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# VISION IN FOCUS

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## Introduction

At a special meeting last month, ministry area officers, licensed lay ministers and clergy, celebrated the launch of the new Diocesan Culture Guide. Introducing the day, Bishop Cherry said that the culture guide **“is not so much about what we’re doing as disciples and church communities, but about who we are, how we behave towards one another, and what people experience when they meet us.”**

You can find out more about how the culture guide was developed and how it can be used in this edition of Vision in Focus.

*Debra Goddard  
Diocesan Communications Officer*

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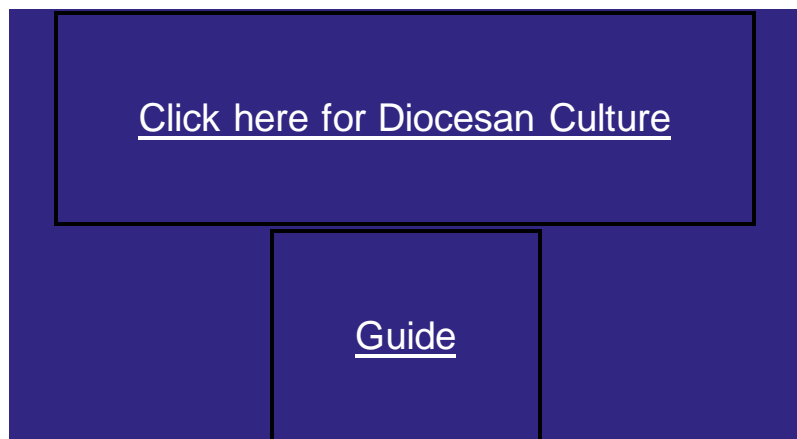
## Why have a culture guide?



How people feel when they interact with us is incredibly important. That's equally true when people are watching 'from afar'. Within our churches we need to ensure that the culture we are promoting is one that points to Jesus. We hope that people see this now, and this is how people inside our churches feel, but we know sometimes it is not! Most of us will have been in, or witnessed, situations in church where behaviour doesn't reach the level people should expect. The values identified in the culture guide are values we want to see as normal in our churches, but that will take some effort at times, but as we seek to live out the gospel in our lives, it will be worth it!

Displaying these values in our behaviour and decision-making is a massive part of our mission and ministry as people and churches, as it will help to point everyone to a gospel that is attractive and relevant, and to a Saviour who died and lives for all.





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## How did we get here?

It is important that the culture guide is something that people can relate to. It is not something being imposed on people. The values chosen and the content were arrived at after lengthy discussions with members of different groups including ministry area wardens, lay co-chairs, treasurers, property leads, ministry area safeguarding officers, lay licensed ministers and clergy.

The six values that were eventually agreed were arrived at following the discussions which included about thirty different ideas. Also included within the guide is a vision of how we want our churches to look - places where there is joyful worship, where prayer and fellowship are central to our life and where there is a generous invitation and welcome offered to all. And our churches are places where we reach out caring for the communities around us and further afield, caring for the environment and where the gifts we have are recognised gratefully and shared appropriately.

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## What can the culture guide be used for?

It can be used to help shape who we are. The values of: **love; generosity; joy; humility; courage and integrity** are qualities upon which we can reflect as we consider how our actions affect others and how that impact can be really positive. We can measure how closely we follow these values in how we behave, how we make decisions and work together and in how we look to others.

The guide can be used therefore for individuals, for groups or committees as well as for whole churches. As the guide says, 'this isn't a booklet to be put

away on a shelf and left there, but one that can help us to really measure up the culture we are seeking to portray as we build closer relationships with God and with each other.'

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## Looking forward

This guide builds on things we have already launched, primarily the Diocesan Vision which was launched back in 2022. In that we identified five branches that contribute to the life and growth of our churches:

**discipleship; stewardship; social justice; equality and diversity and environment**

Lots of work has already been done in engaging with these branches and the culture guide offers a chance to consider how we look as we interact with others. We've also launched a well-being guide, 'Caring for those who are caring'. Again, this links together as think about care for ourselves, for lay people who do so much in our churches, and for clergy.

As well as discipleship courses relating to the vision, we have also offered courses reflecting on the welcome we offer in our churches. We will shortly be launching a new discipleship course based on the culture guide which we hope people will use in small groups. Details of that will follow in the near future.

Hopefully the guide will highlight the values you're already displaying as you meet with others in church and outside, but that it will also just act as a prompt to make sure that we're praying and trying glorify God in everything we do.

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