



**Diocese of Canterbury**  
CHANGED LIVES → CHANGING LIVES



# Strategy Overview & Highlight Report

**Diocesan Synod 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025**



# SMMIB Recap from last Diocesan Synod

- No opportunity for us to request SMMIB funding in June
- Advised that our next funding request will need to be a comprehensive 5-10 year programme
  - Not partial requests like our first two
- Working towards October submission for December SMMIB
- Capacity funding request September for October SMMIB

## UPDATE

- Triennium funding committee meets in June
- Broad levels of funding available should be known in July



# What will our Strategy need to include?

- A clear understanding of the root cause issues to address
- The strategic outcomes we want to achieve
  - These are encapsulated in our Vision and Three Bold Outcomes
- A sound understanding of where we are now
  - Includes the Health & Vitality review of missional and financial strength
- The interventions (projects and programmes) that will take us from where we are to where we want to be
- Our financial strategy
- Our people strategy – developing the resource to deliver
- Which elements of our strategy we want SMMIB to fund

# What might our October request contain?



Programme	Notes	REVITALISATION	YOUNG DISCIPLES	NEW COMMUNITIES
<b>Resourcing church for Ashford</b>	Requested by the town parish. Strategically important. (~10% diocesan population and growing.) Building refurbishment could be expensive. Exploring options. Total cost could be c£3.5m including staff!	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Associate Vicar for St. Luke's Maidstone?</b>	Parish/Project Board has identified priority need for a 0.5 FTE Operations Director. (Normal role for a resourcing church.) Additional 0.5 FTE funding needed for Associate Vicar.	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Further resourcing churches?</b>	No specific next locations identified through MAP/deanery plans yet. Scope for discussion.	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Mission Action Fund</b>	Investment to enable funding for projects arising from MAP/deanery plans. c£2m?	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Youth Ministers</b> Initial tranche of 7	Balance of funding for DIP 1 youth ministers. Funding only given for 2023-2025.		Yes	
<b>Ignite Phase 2</b> Perhaps 6 new plants?	Expansion of plants to reach disadvantaged communities. Method also works for families & youth.	Supports	Supports	Yes
<b>Youth Ministry Development Programme</b>	Developing children and youth ministers of the future. Part of our People Plan.	Supports	Yes	



# What else might be considered?

- Flourish rollout – church/school partnerships
  - Not clear whether national education team will fund next round
  - Could also be funded through Mission Action Fund
- Additional Youth Ministers
  - Opportunity to expand the programme but has been a challenge to fill 7!
  - Could also be funded through Mission Action Fund
- Support for creating and maintaining new Christian communities
  - E.g. Myriad, Greenhouse
  - Exploring what support might be needed
- Other items that arise from discussions e.g. with National Church Institutions, with parishes and deaneries etc.



