

Seeking the Kingdom



following Jesus Christ in the footsteps of Saint Chad

A strategy for Lichfield Diocese 2025 - 2030



DIOCESE OF
LICHFIELD

Roots of our strategy

Making our priorities



- Developing Discipleship
- Encouraging Vocation
- Inspiring Evangelism

we embarked on **Shaping for Mission**
from which emerged the principles and goals of our
Strategic Framework.

Our workstreams towards these goals:

- Feeding our Faith
- Supporting our Ministry
- Building up our Parishes and Communities

Invitation from Bishop Michael



Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave
Bishop of Lichfield

When St Chad set out journeying alone around Mercia with the hope of spreading the good news of the resurrection of Christ, he didn't know what the outcome would be. Yet he travelled with heavenly hope, believing also that there was 'a new opening for the gospel' in Mercia, encouraging many thousands of people to become followers of Jesus.

He took as his example the journeys of the apostles who travelled in the power of the Spirit with little other than the stories of Christ's life, crucifixion and resurrection. With these companions, though he travelled solo, he was not alone.

Chad's plan was to walk Mercia: as daring in its simplicity and boldness, as God trusting the gospel first to the shepherds and then to twelve apostles. Chad set out confidently, hopefully and humbly. He believed that he would bear fruit, and that the kingdom of God would grow. Bede, that great historian of our country wrote of Chad as 'humble, devout, zealous and apostolic'.

Today, in our much more complex world, I recognise a similar opening for the Gospel in these parts and I want to invite you to join with me in seizing this opportunity to follow Christ in the humble, devout, zealous and apostolic footsteps of St Chad.

Chad was resourced, supported and built-up in his work, both by the spiritual brothers of his community gathered in Lichfield, and by the ordinary Mercian people scattered around his diocese who welcomed him on his travels. I want our strategy to be about feeding and supporting one another as followers of Jesus, and about building one another up, as we journey together.



Over the centuries, we have become immersed in Chad's legacy as we are immersed in Christ at baptism. As we seek growth, we reflect his legacy in our priorities: developing discipleship, encouraging vocations and inspiring evangelism. These priorities have developed into the principles set out in our Strategic Framework that will shape our future direction: to be purposeful about evangelism, engage creatively with local communities, and to become more diverse and grow younger.

All this is not our plan: it is where we are heading, our trajectory. Our plan is sketched out in this document, which builds on the Strategic Framework and on our PCCs' responses to it. It is a manifesto: a manifesto for what I invite us by God's grace to achieve as a diocese.

If we are to truly follow in Chad's footsteps, we will go forward with his devotion to prayer. So doing, we will go in faith, believing that God will be faithful and will build his kingdom. It is time to set out together, beginning with our vision prayer:

As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad, we pray that the two million people in our diocese encounter a church that is confident in the gospel, knows and loves its communities, and is excited to find you, O God already at work in your world. We pray for a church that reflects the richness and variety of those communities. We pray for a church that partners with others in seeking the common good, working for justice as a people of hope.

+Michael Leech

'First Steps' - Lichfield Cathedral 2017



The Journey So Far

Vision

Making 'Developing Discipleship, Encouraging Vocation and Inspiring Evangelism' our priorities, we embarked on Shaping for Mission, from which emerged the principles and goals of our Strategic Framework.

The trajectory towards these goals that Bishop Michael describes above sets us on a course towards fulfilling the vision for Lichfield Diocese for which we together continue to pray.

Goals of the Strategic framework

The Strategic Framework adopted by Diocesan Synod in 2024 yields the ten goals that express or en flesh this trajectory, this vision (a tenth goal, around Net Zero Carbon, was adopted by Diocesan Synod in 2025). Some of the goals contain numbers; these are not meant to be frightening, or strict measures against which a judgement of success or failure will be made. Instead, they are the inspiration, painting a picture of what could be.

Youth organisations on parade -
Hanbury



The ten goals are:

- a growth in the overall worshipping community of 34,000 new disciples
- 200 new worshipping Communities which are established and sustainable
- a strengthened culture of vocation amongst all God's people, and at least 30 new licensed lay ministers and 30 ordinations a year
- an active plan in every parish for engaging with their local population beyond the church walls
- a strong connection between every primary or secondary school and their parish church



- no fewer than 30 young people per year aged between 18 and 30 who are called to leadership being supported through a high-quality development programme offered by the diocese
- the age profile of each worshipping community reflecting the age profile of the community which it serves
- every worshipping community reflecting the diversity of the community they serve
- all people being able to see themselves reflected in the leadership and governance of the diocese
- to have made substantial progress towards NZC with a clear and achievable plan of how any shortfall will be resolved in the following few years

These goals align with and are informed by the Six Bold Outcomes of the National Church's vision and strategy:

- doubling the number of children and young adult active disciples in the Church of England by 2030
- a Church of England which fully represents the communities we serve in age and diversity
- a parish system revitalised for mission so churches can reach and serve everyone in their community
- creating ten thousand new Christian communities across the four areas of home, work/education, social and digital
- all Christians in the Church of England envisioned, resourced and released to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the whole of life, bringing transformation to the church and world
- all local churches, supported by their diocese, becoming communities and hubs for initial and ongoing formation



Journeying towards our goals



Hospital chaplaincy

Our strategy or plan for the journey towards our vision is that together we will focus on Feeding our Faith, Supporting our Ministry, and Building up our Parishes and Communities. This will immerse us in celebrating and investing in the existing pattern and practice of our ministry – parishes, schools, fresh expressions, chaplaincies and the cathedral, as well as identifying opportunities to try new ways of being church. At the same time, it will mean taking a careful and honest look at where we are, who we are and what we are doing, noting what is working and what may not be working, and seeing what we could do better. We should not carry on doing things just because 'that's the way we've always done them', but neither will we turn our backs on all that is distinctive, good and fruitful.

