



Diocese of Lichfield

REACHING NEW GENERATIONS

## Diocesan Online Pastor

### Context

The Diocese of Lichfield is committed to reaching new generations with the good news of Jesus Christ. This desire is enshrined as one of our Five Themes for Growth and expressed in two important strategy documents *Reaching New Generations 0-18* and *19-35*.

To reach new generations we recognise that we must learn to relate more effectively to the world and experience of young people and young adults. Increasingly, this generation inhabit a virtual environment sustained by an array of social media applications and digital devices. Recent research finds that adults in Britain spend more time in each day using devices than they do sleeping. Those aged 16-24, doing more than one task at a time, squeeze 14 hours and 7 minutes of media activity into each day, in just over 9 hours. The *means* by which young people in particular communicate are changing rapidly – only 8% of 13-15 year olds use email and only 3% ever use landline phones.

The explosion in new social media applications and devices raises some concerns but also brings great opportunities. For many young people this is where they live for much of the time.

If Christian mission requires a commitment to going where people are and speaking the language they speak, then we cannot afford not to have a focussed and engaged online presence if we wish to reach new generations with the gospel.

We are also conscious that Christian young people as *Christians* are in a minority amongst their peers and, as *young* people, a minority within their churches. Being a Christian under 25 can be a lonely business and an online community will help overcome a sense of isolation and create a sense of belonging.

The number of young people from our Diocese who attend 'Soul Survivor' at Stafford Showground highlights the fact that we are indeed reaching young people but also that there is a gulf between this kind of 'festival experience' and the weekly reality of the local church. There is a need to bridge this gap and engender a greater sense of belonging and connectedness to sometimes dispersed and isolated young people. We want to offer resources for their discipleship and in a form that engages them in ways that are rooted in their own experiences of life.

### The Post: Diocesan Online Pastor

We are seeking to appoint someone, lay or ordained, to a new and ground-breaking post for the whole Diocese. This is a three year appointment.

#### The Online Pastor's work would enable younger people to:

- become Christians through hearing the gospel in the language of digital media
- grow in their faith and discipleship if they are already Christians
- connect with other Christians in the diocese *both* on and offline

- worship regularly and participate in their local church as well as a wider fellowship and lived-out faith online.
- receive invitations to local Christian worship, events and gatherings appropriate to their age group
- engage online in fellowship and the lived-out faith of transforming communities and practising generosity
- receive alerts, post and respond to prayer requests, access daily devotional material and discover links to appropriate and helpful online communities and resources
- safely report any concerns they may have to the appropriate person (particularly in respect of safeguarding issues)

In order to do all this, the Online Pastor would harness existing media such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Facebook and make use of blogs, video blogs and podcasts. All this would be offered in a secure environment with strict protocols in respect of safeguarding.

The ministry would be aimed at 13– 25 year olds. It must be rooted in the non-virtual world and is not an alternative to face to face relationships – the social media platforms are tools to enable deeper relationships with God and other people. It is meant to stimulate engagement beyond the virtual world but is situated in that world because that’s where many younger people live much of the time. Part of the role will be to meet young people, their leaders and clergy and we would expect the Online Pastor to support the “virtual” work through “face to face” encounters across the Diocese.

## **Job Description**

### **The Purpose of the Post**

Through an engaging online ministry, to enable younger people in the Lichfield Diocese to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

### **Key Relationships**

- The Diocesan Director of Communications
- Deputy Director of Mission
- The Diocesan Youth Officer
- The Online Pastor Reference Group
- Reaching New Generations 0-18 Team

### **We are looking for a person who will:**

#### *Make Disciples*

- reach younger people both within and beyond the church with the Good News of Jesus Christ through a lively online presence
- use social media as a tool for engendering and encouraging faith

#### *Make Connections*

- help younger Christians in our Diocese feel more connected with one another and God
- use social media to invite young people to events in parishes, deaneries and Diocese.

- use social media to connect young people to Christian campaigns, consonant with the teaching of the Church of England, that discover the heart of God, grow disciples, transform communities, practise generosity.
- create new connections with younger people in schools and colleges with the support of chaplains
- link younger Christians with their church and the Diocese when they are away from home at College and University
- improve communication between the Diocese and younger people

### *Make Partnerships*

- through face to face meetings with stakeholders support the work online
- produce creative and engaging material over a range of platforms and build a team who can share in this work
- encourage those working with younger people to become part of this wider virtual network
- work alongside the Diocesan Director of Communications, Deputy Director of Mission and with the Diocesan Youth Officer
- meet with and establish a good working relationship with college and school Chaplains and clergy, youth workers and leaders across the Diocese.

### **The person should have:**

#### *Essential*

- a firm and lively Christian faith , a desire to grow God’s kingdom and reach new generations
- a vocation and proven ability to work with, for and amongst younger people in order to help them find faith and grow in discipleship
- a good understanding of how to create, grow and sustain networks both online and offline
- excellent writing skills
- a high degree of “digital literacy” and the technical ability to make use of social media as a means of communication with younger people
- the theological knowledge to produce and source appropriate material for online use
- the ability to respond quickly to new developments in social media
- a willingness to minister across a range of ecclesiastical traditions and theological understandings
- the capacity to build partnerships with other groups working in this area as well as with parishes and Diocesan officers
- an unequivocal commitment to good safeguarding practice and a secure understanding of safeguarding issues in an online environment
- completed IME4-7, if ordained
- the ability to drive own his/her own car

#### *Desirable*

- strong editorial skills
- a theological qualification
- a good understanding how the Church of England works