

Strategy Overview

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Executive Summary

The Diocese of Canterbury set **Three Bold Outcomes** aimed at revitalizing its communities and enhancing engagement by 2030.

The Three Bold Outcomes:

- **Double the Number of Children and Young Disciples:** The diocese aims to significantly increase the involvement of children and young people in church activities. This initiative is part of a broader goal to grow the next generation of believers and ensure that the church remains relevant and engaging for younger audiences.
- **Every Parish, Benefice, and Deanery Showing Signs of Revitalization:** This outcome focuses on ensuring that all areas within the diocese demonstrate growth and renewal. The diocese will look for signs of new life and faith, which may include numerical growth, community engagement, and the development of new worshipping communities.
- **200 New Christian Communities:** The diocese encourages the establishment of new worshipping communities that meet the needs of local populations. This could involve innovative approaches to worship, such as gatherings in homes, cafes, or schools, rather than traditional church settings.

These outcomes reflect the Diocese of Canterbury's commitment to fostering a vibrant and inclusive church community that actively engages with its members and the wider society. The focus on revitalization and youth involvement is seen as essential for the future growth and sustainability of the church.

This document sets out the Diocesan Strategy as well as bringing together the aims and objectives behind the application to the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board ("SMMIB") for a ten-year partnership and funding.

The aim is to provide missional and financial growth across the diocese.

Our strategy is 'To enable the local church to share in God's Mission'. This shifts the focus of planning and support closer to the local church, helping to give parishes the tools and encouragement to lead mission in their communities.

In the autumn of 2025, we launched **Three Things**, a listening and learning exercise to encourage each parish to explore and share their three priorities for mission. This was backed by an intensive deanery-led review of the health of parishes and church communities within this diocese. Together these are part of a three-way conversation between Parish, Deanery and Diocesan Board of Finance that enables all of us to focus and develop our common aims and objectives. This mission action planning enables meaningful conversations and has helped identify where resources are needed and where there are shared priorities.

Our Diocese is diverse. There are variances in geography, the age, location and health of our church buildings, social culture, economic wealth, ethnicity and church tradition. Rural and coastal communities present their own challenges and opportunities, and our aim must be to grow the church with compassion and do so and creatively.

Our plans sit firmly at the local level in enabling sustainable and growing parishes serving God in their communities and have discerned four strategic themes to underpin our vision:

- Children and Young People
- Attendance revitalisation
- Leadership
- Finance

The Diocese of Canterbury

The Diocese of Canterbury, founded in 597 by St. Augustine, is the oldest diocese in England and serves as a central part of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion.

The diocese has played a crucial role in the development of Christianity in England and continues to be a focal point for the Anglican Communion worldwide.

The diocesan bishop is the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is also the Primate of All England and the spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion. The current Archbishop, Dame Sarah Mullally, will be formally installed in March 2026, making her the first woman to hold this position. The diocese also has a suffragan bishop, the Bishop of Dover, who assists in the administration and pastoral care of the diocese. Two further suffragans have nominal sees in the diocese — the bishops of Ebbsfleet and Richborough, who are provincial episcopal visitors with a wider focus than the diocese.

Three Archdeacons (Ashford, Canterbury and Maidstone) complete the senior clerical leadership within the diocese.

The Diocese is split into three archdeaconries. The Archdeacons and appointed Area Deans work together with the Bishop of Dover to assist the running of the parishes within our diocese.

Canterbury Diocese comprises 196 parishes organised in 98 legal benefices.

There are 16 deaneries or areas within the diocese. Many deaneries mirror local district boundaries. Each deanery has its own Deanery Synod with membership of all clergy licensed to parishes in the deanery, plus elected lay members from each parish. Each deanery is overseen by at least one Area Dean (ordained) and one Lay Chair, who hold the post for a fixed term.

Stretching from Maidstone to Thanet, the Isle of Sheppey to the Romney Marsh, Canterbury has 350 miles of coastline with historic ports and seaside resorts, alongside rural communities, market towns and commuter-belt urban developments. Affluent areas often sit alongside pockets of major deprivation, offering an exciting and challenging mission context. The Diocese serves a population of about 1 million people.

The Diocese of Canterbury has 105 Church of England schools that it supports and works alongside. A high-quality Religious Education (RE) curriculum is essential to meet the statutory requirement for all maintained schools to teach a broad and

balanced curriculum. The aim is that church schools should be flagships of excellent practice for RE teaching.

The Strategy for the Church School System in the Diocese of Canterbury states a clear ambition to maintain a cohesive, interdependent family of diocesan church schools, dedicated to transforming the lives of children and young people. The Board of Education seeks to be responsive to local contexts and attentive to the political landscape for education, both regionally and nationally, whilst holding a neutral position in relation to whether schools operate within the maintained sector or convert to academy status.

The Diocese has an autonomous charity, the Social Justice Network which works in communities to alleviate issues of poverty, marginalisation, and vulnerability, especially the homeless, refugees and asylum seekers, and those leaving prison into homelessness. Projects range from local, to national and international. Work is delivered through innovative partnerships creating a framework for others to respond to social challenges.

The Diocese is an historic and vital part of the Church of England, with a rich heritage and a commitment to serving its communities through faith and action.

Vision and Strategy

At the heart of all we do is a vision of transformation for ourselves and our communities: no one can encounter God and remain unchanged.

We want to increasingly become a Christian community transformed through encounter with Christ, growing and overflowing to transform and bless the families, homes and communities we serve: **Changed Lives → Changing Lives.**

Our vision - what the future will look like

By God's grace we want to be a people who are...

- confident & creative disciples of Jesus Christ,
- rooted in scripture & drenched in prayer,
- living gratefully, giving generously, caring for creation & sharing the gospel,
- growing in number & expectations – of God & ourselves,
- motivated by justice & love, open to the Spirit & ready for adventure!

Three Bold Outcomes

Our diocese has been on a journey of listening and discerning to arrive at our vision and strategy, which is distilled into 3 bold outcomes for 2030:

- Double the number of children and young disciples
- 200 new Christian communities
- Every parish, benefice and deanery showing signs of revitalisation

Our strategy – how will we get there?

Our strategy is 'To enable the local church to share in God's Mission'

Underneath our Vision statement we add the phrase “Therefore, we will...” as a recognition that words without actions are empty. It is a commitment to taking real steps now to make our vision a reality soon. The actions will change and develop overtime and as we consider our vision and explore together what actions we commit to take at diocese, deanery and parish level.

Tools and resources

Some projects require major investment and are coordinated at diocesan level. This includes the diocesan-wide recruitment of youth ministers, helping to identify and equip resource churches, piloting Flourish partnerships between schools and churches, enabling further Ignite plants in disadvantaged communities, and the research into and launch of **focal churches**.

We also support local mission through Leading your Church into Growth courses, encouraging both parish mission action planning and deanery planning, training for ministers in youth ministry, growing young leaders, resourcing youth ministry and the ongoing development of a rural strategy.

The way forward

We are committed to leaving no one behind. Our journey began as a diocese and will continue to engage with our clergy, congregations and communities. There is a mixed ecology of churches throughout the diocese, and the desire is to see all flourish. Much of our strategy will be broad – we will hope and encourage that every parish fully engage with it. This will be coupled with areas that will need specific focus and/or investment or where we want to test out an innovative approach.

Our Mission

Our mission is rooted in Matthew 28:19-20:

“¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Current Strategy

With funding support from the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) we have invested in **Resourcing Churches** in Margate (Holy Trinity/St. Paul’s) and Maidstone (St. Luke’s/St. Faith’s). Each is showing good growth especially amongst children and young people. They are also developing future leaders to support revitalisation elsewhere across the diocese. They are expected to support nearby parishes.

The investment for **St. Luke’s included an Associate Minister** to help support the significant growth targets. The parish identified a higher priority need for a part-time Operations Manager role to run the complex site on a day-to-day basis to release the minister to focus on ministry and growth.

A third **Resourcing Church** was considered for Ashford which accounts for ten percent of the total diocesan population but with attendance per capita well below the diocesan average. The only suitable church building would have required sizable capital

investment beyond the range of potential available funding. A wider review of the Ashford Town parish is underway.

The Canterbury Diocesan Board of Finance first funding request to the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (“SMMIB”) was approved in April 2023. This included approximately £0.5m to fund seven youth ministers across the diocese. To date, five of the proposed seven youth ministers are in post.

Projects are running in Folkestone, St John, Seasalter, Maidstone, St Luke, All Saints, Loose and Goudhurst, St Mary.

Ignite has been a successful model for establishing new Christian communities in areas of deprivation, originally developed in St. Paul’s Cliftonville. Earlier funding enabled us to establish self-sustaining plants in Maidstone, Ashford and two in Herne Bay. Over the last two years we have planted additional Ignites in Aylesham and Canterbury with funding support from Benefact Trust.

Consultations

Every parish was invited to join in a renewed commitment to God’s mission – at local level, in their own context – in October 2025.

Our Three Bold Outcomes are our shared vision for 2030, but the journey starts with each parish and deanery discerning and committing to the **Three Things** that will move us towards that future.

This reflects a conscious decision to shift the focus of planning and support closer to the local church, helping to give them tools and encouragement to lead mission in their community.

The submissions are currently being read and information collated with over eighty per cent of PCCs submitting their proposals.

The aim of the process was to:

- discern where God is already at work
- focus on realistic, honest priorities
- review what’s making a difference (and what is not)
- share ideas and identify what support is needed

Deaneries will have sight of the **Three Things** forms from their area. This will help to inform deanery planning and further inform the three-way conversation between the parish, deanery and diocese. The key themes from the responses were:

1. **Children, Youth and Families**

Parishes want to prioritise children and young people, yet many have limited volunteer capacity, fragmented provision, and uncertainty about how to start or scale up.

2. **Local mission and community engagement**

Using local mission, school partnerships, and hospitality/open community spaces as the primary routes for evangelism and discipleship.

3. **Leadership and enabling support**

Churches have asked for coaching, team building and focal leaders. Parishes value “critical friend” conversations to focus effort on what truly grows mission.

4. **Buildings as both obstacle and opportunity**

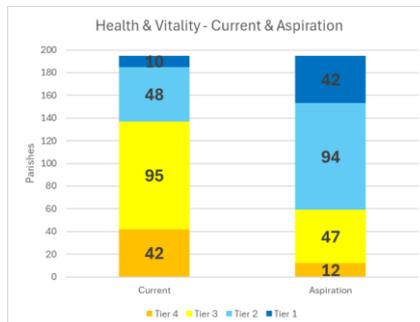
Many submissions raise building constraints (fabric, faculty, cost, grade listings) and ensuring buildings serve mission rather than distract from it.

5. **Data informed planning**

Parishes are asking for timely feedback and deanery level summaries of their ‘Three Things’ as well as Health & Vitality Review (HVR) data.

Each department was also asked to devise their own Three Things.

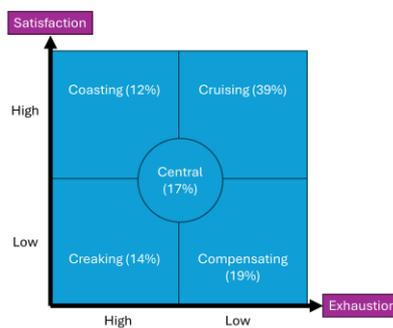
A **Health and Vitality Review (HVR)** with deaneries looked at the missional and financial strength of every parish as well as an overall health and vitality tier from 1 to 4. As well as looking at the current situation, an aspirational view was taken on where they might be in 5 years. The objective was not to create league tables but to see where additional support might be needed or where thriving (tier 1) parishes might be able to support other parishes.