By praying together, feeding and supporting one another as followers of Jesus, by building one another up we can reimagine and revitalise our ministry, and as a diocesan family we can journey together.



The Big Lunch -
Bradley

About this Document

This document is our strategy governance document. It is the reference point for a Programme Board that will oversee the strategy programme. As the strategy programme develops this document will develop too.

As we embark on what is set out below we will see how we are enabling the bold outcomes and strategic priorities of the Church of England's vision and strategy to become a reality in parishes and communities, enabling us to apply for funding from the Diocesan Investment Programme to support our work.

In these pages we look briefly at the context of our diocese, which informs our work on Shaping for Mission, and the missional challenges which that exercise identified. We then see the details of our strategic approach. These are the things that we want to achieve and the things that we will do to achieve them as we work towards our vision.

An essential part of this work is a plan that harnesses best practice communications to power better delivery of strategic goals, through delivering **concise, clear, consistent, co-ordinated** and **culture-setting** communications.

This document also includes the Diocesan Action Plan which includes the metrics that will be used to show if our strategy is working and report back each year to Synod.

Alongside this document sits a shorter one aimed at inviting our diocesan family to be inspired by our vision and travel this journey together.

St Editha's Tamworth





Who we are in Lichfield Diocese

Stretching from the Welsh border to the Peak District and from north Staffordshire to the Black Country, Lichfield Diocese is one of the largest in the Church of England, serving over two million people in nearly two thousand square miles. It is at the heart of England, not just geographically but culturally and socially.

Areas of spectacular natural beauty sit beside the legacy of centuries of industry and commerce, areas of growth, aspiration and hope beside urban deprivation, rural poverty and despair.

Some important data has informed our diocesan strategy.

There is plenty of room for growth: more than half of those who live in our diocese describe themselves as Christian – that is over a million people. Of these, around 34,000 form part of our worshipping community. We can grow through evangelism in both Christian and non-Christian contexts.

We need a pipeline of lay and ordained leaders for the future: the diocese has more than 400 parishes and more than 200 benefices, each of which needs



The Food Bank -
Chell Parish Church

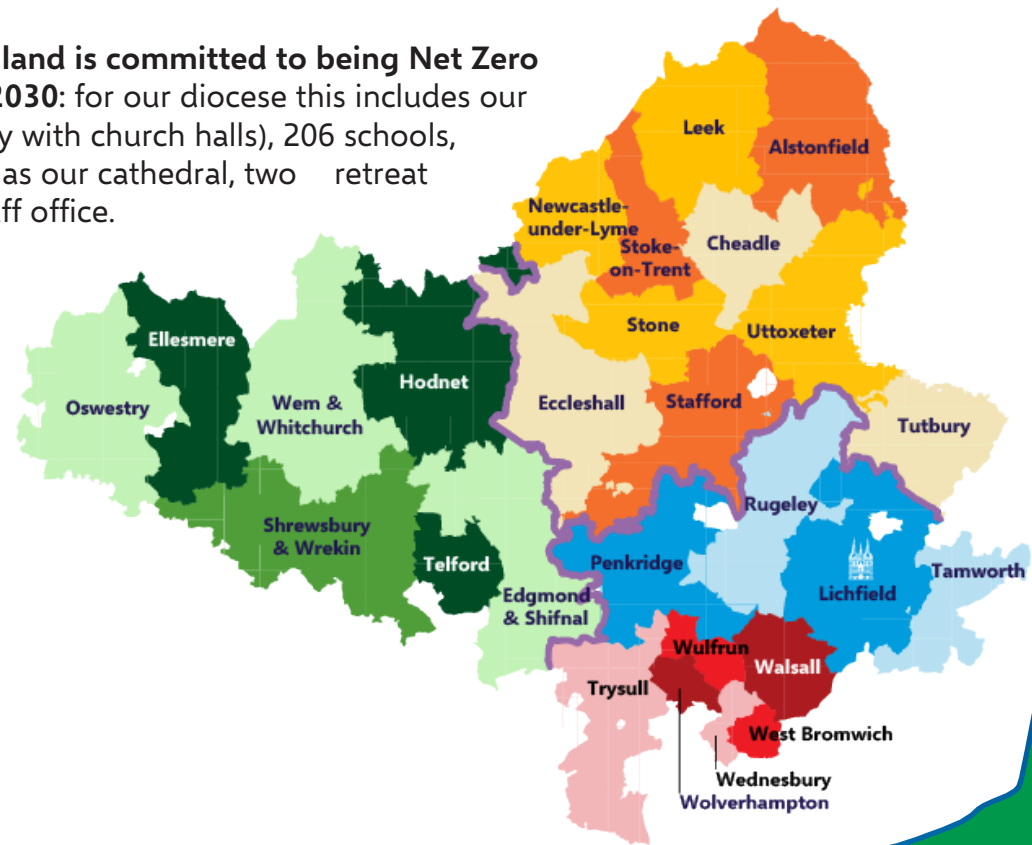
Schools are a huge mission field: we have more than 200 church schools teaching 45,000 children and young people, and there are another 400,000 children and young people in non-church schools.

Children and young people are not only the future of our diocese – they are also a huge part of our diocese today: nearly one in five of our worshipping community is below the age of 18.

Our diocese is ethnically diverse: some of our deaneries are nearly 50% global majority heritage and we can and must do more to make our churches welcoming to all people.

