

A statement from our Bishop



Role  
Benefice

## **Bishop's Statement on the appointment of a new Vicar to Birkdale St John**

Dear Applicant,

I warmly welcome your interest in this post and commend our Diocese and the parish of Birkdale St John to your prayerful consideration and discernment. Thank you for taking the time to think through whether it might be right under God for you to minister with us.

Birkdale St John is a valued member of our Diocesan family. The spirit of the church is energetic, relationship driven and transformative. As bishops we expect its distinctive witness to continue, flourish and develop under the guidance of its new Vicar.

If you come to this Diocese, we and our Diocesan colleagues commit ourselves to support, sustain and resource you in your ministry. The most important gift you can bring to your people is your best self, flourishing in your ministry and in your personal life. I expect, and would hold you accountable for, a high level of personal responsibility from you in the conduct of your ministry within the direction to which we are committed.

At present our diocese remains in vacancy until the Right Reverend Doctor John Perumbalath is installed as the 9th Bishop of Liverpool on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2023. In the meantime, as Bishop of Warrington, I have care of clergy in our diocese.

With this in mind I want to be clear about our commitment and expectations.

## Becoming Fit for Mission our diocesan vision and purpose

For many years we have been working to achieve growth in discipleship. We have expressed this purpose in different ways over the years, but our aim and direction of travel has remained the same – consistent with the purposes of the Church of England as a whole.

So in the Diocese of Liverpool we say that we are

**“Asking God for a bigger church to make a bigger difference”, and we say “more people knowing Jesus, more justice in the world”**

We have identified 4 mission priorities which are foundational to this vision:

- (i) introducing people to Jesus;
- (ii) deepening discipleship;
- (iii) developing Christian leaders, and
- (iv) working for justice.

Supported by major investment from the national church we are determined to make these priorities real in our life and ministry.

This determination includes

- a commitment to working in teams rather than in isolation,
- a major investment in lay leadership,
- a radical re-structuring of our parishes and
- a releasing of clergy to enable them to focus much more fully on their gifts and vocational call.

We talk of a culture of high support, high expectation and high accountability, rooted in the mutuality of the body of Christ.

Called Fit for Mission (FFM) it is an ambitious, growth-orientated and locally delivered change programme to enable mission and ministry to flourish in the Diocese of Liverpool. All clergy in the Diocese of Liverpool are expected to align themselves fully with this vision and work to its fullest possible implementation.

As bishop I would want to see every parish, school, fresh expression and chaplaincy making sense of this aim in ways that connect with their own specific context. In coming to be with us you would be aligning yourself with this purpose and committing yourself to make it real within your own community.

## Live out our Rule of Life



Leadership and discipleship in our Diocese emerges from our Rule of Life ([www.ruleoflife.org.uk](http://www.ruleoflife.org.uk)). We believe that we are ***called to pray, read and learn, and sent to tell, serve and give***. As bishop, I expect all ministers to live out this Rule personally and to build their ministry on it.

So I ask every disciple in the Diocese, including every ordained and lay minister, to *bring one person each year into the worshipping and serving life of the church*, and to *enact ten acts of service or points of connection each year that change the world for the better*. In short, we ask everyone to **bring one friend** and to **do ten things**.

Building on the Rule of Life, we have developed guidelines which shape our expectations of what it means to be a leader of God's people in our diocese. These are appended to this Statement. We encourage you to read these and decide if you will be able to align yourself with them.

Our understanding of the Ministerial Development Review (MDR), which all ministers under Common Tenure are required to do, is that it will help you answer questions in two closely related areas:

- How am I flourishing as a human being, as a Christian disciple and as a minister of the Gospel?
- How is my ministry contributing to the work of God as our Diocese perceives it?

The same is true for the life of your community, which we survey regularly by means of our Archdeacons' Parish Review. In this Diocese our Archdeacons, and diocesan staff, aim to provide the support that our communities need taking seriously their role as missional advisors.

