

Introductory Film transcript

We are now into the third year of living our LIFE vision across the diocese – a vision we discerned together through prayer and conversation – and at the heart of our LIFE vision, are those words of Jesus as told by John in his gospel (Ch. 10v10) : *'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full'*. So our vision together is about life in all its fullness.

And again and again I have returned to words of the apostle Paul to the Colossians in chapter 1. We hear not only that in Christ *'all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell'* but also that *through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things (Colossians 1:15-21)*

Our God is a God of fullness and completion – God of creation and *re-creation*. Amid the mess and brokenness, God has chosen through Jesus Christ to reconcile to himself **all** things.

And yet this is not simply about hope for a time to come. As followers of Jesus Christ we are called *now* to join in with God's mission of liberation and transformation - the flourishing of all people and the whole of creation. And if we are to live that calling well we each need to find a sustainable and nurturing shape for our lives amid the delights and the struggles of daily living.

In my address to the diocesan Synod last November (which you can read on this website), I spoke once more about my desire for us to discover more of what it means to be the church. Discipleship and church are not an activity they are about who we are as authentic followers of Christ individually and together.

Week after week we are gathered in from our daily lives to worship God together: to give thanks, to seek forgiveness, to be nourished and fed ...and then we are **sent out** week after week to nourish the world: To be the church among the people and places of our lives.

And this authentic whole-of-our-lives discipleship - being the church every day - all this is reflected in the Faith theme of our LIFE vision: we have expressed a commitment to nurture confident disciples to live out their faith seven days a week' and we've named a priority of enabling people to discover new depths to prayer and spiritual growth.

This is the soil from which this Lent course on shapes for living has emerged.

Hundreds of years ago in the 6th century someone called benedict wrote a rule of Life for brothers living in a monastery...

.. Benedict's rule has been a life-giving framework for many Christians down the ages. It is hoped that our diocesan focus on Shapes for Living will provide something similar for individuals and worshipping communities.

And it is **about how we each nurture and shape our lives as followers of Jesus Christ, seeking to be faithful and fruitful amid the challenges and joys of our lives, the lives of our communities and the wider world.**

As you embark on *Shapes for Living* there is a main booklet plus additional resources which can be all be found on the website alongside this film...

..The book, resources and films focus on just 5 if-you-like windows of our living: **Relating, praying, working, playing and growing**. There may be others you wish to consider.

The resources are designed to help you to ask questions and identify what you want to celebrate and sustain; what you might consider reshaping, perhaps through reducing something or increasing something or simply by changing an angle of perspective...

All of this is about being attentive to God through prayer, reading of scripture, listening to those around us and listening deeply to ourselves.

And whilst any reshaping of our living will inevitably involve some pain and sacrifice, it's really important not to begin in a place of negative thinking. ..

..Listen out for those destructive drivers of **must** and **should** and **ought** which so often emerge from a destructive inner place; Believing you're not enough or that because of the shape of your life you're not worthy of love.

Hear loud and clear that the starting place is the truth that you are loved by God - and having a differently-shaped life won't make you any more loved by God... although it will open you to discover new depths to God's love and forgiveness – who God is and who you are.

So ***Shapes for Living*** is about how we go on 'becoming' as we discover and share life in all its fullness.

It's about being attentive to the love, mercy and grace of God which will indeed invite a response, change, new discipline and fresh choices ... But it begins with the love of God who first chose us and who first loved us.

In John's gospel chapter 15 we hear those words of Jesus Christ: ¹⁶ you did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last...

And then in the 4th chapter of John's 1st letter we hear ¹⁹ we love^[b] because he first loved us.

At the end of your time of reflection and discussion do use the prayer of examen at the back of the main booklet...

It's about standing in the present and looking back to remember with both thanksgiving and with sorrow, as you look expectantly to what might be shaped going forward...