

Vision 2026 and St Thomas's Vision Action Plan

Blackburn Diocese has for some years had a vision statement called **Vision 2026**. This vision is summed up in the phrase: **Healthy churches transforming communities**. The Diocesan Vision was relaunched last year with the following words:

The Church of England in Lancashire desires to make the Good News about Jesus Christ more widely known, because we believe:

- **He is the One who brings 'life in all its fullness.'**
- **Healthy church communities have a positive and transformative impact on our society.**

We will work together to achieve this by:

- **Making disciples of Jesus Christ.**
- **Being witnesses to Jesus Christ.**
- **Growing leaders for Jesus Christ.**

We will prioritise work among children, young people and schools to raise up a new generation for Christ.

The Diocese of Blackburn asks each PCC to find a Vision Champion. I was appointed by the PCC in December to take on this role. Our new Vision Action Plan for the coming year has been approved by our PCC and was requested by Blackburn Diocese along with our Parish Profile. Clearly it makes sense for our Vision Action Plan to be in line with the Diocesan Vision.

At St Thomas's we have for many years had as our purpose statement *Proclaiming the love of Jesus in the community* and the PCC saw no reason to change this. In the Diocesan format of the Vision Action Plan we were asked for **Our Vision Statement** - *How we would like to be described 5 years from now?* Our answer is: **A beacon of God's love. A growing church. A church with a broad age range of members. A church growing leaders. An inclusive church.**

We were asked to specify three **Priority Goals** for this coming year and chose the following:

- 1. To find a new vicar who will lead us to fulfil our vision.**
- 2. To develop prayer in our people to empower the work we are doing.**
- 3. To develop the work being done in Brick Church particularly with the parents of the children.**

(You can read our full Vision Action Plan on the St Thomas's website.)

This does not mean that we do not have other goals, but it does mean that we will be particularly concentrating on these three. For example one of our other goals is to keep our work with St Thomas's School going while we are without a Vicar. To help with this Elizabeth O'Connor is leading some of the school assemblies and David Bennett is very active in the school as one of the Governors. Equally we are continuing our work with elderly people in the care homes.

The goal that we would like every member of St Thomas's to be involved with is the second one. Bishop Jill says in her book *Lighting the Beacons:where many beacons are being lit, individual lives or regions transformed, or churches planted across the nation today, they are always accompanied by high levels of prayer.* (Incidentally, if anyone has a copy of Bishop Jill's book that they have borrowed from church, please bring it back as soon as you have finished it so someone else can read it.) We would love more people to join us for prayer in church on the second Wednesday of the month at 7.00 pm in the Lady Chapel. But most important is the time we spend individually in prayer each day and particularly that some of that time should be spent in prayer for St Thomas's and for the fulfilment of our vision goals. We are living in exciting times for the Diocese and our parish, but we are like a sailing boat in choppy waters and we need to hoist up a great sail of prayer that will catch the wind of God's Spirit and move us forward.

Peter Watson