

Growing with God's Grace in Glasgow and Galloway



PART 1

History and theology of the
strategic intention for growth

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Theologian Robin Greenwood writes:

The way the Church interrelates and operates is no mere detail or irrelevance; it tells the world what it believes about all life and relationships.

Practising Community: The Task of the Local Church (SPCK 1996)

The way our 'strategic intention for growth' has emerged 'tells the world' about the theology and the ecclesiology espoused by the diocese.

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Origins of strategic intention for growth

- Electoral process 2009-2010
- Diocesan Profile



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Candidates responded to the challenges and opportunities outlined in the Diocesan Profile

One of the questions posed to them was:

What process would you establish to engender a shared vision of mission in the Diocese?

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I would commission the Mission Core Group to devise and implement a process throughout the diocese with the aim of launching a small number of agreed strategic priorities in mission to be worked at by charges over the next 5 years or so, with appropriate diocesan support and review. Charges could agree on a regional basis, or in smaller groups, or individually, which priority to concentrate on and for how long.

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The Bishop would lead strongly on this from the launch. In a diverse diocese it is not a question of establishing one aim, nor of suggesting that nothing is going on already. It is a case of trying to pull things more together, to create more of a sense of common enterprise, mutual support and encouragement.

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In electing Gregor Duncan as Bishop, the diocesan electorate **also elected to adopt that missional mandate.**



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Episcopally-led, but using the gifts of others to implement:

Not long after my consecration I was asked on a local radio station what my vision for the diocese was. I said I had no vision but rather a clear plan for finding out what the diocese would wish to be its vision and then for leading firmly on that.

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At our recent clergy conference I was encouraged to be thanked by one senior priest for taking the clergy and congregations seriously.

Theologically speaking, I suppose this all reflects a conviction that the holy, worshipping, praying and acting people of God are the fount of any missional endeavour and that it is my task as Bishop to help find ways of releasing their energies in a whole variety of very different contexts.

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Desiring to create a common purpose; awareness of need for missional direction and cohesion:

In our context, there has been a relatively weak sense of the diocese as being the “local church”. People focus on their own congregations and communities. Equally there has at times been quite a strong sense of the Diocese as an unhelpful “them” sitting in Glasgow.

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But the Diocese, by engaging with a strategic intention which has emerged from the aspirations of its members, can become a local unit of missional energy and life, finding its diversity a strength and not a hindrance, and finding a common life rooted in living for mission and for the hugely varied communities in which our churches are set.

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Following his consecration, Bishop Gregor immediately embarked upon the work, tasking his Dean and the MDO to set up a process

In June 2010, they sent round a questionnaire to every charge entitled "The Summer Project".

- Lukan image of the Kingdom being *'like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened'*

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Questionnaire asked each charge about its missional life. 80% were returned. Compiled responses fed back to 7 Regional meetings.

LOCAL INGREDIENTS

particular local strengths

MISSING INGREDIENTS

areas needing external support

YEASTINESS

signs of hope

POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH

wish list and opportunities



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Regional meetings achieved several goals:

- (i) they highlighted the commonalities in hopes and expectations
- (ii) they brought energy and hope back into the process; many evident signs of growth and potential for more, if only greater cross-congregational communication and working could be achieved
- (iii) they initiated a strong task force; each Region elected a representative to form a Working Party with the Dean and the MDO.

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Working Party met several times autumn 2010 - early summer 2011.

- the group met in a variety of venues right across the diocese
- met by means of telephone conferences
- meetings characterised by prayer, the sharing of food, the taking of time to get to know each other



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Involvement at every stage of as many people as possible: ownership by 'the whole people of God':

If this was not to be seen (and half-heartedly disposed of) as yet another initiative from yet another new Bishop to combat decline, then its rootedness not in the Bishop's head or enthusiasms but in the examined and reflected-upon life of our churches was vital.

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We have been able to engage many “new” people at all levels of this adventure and have tried very hard to allow it to be a process continuously emerging from grassroots consultation.

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Throughout we have been keen to emphasize that local context is all important – church context and community context. Realities on the ground are to be taken into account. By all means dream dreams and see visions, but not pipe dreams and not fantasies – the people we are and the communities we are part of are where we start. But hopefully not where we stay!

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By working through the seven Regional overviews, the group discerned that the following six strands were those which the diocese as a whole was asking to focus upon:

- **worship, prayer and spirituality**
- **learning and discipleship**
- **missional leadership**
- **numerical growth, welcome and integration**
- **imaginative outreach into local communities**
- **children and young people**

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Underlying these strands we can identify a two-fold thrust:

- (i) to help congregations become more outward-facing;** to be more aware of the needs and gifts of those around them; and to work more 'in partnership'. The church does not live primarily for its own sake but for the glory of God and the glory of God's world. Only if this is grasped can we hope to ...