A **clergy survey** was launched in January 2026. The quantitative analysis yields a quadrant model reflecting levels of satisfaction and exhaustion.

What most sustains clergy wellbeing:

- **Relational support:** family, friends, trusted peers and supportive lay teams
- **Boundaries and restorative practices:** regular days off, hobbies, physical exercise, retreats and spiritual rhythms
- **Reflective and spiritual support:** pastoral supervision, spiritual direction, counselling, retreats



Key pressures undermining clergy wellbeing:

- **Administrative overload:** Compliance, safeguarding paperwork, governance, email volume, and building management
- **Multi-parish and rural overextension:** overseeing multiple churches creates unmanageable workloads, long travel distances, limited lay capacity
- **Isolation and inconsistent diocesan engagement:** slow communication, limited pastoral contact from senior staff, gaps in follow-up
- **Fragile parish capacity:** aging congregations, conflict, resistance to change, gaps in key lay roles (church wardens, treasurers)
- **Unmet specialist needs:** inadequate support with disabilities and health conditions, accessibility barriers.

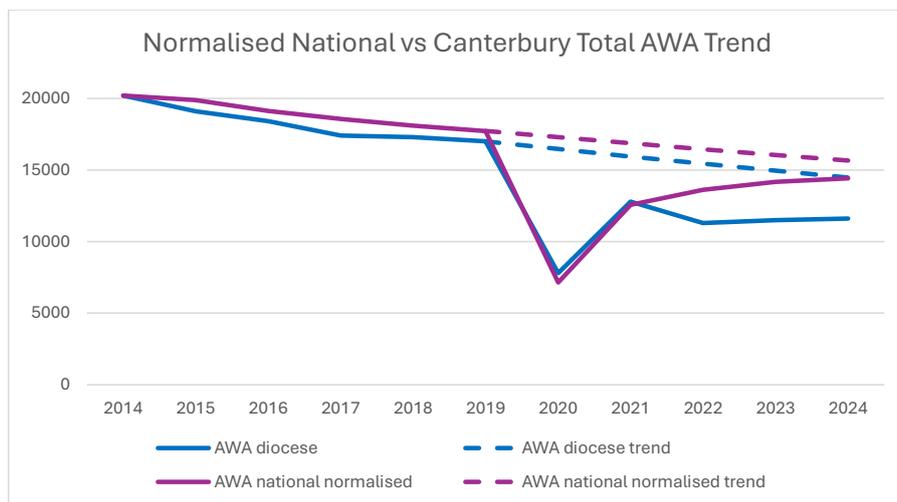
Further consultations have taken place on engagement (on-going) and finance (see under “Finance”).

Challenges

Canterbury and the wider Church of England

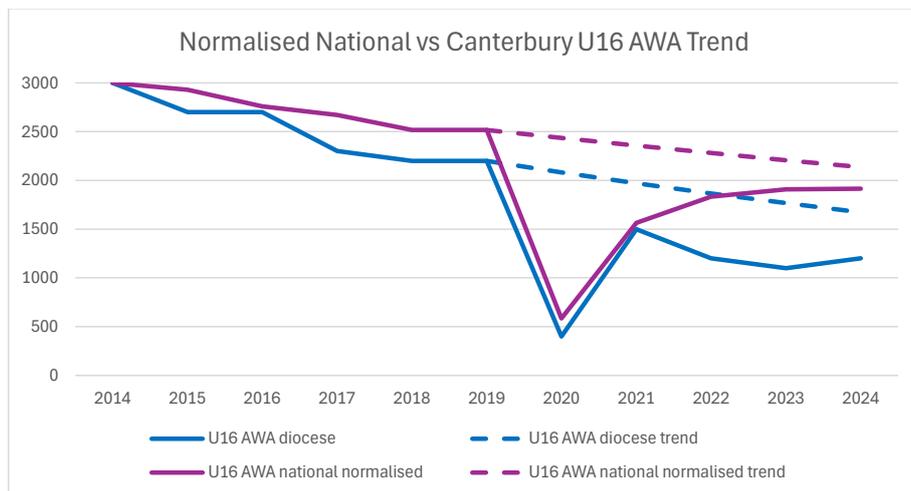
Attendance decline has long been faster in Canterbury than the Church of England average. Between 2014 and 2019 the Average All-age Weekly Attendance declined at 3.2% p.a. in the diocese compared to 2.4% p.a. in the Church of England as a whole.

Covid was a significant disruptor of church attendance. What is noticeable is that recovery in attendance has been worse in the diocese than the Church of England as a whole. This is illustrated in the Average All-age Weekly Attendance graph below.



Note: The graph is based on national attendance data sets which include estimates where data from churches is missing.

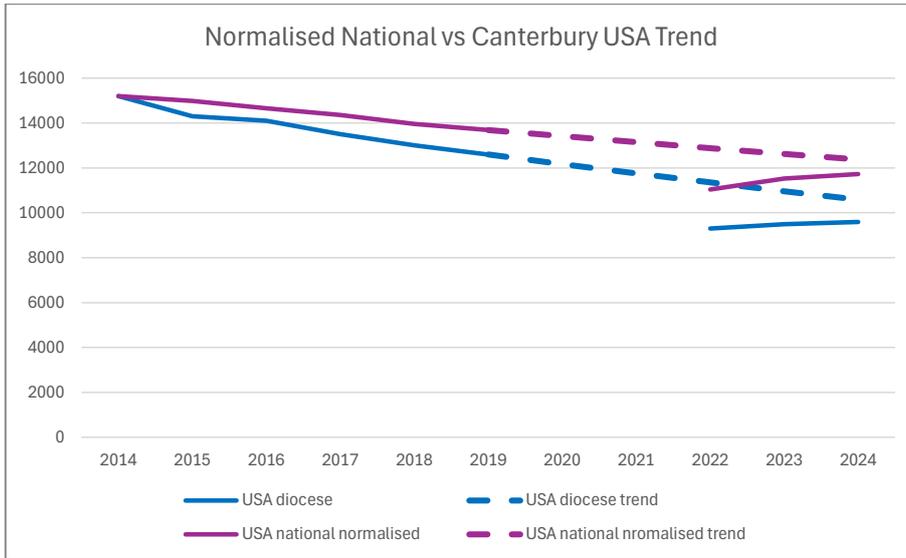
If we separate out attendance of under 16s, the decline between 2014 and 2019 was 5.3% p.a. in the diocese compared to 3.2% p.a. in the Church of England as a whole. Post Covid recovery shows as similar pattern to the All-age attendance although there was small uptick in 2024 as illustrated in the following graph. Once again, national attendance has been normalised to the Canterbury 2024 attendance to facilitate comparison.



Looking at Usual Sunday Attendance, 2024-2019 decline in the diocese was 3.4% p.a. against a national average of 2.0% p.a. Direct comparison with Average Weekly

Attendance is more difficult as USA was not recorded in 2020 and 2021. The post-Covid recover in USA does appear to be slightly stronger than AWA.

The graph below shows all age AWA against the trend line projected from 2019:



Against the backdrop of these identified challenges, the strategy and key objectives are to grow missional churches. This requires effective and supported leadership, led by missional leaders and disciples.

Latest Insight from Analysis of 2025 Statistics for Mission

NOTE: AN UPDATE WILL BE ADDED HERE WHEN THE 2025 STATS FOR MISSION HAVE BEEN ANALYSED.

Our analysis of our growing, missional churches has identified that their success is based missional leadership, from staff and volunteers. Many of the challenges facing our diocese are in common with other dioceses:

- engagement with and response to their community
- insufficient missional leadership, energy and resources
- unrealised potential in churches to help themselves and others
- a lack of shared learning and successful modelling
- a lack of committed volunteers (disciples)

There are many missional leaders who are growing their churches who need equipping rather than burdening. We must do more to develop, recruit and support such clerical and lay leaders.

Pathways for discipleship have been opened but more needs to be done to develop skills, knowledge and experience. We must energise mission and shared learning and develop pipelines to create effective future leaders.

A lack of missional leadership results in uneven spiritual growth and a lack of trained and experienced leaders. This threatens the sustainability of ministry and mission.

The lack of development results in increased demands on clergy and the resulting increase in their stress and ill-health.

Key volunteers, such as church wardens and treasurers, lack support and training. A reduction in both volunteers and volunteered time reduces the capacity of churches to care for their clergy and their congregations and to reach out to their community. Socio-economic changes and a lack of understanding of the context of “Kent” in the wider church has hampered interventions and their effectiveness.

We have a population of 972,000 but only just over 1% attend church on a regular basis. The population of Kent is expected to increase with significant housing developments in Ashford, Maidstone and Thanet.

Areas of new housing and estates result in an influx of new people to an area, often without related increases in community facilities and services. It is often left to the existing churches to take on parochial responsibility for the significant new populations.

The Health & Vitality Review identified:

- We only currently have 10 tier 1 parishes. These are typically both missionally and financially strong and would be parishes that we want to encourage to partner with other parishes to help support revitalisation in **Missional Partnerships**. The aspiration is to increase that to 42.
- Two-thirds of our parishes were in tier 3 or 4 with weaknesses in either missional strength or financial strength. Our aspiration is to reduce that to one-third.
- A fifth of our parishes were in tier 4 and are fragile. Our aspiration is to improve their sustainability.

As part of the review, we identified potential follow-up actions:

- 52 parishes were showing either missing data or there were concerns about the quality of the data. Attention is needed to improve this.
- 45 parishes were identified that would need support from the Generous Giving team to help them strengthen their financial position.
- 27 parishes were identified that might benefit from consideration of some churches becoming Festival churches or similar. These were typically in locations where there was little or no prospect of attracting more to their congregations.
- 21 parishes were identified that needed support in their leadership.

Aims & Outcomes

We recognise the need for any strategic intervention to have significant impact on the diocese.

Each item is cross-referenced to the four key themes of the strategy. Some aims may impact on more than one theme.

