

What do we mean by a Vision?

In our modern times we have become accustomed to all manner of organisations having “Vision Statements” describing their core purpose and the sort of workplace they aspire to be. Worthy though these often are, they are not what we are talking about here.

Throughout the Bible we read of God revealing Himself in visions: to Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, Samuel, Daniel and many others. Later, in Acts, we read that in addition to St Peter and St Paul, God sent visions to some quite ‘ordinary’ followers like Ananias and Cornelius. St Peter, addressing the crowd at Pentecost told them:

this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.”

(Acts 2: 16-17)

Those to whom God spoke in these ways were challenged to respond to His calling, often in strange or uncomfortable ways. Abraham, Jacob and Moses all had to leave the comfort of home to go to unknown places to serve Him. In calling his first disciples, the very ordinary fishermen Simon and Andrew: *“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. (Mark 1: 17).* Joel’s prophecy speaks of God’s Spirit being poured out on all people, not just a special few (and certainly not just the clergy!).

We ask that you will read this important note, and ask what it may be that God is saying to you; what is His prophecy, vision or dream for Beverley through you?

Why do we need a Vision Strategy?

In a place that is so large and grand, so beautiful and majestic, so historical and traditional, it can be easy to overlook our main purpose or mission. The demands of caring for such a beautiful building, of providing safe spaces for everyone – especially the vulnerable, of meeting the many needs of those who call on us – in short, of just “keeping the show on the road”, can easily overwhelm us.

Like much of the rest of the church nationally, we have been seeing for some time declining numbers of regular worshippers, an ageing congregation with fewer and fewer children and young people, and more people for whom the church seems to have little to offer or makes little or no impact in their lives. This in turn has created a situation where we cannot cover our costs from our income, especially as the twin effects of declining and ageing worshippers has led to a significant drop in giving, despite the generosity of a faithful core.

This has happened gradually over a long time so we haven’t noticed it, and the many pressures on people’s time (not just the clergy) have distracted our attention. Until now.

Don’t we already have a Vision?

Those of you who have been part of the Minster family for some time may recall that we did indeed have an earlier Vision:

- A People of Worship – *Rejoicing in God*
- A Light to the World – *Reflecting Christ*
- A Community of Love – *Revealing the Spirit*

which were developed into five themes: Christlikeness, Commitment, Partnership, Influence, Mission.

Good as that was, it was more of a statement of the Minster’s purpose than a call to be renewed, and it did not translate into committed actions. This is demonstrated by the continued decline described earlier.

Nevertheless the starting point for our Vision is a long list of inherited strengths, things done well, and faithful people committed to the life of the Minster. All these we value and want to build on.

What is the vision?

Our **Vision** is what we believe God is calling the Minster to be; how it is to be experienced, by everyone who has dealings with us (and those that don't). This includes our regular worshippers, our visitors to services, children and young people, parents and carers, those who use our buildings for events and clubs, visitors to the Minster as a heritage attraction, people wanting to get married, people needing a funeral for a loved one, for baptisms, and so many more. But also those who might need us as a place of sanctuary: the poor, lonely, needy, troubled, scared, homeless, depressed. And lastly those who have no contact with church, no experience of God in their life, and no inkling of the difference that the healing and empowering love of God in our risen Lord Jesus can make to them.

There are many ways that we could describe it, so we have taken a lead from Archbishop Stephen's description of the refreshed vision for the whole diocese of York. In summary it's this, and it applies to us both individually and as a community of God's people:

- **Becoming more like Christ**
- **Reaching people we currently don't**
- **Growing churches of missionary disciples**
- **Transforming our finances and structures**

Since February, we have been prayerfully considering what that means for us in our specific context of Beverley Minster, in ways that will lead to actionable changes and measurable outcomes. We explain the detail below.

How is that different from today?

The life and people of Beverley Minster today is a product of the generations of the people of God that went before, faithfully serving,

ministering and worshipping. We have a beautiful building that speaks powerfully of the glory of God, we have a strong choral tradition that is open to all abilities, and we have a cadre of dedicated volunteers who fulfil a huge range of roles that often go unseen and unsung. We thank God for all that and we want to build on this powerful legacy.

However the world around us has been changing for a long time. Faith is no longer at the heart of public life; the Bible and its message is not routinely passed on to next generations in schools and families; Sundays (for long the primary day of public worship) are full of attractive alternatives to church participation; and many churches have lost confidence in their mission under God and have turned inward to preserve what feels comfortable and familiar.

Beverley Minster is no different in terms of these challenges and in our response to them.

We believe we must carefully discern how best to make the fullest use of all that is good whilst asking how we should make ourselves attractive and welcoming to the vast majority of people who do not cross our threshold and see no need to; how to become more like Christ in our everyday life and thus feel confident and bold in reaching out to those we currently don't.

