

FROM THE BISHOP OF OXFORD  
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Dear Friends

**Called to be Christ-like: contemplative, compassionate and courageous**

I hope that you have had a good break over the summer and that the new academic year has started well for you and your school.

My first year as Bishop of Oxford has involved a great deal of listening and visits to every part of the Diocese. It has been good to visit many schools as part of that initial tour and see at first hand the excellent work of our teachers and heads.

As a Diocese we are a living growing network of more than a thousand schools, chaplaincies and churches across Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

A large and complex Diocese needs a simple and memorable vision to bind us together in our common task.

The vision we are developing is to seek to become a more Christ-like Church: contemplative, compassionate and courageous as we serve our fragmented world.

As we grow that vision together, I am asking the whole of the Diocese of Oxford to consider together in the coming year the opening words of the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5.1-10.

You will find a short video exploring this and my full letter to the parishes of the diocese here:  
<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/mission-ministry/projects/towards-common-vision/>

The Beatitudes are a self-portrait of Jesus. They show us that to be Christ-like means to become **more contemplative, more compassionate and more courageous**.

For Christians, being contemplative means simply to spend time with God. A contemplative church spends time with God. A contemplative school allows time for spiritual reflection and for life's big questions to be considered within a framework of Christian values. To be contemplative is to be poor in spirit, meek and pure in heart.

Compassionate people feel and show sympathy and concern for others. A compassionate church laments or mourns with the suffering in the world and is full of mercy which leads to action. A compassionate school reaches out to all and serves its community with love.

Courageous people are whole-hearted. To be a courageous church means to put our heart and soul into everything we are and do. A courageous church will be hungry and thirsty for justice, seeking peace and reconciliation and willing to bear the cost of discipleship. A courageous school will uphold the rights of all and be unafraid to hold the whole child: body, mind and spirit, as a precious gift to be supported, valued and enriched.

### Simple resources

Every school will want to engage with this theme in their own ways but as a Diocese we will provide and signpost simple resources to help including resources for children, schools and young people on these themes.

Details of these and other resources when available will be on the diocesan website and from your Link Adviser.

As bishops we are keen to teach on these themes through the year and would welcome invitations to explore the Beatitudes in services and other events (as are the archdeacons and other members of the diocesan team). We will also be holding special days and events in each area of the diocese to explore these themes, beginning with the Dorchester Area Day on 30 September. There will be a special day for young people across the whole diocese on 24 February.

### Learning together

None of us has all the answers. We want to learn and discern together what it means to be contemplative, compassionate and courageous. We want as many people as possible to interact with the developing vision and ideas and to share your experiences of what is happening in our schools today.

We want to hear your stories and so do others, so please do share with your Link Adviser or on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and the [diocesan website](#) using #Contemplative, #Compassionate or #Courageous. You could share a smartphone video of your thoughts or something happening in your church, with photos or text, or share a link to a website or a piece of music or image that inspired you. We also want to hear from you about how you feel we need to be more compassionate, contemplative or courageous in the future. God bless you in all you do for our children our communities.

Your servant in Christ



Bishop of Oxford

### A prayer for the year

*God of gentleness and love  
Draw near to us as we draw near to you  
Dwell in every heart and conversation  
Help us to be more like Jesus.  
Help us to discern all that you are calling us to be  
And all that you are calling us to do  
Assist us, by your Spirit, to become more contemplative,  
More compassionate and more courageous  
For the building of your kingdom and the glory of your Son  
Amen*