Key:

The Diocese of Canterbury's **Three Bold Outcomes** for 2030 are:

- doubling the number of children and young disciples **1**
- creating 200 new Christian communities **2**
- ensuring every parish, benefice, and deanery shows signs of revitalisation **3**

The **FOUR** key strategic themes for flourishing and sustainable mission and finance are:

- Children and Young People **CYP**
- Leadership **L**
- Attendance revitalisation **AR**
- Finance **F**

By 2030 the following outcomes are anticipated:

Three Bold Outcomes

Aim	Measurements & Targets	Reference
<p>Double the number of children and young disciples</p>	<p>Increase the involvement of children and young people in church activities.</p> <p>This initiative is part of a broader goal to grow the next generation of believers and ensure that the church remains relevant and engaging for younger audiences.</p> <p>In effect this means an average growth of 10.4 per cent a year.</p> <p>This will be measured by under 16 Average Weekly Attendance in Statistics for Mission.</p> <p>2023 baseline 990. Target 1,980.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>CYP, L, AR, F</p>
<p>Create two hundred new Christian communities or new worship opportunities</p>	<p>This outcome focuses on ensuring that all areas within the diocese demonstrate growth and renewal.</p> <p>The diocese will look for signs of new life and faith, which may include numerical growth, community engagement, and the development of new worshipping communities.</p> <p>Measured by figures in the Statistics for Mission.</p> <p>2023 baseline xxx. Target yyy.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>CYP, L, AR, F</p>
<p>Every Parish, Benefice, and Deanery Showing Signs of Revitalization</p>	<p>This outcome focuses on ensuring all areas demonstrate growth and renewal.</p> <p>The diocese will look for signs of new life and faith, which may include numerical growth, community engagement, and the development of new worshipping communities.</p> <p>This means growth of 1.5 per cent on average a year.</p> <p>Measured by adult Average Weekly Attendance in Statistics for Mission.</p> <p>2023 baseline 8,601. Target 9,546.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>CYP, L, AR, F</p>

Children and Young People

Aim	Measurements & Targets	Reference
At least 20 areas with growing and sustainable children’s and youth work and worship.	Measured by the number of parishes/churches at “Established” stage in the CYP matrix. 2025 baseline 10; Target 20.	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR,
At least tba areas with 15 or more CYP attending regularly.	Measured by under 16 average weekly attendance per parish/church. 2025 baseline tba; Target tba.	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F

Mission Action Planning and Community Engagement

Aim	Measurements & Targets	Reference
80 per cent of parishes having an annually refreshed Mission Action Plan (Three Things) with progress actively monitored by the PCC and submitted for review.	Annual Mission Action Plan Three Things submissions.	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
75 per cent of parishes engaging with the wider community to grow discipleship.	Annual Three Things submissions.	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F

Missional and Financial Strength

Aim	Measurements & Targets	Reference
Increase in the number of HVR tier 1 missionally and financially strong parishes.	Health & Vitality Review. 2025 baseline 5% (10). Target 20% (40).	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
At least half of HVR tier 1 parishes actively helping other parishes with revitalisation in Missional Partnerships .	Missional Partnerships will be monitored through Health & Vitality Reviews. Target 10% (20).	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
A doubling of the number of HVR Tier 1 and Tier 2 (missionally strong or moderate) parishes.	Health & Vitality Review. 2025 baseline 30% (58). Target 60% (116).	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
A decrease in the number of HVR Tier 4 parishes.	Health & Vitality Review. 2025 baseline 22% (42). Target 6% (12).	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F

Commented [CE1]: Should we incorporate into the Revitalising Attendance section to avoid creating a new theme? We also have a duplicate on the missional partnership one in each.

Commented [IB2R1]: I think we need to acknowledge what the HVR told us and this does that. We have said that this document is more than the SMMIB bid, as well, so we do not need to limit ourselves too much.

Revitalising Attendance

Aim	Measurements & Targets	Reference
Every benefice to engage with discipleship courses (seeker, starter, deeper..... leadership)	Monitor through attendance	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Every leader encouraged to engage with LyCiG (or alternative) with a team and actively work on follow-through.	Monitor through attendance	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Peer support from HVR Tier 1 parishes for revitalisation in Missional Partnerships .	Formal learning days to be held and monitor through attendance	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Enhanced training offer to parishes	Monitor through attendance	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F

Leadership

Aim	Measurements & Targets	Reference
At least a full-time leader in every benefice of c10,000 plus population.	We will run a pilot in two locations, St Stephen's, Hackington and The United Benefice of Reculver. Plans will be developed at local level to support a sustainable missional and financial future.	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
25 per cent of incumbents engaged in a programme of development and support by 2028	Need to scope out a leadership programme.	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Leadership programme embedded by 2028	Evidenced through course progression and the establishment of a mentoring programme	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
20 per cent of benefices with a missional management group in place by 2028	This will be key in rural and coastal communities as well as those looking to Focal Ministry and Festival Church futures	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Focal Ministers in post p.a., with ??? in post by 2030.	Need some work to deduce the number of potential focal ministers we would need. We would also need to ensure we can identify and locate these on CMS (ideally).	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F

Finance

Aim	Measurements & Targets	Reference
80 per cent of parishes submitting accounts each year	Monitored and reported to Archbishop's Council	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Accounts package offered to every PCC with 90 per cent in place by 2030	Monitored and reported to Archbishop's Council	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Create learning hubs, provide training and hold conferences for PCC Treasurers and clergy	Monitored and reported to Archbishop's Council	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F

Rural

Aim	Measurements & Targets	Reference
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Create five rural mission and connecting hubs	Needs more work on what a rural hub would look like and who would be involved.	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Establish new Christian communities among children, young people and families in focussed locations	Rural Development Officer to develop and maintain a list.	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Strengthening relationships between church and school in partnership to serve the community	Rural Development Officer to work with DBE to establish a list of C of E schools and support development of church-school community partnerships.	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Strengthen engagement with under-served groups including Gypsy, Traveller & Romany (GTR) communities and seasonal workers	A pilot Ignite community established at Hothfield. Lessons learned to inform potential for further Ignites or other forms of engagement.	1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Identify, train and support Oversight Ministers, Focal Ministers and lay leaders		1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F
Develop creation care as a form of mission		1,2,3 CYP, L, AR, F

The aims of this programme support the national bold outcomes of the [Church of England's Vision and Strategy](#):

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.**

The first, third and fourth national Bold Outcomes are directly reflected in our Diocesan Bold Outcomes.

The second national Bold Outcome is reflected in our concern and outreach in areas of significant deprivation such as Margate, Sheppey, Sittingbourne and Ashford and more locally by our successful Ignite programme.

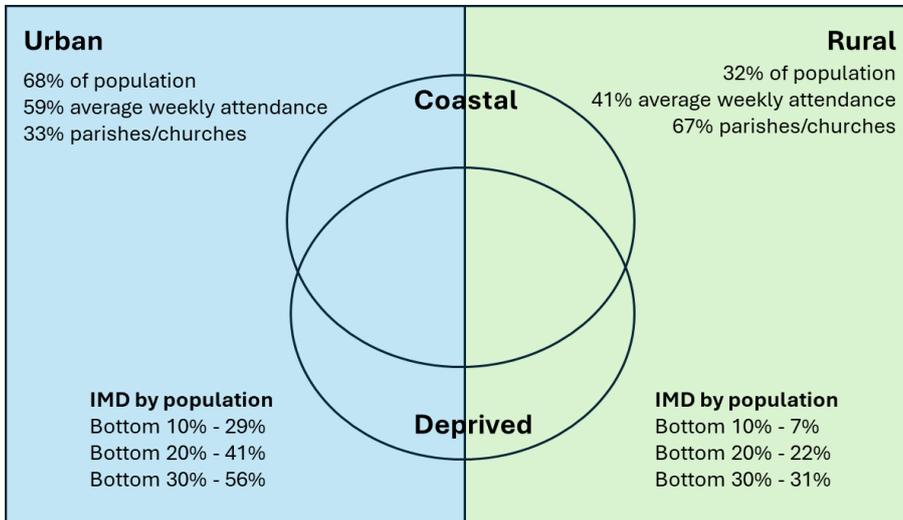
The fifth national Bold Outcome is reflected in the discipleship strand within both our children and young people and attendance revitalisation themes.

The sixth national Bold Outcome is reflected in our Leadership theme.

Canterbury Contexts

The diocese has distinct but overlapping contexts which are illustrated in the diagram below:

- Rural communities
- Coastal communities
- Urban areas
- Deprived areas
- Multi-parish benefices



Nearly half of our population is in the bottom three IMD deciles. Deprivation has increased (relative to other areas of the country) between 2019 and 2025. Even in more affluent areas there are frequently pockets of deprivation.

According to the Kent Marmot Coastal Regions Programme, Kent’s economy remains characterised by low-wage employment sectors, limited access to higher education, ageing populations, and transport isolation, particularly in coastal and semi-rural parishes. Rural and coastal deprivation often presents differently from urban poverty—it tends to be less visible but more entrenched, driven by barriers to services, housing affordability issues, and weak local labour markets¹.

Multi-parish benefices

The issue of “church” has changed considerably. Nationally, the number of benefices fell from 6,792 to 6,542, parishes from 12,338 to 12,131 and churches from 15,707 to 15,486 in the 5 years to 2019.

The current picture in Canterbury is as follows:

- 3 Archdeaonries
- 16 Deaneries
- 98 Benefices
- 196 Parishes and
- 305 active Churches

The historic legacy of often ancient and listed buildings means resources must be diverted from mission simply to keep buildings in order.

¹ Kent Marmot Coastal Regions Programme
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/Documents/s128431/Item%2010%20Kent%20Marmot%20Coastal%20Region%20Programme.pdf>

Nationally, in 1960 17% of parishes in England were part of a multi-parish benefice, and in February 2024 it was 64%. In rural areas benefices with over a dozen parishes and churches are not uncommon.

In Canterbury, there are many multi-parish benefices. There are also significant multi-church contexts:

- 37 of 98 benefices have more than 1 parish
- 58 of 98 benefices have more than 1 church
- These 58 benefices have 265 of our 305 churches between them
- In the Health & Vitality Review we identified about 25 churches that parishes might eventually want to become festival churches
- 66 FTE clergy look after these 58 benefices
- The remaining 40 benefices cover just 1 church each with 34 FTE
- It is often, but not exclusively, newer clergy who take up roles in such benefices and care needs to be taken to ensure good support is offered to all clergy

GROWTH

The strategy aims to support the diocesan-wide programme for growth in the following ways:

- Accelerating and scaling up strategic plans
- Learning from the existing projects and other growth areas in the diocese
- Supporting established vocational pathways to increase lay and clergy leadership in the diocese
- Building on the missional energy and outward focus present in the diocese.
- Addressing the challenges of declining attendance, low attendance in high population areas, the challenges in multi-parish benefices and too few young people in congregations
- Support of lay and ordained leaders in achieving the vision
- Continuing the journey to missional and financial sustainability

Four areas of Missional Planning

Children and Young People

Our vision for children and young people is a variant of the overall diocesan vision:

We want every *child and young person* to be welcomed and confident in their journey towards God.

Sub themes

- Putting CYP culture at the heart of mission
- Building confidence, capacity and skills in leaders
- Working to establish and improve Parish/School partnerships
- Developing CYP discipleship and leadership pathways

Broad approach

- To grow the number of CYP in churches/parishes
- Identifying training and development needed
- Growing CYP activity in churches and in partnership with schools
- Bringing children, young people and their families to church
- Supporting culture change in parishes and benefices
- Identifying a cohort of parishes with expertise who can share learning
- Nurturing other parishes who can join this cohort
- Creating a pipeline of expertise and good practice
- Become a diocese recognised for its pioneering approach

Specific interventions

- Flourish
- Youth Minister programme
- Resourcing Churches
- St. John's, Swalecliffe CYFM
- Seasalter Youth Hub

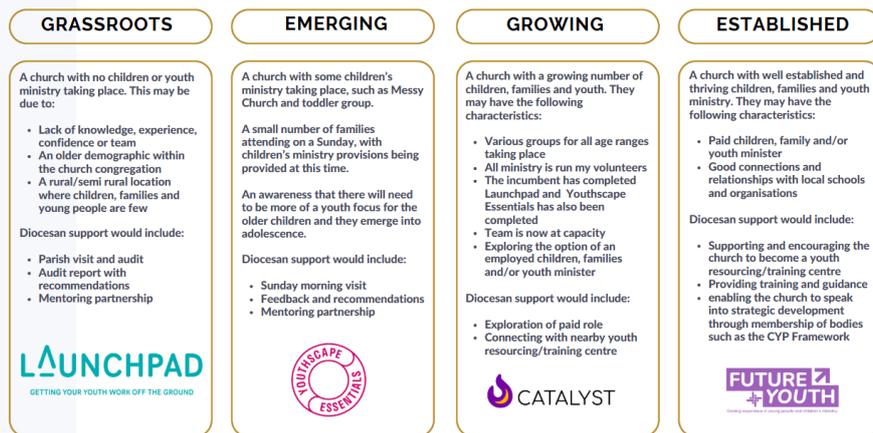
Possible resources

- CYP training and development coordinator
- CYP growth advisor – pre-school
- CYP growth advisor – primary
- CYP growth advisor – secondary
- CYP administrator

There are many overlaps with the **Attendance Revitalisation** theme. This theme will focus on the specific areas that relate to **children and young people's ministry**.