- (ii) confidently and articulately draw others into the fellowship of faith,** so that all may experience the fullness of life that comes through knowing God.

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So, our intention for growth is about both **Kingdom and Church**: about growth in confidence, spirituality, prayer and worship, active discipleship, faith-sharing - and also about numbers, about growing younger, about moving from simply a group of people being looked after by a priest (chaplaincy) to a community of faith seeking to be with and for Christ in the world (church).

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'Growing with God's Grace in Glasgow and Galloway' because grace lies at the heart of it all.

This should warm all Lutheran hearts! Unless the Lord build the house their labour is but lost who build it. We do not seek a 21st century activism, a kind of missional frenzy that will wear everyone out. We seek a people living with and for God in the world out of their sharing in the divine life in worship and in prayer.

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Eucharistic worship in particular is the beating heart; we gather around Word and Sacrament, we are energized in that gathering to try to mirror what we encounter there - that selfless, self-giving love and overwhelming generosity of the divine in the way we live our lives, passing on the good news of salvation, not keeping it to ourselves.

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A 'process' not a 'programme':

When I made my pitch to the electors, I mentioned a time span of 5 years or so. We do not see all of this as simply another programme but rather as an attempt, over quite a long period of time, to enter a new way of being, a way that will, so to speak, embed itself into the DNA of the diocese, affecting every decision that is made.

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As you can see we do not lack ambition (nor, as it happens, do we lack realism!)

So, this is not conceived, and did not emerge from the diocesan womb, as a quick-fix solution but is rather hoped to be a process of gradual cultural change.

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We aspire to become a Diocese that is a Learning Community for all the people of God, clergy and laity alike; we hope to see “members” moving to being ‘disciples’, lifelong learners and apostles.

That takes time and effort and there are frustrations along the way – but the way is not only an exacting but also an exciting one to travel. We are a eucharistic people engaged in a wonderful exchange. Growing and grateful.

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Having used the image of bread in the preliminary stages of the project, the group chose the other element of the Eucharistic Feast as symbolic expression of the strategy itself.

John 15 central text

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In keeping with the intention that the 'ownership' of the strategy should continue to cascade ever more widely, the Working Party agreed that every Region would host its own Launch Service around Pentecost, the 'birthday of the Church', when the focus is particularly upon the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

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Similarity: standard liturgy.

Hymns and readings were chosen to reflect the themes. Bishop as Preacher and President at every launch service.

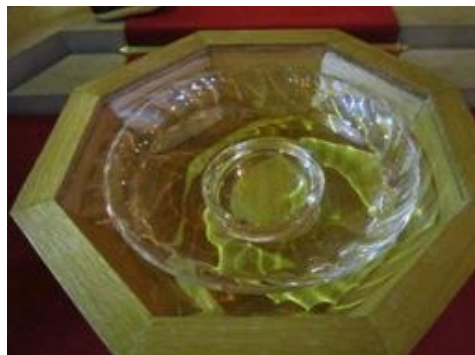
Difference: recognising contexts.

Each Region made a presentation, in word, or symbol of the seeds of hope in its midst, those things in which it wished to nurture with God's help.



*Go in grace and make disciples,
baptize in God's holy name;
tell of death and resurrection,
Easter's victory now proclaim.
Christ's commission sends us forth
to the nations of the earth.
Go in grace and make disciples,
midwives for the world's rebirth.*

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The Bishop's homily was a powerful exegesis of the biblical texts chosen for the service, telling of the encouragement, the energizing and the challenge of God.

It stressed the Love and Grace lying at the heart of the Diocesan adventure, and the need to step out in faith - to dream and to risk, to try and to trust.

'Small steps, medium steps, large steps, all can be beautiful, but the real beauty is where what is tried is in line with your circumstances, your stories, your resources – neither selling them short, nor over-reaching them'.

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'Summer recess'; this was not the time for any charges to be starting on the Mission Action Planning process, so reading matter was provided to enable members to think about the MAP-ping process over the summer.

Gardeners know that there are always other tasks needing attention while plants are dormant .. so the Working Party began working on the new **structures** that would be needed to support the expected emergent growth, or ensuring that previous ones would be fit for purpose.

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- **Meeting** with all clergy to walk them through the Mission Action Planning process
- **Training** MAP Facilitators (volunteers)
- **Setting up** of Development Teams, one for each strand of the strategy, to resource congregations as they pursue their missional goals.
- **Setting up** of a Growth Fund to support the projects that congregations embark upon
- **Inducting** Regional Councils in the new purpose and tasks of Regional meetings

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Over the next two years 43 congregations embarked upon the MAP-ping process. MAP-ping is a four stage process that asks congregations to

- 1. review:** look hard at themselves and their community
- 2. choose:** discern vision and values
- 3. plan:** agree goals and actions
- 4. act:** implement and review them

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With the support of a **Mission Action Plan Facilitator**, the whole congregation gradually works through the 4 stages.