The Church of England is committed to being Net Zero Carbon (NZC) by 2030: for our diocese this includes our 550 churches (many with church halls), 206 schools, 300 houses as well as our cathedral, two retreat centres and our staff office.

Solar power at
Christ Church Bayston Hill



Our Missional Challenges

Shaping for Mission gave us an opportunity to consider the missional challenges facing our parishes, many of which are shared with parishes in other dioceses around the country.



Following the adoption of the Strategic Framework parishes were asked which areas felt especially challenging and this survey highlighted themes around discipleship and vocation and working with young people.

Worshipping Community: our worshipping community represents just 1.6% of the population of our diocese and fell by 15% between 2019 and 2023.

Discipleship: our work centrally with those who want to explore their faith or calling indicates generally low levels of Biblical literacy and catechesis.

Evangelism: it is a constant challenge to tell our stories of God's goodness, kindness, mercy and forgiveness to us – our salvation in Christ; we need to find ways of equipping and empowering one another to be confident in this.

Lay leadership: many of our parishes are finding it difficult to fill key positions including churchwardens and safeguarding officers: 150 parishes have fewer than two churchwardens.

Ordained leadership: we have a vacancy rate that peaks at over 20% and an historically low number of curates and ordinands in training.

Children and Young People: opportunities for children and young people to grow in their faith and to develop as leaders are not consistent across the diocese and in many places the low numbers of children and young people make provision of opportunities challenging.

Diversity and Inclusion: we know that we have much to do at parish and diocesan level if we are truly to represent the communities that we serve and to celebrate the God-given gifts of all people.

Net Zero Carbon: the national commitment is placing significant pressure on finances at both parish and diocesan level and is stretching some of our central resources, including the DAC.

Finances: common fund receipts are down by over £2 million per annum since 2019 resulting in budget deficits of a similar size; at the same time pressure on parish finances is significant.

Buildings: the condition of nearly 200 of our church buildings was identified as being of concern in a recent audit.



Major works at St Mark's
Shelton during 2023-5

Communicating our Strategy

Journeying towards our goals will be supported and informed by a communications plan: an overall vision for communications and detailed plans updated year by year.

Communications Vision

The vision for communications in Lichfield Diocese for Continuing our Journey is that:

‘Mass communications within and from Lichfield Diocese aim to be concise, clear and consistent, co-ordinated and culture-setting’.

Publishing a strategy is only the start: good communication needs to accompany the outworking of strategy for as long it is being put into effect – broadly speaking until it is updated.

The plans will embrace and offer support to all our many audiences:

- **Internal communications** – including communications between bishop’s and diocesan officers and parishes and the many internal audiences in the diocese
- **External Communications** – communications for the diocese with media and other external audiences and communications from parishes, schools and chaplaincies into their local communities and beyond.

‘Concise, clear and consistent’ are largely self-explanatory, but eminently supportable. It is worth adding that consistent presentation calls for the widely available provision of branding materials that make clear that we are Lichfield Diocese and part of the Church of England alongside a simple and clear user guide.

The communications journey in support of any strategy is likely to major on **co-ordination** and **culture-setting** and Lichfield is no exception.



Mass communication should be co-ordinated and free of interference or 'noise'

Focus is aided in two ways both of which address the issue of 'noise'. Noise happens when communications from the same organisation, or what is perceived by audiences as the same organisation, overlap either in time or content, or are too frequent! The message doesn't get through because it is not heard distinctly, or it is ignored because of overload. It's not the messages. Or the audience. It can be lack of planning and co-ordination. The creation of false expectations or lack of attention to how people give attention to things and why. The other source of noise is information overload, where everything received for dissemination is passed on without discrimination or discernment.



A seminar on the latest in social media delivered by the national CofE to diocesan staff

Mass Communications should be culture-setting

Communications play a significant role in delivering strategy, not least through culture-setting. It is said that 'culture eats strategy for breakfast'. This does not mean that cultural change alone can achieve our goals: it means that an excellent strategy can fail if the goals are not well shared and the culture is not one which encourages people to take on challenge and join or continue the strategic journey expressed in their local context.

Reducing noise and setting culture

The solutions include better targeting of information, more sifting in the choice of what to transmit and the adoption of seasonal campaigns that 'reserve' times of the year for strategic and carefully crafted material. Culture setting is also achieved through a greater sense of ownership arising from good branding and a feeling of shared endeavour.

Good communications practice can support strategy through supporting focus on its essential elements, providing resources and opportunities in tune with it, not just passing on a spectrum of possibilities that leave clergy and parishes breathless rather than inspired.

Feeding our Faith

**Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."
(John 8:31, NIV); "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if
you love one another." (John 13:35, NIV)**



To be true followers of Jesus we need to know Him and understand His teaching. Our strategy is to help every person in our diocese to explore their relationship with Jesus Christ, expand their engagement with Holy Scripture and work lovingly for the fulfilling of God's Kingdom in all walks of life.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20, NIV)

The Great Commission tells us to make disciples of all nations – this is our baptismal vocation. Our strategy is to equip ourselves so that we can all share the Good News of Jesus Christ and what He means in our lives.

Christ is all and in all. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. (Colossians 3:11, NIV)

All people are created in the image of God and are equal in dignity and value. Our strategy is especially careful to ensure that people of all ages and from all different backgrounds are enabled to flourish as disciples.