Successful children and youth ministry needs a culture that intentionally integrates all ages into the mission and practice.

For churches, we have identified several stages of development of this culture within a matrix. This shows the support likely to be needed for a church in each stage:



Children and Young People's Advisors will work with all interested parishes to identify where they are in the matrix and therefore what support will be needed to move forwards. A new role of **CYP Training & Development Coordinator** will be created to deliver the necessary training and development opportunities for parishes.

The **Children and Young People's Advisors** will focus efforts on strengthening existing CYP ministry in locations that have the potential to grow into **CYP Hubs**. In some deaneries, this could mean delivering a long-term strategy to develop the potential.

Through earlier SMMIB funding, there are several **Youth Ministers** across the diocese. Part of their role is to support and encourage other local parishes in (the development of) their children and youth ministry through offering training, mentoring, shared events etc. This is at initial stages of development.

CYP Leadership Development

The aim in Canterbury Diocese is to have a distinctive missional outreach to children and young people.

We require a well-resourced project team in the diocese to hold vision, provide accountability, implement activity, oversee the people pipeline, and recruit, network, train and nurture ministers.

A key focus will be the need for clarity of expectation and ownership at every level. Senior leaders, parish leaders, laity and youth ministers must each understand and agree their roles and how they relate to one another.

The Three Bold Outcomes include a commitment to double the number of children and young active disciples encountering God. To achieve this the diocese will:

- Recruit and deploy youth and children’s workers or apprentices, to support parishes that show potential for growing the number of children and young people
- Provide training for leaders and potential leaders within churches and schools
- Invest in churches that have existing strength with children and young people, so that they can support other churches in this work
- Help start new congregations with a specific focus on children and young people, or in areas likely to have many young people
- Invest in collaborative working between churches and schools, such as through chaplains and discipleship programmes
- Invest more broadly in effective general ministry and revitalising parishes, which will contribute to having thriving intergenerational worship

The focus will be on equipping, resourcing and recruiting young leaders for mission and ministry with children and young people.

It is recognised work must start from the current reality. In some places this may mean preliminary interventions in providing missional energy, establishing a welcoming culture, or establishing discipleship and leadership pipelines before investing in youth ministry. For those already successful, the diocese will listen and seek to multiply these proven models.

Revitalising Attendance

Our diocesan vision:

Every person to be welcomed and confident in their journey towards God.

Sub-themes – are these all incorporated?

- Discipleship & Leadership pathways – see Leadership theme
- Intentional mission (Mission Action Plans – **Three Things**)
- Specific missional interventions
- Capacity, capability and motivation
- Rural strategy – now has a separate section

Broad approach

To encourage and facilitate growth in discipleship and intentional mission across every parish.

- Discipleship courses (seeker, starter, deeper..... leadership)
- Mission Action Plans (**Three Things**) supported and enabled by Mission Enablers and **Strategic Mission Fund** and underpinned by Health & Vitality Reviews.
- Every leader encouraged to engage with LyCiG with a team and actively work on follow-through with support from Mission Enablers.
- Peer support from HVR Tier 1 parishes for revitalisation in **Missional Partnerships**
- Enhanced training offer to parishes

Specific interventions

- Resourcing Churches → resource churches (**Missional Partnerships**)
- Ashford
- Sheppey
- Sittingbourne
- Thanet
- New Christian communities – Myriad/Greenhouse (Soul Space)
- Renew Wellbeing
- Disadvantaged communities – Ignite
- Hard to fill vacancies – see Leadership theme?

Possible Resources

- Mission Enabler x3
- Resource church and new Christian communities' officer
- Training and Development Co-ordinator
- LyCiG courses

- Strategic Mission Fund

Broad Approach

Our discernment is that discipleship is the essential foundation for mission. We will therefore develop and promote a range of courses to be run in parishes that create a discipleship pathway. This will start with “seeker” courses recognising that churches are seeing a renewal of interest especially amongst young adults. Local leadership will be encouraged to run these courses with support where necessary. There will be strong encouragement from senior leaders for all to engage in these courses in some capacity. There will also be a link into a leadership development pathway to encourage the growth of leadership capacity and capability. (See the Leadership theme.)

Our broad approach recognises that we need to encourage and support mission in every parish. Fundamental to this has been to re-initiate Mission Action Planning (Three Things) in every parish. A collation of the outcomes will feed through into deanery and diocesan planning and support. This will become a part of our regular annual cycles. We will continue to run the Leading your Church into Growth course and encourage every incumbent to engage in this with teams from their parishes. Follow up of both Mission Action Plans and LyCiG will be done by Mission Enablers who will bring additional support and expertise to help focus plans and further develop local ideas. Financial support for missional activities will be available through the **Strategic Mission Fund**.

Our Health and Vitality Review has identified several parishes that are missionally and financially strong. We want to encourage each of these tier 1 parishes to support other nearby parishes by establishing Missional Partnerships. Parishes are not in competition with each other and partnerships can support and enhance mission.

To further support parishes, we are developing a range of resources and training that will help PCCs and specific roles (e.g. treasurer, PCC secretary, administrators etc.) and establish networks of like roles to encourage mutual support and sharing.

Specific Interventions

We have established two Resourcing Churches in Maidstone and Margate. These are already showing strong growth in attendance, especially amongst children and young people. We are also looking to these churches to support other parishes in revitalisation through offering training, encouragement and support teams where appropriate. They are also training curates in the principles of revitalisation who will in turn support revitalisation when they move on to roles in other parishes.

As mentioned earlier, we will be encouraging our missionally and financially strong tier 1 parishes to become resource churches to other parishes through Missional Partnerships.

We have identified a particular missional need in a number of locations that typically have low missional impact (measured by attendance per capita) and often are in areas of significant deprivation. We recognise that revitalisation in those areas is a key. Local plans are in development to identify what support and investment will be needed.

Our second Bold Outcomes points to the need for new Christian communities to reach new people with the Gospel. These will be encouraged and supported through

Greenhouse and Myriad with the support of a Resource Church & New Christian Communities Officer.

Two specific new Christian communities that we will grow are Renew Wellbeing that focuses on isolation and mental health and our successful Ignite model that works well in deprived communities.

We have an aspiration to see at least a full-time leader in every benefice of c10,000 plus population. We have identified St. Stephen's Hackington and the United Benefice of Reculver as locations which cannot afford a full-time minister. Part-time vacancies are hard to fill and the limited resource tends to lead to a cycle of decline. We are looking to bring a package of investment and support with an expectation of mission, revitalisation and growth.

We want flourishing churches and we want to support and invest in them. We should continue to develop and support parishes that have demonstrated significant growth, enabling them to act as models and mentors for other communities.

These parishes will be equipped to offer resources, guidance, encouragement and support to neighbouring parishes. Each place will be equipped for planting in the form of parish plants/grfts and New Worshipping Communities.

In these contexts we expect to be able to strengthen and resource them for planting/grafting into churches within our Revitalising Churches workstream. They will actively demonstrate that the challenges of declining attendance, lack of outreach and unsustainability can be overcome.

Flourishing churches

The diocese aims to build on the firm foundations of previous work, investing in the next stage of development from growing church and disciples to resourcing others to do the same.

Using what has worked (and where the challenges are) we can identify new locations for investment to catalyse growth. All these locations are Tier 1 in our data analysis, with strong leadership teams in place and a clear vision for their mission and growth.

We should also identify pathfinder projects where we are confident that the missional potential can be met by whatever the planned investment is.

Our Missionally Healthy Churches investment should be invited to propose several projects across benefice and deanery locations and ongoing work during this strategic mission plan. The key outcome will be an increase in the number of people in church. To do this, we will deliver:

- Practical solutions include:

Replicating Success (Locations – Margate, Maidstone, SMB)

Utilising knowledge from previous experience, deliver new worshipping communities, increase church attendance and commitment to faith through context specific

Additional resource – New Worship Community/Church Planting Officer (plus Children and Families workers).

Sharing Success in Current SDF Projects (Locations – Sheppey, Sittingbourne)

Support to resource others – sharing knowledge and expertise with others in similar context

Additional Resource – Associate Priest, Pioneer Evangelists, Community Pioneers (Ignite), and Children and Families workers

Buildings for Mission

Capital costs to provide facilities to carry out mission and ministry activities

Pathfinder Projects (Locations – Ashford, Thanet, Maidstone All Saints)

Applying innovative approaches in places where opportunity and potential has been identified

Provide resources for ministry in places of new population or significant population change (DPMC)

Provide evangelistic ‘access to faith’ through established Arts activities, including choral music.

Roles – Pioneer Priests, School Chaplains, Arts/Music Pioneer

Our analysis of our growing, missional churches shows success is usually based on:

- Strong missional leadership
- Committed staff and volunteers
- Potential
- Engagement with and response to their community

We must select locations based on a situational and readiness criteria, using insight gained from the Health and Vitality Reviews and local experience. This includes:

- ensuring a strong leadership team is in place
- missional energy is evident
- the potential for growth is identified
- a willingness for change, learning and reflection.

Each location should be identified as ‘emerging’, and have a vision and plan, agreed with the local church leadership team. Outcomes expected include new worshipping communities, an increase in existing worshipping communities numerically and spiritually, an increase in the number of people in contact with the church, and an increase in the missional outreach of the church.

Over time, we will establish Knowledge Hubs and resourcing churches that will serve as centres for training, resource-sharing, and leadership development. These hubs will be crucial in creating a sustainable pipeline of leaders equipped to drive mission and growth throughout the diocese. Each of these places will integrate with our Missional Leadership Development workstream, will support the Revitalising Fragile Churches workstream, and where relevant will integrate with the Children, Young People and

Families workstream. The learning informs and supports growth plans across the diocese.

