



Shaping for Mission
A strategic framework
2024 – 2030

Lichfield Diocese 2024-2030

Shaping for Mission: A Strategic framework

This paper is produced following a three-year Diocesan process called *Shaping for Mission*. It is a consolidation of progress and learning to date and will shape our plans for the next six years.

Direction of travel:

We continue to invite people to *follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad* and use our vision prayer as an inspiration for all we do.

"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 God already at work in the 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."

Our priorities **Developing Discipleship, Encouraging Vocations and Inspiring Evangelism** (Diocesan Vision Statement, 2018) remain, and will become more and more embedded in every aspect of the life of the Diocese. Prayerfully led by the Spirit, we will build on current good work, renew existing ministry and mission, and pursue new possibilities.

The following shaping principles have been widely discerned from the *Shaping for Mission* process and through engagement with the Church of England's national vision. We will

- **Be purposeful about evangelism** leading to numerical growth and depth of discipleship, inspiring all to confidently share their faith story
- **Engage creatively with local communities.**
- **Become more diverse** at every level and in every way and in particular to
- **Grow younger**

For the next six years, the life of the Diocese will be shaped by these principles. Every church, fresh expression and chaplaincy will respond to these shaping principles in a way that is appropriate to their particular context. These principles will also define the work and leadership of the Bishop's Staff team and Diocesan officers.

In the light of these principles, the goals we hope to achieve together in the next six years are:

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

The current worshipping congregation represents 0.9% of the population of the Diocese. Our goal is to double this. It is possible to achieve this goal if we work at increasing our individual confidence in living the gospel story.

2. 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.

3. an increased culture of Vocations leading to at least a trebling of numbers of people in licensed ministries (ordained and lay).

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

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. no fewer than 30 young people per year aged between 18 and 30 who are called to leadership being supported through with 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

These goals have not been identified lightly and cannot stand alone without the development of work streams that will enable the Bishop's Staff team, all Officers and committees of the Diocese and all the worshipping communities we serve to work together in a focused way to achieve them. Once Diocesan Synod has approved this strategy in principle, we will begin the task in earnest by recruiting an Officer to spearhead the design and development of the "practical details". This position will be fully funded over the next three years by the national church and is designed to ensure a consultative approach to the task. We will also recruit a new Diocesan Communications Director. We will look at how all our current activities need to be shaped to prioritize achieving these goals and what new work might be needed.

There are several key "cross threads" that will enable and facilitate our mission and ministry:

- Area Staff must have a current and **in-depth understanding of every parish's lived reality**, including financial and missional strength. Area Staff will use this data to shape decision making transparently and sensitively.
- The strategic framework must be **clearly communicated**, understood and embraced by parishes, fresh expressions, schools, chaplaincies and the cathedral.
- Attention will continue to be given to the way we resource our mission and ministry. This includes a realistic **appraisal of our financial sustainability**, stewardship and management of our assets to maximise the amount of ministry we can support. In addition, we will give more support with the management of our church buildings and the need for constant fund raising in this area. In all that we do we will seek to reduce our carbon footprint with the goal to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- We will develop a **ministry plan** that can support and enable our local contexts.