Forest Church service at Battlefield in the Severn Loop parishes



Church of the Holy Spirit, Harlescott

We want to:

- **develop our culture of discipleship** by creating an expectation that all members of our worshipping communities will have the opportunity to explore their faith outside of regular weekly worship, for example in small or home groups that are centred around prayer and study of scripture
- **understand that we are all responsible for evangelism and growth** by encouraging one another to speak more confidently about our faith, about scripture and about what Jesus Christ means to us and how he is shaping our lives
- **provide a consistently high-quality offer for life-events across the diocese** by producing a 'cradle to grave' suite of missional discipleship resources including baptism and confirmation courses, and practical missional guidance for marriage, funeral and bereavement ministry, which can be adopted by parishes
- **encourage our chaplains in inviting people to explore faith in Jesus Christ and in developing new worshipping communities** by supporting closer links and more joint working between chaplaincies and parishes
- **grow cohorts of young leaders** by developing new learning opportunities for young adults, working with the cathedral and other churches across our diocese to offer a depth and breadth of theological thinking and leadership experience (and establishing the role of the cathedral as a learning and teaching hub) and by establishing an annual confirmation camp for young adults based at Dovedale House which will provide an opportunity to explore faith and leadership with those of a similar age
- **ensure that every child and young person in our diocese can explore their faith in an age-appropriate way** by sharing best practice, recognising where involvement in Multi Academy Trusts allows us to work closely with non-church schools, and by developing and delivering a discipleship course specifically targeted at leaders in church schools to help equip those who are teaching our children and young people



Anglican and other chaplains at
Black Country Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

- **continue to learn and demonstrate how as followers of Jesus we are called to care for and safeguard the wellbeing of all people** by following best practice and ensuring that our parishes, schools, fresh expressions, chaplaincies and the cathedral are recognised as safe places to be
- **identify, honestly and courageously, what we need to do differently to embed diversity and inclusion in the life of our diocese** by using resources such as the Difference Course to help us better reflect God's Kingdom



Pupils discovering the riches of
Lichfield Cathedral as part of the
Inspire programme

Supporting our Ministry

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16, NIV)

Most of our diocesan resources are rightly invested in frontline ministry and our clergy and lay ministers are the key lever for change and growth. Our strategy focusses on properly equipping our clergy and lay ministers for ministry in the church today and developing a healthy pipeline of new leaders.

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. (1 Thessalonians 5:11-13, NIV)

We need to take care of those who carry the weight of leadership in our diocese, especially in the most demanding of times. Our strategy is to ensure that all who exercise frontline ministry, and especially those in incumbent-level ministry and those leading worshipping communities, are enabled to flourish as human beings.

Clergy of the 'larger churches' network meeting in Lichfield



We want to:

- **empower and expect all those who hold the bishop's licence to take responsibility for their flourishing as human beings and effectiveness as ministers** by refreshing and joining up our approaches to wellbeing, development and ministerial review and ensuring that we have a first class and proactive wellbeing programme which recognises the strains of ministry during a time when the church is facing significant challenges
- **ensure that clergy and lay leaders are ministering in places where they can thrive and have real impact** by developing a deployment strategy that will enable us to take informed decisions about where clergy serve, make imaginative and missional use of assistant and self-supporting ministers, and plan routes into incumbency for our incumbent-level curates
- **establish a culture of peer support and review** by forming and resourcing learning communities for church leaders and chaplains across our diocese who share types of ministries (such as rural ministry, ministry in multi-parish benefices, ministry in large parishes) and by developing a mentoring programme
- **equip our curates for their future ministries** by fully aligning our IME programme with our strategy and introducing new elements including placements in schools and chaplaincies
- **learn from our Pioneer Ministers** by sharing their experiences and ensuring that they can evidence the impact of their ministries
- **secure a home-grown pipeline of clergy** by using our newly adopted pathway for ordained vocations to increase both the numbers and diversity of those offering for and being trained for ordination
- **identify and overcome all the barriers that are holding people back from fulfilling their God-given calling** by developing a new vocations strategy for lay and ordained vocations and by mapping our lay and ordained vocations over the past ten years to understand where vocations are and are not being raised so that we can learn from best practice

Brick Church - St Thomas, Aldridge



- **reimagine our approach to lay ministry** by providing more straightforward routes into chaplaincy, a choice of training options for Reader Ministry, new pathways to train worship leaders (so that every church to have regular Sunday worship) and other key lay roles and promoting the vocation of lay offices such as churchwarden

Churchwardens from around the diocese
meeting for mutual support



Building up our Parishes and Communities



Staff and volunteers with the diocesan education team deliver 'Inspire' to hundreds of school children

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6, NIV)

Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. (Isaiah 40:26, NIV)

Our parishes are all different with different opportunities for mission and different challenges to meet. Our strategy is to help each parish to make informed and missional decisions so that we can best support one another in our shared work to build the kingdom. Each parish is as valued and as valuable as each individual.

And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." (Matthew 13:52, NIV)

Understanding what it is in our existing ministry that is good and needs cherishing and nourishing whilst at the same time being honest and courageous in naming what needs refreshing, revitalising or reimagining is critical if we are realise our vision for the diocese. Our strategy is to develop a 'Mixed Ecology' which will include the best we already have alongside exciting new opportunities.