# Average Weekly Attendance Trends

Avg. Weekly Attendance  
2024

**9.702**

Avg. Weekly Attendance  
Growth 2023 - 2024

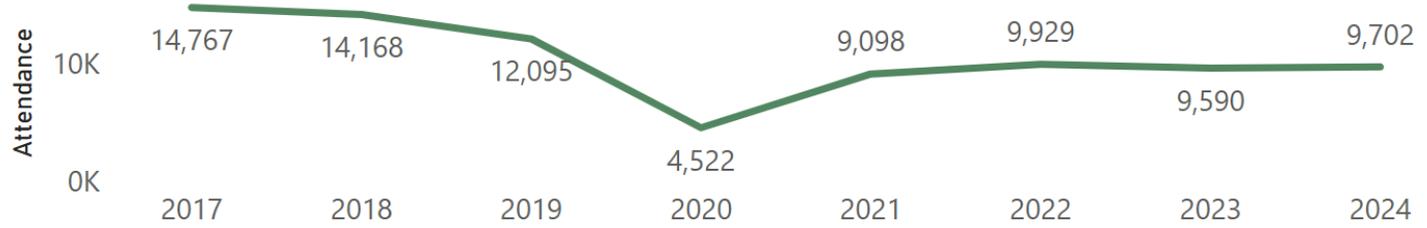
**1.17%**

Avg. Weekly Attendance  
U18 Growth 2023 - 2024

**10.10%**

## Attendance by Year

Avg. Weekly Attendance



## Average Weekly Attendance

- Up by 1% overall
- Growth in U16 attendance 10%

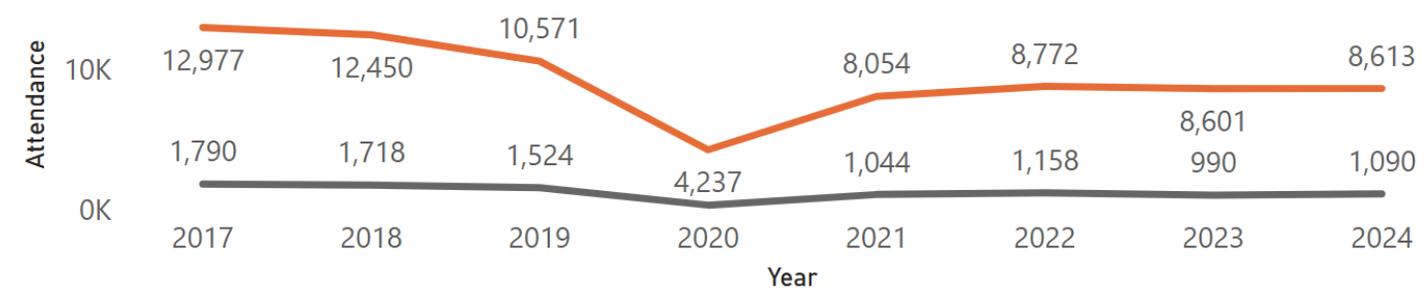
## Broad trend

- Flattish after Covid recovery

## Attendance by Year

Avg. Weekly Attendance

● Adult ● Child





# Usual Sunday Attendance Trends

Usual Sunday Attendance  
2024

**8,714**

Usual Sunday Attendance  
Growth 2023 - 2024

**3.52%**

Usual Sunday Attendance  
U18Growth 2023 - 2024

**-3.33%**

Usual Sunday Attendance

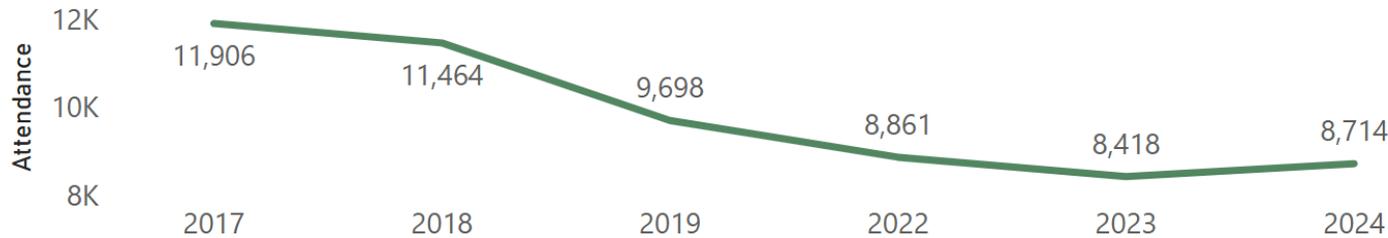
- Up by ~3.5%
- U16 down by ~3.5%

Broad trend

- Flattish after Covid recovery

## Attendance by Year

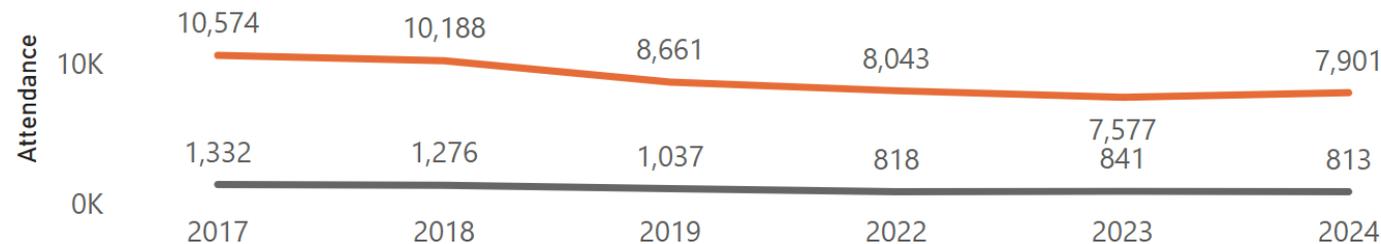
Usual Sunday Attendance



## Attendance by Year

Usual Sunday Attendance

● Adult ● Child



# Resourcing Churches & Ignite

No significant concerns



A long-term plan to see resourcing churches established in all major urban areas of the diocese focussing on rapid growth, young people and families and making new disciples. Resourcing churches supporting revitalisation in neighbouring parishes and potential new church plants e.g. estates.

Highlights	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Margate:</b> Strong attendance growth of double since before launch. Children and young people have trebled!</li> <li>• <b>Maidstone:</b> Refurbishment of St. Luke’s is progressing well. Encouraging growth at St. Luke’s &amp; St. Faith’s esp young people.</li> <li>• <b>Ashford:</b> First draft of project proposal created and initial discussion held with NCIs for advice.</li> <li>• <b>Rural Strategy Group:</b> Seek input and advice from NCIs on draft rural strategy. Meeting scheduled.</li> <li>• <b>Focal Ministry:</b> Programme has launched.</li> <li>• <b>Ignite:</b> Aylesham &amp; Canterbury have recruited Enablers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding a suitable new clergy house for St. Faith’s.</li> <li>• Lack of current funding maybe leading to reduced interest from parishes in hosting future Ignites</li> </ul>
Next Steps	Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to develop strategy to support growth in rural and semi-rural parts of the diocese. <i>[In progress]</i></li> <li>• Church planting officer recruitment. Important role to oversee current and future programme. Need to expand role to include support for establishing and supporting new Christian communities. <i>[Funding from SMMIB already in place.]</i></li> <li>• Progress building options for Ashford Resourcing Church.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue discernment and discussion of potential future locations for resourcing churches.</li> <li>• Continue discernment and discussion of potential future locations for Ignite.</li> </ul>

Note: NCI stands for National Church Institutions

# Youth Ministry

Some concerns



An initial tranche of seven youth ministers to be located in churches with the largest number of young people to support the growth and development of youth ministry. Part of the role is also to encourage nearby parishes with their youth work. Grants are provided towards cost on a reducing basis over five years to encourage sustainability. Also running Youthscape LaunchPad & Ministry Experience Scheme.