I make these demands and state these expectations unambiguously. In addition I commit myself as bishop to support and resource you in your ministry as best I can. I want you to draw close to our Lord in your work, as well as in every other aspect of your life. I will be praying for you and asking God's blessing on you and your household, so that you may flourish in your life and in your ministry, and so that your ministry may operate from the overflowing of the love of God in Christ for you and those close to you.



## Some specific matters

- The parish of Birkdale St John is part of the Deanery of North Meols which is not yet a Fit For Mission Cohort deanery, we are expecting them to join in Cohort 3 in 2024/2025. This aims to be a supportive place and has long been exploring the right way to develop structures of mutual encouragement and care for clergy and lay people alike. Our diocese places a strong emphasis on devolved Deanery mission planning, which will of course only be effective if all our local leaders involve themselves actively in the Deanery's life and structures. The allocation of the Parish Share is also now decided at Deanery level, so as to make decision-making local and relational.

Anyone appointed to this post will therefore be committed to and accountable for regular attendance at Deanery Chapter and Synod, robustly offering their own wisdom and insight and listening carefully to the wisdom and insight of others. As North Meols deanery engages fully with Fit for Mission we expect the post-holder to commit to the culture change it requires and to play a full and positive part in the appropriate leadership teams as they are established.

- The Church of England needs to hear the wisdom and insight of the diverse community of strong and thoughtful people that this parish contains. We look to the new Vicar, together with the people of this parish to engage positively with Fit for Mission and with the wider Church of England's agenda for mission and growth, and to contribute robustly in shared conversation, insight, wisdom and learning.
- We are committed, through Fit for Mission, to a vision for "bigger parishes" which are better resourced and equipped, reducing extensive governance and administration and releasing disciples for ministry and mission. We expect anyone who joins the Diocesan college of clergy, or who moves within the Diocese, to be explicitly committed to this as our direction of travel.
- As a Diocese we are determined to develop the ministry of all God's people. Any priest wishing to come and serve here will therefore be committed to working collaboratively with ordained and lay colleagues as part of the Fit for Mission transformation.
- The spiritual and numerical growth of the Church is a priority for the Church of England and for the Diocese. We will help and support any new post-holder in the Diocese, expecting them to pray and to work to secure this growth in depth and in numbers, and we will act

in partnership with them to ensure that they have the necessary training and equipping for this vital part of their task.

- We take seriously the call on the Church of England to serve all people and to be there for any who will need us at significant moments of transition in their lives. For this reason we expect our clergy wholeheartedly to exercise the “cure of souls” to all within their benefice and across the larger Fit for Mission Parish as it is established, for example taking full responsibility for the provision of the pastoral offices to any who request them.
- The people of the parish of Birkdale St John fully recognise the mutuality of our congregations and are committed to paying the parish share in full and on time. The Diocese, and in particular those of its parts in areas of deprivation, honours and values this commitment. We look to the new Vicar to sustain and encourage generosity in the future, teaching regularly on the principles and practice of Christian stewardship and availing himself or herself of the diocesan and other resources available for this purpose, and in particular advocating full involvement in the Parish Giving Scheme.
- We are committed to mutual flourishing in the Diocese as expressed in the Five Guiding Principles and the House of Bishops’ Declaration on the ministry of women as priests and bishops. In the case of Birkdale St John, this is a parish which has affirmed and has been blessed by the contribution of ordained women in public ministry, and we will look for this approach to continue.
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is an absolute priority of the Diocese, as it is of the whole Church. The clergy of the Diocese receive regular training in this area, and anyone coming into the Diocese, or moving within it, will commit themselves actively to undertake our relevant diocesan training as a matter of obligation.

## **Thank you!**

Thank you for reading this far. Please be sure of our prayers for you as you discern whether it will be right for you to explore this post further. And may God bless you in your future ministry!

With our warmest good wishes,

+ Bev.

The Rt Revd Beverley Mason  
**Bishop of Warrington**



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