

## **Head, Heart and Hands: Dioceses share best practice at Growing Vocations Conference**

How to establish a culture of vocation? How do we spot those callings which may be unfamiliar in our dioceses? How do we press pause on our own unconscious bias? And what positive work can we be doing in churches locally to nurture the gifts and callings of every Christian?

These were some of the big questions discussed at the recent *Growing Vocations Conference*, held at King's Park, Northampton. Bringing together a diverse range of knowledge and experience, the fully-booked event included vocations staff, DDOs and Ministers from 39 Church of England dioceses.

Alongside keynote speeches from Bishop Andrew Watson, Bishop Stephen Cottrell, Revd Dr Sharon Prentis, and Dr Douglas Board, *Growing Vocations'* primary aim was to draw upon the expertise of all those attending and to equip them as they develop vocations teams and networks in the dioceses.

The Rt Revd Andrew Watson, Bishop of Guildford said:

“At the heart of Renewal and Reform is a vision to develop a stronger culture of vocations across the Church – both vocations to ordained ministry, and a sense of vocation more generally. Every Christian woman and man, young person and child has a calling under God which needs to be recognised, trained up, and pursued with vigour. Growing Vocations offered a fantastic opportunity to explore more together about how we do this, as we seek to grow vocations everywhere.”

Commenting on the discussions, Head of Discipleship and Vocation Catherine Nancekievill said:

“All the people of God are called to serve Christ according to their given gifts and talents. This implies every Christian has a vocation, but we don't always see it, in ourselves or in others. This can be because of a lack of confidence, lack of opportunity or because of the stereotypes that can blind us all. It's the task of all those serving in ministry to help identify and nurture the gifts and callings of every member of the body of Christ. Ultimately vocation is not about doing jobs but giving yourself to God, so together, we can more fully become the body of Christ.”

Catherine spoke at the conference of the key role that lay and ordained ministers play in nurturing vocations. Meanwhile, CPAS announced that they are developing four resources for dioceses and churches on nurturing vocations amongst young people and adults. More details will be announced in March, with resources being released at different points through the year.

The Rt Revd Martyn Snow, Bishop of Leicester and Chair of CPAS trustees says

“We are pleased to be able to offer these resources to the Church as we seek to rapidly increase vocations to lay and ordained ministry. It will make a big difference if our ministers have further good quality training and resources to help them spot and nurture the gifts of all God’s people”.

*Growing Vocations* takes place amidst a renewed emphasis on gifts and calling. Recent reports on good practice in dioceses and parishes have shown that it is helpful to provide and advertise open access to conversations about vocations with advisers. Conference delegates also heard from the Diocese of Liverpool, who are experiencing a marked increase in candidates for ministry. Since 2011 they have been increasing vocations staff and consistently put on accessible and open-ended events focused on discovering gifts and calling. Enabling role models to have maximum visibility and providing mentors have been found as particularly important for encouraging those from under-represented groups.

ENDS

### **Notes**

- Further comment available [catherine.nancekievill@churchofengland.org](mailto:catherine.nancekievill@churchofengland.org)
- Best practice reports available at <https://churchsupporthub.org/vocations/downloads>
- Photos attached