How will we achieve it?

We have developed a comprehensive list of change initiatives that we believe are necessary to fulfil our vision. These are grouped under **14 Workstreams** and together they represent our **Strategy** to achieve our Vision. The full list can be found at the end of this note. Not all these are new: several are extending the scope and reach of things we do now; others are restarting some past initiatives that for one reason or another have stalled.

How long will it take?

This will depend on how quickly we can find and enlist the help we need to deliver the strategy. Subject to that we believe that we can implement most of our initiatives in about two years, although some will take longer than this to fully bear fruit. We may also discover other opportunities along the way that we think will further contribute to our vision.

However we always have to listen to God and to follow the lead of the Spirit in what we do, in what order and how fast:

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3: 8-9)

What will it cost?

We don't yet know the likely full cost of this Strategy, since we need to form the teams to design and cost each initiative in detail. Several will have very little cost, but for others updating, improving and re-ordering of buildings may be needed, and equipping ourselves for a future on-line presence will need some capital outlay. We may also have to invest in bringing in some people if we can't fully resource the plan with volunteers with the right skills. The eventual full cost will be overseen and approved by the PCC.

We need to distinguish the cost of change, which is an investment in our future, from our operating costs. We are currently facing a structural deficit caused by our income failing to keep pace with our costs and other plans are being developed to manage this whilst our new Vision bears fruit. However we cannot allow this to delay implementing our Strategy and whilst we will be careful stewards we also trust Almighty God to provide for our needs, as He always does.

The larger 'cost' involved will be the demand on each of us to lay aside our personal preferences and habits to open up our forms of worship and ministries to better reach those we currently don't. Even the smallest change can invoke the strongest of reactions when

we feel that the church is primarily there to serve us. We passionately hope that all of our people will catch this vision to be more outward-focused and will take to heart the writings of St Paul:

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. (Philippians 2: 1-4)

Vision Strategy – Theological Overview

It is important for us to know that what we seek to achieve is grounded in God's word. The theological foundation for our Vision can be summarised here:

- The Church is called to share in the mission of God to the world.
- Like God, it is missional, orientated towards the world.
- Like Jesus it is incarnational, meeting people where they are.
- Like the Holy Trinity it is relational, recognising that the gospel is lived out in communities.
- Like the gospel, it is transformational, reflecting the truth that God's grace changes us and brings life and growth.
- All of this comes about by focussing on God in Christ, not by focussing on the church as such.

How will we find people to implement it?

We shall need to recruit quite a number of people to help lead and deliver all of these, and we are confident under God that we shall find them. We must however be open to using the skills and talents of people who may not be well-known to us. We cannot afford a mentality that suggests people have to have spent years in the chorus before being allowed to take on principal roles.

What part can I play?

There are two things that each and every one of us can and must do:

- 1) Engage with, understand and champion our Vision. Get excited by it; encourage those charged with implementing it; embrace and welcome the introduction of new activities without fear of change;
- 2) Pray with confidence, individually and with others, for God's blessing on this plan, trusting in His word: *For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)*

In addition please prayerfully ask how you may be able to support the plan, perhaps through becoming involved in (or even leading) a workstream, by suggesting others who may be able to help, by offering specific skills and experience you may have, by offering financial support, or in any other way that the Holy Spirit may prompt.

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Thank you for taking the time to read this note and to consider its implications for you and for all of us together. This is a critical time for the Minster as a gathering of the people of God. Our challenges have been thrown into even starker relief by the impact of the pandemic, but that has also prompted opportunities and fresh thinking for which we thank God.

If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns, or if you wish to offer yourself to help deliver any part of the Strategy please speak to Jonathan, Wendy or Tim, or email vision@beverleyminster.org.uk and someone will get in touch with you.

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A Prayer to ask God's blessing on our Vision Strategy:

*Anoint us with your Spirit, Lord God,
that our church may hear the voice of Jesus
and be transformed
to become more like him,
to reach those we currently don't,
to grow with a growth that comes from you,
and to fling wide the gates of your kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Revd Canon Jonathan Baker - Vicar

Martin Doolan – PCC Vice Chair

Revd Tim Kelly – Curate

Rod McPhee – Vision Strategy Convenor

Dawn Pollard – Church warden

Revd Wendy Wale – Associate Vicar

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Our strategy is set out below. The coloured columns set out a more detailed vision of the kind of church we believe God is calling us to be. The Initiatives refer to the actions we must take in order to make the vision a reality. The four colours relate to the four vision headings.