Leadership

Sub themes

- Develop an effective training pipeline
- Review the number of curates and where they are deployed
- Offer enhanced support to clergy and lay leaders
- Leadership training and development
- Focal Ministry

Broad approach

- Increasing the number of missional leaders
- Improved leadership development opportunities
- Leadership pathways
- Enhanced support for leaders and potential leaders
- Networks/Hubs to ensure peer support & encouragement
- Create effective Missional Partnerships between parishes and benefices
- Walking alongside leaders
- Enhancing recruitment

Recruitment

There will be a greater focus on recruitment across all roles:

- A “Statement of Needs” style document promoting the diocese. (This will have wider use than recruitment of clergy, but this will be a primary focus.)
- We will set aside funds to pay for all clerical adverts in the Church Times for an initial period of three years
- The Media and Communications Team will work with PCCs on Parish Profiles in vacancies and develop templates
- We will encourage regular reviews of Parish Profiles and the sharing of good practice
- We will hold Open Days at Lambeth Palace and in the diocese to showcase the diocese

Specific interventions

- Better understand “hard to fill” vacancies
- HR & management support for PCCs
- Offer LYCIG to all PCCs
- Annual review of mission, finance and interventions at local level

Resources

- Mission Enablers x3

- | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training and Development Coordinator |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Detail

What we want to see is:

- an increase in the number and quality of missionally-oriented leaders (both lay and clergy)
- an increase the number of sustainable churches
- a decrease in the number of fragile churches
- an increase in the number of committed Children and Young People and families
- an increase in the number of people encountering God

These key outcomes will result from the interventions across our four workstreams.

However, none of these workstreams can operate in isolation ... it is missionally healthy places that are most likely to produce new candidates for a missional leadership development pipeline; it is missional leaders who are most likely to inspire churches to be missional; it is missional churches that are most likely to engage in CYPF and other missional work; and it is today's missional children and young people who will comprise tomorrow's missional leaders.

Many of the root causes of the challenges we face are intrinsically linked to leadership.

This includes a range of issues such as:

- tiredness and apathy
- a lack of confidence in sharing and inspiring others to share the gospel message
- a lack of ability or experience of working collaboratively in teams
- a lack of knowledge or experience of change management
- a lack of training (see Sheffield and Ely for examples of good training offers)
- leaders not being equipped for the role they are undertaking
- an inability to relate with relevance to different communities
- an inability or unwillingness to change

The challenge for us is not to see this as an insurmountable problem (or list of problems) but individual streams that we can work on, as PCCs and benefices, as deaneries and as a diocesan body.

The leadership workstream will reshape all our existing leadership development and support and bring in new elements of work to create a pipeline of lay and ordained missional leaders to be strategically deployed across the diocese.

The key outcome will be an increase in the number and quality of missionally-oriented leaders, leading to missional churches and missional disciples.

To do this, we need to:

- Increase retention of good leaders (lay and ordained missional)
- Create a pipeline of new good leaders (lay and ordained missional)
- Increase the number of trained and deployed leaders.

We need to:

- Define what 'good' lay and ordained leadership will look like after XX years
- Design a missionally-focused leadership development offer addressing all the challenges above, which includes appropriate CMD, MDR, and some form of ministry experience scheme
- Identification of the strengths and characteristics of missional leaders so these can be replicated
- Use of the knowledge of strengths and characteristics of missional leaders to shape and deliver this programme
- Recognition of varied learning styles
- Inspiring, equipping and releasing churches in the 'thriving' quadrant for planting and to generate vocations for the leadership pipeline.
- Increased contextual learning opportunities and networking for peer-to-peer support of clergy and lay leaders to create a culture of shared knowledge and learning

Some may tell us we are doing all of this but the challenges we face are still there. So, something needs to change.

As a diocese we need new thinking. If we accept there is a challenge in our leadership and pipelines we cannot simply carry on as normal.

This thinking has led to a training programme for potential leaders in the diocesan offices. The Leadership Pipeline ("TLP") is intended to equip new and potential leaders within the Diocese with a range of leadership skills, insights and tools. Spread over 9/10 months of 2026, it will provide a cadre of participants with a framework to consider and develop their careers and future professional trajectories.

Our aim across the diocese is to:

- use those missionally healthy places to develop learning communities to support those more fragile churches alongside other missionally strong and emerging leaders
- design and implement a range of missionally supportive networks for cohorts of church officers, including Church Wardens, Treasurers, Lay Ministers, PCC Secretaries, Administrators and Operations Managers, Deanery Lay Chairs, Parish Safeguarding Officers, Children and Young People's workers (paid and voluntary)
- partner with external expert organisations to increase missional leadership strength including CCX, CMS (Pioneering Parishes), Myriad, Church Army?
- plant or graft churches
- use the CMS (Pioneering Parishes) partnership model to focus on change management, transition from curacy to first incumbency and culture change?
- Identify, equip and support people and places to resource others, through resourcing churches, church plants and church grafts into fragile churches
- lift the burden of governance/PCC management and strengthening missional engagement in PCCs

Training for clergy and volunteers

While training outside that mandated is offered any changes expected of leaders will need to be supported by enhanced training programmes designed to equip clergy and volunteers with the knowledge and skills to support their roles.

Every department will be expected to offer training on their areas of expertise aimed at improving opportunities for shared learning, pastoral care and practical support.

(The Appendix contains details of the current training offered.)

Finance

Sub-Themes

- Investment in mission
- Giving
- Parochialism
- Buildings

Broad Approach

- Significant strengthening of parish finances especially in parishes that are financially weaker?
- Active support from the Generous Giving team to help parishes with weaker financial positions.
- Extensive rollout of the national Cornerstone project with follow-up
- Parish accounts package rollout to simplify work for PCC treasurers supported by Finance team
- Support from Quick Wins repairs fund and Net Zero funding to improve buildings, reduce repair costs and running costs.
- Encourage deaneries to actively explore parishes supporting other parishes, restricted reserves etc.

Specific interventions

- Active support from Director of Finance where parishes are facing financial challenges
- Lowest Income Communities (LInC) funding aligned to support achievement of this strategy in areas of deprivation (bottom 25% IMD). [Note: Diocesan LInC funding has increased from 2026.]

Potential Resources

- Generous Giving role
- Parish Finance Support Officer
- Buildings Officer
- Accounts package

Details

The people of mid and East Kent have continually shown extraordinary levels of generosity in supporting the church throughout the Diocese of Canterbury.

But many churches find it challenging to grow income. Building a generous church involves creating an environment where generosity thrives. There is no “one right

answer” – if there was, we would all have done it years ago. But brick by brick there are ways in which we can grow giving in our churches and beyond.

There are key aspects to consider:

Make it Easy: provide various giving options like direct debit, contactless and online.

Be impactful: show how people’s giving supports the church’s ministry and mission.

Explaining the why: clearly communicate why giving is essential.

Build trust be clear in what you use funding for.

We believe in a generous God, who longs for us to share his generosity with others. A generous life is therefore a hallmark of our faith and a testament to it, as the more generous we are, the more we reflect the generous God we believe in.

A generous culture is also essential for a church to develop a sustainable ministry. Generosity can be expressed in many ways. It is not only about financial giving.

To develop a culture of generosity there are four things to bear in mind:

- Inspire people through generous leadership and celebrating generosity within the life of the church.
- Disciple members, through resources, teaching and learning, so people can grow in an understanding of God’s generosity towards them, and how they can live generous lives.
- Embed generosity in the life of the church, in its plans, services and ministry and weave it into everything the church does.
- Activate generosity, by providing opportunities for people to grow in generosity and apply what they have discovered.

Understanding how to grow a culture is critically important. This is not about delivering a series of initiatives, but about changing our way of being and behaving. It requires patience, commitment and determination and above all prayer. Leadership is crucial, but this is something that all need to be committed to so that we become the generous community we are called to be.

In the diocesan journey since 2024, working together, understanding the aims and concerns of parishes and benefices and even a simple “thank you” can make a difference to the relationship with parishes, deaneries and the diocesan offices.

There is work to do. PCCs are stretched. Volunteers are asked to do multiple, complicated tasks. Planned interventions will seek to:

1. Provide an accounts package for all parishes. This will provide better and more consistent data, training opportunities and enable earlier and more tailored interventions.
2. Create learning opportunities for PCC treasurers and others.
3. Hold annual conferences for deanery and parish treasurers
4. Offer training around finances and giving
5. Be a voice for parishes and deaneries at national level
6. Explore opportunities for community involvement the maintenance of church buildings

Rural Strategy

Our Rural Strategy is cross-cutting across all four strategic themes noted above and much within them will be relevant in rural contexts. The Rural Strategy is intended to take a closer look at aspects that will make a significant difference in rural contexts.

Sub themes

- Elements of all four main themes
- Parish/School partnerships to serve the community
- Oversight and Focal ministry and other lay roles
- Isolation
- New housing

Broad Approach

- Create five rural mission and connecting hubs
- Establish new Christian communities among children, young people and families in focussed locations
- Strengthening relationships between church and school in partnership to serve the community
- Strengthen engagement with under-served groups including Gypsy, Traveller & Romany (GTR) communities and seasonal workers
- Identify, train and support Oversight Ministers, Focal Ministers and lay leaders
- Develop creation care as a form of mission

Specific interventions

- Ignite plant in Hothfield
- Further Flourish church/school partnerships
- Support for parishes wishing to explore Festival churches or other alternatives

Potential Resources

- Rural development officer
- Training and Development Coordinator
- (Mission Enablers)
- (CYP growth enablers)

Rural ministry faces several challenges that can hinder its effectiveness and growth. These include:

Growth Challenges: Rural areas often struggle with growth due to limited population dynamics and the need to wait for growth to occur.

Geographical Spread: The geographical spread of congregations can lead to limited fellowship and unfocused evangelism. It is crucial to find ways to connect and reach out to the broader community.

Resistance to Change: Many rural churches experience resistance to change, which can hinder their ability to adapt and innovate.

Financial Limitations: Financial constraints can limit the resources available for ministry and outreach efforts.

Business as usual: the need for local leaders to be available to all and not just “the flock” and the time taken to perform occasional offices.

These challenges highlight the need for creative solutions and a commitment to developing leaders and volunteers to overcome these obstacles and continue the ministry's mission in rural areas.

Present Context

- There are different rural contexts, particularly from a socio-economic perspective and while this widens across the diocese, there can be significant differences in neighbouring parishes
- Parishes have felt excluded in the past with the need for a formal strategy increasingly apparent.,
- There is a need to give parishes a future and a hope.
- Festival churches could be part of the future.
- The welcome given in churches is not always as good as it can be
- There can be uncertainty over service times and locations, especially for occasional or new visitors
- Buildings can often be old and expensive to maintain

Opportunities

- Improving school-church relationship
- Understanding of church in a rural context – the institution speaks to the community
- New housing – many parishes in Kent have development plans (often unwanted) but there is an opportunity in welcoming new parishioners
- Developing “Friends of...” groups can help maintain local buildings

Vision

- Strengthening relationships between church and school in partnership to serve the community
- Clergy as oversight ministers with focal ministers at local church level
- Growth in discipleship and mission
- Hospitality
- Breaking down the insular nature of many rural communities

Interventions

- Discipleship
- CYP ministry focussed in specific locations

- Support from Mission Enablers
- Focal Ministry
- Hubs – bringing together from across a deanery to break down the sense of isolation.
- Schools/Churches developing a shared vision for the community.
- Providing support and opportunity for young adults

Strategic People Plan Overview

At the heart of our diocesan people strategy is the wider vision of *Changed Lives* → *Changing Lives*. We are called to enable the local church to share in God’s mission, supporting worshipping communities that are confident in Christ, rooted in prayer and scripture, and outward-looking in love and service. Achieving this depends fundamentally on our people and on the culture in which they serve.

