



Dear Elizabeth,

It's just over two years ago that I came to Bath and Wells and a lot has happened since then. When I came it was with a very clear charge, given to me by the Archbishop of Canterbury, to help the diocese to discern what our calling is, what our vision is and to discover together what it is that God is calling us to be and to do. Where is God leading us, as we seek to be his people here in Bath and Wells?

As we've talked about that, a vision has emerged that is becoming stronger the more we reflect and talk and pray about it.

It is that in response to God's immense love for us, we seek to be God's people, living and telling the story of Jesus.

That means that together we need to pray and seek to discern what it is to listen to God's word, to walk in his steps and to allow his Holy Spirit to transform our lives.

As we've talked together, three priorities have also emerged:

- The first is to put mission and evangelism at the heart of everything that we do
- The second is to look at our resources, our ministry, all that God has given to us and entrusted to us: our buildings, our time, our money, our resources and to make sure that we're using those effectively to build up the kingdom of God and to declare the good news of God's love
- And the third is to look at ourselves and to think about the gifts that God has given and entrusted to us and ask how we can identify those gifts, how we can develop them and then how we can offer them to God in order that we might be God's people, living and telling the story of Jesus.

In a jigsaw there are many pieces and each one of those pieces is important. Each piece has its own particular place and the picture is not complete without each one being in the right place. And so it is for all of us, but the question is where can we best serve God?

For some of us, it may well be in our local churches or perhaps in our deanery. For others it may be in our homes, in our schools, in our places of work, as chaplains, in places where we work or where God is leading us. For others, we may be involved in the diocesan synod or perhaps helping to work together on our plans, our goals and our activities in order to determine how to take forward the vision that God is placing in our hearts, the call he's placing before us.

I'm sure the most important thing for each and every one of us is to put prayer at the very centre of all that we do. Prayer is what will sustain us. It's prayer that will inspire us and it's prayer that enables us to be God's people, living and telling the good news of Jesus.

I'm clear what my role is: it's to help to further those conversations that have brought us this far. It's to listen to people, not just inside the diocese but from those outside of the life of the church, that together we can hear what it is that God is saying at this time. And then of course to communicate and to share with everyone what I believe God is saying to us and what we're hearing about God's word and how best we can share the love of Christ.

As we've been going forward, thinking about these things, a prayer has been written that I've found both inspiring and helpful:

Gracious God, may your Holy Spirit guide us into the future. Help us, throughout the diocese, to show uninhibited reliance on your grace and power, as we seek renewal of our lives. Give us courage, rigour, imagination and generosity in order that your kingdom may come and that your abundant life be known by all.

And I say amen to that.

The Right Revd Peter Hancock, Bishop of Bath and Wells