We want to:

- **empower parishes to take ownership of the things they need to focus on as they worship together and serve their communities** by sharing the results of our health and vitality review of every parish in the diocese and highlighting the missional opportunities that are available and how Mission Action Plans can be used to focus our use of resources and hold ourselves to account
- **enable local church communities to resource one another in growth** by developing groups of volunteers who are called temporarily to move to a different church to provide leadership capacity
- **make mission-focussed decisions about the future for each church building** by producing a diocesan buildings strategy and focusing support with grant funding in those places where it can have the greatest impact on our mission and ministry
- **challenge parishes to look at new ways of being church** by encouraging better use of online worship and social media or by exploring the opportunities of working ecumenically
- **allow parishes to see vacancy as an opportunity for growth** by sharing good news stories and resources available both locally and nationally
- **celebrate the gift of generosity** by producing a diocesan giving strategy to help parishes and the wider diocese resource their mission and ministry
- **establish new nationally funded and locally resourced church plants and chaplaincies** by working with area teams and in some cases partner organisations to identify the places where they could have the most impact
- **encourage parishes as they develop new worshipping communities** by sharing best practice, creating a network of leaders, learning from other communities such as our 'Flourish' pilots and 'Greenhouse' projects and celebrating success

The national Greenhouse programme has been used to support the development of new worshipping communities in Walsall





Ellesmere Deanery was the first in the country to have a full house of Dementia-friendly churches and offer support via the local library

- **ensure that all our parishes are outward facing and have a culture of invitation** by offering support with community mapping and producing community engagement plans
- **meet all the needs of the people we serve** by developing and sharing pathways from outreach to discipleship to use with those we encounter through social activities, Places of Welcome or other projects such as those focusing on poverty, homelessness and debt
- **develop excellent relationships between all our churches and schools** by working with our Christian Distinctiveness Advisers to map church / school engagement across the diocese, learning about and overcoming the barriers in any places where there is a lack of productive engagement
- **see that our churches are welcoming to and inclusive of all people and benefit from the richness of a diverse worshipping community** by providing training and practical support and guidance, and constructive criticism and challenge where this is needed
- **move towards Net Zero Carbon** by supporting parishes to become Eco-Churches and with adoption of the Energy Footprint Tool



Outcomes: What our Strategic Approach will Achieve

Through our focus on **Feeding our Faith**, **Supporting our Ministry**, and **Building up our Parishes and Communities** we address our missional challenges and are free to journey together towards our vision.



Baptisms at Aldridge Parish Church

Feeding our faith leads to a deepening in **discipleship**, nourishing our confidence and eagerness to share the story of the love of Jesus Christ in our lives. Renewed confidence in storytelling will fuel the **evangelism** and outreach of all to those who have drifted away from church or not yet heard the Good News. Through engagement with our communities, our schools and our chaplaincies, and responding to the needs of those around us, we will have developed patterns of worship and ways of being church that will enable us not only to be effective in service but also to grow as a **worshipping community**. Working alongside our schools and developing opportunities for **children and young people** as well as young adults will engage those who are already in our churches and secure the future of our diocese and our next generation of leaders as we grow younger. Our focus on **diversity and inclusion** will mean that we truly represent the full richness of our diocese and that we are flourishing as the gifting of all people is recognised.

Supporting our ministry will help us to identify the **lay leadership** and the **ordained leadership** that God is calling for our diocese's needs. Our leaders will be equipped and sustained for the work for which are called into Kingdom. We will be able to deploy our leaders to the places where they are most needed and can have the most impact, and this will include establishing new worshipping communities. The right leadership in the right places will facilitate developing our thinking around generosity, leading to an improvement in our **finances**.



Building up our parishes and communities and understanding the health and vitality of all our parishes will allow us to develop an appropriate plan for the future of each parish and to see the places where we need to try something different and new. We will know where revitalisation is needed, or where innovative and pioneering approaches should be adopted. This will be vital in sustaining our future growth. Our buildings represent a huge missional resource and by fully understanding the condition of our **buildings** and having a plan for their futures we will be able to start to make best use of that resource and to tackle issues that are becoming a drain on missional energy. By offering practical support and encouragement we will be able to play our part in the move towards **net zero carbon** which is not only essential as a Christian response to the climate emergency, but also an important way of establishing of our credibility with future generations.

By overcoming our missional challenges and focusing on our goals our strategy will move us towards our vision of a diocese that is purposeful about evangelism, engaging creatively with local communities, becoming more diverse and growing younger. The tables below show how this will happen in more detail.



Feeding our faith

↓ actions to achieve our goals

Our missional challenges →

	Worshipping Community	Discipleship	Evangelism	Lay Leadership	Ordained Leadership	Children and Young People	Diversity and Inclusion	Net Zero Carbon	Finances	Buildings
develop our culture of discipleship										
understand that we are all responsible for evangelism and growth										
provide a consistently high-quality offer for life-events across the diocese										
encourage our chaplains in inviting people to explore faith in Jesus Christ and in developing new worshipping communities										
grow cohorts of young leaders										
ensure that every child and young person in our diocese can explore their faith in an age-appropriate way										
continue to learn and demonstrate how as followers of Jesus we are called to care for and safeguard the wellbeing of all people										
identify, honestly and courageously, what we need to do differently to embed diversity and inclusion in the life of our diocese										

Supporting our ministry

↓ actions to achieve our goals

Our missional challenges →

	Worshipping Community	Discipleship	Evangelism	Lay Leadership	Ordained Leadership	Children and Young People	Diversity and Inclusion	Net Zero Carbon	Finances	Buildings
empower and expect all those who hold the bishop's licence to take responsibility for their flourishing as human beings and effectiveness as ministers										
ensure that clergy and lay leaders are ministering in places where they can thrive and have real impact										
establish a culture of peer support and review										
equip our curates for their future ministries										
learn from our Pioneer Ministers										
secure a home-grown pipeline of clergy										
identify and overcome all the barriers that are holding people back from fulfilling their God-given calling										
reimagine our approach to lay ministry										