Our People Plan is rooted in this vision and shaped by our values of compassion, courage and creativity. It seeks to nurture a safe, healthy and life-giving culture across the diocese, recognising the vital contribution of lay and ordained people, paid and voluntary, serving in parishes, schools, chaplaincies, communities and diocesan support roles. All are partners in enabling mission in diverse local contexts.

Investing in People for Mission and Ministry

Delivering our priorities will require targeted and sustainable investment in people. This includes strengthening leadership and ministry capacity in parishes, supporting children, young people and families, building confidence in governance, operations and stewardship, and ensuring diocesan teams are well-resourced to serve and enable local churches.

The proposed investment in new and enhanced roles is summarised below:

Area	New Roles (FTE)	Enhanced Roles (FTE)
Parish roles: clergy, lay leaders, pioneers, chaplains, children & youth specialists, operations/project support	xx	xx
Central support roles: mission development, parish support, buildings, finance, community engagement, wellbeing, schools' engagement, addressing parish fragility	xx	xx
Central programme roles: project management, data, administration, finance support	xx	xx

A detailed list of roles is shown in the Appendix.

This investment will enable the development and networking of leaders both lay and ordained to support shared learning across mission, ministry, operations and governance.

Supporting, Developing and Retaining Our People

We are committed not only to recruitment, but to sustaining and developing those who already serve across the diocese. Our approach recognises the diversity of roles and contexts in which people minister, while providing a coherent and supportive framework for clergy life and leadership. This is expressed through a strong emphasis on leadership development, including the Canterbury Diet, alongside mentoring, peer learning, and the provision of Pastoral Supervision for all stipendiary clergy. We support ongoing formation through training that is tailored to role and context, underpinned by clear, supportive line management (for employed post) and transparent, prayerful approaches

to vocation, discernment, and deployment. In doing so, we remain committed to maintaining appropriate levels of stipendiary clergy and to deploying people in ways that balance pastoral need with missional opportunity.

Recruitment and onboarding for CDBF employed roles, parish-employed roles and clergy posts will be phased to ensure quality and capacity. Parishes will be supported in employing staff through guidance and expertise provided by the diocesan People Services team, agreed before funding is committed.

A Safe, Healthy and Relational Culture

Creating a safe, healthy and inclusive culture is central to how we work together. As a Christian community, we seek to model relationships shaped by the Christian values of love, and forgiveness in every day working relationships, recognising that challenge, difference and disagreement are part of shared life and ministry. We are committed to addressing these with honesty, kindness and humility, and to fostering a culture where people feel valued, respected and supported, and where mistakes can be acknowledged and addressed constructively.

Safeguarding and wellbeing remain core priorities. We will continue to strengthen support for Parish Safeguarding Officers and local Leaders, promote clear and consistent safeguarding practice, and provide a comprehensive wellbeing offer for clergy and staff. We are also committed to embedding racial justice across diocesan life, reflecting the learning and recommendations of *From Lament to Action* in both policy and everyday practice.

Capacity to Deliver

Delivering this People Plan requires sufficient organisational capacity and capability. We will continue to review and invest in the development of senior leaders, programme and project teams and key enabling roles, ensuring the diocese is well-equipped to support parishes and to make progress towards our shared strategic priorities.

Current and proposed interventions

This section draws together the key interventions from across the strategy. It is presented in alphabetical order to enable access to any further details of interventions mentioned earlier in the document.

Some of the items are current, potentially with planned extensions, and some are new. This is indicated alongside each item.

Each item is cross-referenced to the four key themes of the strategy. Some interventions may impact on more than one theme.

Key:

The Diocese of Canterbury's **Three Bold Outcomes** for 2030 are:

- doubling the number of children and young disciples **1**
- creating 200 new Christian communities **2**
- ensuring every parish, benefice, and deanery shows signs of revitalisation **3**

The **FOUR** key strategic aims for flourishing and sustainable mission and finance are:

- Children and Young People **CYP**
- Leadership **L**
- Attendance revitalisation **AR**
- Finance **F**

Buildings for Mission (Current)

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

The upkeep and maintenance of our many church buildings presents significant challenges and issues for church wardens and PCC members.

The Buildings for Mission programme supports parishes and benefices directly, working with partner agencies such as the Heritage at Risk Register, the Church Buildings Council and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, in areas such as:

- Maintenance issues and plans
- Faculty applications
- Grant-funded projects
- The Minor Repairs and Improvement grant scheme (over £50,000 to date)
- A new Church Heritage newsletter
- Providing seminars on buildings and their maintenance

There is also close working with the Carbon Net Zero team to explore funding for improvements that will reduce carbon emissions.

Canterbury Diet (Current and planned)

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

The Canterbury Diet is designed to help an individual to attend to their formation as a Christian minister and to their ministerial competence. The word 'diet' comes from the Greek *diata*, which means 'way of life,' and seeks to promote reflection on practice and self-reflection as critical components for ministry effectiveness and wellbeing.

The Canterbury Diet makes special note of the three Golden Threads, fashioned as questions so the minister continually attends to their ministry practice conscious of the development of prayer and spiritual practices, their learning and reflection in the practice, and the vitality of good relationships and collaborative ministry.

Key pillars of The Canterbury Diet are:

- Spiritual accompaniment/direction – how a person attends to God
- Pastoral supervision – how a person attends to the work
-

Ministry specific forms of the Canterbury Diet are available for Incumbents / Priests in Charge, Licensed Lay Ministers, Recognised Lay Minister, Anna Chaplains and Youth Ministers.

This will be reviewed in the light of feedback from the clergy survey undertaken in January 2026.

Cornerstone (Current and developing)

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

Developed by the National Giving Team, Cornerstone is an online generosity tool available free of charge to all Church of England churches. It offers three separate functions: Insights, Pathways and a comprehensive Grants database.

Insights

Cornerstone is designed to help churches develop the most detailed picture they've ever had of their financial situation – whether that's a source of joy or concern. Using Parish Returns data, Cornerstone identifies different types of giving and shares comparisons with other churches, both in the same diocese and nationwide.

Equipped with detailed information, churches can then pursue two different ways of changing or enhancing the picture – Pathways and Grants.

Pathways

The information a church receives from the Insights phase gives them a picture of where they can focus their efforts. Some may only have capacity for one or two 'quick wins', while others are ready for a full-on campaign. There are over 50 Pathways on the platform and churches can undertake as many or as few as they wish.

A Pathway takes a single topic and breaks it down into steps, none of which take longer than half an hour. Templates and links to videos and instructions are provided. You can skip bits that you've done already or aren't suited to your setting. They're a great way of encouraging people to volunteer who are uncertain about something they haven't done before.

Grants database

All churches have completely free access to over 1000 grants, curated for churches. Covering a range of purposes, values and geographic areas, this searchable, filterable database is updated weekly and is the biggest range of grants currently available to churches. Each grant is described and there is a link to the grant making body so you can read further and apply.

CYP Culture Development Matrix (Current and planned)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR

Developing the right culture in churches is essential to flourishing work with children and young people. The **CYP Culture Development Matrix** is set out under the Children and Young People theme.

CYP Advisors will work with parishes/ churches to help them identify which stage they are at within the matrix and help them to develop plans to progress to the next stage. There will be regular check-ins to see how things are developing. Specific training will be overseen by a CYP Training & Development Advisor.

Consultations

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

Every parish was invited to join in a renewed commitment to God's mission – at local level, in their own context – in October 2025.

Our **Three Bold Outcomes** are our shared vision for 2030, but the journey starts with each parish and deanery discerning and committing to the **Three Things** that will move us towards that future.

This reflects a conscious decision to shift the focus of planning and support closer to the **local church**, helping to give them tools and encouragement to lead mission in their community.

The submissions are currently being read and information collated with over eighty per cent of PCCs submitting their proposals.

The aim of the process was to:

- discern where God is already at work

- focus on realistic, honest priorities
- review what's making a difference (and what is not)
- share ideas and identify what support is needed

A **Health and Vitality Review (HVR)** (see below) looked at the missional and financial strength of every parish.

A **clergy survey** was launched in January 2026, and this will inform a key part of the Board's strategy relating to leadership.

Further consultations have taken place on governance, engagement (on-going) and finance/Parish Share.

Deanery Planning (Current and planned extension)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

Deanery plans have been a part of diocesan planning, with various degrees of success, since 2021. Some of the challenges that deaneries have faced in developing their plans were:

- A lack of parish level **Mission Action Plans /Three Things**
- An absence of key data and statistics
- Lack of diocesan support to help with development.

To begin to address these challenges, **Health & Vitality Reviews** were introduced in 2025 to enable Archdeacons, Area Deans and Lay Chairs and Diocesan senior staff to build a picture of the missional and financial health of every parish and aspirations for the next five years. This process has been supported with collation of data into deanery dashboards. Follow-up actions have been identified. These reviews will become a regular part of our annual cycles.

The Health & Vitality Review outcomes and enhanced data set available, will enable a renewed focus on planning that needs to be undertaken at deanery level as part of the three-way conversation.

Discipleship courses (Current and planned expansion)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

Deepening Discipleship: This is an 8-session discipleship course where participants explore their Christian identity, gifting and calling, and how that relates to their daily life, church and wider community.

There is a vocational element to the course, with an expectation that anyone exploring formal ministry will have completed it as part of their discernment process. The course is delivered online twice a year and is also available as a 'pack' for local delivery.

We will develop a set of other courses to create a discipleship pathway that starts from "seeker" and links through to a leadership pathway.

Dover Pathway

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

The **Dover Pathway** is a route to ordination as a Distinctive Deacon or Assistant Priest for those over 65 years old.

It was established in 2025 and is available to candidates who have an established track-record of leadership and ministry in the local church (normally as a Reader or Authorised Lay Minister) and have previously undertaken theological study.

Clergy ordained through this route will be self-supporting and will continue to serve in their current church after their curacy.

Much of the discernment process takes place locally and will include a statement of need from the PCC(s) explaining how the ordination of an additional minister in the benefice enhances its Three Things/Mission Action Plan.

Festival Churches (Current and planned)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

This option is being explored to support parishes who wish to explore some churches becoming Festival churches where they are no longer located where the population is. This involves fostering a strong community involvement and partnership.

Often, particularly in rural areas, the church building has significant resonance locally and even those who do not attend church have an interest in the building as a community asset or civic space.

The focus is on churches doing what they do well. Parishes may wish to explore this to allow their missional efforts to be enhanced in other places.

Focal Ministry (Current and planned)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

Focal Ministry is about leading one church at a time. Each church would have its own local leader as the focal point of its community and embedded within it. The Focal Minister is 'the go to person', working with the local Incumbent. The core definition is a local leader, clergy or lay, who is an 'everyday face of the church' in their local community. Within this role, focal leaders bring an intentional focus on growth, mission and discipleship to the action of the church.

Research so far shows that Focal Ministry is often associated with growth in all three dimensions – numbers of people, depth of discipleship and vitality in the church's relationship with its context. It does however depend on a supply of suitable focal ministers, and on having people with the relational skills to make it work.

A pilot project is in progress within two benefices. Lessons learnt will be applied in an offer to benefices for further rollout.

Fuse Youth Events - with Rochester (Current)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR

Fuse is a large worship event for young people. In 2024, it took place three times as a shared event with Rochester.

