**Script for ‘engaging: releasing imagination’ section of Shaped By God Together presentation**

One of the emerging themes that has been noticed in this diocese as churches have engaged with the pandemic challenge, is the extraordinary release of imaginative ways of continuing to be church and to reach out with the love of Christ. we might think of :

* The small online worship and prayer gatherings often led by new lay people having a go with growing confidence; or
* New ways to mark festivals and commemorations - for example the village church that is encouraging Advent Window decoration of houses and porches so that passers might see signs of light and hope and possible some part of the Christmas story being retold.
* There has also been Imaginative rethinking of the use of church buildings to serve communities;
* In one urban parish that’s meant simply a reorganisation of church building space to enable the food bank to expand;
* And in one village the vision emerging through the pandemic for a church building with a major repair challenge to become a really visible community hub at the heart of that village which doesn’t yet have a café
* And we are seeing churches finding new ways of engaging in conversations with communities to identify shared concerns arising from the pandemic and ways of tackling them – such as through **Together Leicester’s** community listening initiative now offered through online facilitated meetings.

**[back to engaging: reimagining slide]** There is so much we can learn from these often small but local adventures of the imagination. But as a Diocese of Leicester we are also blessed with our international links to inform us. And if we lift our eyes to that wider horizon, there is much to encourage us with how our partner dioceses have addressed significant challenges

In the Diocese of Wyoming, which in recent years has experienced dwindling congregations, every church has been encouraged to have one social action project to re-connect with their community, leading to imaginative responses.

* [oregano trail church]**This picture** is of Oregon trail church located miles from the nearest settlement but on a main highway, formerly the Oregon Trail as you can see from **this stained glass image** in the church.  [picture of stained glass] The church congregation had reduced down to 2 elderly ladies, but they responded to the social action challenge and simply kept the building open, stocking it so that travellers passing by **this wayside sign** can find food, shelter and somewhere to wash.

[**back to reimagining slide**] Moving on…..

In the Diocese of Mount Kilimanjaro, an innovative way of drawing together a series of local communities to enable constructions of buildings for newly planted churches has been discovered, led by an engineer called **Clement (seen here on the left).** Through use of a standard design, locally provided materials and community labour over an intense 28 day period, **new churches** (like this one) are springing up, where previously it often took over 10 years for roofs to be constructed.

And in the Diocese of Kiteto, where cattle farmers are blighted by eye disease, a travelling diocesan eye clinic now gathers communities together **in church buildings** (as in this photo) for treatment and advice; where the boundaries between worship space and community space are broken down, and where a public health talk can be an opportunity for Christian witness.

[**back to engaging: reimagining slide]** These link diocese innovations have all come as response to a challenge and likewise most of our own recent adventures of the imagination are emerging because the pandemic has forced us to do things differently. That pressure to change has sadly often taken its toll on us with fatigue and exhaustion being common. So in any thinking about adventures of the imagination we should also factor in attention to our own wellbeing, seeking support where needed, and engaging only in so far as we are able; these tumultuous events affect us all differently and yet by God’s grace they also draw different strengths and gifts out of all of us, which is a reminder of much we need each other in the body of Christ.

**Archdeacon of Leicester, Richard Worsfold 21.11.20**