## Highlights

- Growth of 10% from 2023 to 2024 in the average weekly attendance of under 16s across our diocese! This confirms the trend indicated in Bob Jackson's report earlier in the year.
- Strong youth growth at resourcing churches in Margate HTM and Maidstone St. Faith's (not reflected in the above).
- Recruitment of replacement youth minister at St. Luke's Maidstone proved difficult.
- Plans drafted for Youth Ministry Development Programme.

## Concerns

- National shortage of youth ministers. Experiencing difficulty in recruitment to vacancies across the diocese.
- Some churches expressing concerns about the grant tapering in later years which could affect financial sustainability which has deterred some churches from taking the opportunity up.
- Look at youth minister retention issues.
- St. Luke's Ramsgate have put recruitment on hold as a result of a downturn in parish financial health.

## Next Steps

- Parishes to recruit to current vacancies
- Work with local Flourish leaders on pilot project delivery
- Explore funding for a second Children & Youth Ministry officer to support the many churches asking for advice with children and youth work.
- Continue to work with other locations to explore further opportunities.

## Future

- Develop models that might work in other contexts, especially rural e.g. Ospringe model, Bapchild and Tonge model, Flourish
- Develop business case for future SMMIB DIP grant funding request(s)
- Explore any flexibility with grant tapering.

# Parish & Deanery Planning

**Significant concerns**



A long-term plan to see resourcing churches established in all major urban areas of the diocese focussing on rapid growth, young people and families and making new disciples. Resourcing churches supporting revitalisation in neighbouring parishes and potential new church plants e.g. estates.

## Highlights

- Based on feedback, process re-imagined to focus on: **“Empowering the local church to deliver God’s mission”**
  - Resources for parishes from Diocesan House, deaneries
  - Certain wider projects driven at diocesan level
- Toolkits available to support parishes and deaneries
- Health & Vitality review data prepared. Launch with Area Deans & Lay Chairs schedule 12<sup>th</sup> June. Will provide better access for deaneries to latest attendance and other information.
- LyCiG second conference held and follow-up continuing with first conference attendees.

## Concerns

- Partner with Area Deans & Lay Chairs to ensure that the Health & Vitality review lands well and is productive
- Lack of capacity apart from the day-job

## Next Steps

- Arrange third LyCiG conference
- Prepare “hard” launch of Mission Action Planning
- Encourage and support parishes with Mission Action Planning
- Explore creation of a Mission Action Fund help support parish initiatives.

## Future

- Use Health & Vitality Review outcomes to underpin further strategy development and our next funding request.

# Key Risks



*New elements in blue*

Risk	Current Risk	Actions	Residual Risk
Lack of capacity within deanery leadership to develop plans for growth	High	Regular meetings with Archdeacon & diocesan staff to support Explore how to re-imagine the process and provide more support Health & Vitality Review	Medium
Insufficient scale and pace to make a significant difference	High	Emphasise the importance of every parish and benefice being engaged Encourage parish Mission Action Plans Leading your Church into Growth courses Engagement through media channels (Comms) Health & Vitality review tool to help inform discussion.	Medium
Insufficient investment available	High	Plan for future DIP (SMMIB) requests Explore other funding opportunities Raise profile of Canterbury with national church	Medium
Lack of capacity within diocesan support to add sufficient momentum	Medium	Programme Management Office funded through DIP (SMMIB) Recruit Church Planting Officer (also supporting new Christian communities) Possible funding request for more (local) resource	Low
Insufficient credibility with national church/ SMMIB delays future DIP funding requests	High	Tighten delivery of existing DIP projects to demonstrate clear progress. Establish measurement frameworks for key projects. <del>Annual DIP funding review with national church.</del> Submit DIP Change Requests where necessary.	Medium

# External Funding Applications Summary



Application	Date	Amount	Status	Notes
DIP (SMMIB) 1	May-23	£1m	Awarded	Conditions to be met
DIP (SMMIB) 2	Feb-24	£3.2m	Awarded	Conditions met
Flourish (education)	Apr-24	£92k	Unsuccessful	Scheme was oversubscribed.
DIP (SMMIB) 2a	Dec-24	£452k	Awarded	To cover significant building cost increase.
DIP capacity request	Sep-25	TBA		Core capacity to support our strategic programme
DIP funding request	Oct-25	TBA		Investment in key projects and programmes that will deliver our strategy