Future Youth/ Ministry Experience Scheme (Current)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR

The aim of this is to be part of developing a grass-roots training programme to 'grow our own' leaders within the Diocese.

The Diocese took part in the second pilot year of Future Youth. The decision was made to pursue FY as part of a paid year of employment for participants, rather than the traditional apprenticeship style MES and FY usually take.

This has been successful in that the year of 2024/25 we have 3 employed FY trainees employed across the Diocese. Each participant is employed full-time for this fixed-term, benefits from the Aurora training and FY residentials and are also taking part in the Diocese's second cohort of Catalyst (delivered by Ridley College).

Generous Giving/ Cornerstone (Current and planned extension)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

The Generous Giving team aids revitalisation across the Diocese by promoting giving and generosity in a way that not only funds future mission and growth but also

stimulates discipleship by inviting members of church communities to share in the grace of generosity.

Materials have been developed, and the pace of engagement is increasing.

The aim is to build on work already done in this area by:

- continuing to increase the number of contactless donation devices in churches
- to encourage greater use of online giving
- to encourage churches to engage in positive and meaningful giving campaigns
- to promote the Parish Giving Scheme
- to support churches as they apply for grants
- to encourage churches to promote gifts in wills

Parishes are encouraged to engage in the rollout of Cornerstone, a new tool to help transform the culture of giving, in conjunction with the National Giving Team.

Greenhouse (New)

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

Greenhouse is the Church of England's approach to establishing and growing new Christian communities (sometimes called 'Fresh Expressions').

In Greenhouse you are part of a wider learning community led by the national Greenhouse team, with the support of other teams who are in the same process as you. If there are enough teams in a diocese, this can be done locally. Greenhouse is for all who are called to set up new Christian communities. The aim is to establish new Christian communities that keep going and keep growing.

Growing Young Leaders Programme (Current and planned)

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR

We are building up the volunteer base to empower and build confidence within our churches. We currently run a Growing Young Leaders (GYL) programme each September. [Numbers and outcomes?]

Young People's Pathway Project:

This is envisaged as the following:

- **Stage One** will create a pathway for young people to grow into church leadership with a focus on children and youth ministry.
- **Stage Two** will be to create an experience-based programme which could be offered to those completing Stage One, above. This will include detailed work

experience within the Diocese including placement within a church. Offers of interest from placement churches would be established together with a core training programme and mentored progression.

- **Stage Three** will look at developing a partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University, who would offer a youth ministry qualification. Initial conversations with the university about this indicate they are keen and have the appropriate qualified staff to do provide this. They will need a guarantee of numbers each year of 15-20. Surrounding dioceses can be approached to discuss this further.
- **Stage Four** would follow the MES/Future Youth model (or replicate something similar) and provide a year's apprenticeship/placement at a church setting of the young person's choice. Training them up in that year, with the aim to resource churches within our diocese with a home-grown trained children/youth minister at the end of the pathway programme.

Overall, the proposed model would mean that a young person could take part in growing young leaders whilst doing GCSEs, take part in Stage Two for one or two summers, gain experience in holiday clubs, undertake a formal qualification with Christ Church at 18, and move into MES/Future Youth, finishing as a fully qualified and experienced children and youth minister.

Health & Vitality Reviews

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

The reality of church attendance in this diocese is that of a population approaching one million residents only 1.1 per cent attend church regularly.

Health & Vitality Reviews were introduced in 2025 to enable Archdeacons, Area Deans and Lay Chairs and Diocesan senior staff to build a picture of the missional and financial health of every parish. It also allowed a significant element of local hope with aspirations for the next five years a key component.

Follow-up actions have been identified. These reviews will become a regular part of our annual cycles.

The Health & Vitality Review outcomes and enhanced data set available, will enable a renewed focus on planning that needs to be undertaken at every level as part of the three-way conversation between parishes, deaneries and diocesan staff.

Ignite (Current and planned)

1,2,3

L, AR

In recent years, this diocese has had success in bringing new people to God using the Ignite methodology of "church but not as we know it". It has a distinctive ethos and is

designed to reach out with confidence to the marginalised by means of a weekly magazine-style service preceded by a communal meal. An important part of the concept is to spend time getting to know individuals within the community before inviting them in.

A paid part-time Enabler is funded for a limited period; after that it is expected that the parish will be able to bear the load.

The first tranche of plants has been independently evaluated, and this has been used to develop a checklist for engaging with parishes who wish to take part.

Lay Ministry (Current and planned)

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

Lay ministers use their gifts in a wide variety of different roles, serving alongside ordained ministers. Youth and children's ministers, churchwardens, Readers, and many chaplains, evangelists, missionaries, pioneers, are lay people, who are not ordained.

Lay ministry usually happens in three contexts:

Recognised ministries happen in the local parish, benefice, chaplaincy or fresh expression. Examples of recognised ministry include leading a home group, pastoral care, assisting with children and youth ministry, offering prayer and listening, acting as a chaplaincy assistant or exploring growing church locally.

Selection, recognition and training is usually local, led by the minister in the parish or deanery. Some local ministry roles will have diocesan training too, for example safeguarding courses.

Authorised ministers represent the church in the wider community. Their authorisation (which might be called Commissioning) is from the bishop, and it may be time limited or reviewed regularly. Examples of authorised ministry includes pastoral assistants, worship leaders, preachers, and assistant youth and children's ministers.

Selection may be local or diocesan, while training is usually through a diocesan programme.

Licensed lay ministries represent the church in a public, representative or leadership role. Examples of licensed lay ministers include Readers, licensed lay ministers, lay workers and some lay pioneers.

Licensed lay ministers may be involved in evangelism, mission enabling, teaching, preaching, leading of worship, taking funerals, leading a Fresh Expression and community outreach.

Licenses are issued by the diocesan bishop as required by Canon and are nationally recognised.

Mission and Ministry Leadership Development Programme (Current and planned)

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

Our current leadership programme focuses on:

- Minister as Learner;
- Minister as Leader;
- Minister as Missioner.

Other offerings include Dealing with Conflict etc

Future context

Led by a Training & Development Co-ordinator, we will develop a range of leadership development courses to supplement current offerings.

Leading your Church into Growth (LyCiG) (Current with planned expansion)

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

A two-day conference led by the national LyCiG team and an ongoing diocesan process for local church leaders to introduce and establish growth principles and practice into the bloodstream of their own communities. The course takes the form of an open seminar with interactive talks, practical exercises, workshops and time and space for personal reflection. Times of informal conversation provide opportunities for the national LyCiG team to answer questions and to explore the profile of individual churches.

It is crucial for ordained leaders to attend the course and follow through with a small team of lay leaders. Post-conference discussion and planning in the parish is essential.

So far there have been 2 conferences involving ~200 people and 50 parishes. The follow-up has not been as rigorous as it needs to be, and this is being addressed. The next conference being held later in 2026 has 20 parishes pre-booked.

Missional Partnerships

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

Missional partnerships are collaborative by definition and aims to encourage churches and communities to share spiritual, financial and social learning and expertise. At its heart is the belief that no one should be left behind and that we are one diocese and one church.

Churches are forming groups to share resources and strengthen ties as Mission Partners and will be supported by the creation of learning hubs, training resources, conferences and sharing expertise.

Informed by the **Consultations** (see above) that have taken place across the diocese parishes, benefices, clergy and volunteers will be supported as they share what is good, what works (and does not) and develop platforms and opportunities to enable each other to flourish.

Myriad (New)

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

Like Greenhouse, Myriad exists to help everyday people to form new church communities. It is part of the Gregory Centre for Church Multiplication. It works in partnership with local church leaders to raise up and send out these lay leaders as they seek to reach new people in new ways with the Gospel. It provides oversight training to help equip clergy for this journey.

The Myriad Pathway lasts 2.5yrs and consists of five in-person gatherings, mentoring for the lay leaders and online learning. It is attended by 6-12 teams each of which has 2-6 team members. It works in partnership with a local team of church leaders who take responsibility for recruitment, organisation, and ongoing supervision.

Ordained Ministry

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

The Church of England actively seeks to help people from a wide variety of backgrounds and contexts to answer the question, 'Is God calling me to ordained ministry?'

People may be called to:

- Distinctive deacon or priest
- Incumbent (lead a congregation, church or team) or assistant (part of a team) focus
- Full-time or part-time ministry
- Stipendiary (paid) or self-supporting ministry (unpaid)

Training can be part-time or full-time depending on your circumstances. Some ordinands live in college and study fulltime, and others might live in their own homes and either study part-time around working commitments or do a 'contextual' or 'mixed-

mode' course which is fulltime and includes both study and working in a parish context, as directed by your sponsoring bishop.

Parish Giving Scheme (Current)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

The Parish Giving Scheme is a Direct Debit scheme for churches. The promotion of the Parish Giving Scheme is a priority for the National Giving Team and makes it easy for people to give freely and increase their giving. Donors can sign up online, via paper form or on the telephone and have the option of increasing their gift annually in line with inflation which ensures their giving remains dynamic. The scheme can now also be used for 'one-off' gifts. Use of the scheme aids the collection of Gift Aid on regular gifts and eases administration for treasurers.

Parish Training Programme (Current and planned)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

Across the church, key volunteers, such as church wardens and treasurers, often cite a lack support and training. A reduction in both volunteers and volunteered time reduces the capacity of churches to care for their clergy and their congregations and to reach out to their community.

The DBF offer to clergy too needs to include practical and effective help.

Closely linked to this will be the establishment and encouragement of mutual support networks between similar roles with geographic areas.

Renew Wellbeing (Current and planned)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

The Disability Project at Faith and Public Life is partnering with dioceses across England to undertake a pilot for implementing Renew Wellbeing spaces. We have been selected as a Diocese for funded support. This will involve us being able to offer free information, training, and support in person to any parish in the Diocese wanting to open a Renew Wellbeing space.

Resourcing Churches (Current)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

Resource churches are designed to plant and revitalise churches, increase discipleship within communities and develop leaders. The focus is on new disciples through a clear vision and strategic aims.

With funding support from the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) we have invested in **Resourcing Churches** in Margate (Holy Trinity/St. Paul's) and Maidstone (St. Luke's/St. Faith's). Each is showing good growth especially amongst children and young people. They are also developing future leaders to support revitalisation elsewhere across the diocese. They are expected to support nearby parishes.

Rural Hubs (New)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

Within the Rural Strategy, five new rural hubs will be established to provide focussed support to ministry in rural areas to help combat the isolation that can be experienced. These hubs will provide active support and will be facilitated by a Rural Development Officer.

Strategic Mission Fund

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

A fund that parishes and deaneries can apply to develop missional plans. See the Strategic Mission Fund section of this document.

Three Things (Mission Action Plans) (Current and planned)

[1,2,3](#)

CYP, L, AR, F

Mission Action Plans are inspired by God and grounded in prayer that seek to grow the church and keep mission at the centre.

Research shows that churches that want to grow and that have a clear plan are more likely to do so. The Mission Action Planning process helps churches to grow spiritually, numerically and in their presence, mission and witness in their community. A 'MAP' helps us to work towards the Three Bold Outcomes, as we plan action in our local context which enables us and others to grow and flourish.

We re-imagined MAPs into the diocese in 2024 and in 2025 the Bishop of Dover invited every parish to submit their plans by the end of the year. Over 80% responded. We called this “**Three Things**”.

