

RESOURCING SUSTAINABLE CHURCH: A TIME TO CHANGE – TOGETHER



What is it?

'Resourcing Sustainable Church: A Time to Change - Together' is about making best use of the resources we have, to invest in the local church, for it to flourish today and into the future. At its heart are a set of fifteen coherent recommendations and commitments, agreed by our diocesan synod. You can find these on our website, (link?).

Why now?

Because, for generations, we have been subsidising the cost of our paid clergy from our historic resources. - As a diocese we have an unsustainable annual £3M operating deficit.

Because, despite best efforts, we have found it difficult to recruit paid clergy to some posts, leaving parts of the diocese under-resourced.

Because, changing and rising expectations on clergy, lay ministers and officers such as church wardens and treasurers, mean that many people are exhausted and struggling to go on.

And because the Covid-19 pandemic has sharpened the impact of all of the above.

Therefore, together, we must find a refocused, reimagined way for our Church, so that the transforming love of God can be shared better, further and deeper across Greater Lincolnshire. – This is our mission.

How did *Resourcing Sustainable Church: A Time to Change - Together (RSC)* come about?

The fifteen Recommendations and Commitments agreed by Diocesan Synod on 15th May 2021 by an over 80% majority are the result of almost two

years' work and prayer by many people and are the bedrock of RSC. They have been through two rounds of regional consultations involving over

600 participants. They may be challenging, but they should not surprise us.

How would you summarise the heart of *Resourcing Sustainable Church: A Time to Change - Together*?

The five key messages are:

A - That the **local church and its growth**, in all its different forms and varieties, must be at the heart of everything we are. **Not all churches have to be the same** or try to do the same things, but we need to **work together** to serve our communities.

B - That **collaboration** between churches in what we are calling **Local Mission Partnerships**, and between **clergy and lay people** within these partnerships, must be the key to the way forward. This is respectful to the Church of England's history, calling and theology, and uses all of our different personal and collective gifts and abilities.

C - That we need to find a **new way of financing our mission and ministry**, replacing our old style 'parish share' system with an approach to generous giving based on '**covenant**' – a prayerful commitment to each other in trust, founded on our response to God's generosity to each of us.

D – That **the role of the bishops, archdeacons and those who work in the diocesan office is to support the work of the local**. We will therefore try to minimise central costs and to build a partnership that is based on mutual support and

greater levels of understanding about our respective responsibilities and challenges. *

E - That we will make **best use of the assets** left to us by previous generations of Christians in Lincolnshire, committing to use this wealth responsibly, and mindful of our less fortunate neighbours both locally and nationally.

What will happen next?

'Resourcing Sustainable Church: A time to change - together' is not a top-down plan into which we all need to fit. Rather, it is a series of conversations about the kind of church we believe we are in our own particular setting, about what we might be able to contribute financially to support mission and ministry both locally and across the diocese, and about with whom we might work in partnership as we seek to play our part in being that 'healthy, vibrant, sustainable church transforming lives in greater Lincolnshire'.

We will start these conversations this summer and continue throughout the autumn and next spring. We hope that by the end of autumn 2022 we will have discerned and agreed:

- the type of church each of our parishes and congregations wants to be
- the way in which we will work with our neighbouring parishes and congregations
- the financial contribution each parish and benefice will make to the finances of the diocesan family
- the distribution of ministers, lay and ordained, voluntary and paid, in each part of the diocese

Change makes me anxious – will it work?

Finally, we want to acknowledge that for all who will find *RSC* energising and exciting ('at last, something is being done, we are facing reality'), there are others who will find that the Recommendations and Commitments, for differing reasons, create anxiety and uncertainty.

Some may even think that, as they feel may have happened previously, *RSC* will simply fade away.

We pray that over these next months, as we worship, work and talk together, anxiety will be overcome and understanding built, so that everyone will feel able to contribute, whatever their concerns – because everyone matters. And we, your bishops, together with our close colleagues, pledge to implement *RSC* to the extent

of our abilities and capacities – because this is how best to serve you, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We hope that the conversations we have together will release a new wave of Holy Spirit inspired creativity, leading us into ways of working beyond those which we have imagined before, using all the rich resources that God gives to us, so that the Church will flourish across Greater Lincolnshire. It may look different from what it looks like now, but that is part of the adventure we believe we are being called to, and so we commend our Diocesan Prayer:

Almighty God, source of our hope and all good things; you call us in love to share in the work of creation in making all things new. Bless our diocese: may we be faithful in our worship; confident in our discipleship; and joyful in our service; that, through us, the world may catch a glimpse of the love you have for each one of us, made known to us in your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



DIOCESE OF LINCOLN
faithful · confident · joyful

*(It may be helpful to know that already £400,000 of central costs have been saved since 2019).