Clergy licensing at Wrockwardine Wood, Telford

Building up our parishes and communities

↓ actions to achieve our goals

Our missional challenges →

	Worshipping Community	Discipleship	Evangelism	Lay Leadership	Ordained Leadership	Children and Young People	Diversity and Inclusion	Net Zero Carbon	Finances	Buildings
empower parishes to take ownership of the things they need to focus on as they worship together and serve their communities										
enable local church communities to resource one another in growth										
make mission-focussed decisions about the future for each church building										
challenge parishes to look at new ways of being church										
allow parishes to see vacancy as an opportunity for growth										
celebrate the gift of generosity										
establish new nationally funded and locally resourced church plants and chaplaincies										
encourage parishes as they develop new worshipping communities										
ensure that all our parishes are outward facing and have a culture of invitation										
meet all the needs of the people we serve										
develop excellent relationships between all our churches and schools										
see that our churches are welcoming to and inclusive of all people and benefit from the richness of a diverse worshipping community										
move towards Net Zero Carbon										

Diocesan Action Plan and Archdeaconry Plans

Our strategy sets out how we can continue our journey together towards our vision for Lichfield Diocese. Most of our success in achieving our strategic goals will happen at the local level, as our parishes, schools, fresh expressions, chaplaincies and the cathedral set out together in response to Bishop Michael's invitation.

The Diocesan Action Plan focuses on those activities that will be undertaken centrally to facilitate and resource the work at a local level. It shows each of our strategic goals and sets milestones for the coming year, as well as the key metrics that will show us if our strategy is working.

The Diocesan Action Plan will return to Synod annually to report on progress and set out milestones for the year ahead.

Sitting beneath the Diocesan Action Plan will be implementation plans which will detail how our diocesan strategy is worked out in each of our four archdeaconries.



Diocesan Action Plan: a growth in the overall worshipping community of 34,000 new disciples

Feeding our Faith

We want to

- **develop our culture of discipleship** by creating an expectation that all members of our worshipping communities will have the opportunity to explore their faith outside of regular weekly worship, for example in small or home groups that are centred around prayer and study of scripture
- **understand that we are all responsible for evangelism and growth** by encouraging one another to speak more confidently about our faith, about scripture and about what Jesus Christ means to us and how he is shaping our lives
- **provide a consistently high-quality offer for life-events across the diocese** by producing a 'cradle to grave' suite of missional discipleship resources including baptism and confirmation courses, and practical missional guidance for marriage, funeral and bereavement ministry, which can be adopted by parishes

2025 Milestones

- opportunities to explore faith mapped across the diocese
- 'cradle to grave' suite of resources developed

Diocesan Action Plan: a growth in the overall worshipping community of 34,000 new disciples

Supporting our Ministry

We want to

- **empower and expect all those who hold the bishop's licence to take responsibility for their flourishing as human beings and effectiveness as ministers** by refreshing and joining up our approaches to wellbeing, development and ministerial review and ensuring that we have a first class and proactive wellbeing programme which recognises the strains of ministry during a time when the church is facing significant challenges
- **ensure that clergy and lay leaders are ministering in places where they can thrive and have real impact** by developing a deployment strategy that will enable us to take informed decisions about where clergy serve, make imaginative and missional use of self-supporting ministers, and plan routes into incumbency for our incumbent-level curates
- **establish a culture of peer support and review** by forming and resourcing learning communities for church leaders and chaplains across our diocese who share types of ministries (such as rural ministry, ministry in multi-parish benefices, ministry in large parishes) and by developing a mentoring programme
- **equip our curates for their future ministries** by fully aligning our IME programme with our strategy and introducing new elements including placements in schools and chaplaincies
- **review and revise the process of MDR** to ensure that it feeds into our wellbeing and development programmes and develop our wellbeing and development programmes to ensure that they reflect the current pressures, demands and opportunities of ministry

2025 Milestones

- MDR process reviewed and revised
- work with external partners on developing the ministerial wellbeing programme underway
- deployment strategy developed
- first learning community established
- all new incumbents being offered a mentor
- IME programme aligned with strategy

Diocesan Action Plan: a growth in the overall worshipping community of 34,000 new disciples

Building up our Parishes and Communities

We want to

- **empower parishes to take ownership of the things they need to focus on as they worship together and serve their communities** by sharing the results of our health and vitality review of every parish in the diocese and highlighting the missional opportunities that are available and how Mission Action Plans can be used to focus our use of resources and hold ourselves to account
- **enable local church communities to resource one another in growth** by developing groups of volunteers who are called temporarily to move to a different church to provide leadership capacity
- **make mission-focussed decisions about the future for each church building** by producing a diocesan buildings strategy and focusing support with grant funding in those places where it can have the greatest impact on our mission and ministry
- **challenge parishes to look at new ways of being church** by encouraging better use of online worship and social media or by exploring the opportunities of working ecumenically
- **allow parishes to see vacancy as an opportunity for growth** by sharing good news stories and resources available both locally and nationally
- **celebrate the gift of generosity** by producing a diocesan giving strategy to help parishes and the wider diocese resource their mission and ministry

2025 Milestones

- Health and Vitality Review of all parishes completed
- scheme to allow groups of volunteers to support a local church developed and ready to be piloted
- buildings strategy developed
- giving strategy developed

Diocesan Action Plan: 200 new worshipping communities which are established and sustainable

Feeding our Faith

We want to

- **encourage our chaplains in inviting people to explore faith in Jesus Christ and in developing new worshipping communities** by supporting closer links and more joint working between chaplaincies and parishes

Supporting our Ministry

We want to

- **learn from our Pioneer Ministers** by sharing their experiences and ensuring that they can evidence the impact of their ministries