Workstream		Initiative
The Minster is a community where all are involved in inviting, welcoming and introducing people to Jesus through the Minster's activities, including families, children and young people.	A1	Ensuring that there are clear pathways available for all those in contact with the Minster who want to explore faith further
	A2	Holding social events to which everyone is welcome, and invited by all in the church
	A3	Welcoming and supporting families and young children with parent groups and activities for babies and young children
	A4	Recognising the gifts and skills of all and encouraging their use in the life of the church, including as lay-leaders
The Minster is a place where the heritage of the building points people clearly to God and the worshipping community.	B1	Encouraging and supporting the use of the Minster building for community events that welcome a wide variety of people into our building
	B2	Ensuring that the spiritual purpose of the building is clearly communicated and supported by signage, use of space, and balance of activities taking place within the building
	B3	Ensuring that visitors are warmly welcomed and supported (including signposting and chaplaincy support for spiritual support where possible, opportunities to provide contact details, visitor comments, and prayer requests)
	B4	Supporting school visits and workshops with a team of volunteers and guides that can connect the building to the worshipping life of the church

The Minster is a community where all are supported in their growth towards maturity in Christ at every stage of their journey.	C1	Teaching across our different services that supports people at different stages of their faith journey (from those exploring, to in-depth teaching)
	C2	Supporting house groups with teaching and discussion materials that tie in with service teaching, as well as seasonal material / courses
	C3	Establishing a preaching team that includes our current clergy, retired clergy, readers and others to support our teaching programme and provide mutual support
	C4	Encouraging church members to join house groups or form other small groups that provide mutual support
The Minster is a community sustained by prayer.	D1	Ensuring prayer support is available for all who need it (including small prayer support groups, post-service, and prayer visiting)
	D2	Teaching, encouraging, and developing prayer (including holding special prayer events)
	D3	Offering prayer support for visitors to the Minster building (including the provision of a sanctuary prayer space, and chaplaincy)
The Minster is a community where we take responsibility for one another's wellbeing.	E1	Having a robust system of pastoral support that involves clergy and others to support all members of, and groups within, the Minster community (esp. those who are struggling) - including for those who can no longer physically visit the Minster building, and arranging practical support where necessary
	E2	Offering safe and sustainable mentoring support to young people where there is a need

The Minster is a community where God's story is shared through word and action.	F1	Listening to, and serving, the needs of the local community working in partnership with other organisations
	F2	Making the church visible in the town and increasing our opportunities to make contact with, and pray for, those in our community
	F3	Rebuilding our relationships and engagement with secondary schools
	F4	Ensuring that all those in contact with the Minster for weddings, baptisms and funerals are welcomed, known, and supported
	F5	Encouraging all in the Minster community in their acts of loving service
The Minster is a community where there are opportunities to worship that embrace a breadth of culture and need.	G1	Providing services that offer a balanced mix of types of service and forms of worship (including services specifically for families)
	G2	Enabling people to use their gifts and abilities in supporting and leading worship
	G3	Supporting people who want to join in with Minster services online
The Minster is an organisation where there is effective communication through a wide range of channels.	H1	Establishing and enacting a reliable, consistent and responsive communication strategy for publicising the Minster's activities and encouraging engagement with the wider community across all channels (e-mail, web, social media, in-service, and printed materials) to serve and support the Minster community
The Minster is an organisation where the building infrastructure (including technical infrastructure) is effective and efficient.	I1	Ensuring that the Minster's building facilities are fit for purpose in supporting on-site services and events
	I2	Ensuring that the Minster's audio-visual equipment is fit for purpose in supporting on-site and online services

The Minster is an organisation where the financial infrastructure is effective and efficient.	J1	Providing clear and up-to-date information about the income, expenditure and reserves of the Minster (both for the public, and for the PCC)
	J2	Explaining, and giving thanks for, the impact of generous giving by Minster community on the mission and ministry of the Minster, and our support to the Diocese
	J3	Establishing clearer models of funding, income generation (using the assets of the Minster), and budgeting for different elements of the mission and ministry of the Minster
The Minster is an organisation which is safe for all, having a robust safeguarding culture.	K1	Maintaining the PCC's responsibility for safeguarding through a designated Safeguarding Officer, supported by clear policies and procedures
The Minster is an organisation which is environmentally responsible.	L1	Promoting clear aims, supported by a policy, for the environmental sustainability of the Minster's activities
The Minster is an organisation where related and partner organisations work collaboratively towards the Minster vision.	M1	Maintaining and developing links to create closer co-operation with related and partner organisations through designated PCC members with responsibility for communicating the Minster vision and strategy
The Minster is an organisation where the PCC, staffing, and volunteering structures operate effectively and efficiently and are proactively responding to current challenges and opportunities.	N1	Ensuring that there are clear models of responsibility and authority for all staff and volunteers that help to get things done as efficiently as possible
	N2	Ensuring that there are clear policies, procedures and processes for all of the Minster's activities