partnership Group meets twice a year to facilitate the above but also shares reports and ideas between meetings. It is made up of:

Ven Phil Andrew (Archdeacon of Cheltenham) : Chair

Revd Canon David Bowers : Link Officer, Diocese of Karnataka Central (Church of South India)

Revd Gary Grady : Link Officer, Diocese of Dornakal (Church of South India)

Revd Canon Helen Sammon : Link Officer, Diocese of Western Tanganyika (Tanzania)

Dr Julie Fay : Link Officer, Diocese of El Camino Real (Episcopal Church, USA)

Mr Steven Peachey : Link Officer, Diocese of Vasteras (Church of Sweden)

In addition either Bishop Rachel or Bishop Robert will attend each meeting.

Phil Andrew

Archdeacon of Cheltenham

On behalf of the Diocesan Partnership Group November 2017