Building up our Parishes and Communities

We want to

- **establish new nationally funded and locally resourced church plants and chaplaincies** by working with area teams and in some cases partner organisations to identify the places where they could have the most impact
- **encourage parishes as they develop new worshipping communities** by sharing best practice, creating a network of leaders, learning from other communities such as our 'Flourish' pilots and celebrating success

2025 Milestones

- working group of chaplains and parish clergy setup to explore opportunities for closer working

2025 Milestones

- toolkit for measuring impact developed

2025 Milestones

- planting / revitalisation plans for Wolverhampton Episcopal Area developed
- virtual network of leaders established

Diocesan Action Plan: a strengthened culture of vocation amongst all God's people, and at least 30 new licensed lay ministers and 30 ordinations a year

Supporting our Ministry

We want to

- **secure a home-grown pipeline of clergy** by using our newly adopted pathway for ordained vocations to increase both the numbers and diversity of those offering for and being trained for ordination
- **identify and overcome all the barriers that are holding people back from fulfilling their God-given calling** by developing a new vocations strategy for lay and ordained vocations and by mapping our lay and ordained vocations over the past ten years to understand where vocations are and are not being raised so that we can learn from best practice
- **reimagine our approach to lay ministry** by providing more straightforward routes into chaplaincy, a choice of training options for Reader Ministry, new pathways to train worship leaders (so that every church to have regular Sunday worship) and other key lay roles and promoting the vocation of lay offices such as churchwarden



Freshly-licensed Readers with Bishop Michael and Ministry & Vocations staff outside our cathedral

2025 Milestones

- new vocations strategy developed with ongoing work to overcome the barriers to people fulfilling their calling
- second provider for training for Reader Ministry secured (to receive first cohort in September 2026)

Diocesan Action Plan: an active plan in every parish for engaging with their local population beyond the church walls

Building up our Parishes and Communities

We want to

- **ensure that all our parishes are outward facing and have a culture of invitation** by offering support with community mapping and producing community engagement plans
- **meet all the needs of the people we serve** by developing and sharing pathways from outreach to discipleship to use with those we encounter through social activities, Places of Welcome or other projects such as those focusing on poverty, homelessness and debt

2025 Milestones

- existence of community engagement plans across the diocese mapped
- toolkit to show how pathways can be developed from outreach projects to discipleship produced



Diocesan Action Plan: a strong connection between every primary and secondary school and their parish church.

Building up our Parishes and Communities

We want to

- **develop excellent relationships between all our churches and schools** by working with our Christian Distinctiveness Advisers to map church / school engagement across the diocese, learning about and overcoming the barriers in any places where there is a lack of productive engagement

Pupils from St Peter's C of E Academy, Stoke, at the national launch of the Difference course



2025 Milestones

- mapping work completed

Diocesan Action Plan: no fewer than 30 young people per year aged between 18 and 30 who are called to leadership being supported through a high-quality development programme offered by the diocese

Feeding our Faith

We want to

- **grow cohorts of young leaders** by developing new learning opportunities for young adults, working with the cathedral and other churches across our diocese to offer a depth and breadth of theological thinking and leadership experience (and establishing the role of the cathedral as a learning and teaching hub) and by establishing an annual confirmation camp for young adults based at Dovedale House which will provide an opportunity to explore faith and leadership with those of a similar age



2025 Milestones

- first term's worth of training material completed and delivered to the first cohort

Diocesan Action Plan: the age profile of each worshipping community reflecting the age profile of the community which it serves

Feeding our Faith

We want to

- ensure that every child and young person in our diocese can explore their faith in an age-appropriate way by sharing best practice, recognising where involvement in Multi Academy Trusts allows us to work closely with non-church schools, and by developing and delivering a discipleship course specifically targeted at leaders in church schools to help equip those who are teaching our children and young people



2025 Milestones

- proposals around the opportunities for greater church involvement in non-church secondary schools (where this is facilitated by the Multi Academy Trust structure) developed
- discipleship course for leaders in church schools delivered for first cohort

Diocesan Action Plan: Every worshipping community reflecting the diversity of the community they serve

Building up our Parishes and Communities

We want to

- **see that our churches are welcoming to and inclusive of all people and benefit from the richness of a diverse worshipping community** by providing training and practical support and guidance, and constructive criticism and challenge where this is needed
- **continue to learn and demonstrate how as followers of Jesus we are called to care for and safeguard the wellbeing of all people** by following best practice and ensuring that our parishes, schools, fresh expressions, chaplaincies and the cathedral are recognised as safe places to be



2025 Milestones

- Work undertaken with national team to see how Church Development Tool can be used to track demographics at parish level

Diocesan Action Plan: All people being able to see themselves reflected in the leadership and governance of the diocese

Feeding our Faith

We want to

- **identify, honestly and courageously, what we need to do differently to embed diversity and inclusion in the life of our diocese** by using resources such as the Difference Course to help us better reflect God's Kingdom



2025 Milestones

- work started on action plan to increase diversity in our structures (to be in place ahead of the next triennium)

Diocesan Action Plan: to have made substantial progress towards Net Zero Carbon with a clear and achievable plan of how any shortfall will be resolved in the following few years

Building up our Parishes and Communities

We want to

- **move towards Net Zero Carbon** by supporting parishes to become Eco-Churches and with adoption of the Energy Footprint Tool