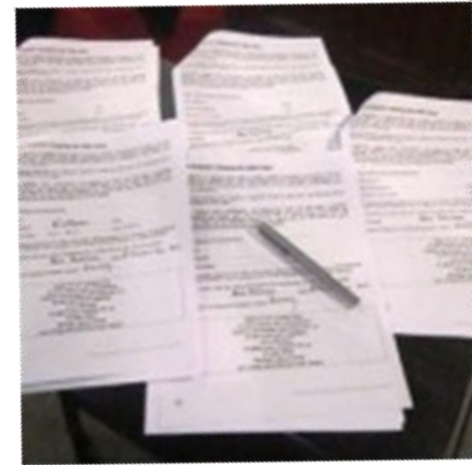
The outcome is a short document summarising the missional plans for the forthcoming year.



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A MAP is

- a summary of the charge's mission strategy
- built upon a clear sense of God's vision for the church
- a tool for strategic planning ensuring that the life of a charge is purposeful, developing and focussed



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It's a living document, communicated frequently to church members

- to build support for mission priorities
- to invite people to pray for these
- to encourage people to engage where help is needed
- to prepare people for changes that are planned

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One year on from the date of signing, the Bishop (or the Dean) visits the congregation to review the work attempted and achieved.

And then the cycle begins again ... new plans, new work, new review.



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Review: Looking at the goals you set yourself

- which avenues of work have proved most fruitful and why?
- how might growth in these areas be further effected?
- which areas have not developed as had been hoped? Why?
- what have you learned as you progressed: about yourselves? the local community? God? What surprised you?
- what did it cost you in terms of money and other resources: time, energy, people?
- what support and resources did you discover along the way to help you?
- what support and resources did you lack? what/who else might have been helpful?



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Another form of **review** – the three-yearly celebration of growth

The Feast of Michaelmas 2012 was chosen as the most appropriate date for the first of these, a chance, as the Bishop put it in his invitation to all charges – to gather ‘with the whole company of heaven’.

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A diocesan celebration of the 'people we are, liturgically, symbolically; a chance for people to taste and experience what the Church can be like; a gala day which is all about relations not process; a celebration of the gathered community at prayer and its vocation to the world'.

Every congregation in the diocese was encouraged to send 3 representatives of all ages; 180 attended.

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A Eucharist ...

woven into which were workshops organised by the Development Teams, each one aiming to enable people to experience ways in which they could live out the strands of the strategic intention for growth

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A day of the whole diocese coming together, enjoying being together and experiencing a huge amount of creative energy and sheer fun. We held a very high church liturgy (smoke and all) in our biggest evangelical church who provided all the music - it just took off in eucharistic joy and thanksgiving which symbolised the unity-in-diversity of the diocese, the centrality of prayer and worship to the enterprise and the relational foundation of it all.

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Bread was baked at one of the many workshops and taken to be offered in the Eucharist in every church of the diocese the very next day, Sunday – and that, perhaps more than anything else, helped make people aware of at least the possibility of a vibrant diocesan community sharing in one bread and being one body in Christ

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The work relies on the goodwill of volunteers. MAP Facilitators are largely lay people who give their time and energy to the work

- receive training and travel expenses
- annual diocesan get-together and local regional meetings for prayer, fellowship and mutual support
- importance of thanking them for their work

MAP Facilitators' Training Day 2013 Holy Trinity Ayr Saturday April 27th



- 11.00 Welcome and opening worship
- 11.15 **Gathering** Sharing our experience
- 12.00 Coffee stop
- 12.10 **Growing** New developments
- 12.50 Sandwich Lunch
- 13.30 **Grappling** Shaping the future
- 14.15 Leg stretch
- 14.25 **Going** Resources for the next stage
- 15.30 Closing Eucharist
- 16.00 Depart

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We believe that all of this :

- **Relies on God:** it is a grace-filled process, fuelled by prayer, or it is nothing.

But it also

- **Depends on people :** throughout this theological or quasi-theological commentary has run the theme of the minds and skills and hearts of the faithful, not exactly the *consensus fidelium* though perhaps not a whole world away from that.

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We do not have an army of paid professionals to do any of this, but nor would that be in keeping with what, in our own context as a small diocese in a small church, we are trying to help people to do and to be.

So, people giving of their time and skills, working hard in the charges on the task and communicating well are at the heart of it all.