



What is *Changing Lives* about?

A beginner's guide from the Bishop of Taunton

The aim of the diocese is to resource and encourage confident Christian communities which express joyful hope in the gospel, for the sake of the world which they serve.

Changing Lives is about enabling church leaders to meet community needs, and helping the church to be better able to respond to and reflect today's world.

In Changing Lives, we are trying to help everyone respond to two key questions:

- What kind of church do we want to be?
- How will we shape our ministry and mission to become that church?

Changing Lives encourages us to continue to 'think differently' about the way we are as the Church of England locally. It should enable us to:

- reach more people
- reach some people more deeply, by being more responsive and flexible in the way we do things
- build on good practice, working from the ground up
- take a long term view of growth or maintenance of church 'membership'
- recognise the value of all types of church and expressions of faith
- ensure that central teams and officers offer the right support, and work together with each other and with parishes to be most effective
- ensure that everyone learns about and listens to their communities, teaches others and is open to learning themselves.

Changing lives is not a:

- business plan or strategy. We are not looking for centrally-generated 'action plans' with measures of success.
- way to combine the diocese's various departments and groups into one structure. However, it will underlie all plans made by the diocese.

In practical terms for a parish, Changing Lives should:

- help clergy redefine their role to be leaders and people who inspire the ministry, rather than managers and people who try to 'do it all'
- invite all members of the church and community to make a difference and a contribution according to their vocation, gifts or calling
- encourage us to consider developing worship beyond traditional church services
- involve us in listening to and learning about all members of our community and responding to meet their needs
- invite us to share stories of good practice - such as across a local ministry group or by using a local ministry team.
- offer people all over the diocese support and resources such as training, specialist expertise and advice