2025 Milestones

- Net Zero Carbon Manager appointed to oversee this work

Tree planting - Ellastone



Metrics

Goal	Metric	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
a growth in the overall worshipping community of 34,000 new disciples	All-Age Average Weekly Attendance							
	Size of Worshipping Community							
	Percentage of Worshipping Community in discipleship groups							
200 new worshipping Communities which are established and sustainable	Number of New Worshipping Communities							
a strengthened culture of vocation amongst all God's people, and at least 30 new licensed lay ministers and 30 ordinations a year	Number of new ordinands							
	Number of new Readers / LLMs							
	Percentage of churchwarden positions filled							
an active plan in every parish for engaging with their local population beyond the church walls	Number of members of local community benefiting from a church-led project							
a strong connection between every primary and secondary school and their parish church	Foundation Governor vacancy rate							

Goal	Metric	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
no fewer than 30 young people per year aged between 18 and 30 who are called to leadership being supported through a high-quality development programme offered by the diocese	Number of people on diocesan courses							
the age profile of each worshipping community reflecting the age profile of the community which it serves	Number of under 16s included in All-Age Average Weekly Attendance							
every worshipping community reflecting the diversity of the community they serve	Using Church Development Tool to age, sex, number and age of children, ethnic background, social mobility, religious belief, and health conditions / disabilities	awaiting national guidance						
all people being able to see themselves reflected in the leadership and governance of the diocese	Number of GMH clergy / Readers / LLM							
	Number GMH members of Bishop's Council							
	[Additional metrics to be developed]							
To have made substantial progress towards Net Zero Carbon with a clear and achievable plan of how any shortfall will be resolved in the following few years	Percentage of churches completing Energy Footprint Tool							
	Number of Eco-Church awards							

Appendix One: The Goals of The Strategic Framework

A growth in the overall worshipping community of 34,000 new disciples.

- Our All-Age Average Weekly Attendance represents 0.9% of the population of the Diocese and our Worshipping Community represents 1.6% of the population of the Diocese. Our goal is to double our Worshipping Community. It is possible to achieve this goal if we work at increasing our individual confidence in living the gospel story.

200 new worshipping communities which are established and sustainable.

- In any new worshipping community, we expect to see the word preached and the sacraments celebrated with robust accountability structures in place. We believe it is realistic to think that one to two new fresh expressions could come from each deanery each year.

A strengthened culture of vocation amongst all God's people, and at least 30 new licensed lay ministers and 30 ordinations a year.

- We need to build one another up and encourage vocations in all aspects of ministry, licensed or otherwise.

An active plan in every parish for engaging with their local population beyond the church walls.

- Opportunities to engage with our local communities vary and change over time. Every parish should have a plan for local engagement that is regularly reviewed and kept live and fresh.

A strong connection between every primary and secondary school and their parish church.

- There are 450,000 school age children in the diocese, 45,000 of which attend a Church of England school. Our aim is to link with the huge number of community schools as well.



Chaplaincy - Ellesmere College

No fewer than 30 young people per year aged between 18 and 30 who are called to leadership being supported through a high-quality development programme offered by the diocese.

- By developing a leadership programme to train those identified by deaneries we hope to be able to build a critical mass of young disciples who are making more disciples in each deanery.

The age profile of each worshipping community reflecting the age profile of the community which it serves.

- Most of our church communities have very few people under the age of forty. Where this is the case, our goal is that churches will develop creative outreach opportunities to reach the missing generations.

Every worshipping community reflecting the diversity of the community they serve.

- Currently, in many of our churches the whole gospel is not reaching the whole community. Parishes should identify the voices and groups in their local community not currently represented in church and shape their mission action plans to address this.

All people being able to see themselves reflected in the leadership and governance of the diocese.

- The Bishop's Council will set policies which enable us to attract new members of committees and boards, and support them to flourish in their roles, so that our representative structures reflect the diverse communities we serve.

To have made substantial progress towards NZC with a clear and achievable plan of how any shortfall will be resolved in the following few years.

- The diocese is working with the Net Zero route map set out by the Church of England. Through the setting of milestones and resources provided centrally we will: help our congregations to understand the imperative of caring for God's creation; consider the carbon emissions of both buildings and travel; and with the innovative use of glebe land for offsetting, aim to achieve Net Zero by 2030.

Appendix 2: Church of England Vision and Strategy

One vision

- A Church for the whole nation which is Jesus Christ centred, and shaped by, the five marks of mission. A church that is simpler, humbler, bolder.



Three priorities

- To become a church of missionary disciples where all God's people are free to live the Christian life, wherever we spend our time Sunday to Saturday.
- To be a church where mixed ecology is the norm* – where every person in England has access to an enriching and compelling community of faith by adding new churches and new forms of Church to our parishes, cathedrals, schools and chaplaincies.
- To be a church that is younger and more diverse.

*the mixed ecology describes the flourishing of church and ministry in our parishes, and in other communities of faith through things like church planting, fresh expressions of church, chaplaincy and online.

Six bold outcomes

From the three strategic priorities we have identified six bold outcomes.

A church for everyone through:

- Doubling the number of children and young active disciples in the Church of England by 2030.
- A Church of England which fully represents the communities we serve in age and diversity.

A pathway for everyone into an accessible and contextual expression of church through:

- A parish system revitalised for mission so churches can reach and serve everyone in their community.
- Creating ten thousand new Christian communities across the four areas of home, work/education, social and digital.

Empowered by:

- All Christians in the Church of England envisioned, resourced and released to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the whole of life, bringing transformation to the church and world.
- All local churches, supported by their diocese, becoming communities and hubs for initial and ongoing formation.

from churchofengland.org/about/vision-and-strategy

New meeting space at Telford Minster resource church



'Continuing our Journey' published by Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance. Spring 2025