All the plans have been reviewed and the key themes identified. The plans have been shared with Area Deans and Lay Chairs. In 2026 and beyond we want to follow up with every parish to support them in working through the realisation of their plans. MAPs will become part of an annual cycle which will include reviewing progress on previous actions and plans for the forthcoming year.

Wonder Community (Prayer Community) (Current)

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

‘Wonder’ is a year-long journey in community, discovering together the varied landscapes of prayer. Gathering for ten sessions across the year, it has three foci: praying together, learning together and journeying together.

Having run a pilot of ‘Wonder’, we observe it to have significant revitalisation benefits for the diocese, including but not limited to:

- A group committed to praying with and for the diocese is a valuable gift to our ongoing mission and ministry.
- A small group of people going deeper in prayer acts as a seed planted, and the context in which that seed is planted is impacted as that seed grows.
- A group committed to journeying together in prayer brings to light people who have the gifting and desire to further develop prayer locally and across the diocese.

Youth Ministers (Current)

1

CYP, L

In 2023 the Canterbury Diocesan Board of Finance secured SMMIB funding for seven youth ministers across the diocese. Five are currently in place in St. Luke’s Maidstone, All Saints Loose, St. John’s Folkestone, St Alphege Seasalter and St. Mary’s Goudhurst. Recruitment is in progress at St. Andrew’s Reading Street. Funding tapers down over 5 years with the goal of each parish being able to fully financially support a youth minister thereafter. There have been difficulties in recruiting youth ministers and the project has experienced a significant turn-over of staff

SMMIB projects are subject to annual review. A project re-set is in progress to ensure that lessons are learnt from the project to-date and revised plans are in place for the remainder of the project. There are no plans to expand the number of youth ministers in the project currently whilst we assess the outcomes of the refocussed Project.

A far better and more sustainable approach requires the development of a children and young people culture across the Diocese and within churches.

Youthscape Launchpad (Current)

1,2,3

CYP, L, AR, F

We have delivered three Youthscape's Launchpad courses so far. These are for cohorts of up to ten clergy, whose churches have little to no youth work taking place. It provides clergy with an understanding of how to start youth work and grow from something small. Many clergy have progressed initiatives as a result.

Finance Overview

Prior to the commencement of the review into diocesan finances in 2024 Archbishops' Council noted: "The current financial pressures in the system and the complexity of financial arrangements, can be a constraint to, rather than an enabler of, effective missional planning and action". Diocesan deficits had risen from £29m to £62m in a little over three years.

The overall aim of the review was "ease dioceses' current financial stress in a way which helps to develop the Church's longer-term missional and financial health." It aimed to focus on the financial support of dioceses by the National Church Institutions ("NCIs") and the simplification of the Church's financial systems, "primarily in respect of financial flows between dioceses and the National Church Institutions."

Whether the review has achieved this will be shown in time. The imposition of a near eleven per cent increase in stipends undermined much of the work and goodwill the review had generated. That is not to say the increase was not merited but its late inclusion in the review damaged relationships.

At the same time, Canterbury Diocesan Board of Finance had recognised the need for a comprehensive review of its own finances.

Overview

Within the 2024 accounts, we had been concerned at the inclusion of £508,000 restricted fund expenditure which impacted the Unrestricted (Operational) Deficit. This will now be removed, reducing the 2024 unrestricted deficit to £658,000 and meaning in future years Synod can have greater confidence in the figures presented to it.

Costs, as percentage of the total expenditure, have fallen and we will continue to explore options to reduce these further without reducing the services offered.

The proposals for the 2026 Budget included:

- 10.7% and 3.5% stipend and salary increases respectively
- A flat 1.25% increase in Parish Share
- To use one-ninth of the nine-year "Cliff-edge" funding being allocated to the diocese (or £222,000)
- To use one-third of the proposed sales (expected to generate £3m, therefore £250,000 a year) over four years creating a "Property Ring-fenced Fund" with the balance and future sales, the interest on which will be used to carry out improvements to clergy homes
- Various cost cutting/income increasing measures totalling £92,000

Financial Sustainability

Plans were presented in March, July and November setting out how the Diocesan Board of Finance could secure a sustainable missional and financial future:

- Balancing the budget by 2030
- Selling unused housing and bringing together a programme of Glebe sales
- Submitting a funding request to SMMIB

- Seeking a settlement with the National Church Institutions
- Controlling costs

To succeed, all five challenges must be met.

This represents a cautious approach while we assess the impact of the funding changes in 2026, but it produces a roadmap to a balanced budget with scope for flexibility in how and when that is achieved.

In total there is significantly more funding (over £130m more) available for distribution to dioceses in this triennium than in the previous one from the National Church Institutions.

The composition of this funding has changed with more formulaic funding - through more LINC and new additional time-limited support. Other changes, including the removal of apportionment, and stipend changes have implications for diocesan finances; these changes will have implications of this for our financial plans for the next three- and six-year cycles.

The main changes

The changes from the Diocesan Finances Review include:

- an allocation of £200m time-limited funding over 9 years
- £100m of this will be allocated in 2026-2028
- The majority of the 2026-28 funding – £63m – will be distributed by formula
- £37m is also available for distribution using the DIP application process, ring fenced for time-limited support. (The purpose of the funding is to provide dioceses with short-term help to avoid making sub-optimal missional decisions whilst their longer-term plans to develop missional health and financial sustainability bear fruit. Some DIP funding has been provided for that purpose in 2023-25 and the availability of the ‘DIP time-limited funding’ in 2026-28 provides additional help.)
- An increase in Lowest Income Community funding of £10m nationally
- The removal of apportionment
- A centrally administered Ministry Training Fund

Impact on Canterbury DBF Finances

Overall, the changes to funding will have a positive impact on the finances of Canterbury DBF:

Diocese *	After TL formula funding	Eliminate Apportionment & Maintenance	Ministry Training Fund (MTF)	Additional LINC	Sub-Total Net Impact	As % Income	Stipend Increase	Total Net Impact
Canterbury	4%	694,996	-212,481	286,765	769,280	7%	-348,288	420,992

Lowest Income Communities Funding (LInC)

The most deprived communities have 60% less church attendance and 40% less ministry per capita compared to the least deprived. LInC funding is critical support to sustain flourishing ministry in areas of greatest need which will never be self-financing. LInC is a key foundation in the funding model of this Diocese. LInC has also declined slightly in real terms due to recent high inflation.

The annual amount received by Canterbury DBF will rise to £1,145,415 from 2026. With some changes to demographics, this is a net increase of around £252,000.

Apportionment/Ministry Training

The elimination of the apportionment (i.e. those costs previously paid by Dioceses to the National Church Institutions) will benefit the finances by £695,000 per annum. However, there will be contributions to a new national “Ministry Training Fund” of £212,500 from 2026.

Overall, these changes result in a significant improvement in the Board’s financial position.

Time-limited support/“Cliff-edge” funding

In addition to the measures announced above, a little over £2million, tapered over nine years has been allocated to Canterbury DBF. This is unrestricted and without any requirement to apply for it.

Canterbury DBF now has access to a further £875,000 of funding specifically aimed at assisting the Board moving to a position greater financial security. This represents a twenty-five per cent increase on the £3.5m of funding allocated to the Diocese by SMMIB for the 2026-2028 triennium.

Underlying commitments

It is worth taking stock on the progress of the proposals that will allow the Board a greater degree of financial security:

- Plans have been drawn up to sell several properties no longer required to support ministry. Backed up by new policies designed to protect capital receipts, the Board anticipates using most of the proceeds to create a ring-fenced fund and use the interest paid on that to provide a budget for improvements to clergy homes.
- A programme of glebe sales is being drawn up with advice from the Board’s independent surveyors. With input from the NZC Steering Group, all options for the land will be explored but sales of this land will allow the Board to assure itself of a missionally and financially secure future. When sales are proposed, the Board is uniquely positioned to use its influence to support the local community interest and act as a trusted partner for developers and other land uses.
- The funding request to SMMIB is a work in progress and is being led at local level through Mission Action Plans. As confirmed at the Roadshows and elsewhere, DBF staff will be available to every PCC or benefice who wishes to engage with us in this. This is a significant change and allows us to say with certainty that we are empowering the local church to lead mission. A core of this has been led through The Three Things and there has been a very encouraging response from PCCs to this request.
- One of the core principles of the funding request will be a new Rural Strategy and work continues at pace, led by clergy and laity and supported by the Archdeacons and staff.

- Another stream we are actively pursuing is a Mission Action Fund which will provide funds from SMMIB for grants for mission at local level. This will support those ideas local churches across the diocese wish to see, allowing Mission to flourish.

The settlement from the National Church Institutions is only the beginning of this process. The Board will pursue the options open to it, including seeking further funding from the allocation made for the next three years. Where opportunities exist, we will work with our colleagues in other dioceses.

Our engagement has made a difference. The Board was able to successfully push for the exclusion of DBE assets in calculating the settlement we have been given.

We continue to control costs and as a percentage of overall expenditure, costs have fallen by one percentage point. We are working on proposals for further savings and income generation.

Working in Partnership with PCCs

To ensure stability as we approach 2030, Synod approved the following measures and aims:

1. To work with PCCs to achieve payment of at least 92% of Parish Share by 2030
2. To ensure that a commitment to pay Parish Share is given before an appointment
3. To provide as much certainty as possible regarding clergy numbers
4. To provide increased support for parishes recruiting clergy

Next steps

It is anticipated the consultation over the annual budget, set out over 2025, will continue in the future. The Board will seek to ensure Synod is involved throughout the process in the years ahead with greater opportunity for challenge and shared learning.

Financial Strategy

The initial “Gap” Analysis undertaken in the summer of 2025 identified the following:

Sub-theme	Why is this an issue?	Where would we like to be?	What have we learnt so far?	How will we get there?
Investment in mission	Lack of historical investment available to support mission. There has been a reduction from 150 to 100 FTE clergy over the last 15 years, not by positive intention, but by a need to “balance the books”. If we wish to support intentional mission, we must find ways to support it.	Maximising investment from the SMMIB Diocesan Investment Programme	Two successful SMMIB bids in 2023 and 2024. Learning from other dioceses. Reviews with key NCI subject-matter experts. Bid template available.	Successful holistic bid to SMMIB Mission Action Fund . Sale of spare clergy housing. Sale of glebe for development. Receipts used to create investment fund with interest used for mission.
Giving	There is a shortfall on parish share received which leads to a deficit in the diocesan budget. This has to be covered by sale of assets and is not sustainable.	Parish share payments received in full.	Parish Giving Scheme has worked well for many parishes. Net parish assets have increased which indicates a potential trust issue.	Keep Parish Share increases to a minimum with openness to To succeed, all five challenges must be met. rebuild trust. Generous Giving & Fundraising Team. Cornerstone.
Parochialism	Parishes rarely support each other and often consider themselves to be in competition or protective of their resources.	Health & Vitality Tier 1 parishes supporting other parishes. Tier 3 & 4 parishes being helped and encouraged.	Starting to see some intentional inter-parish support through our resourcing churches and, to some extent, our youth ministers.	Health & Vitality review. Deanery planning to explore partnerships within deaneries, pastoral re-organisation etc..
Buildings	Many of our church buildings are Grade I or II listed. These buildings consume much of parish resources and finances and can detract from missional activity.	Resourced support to parishes to provide them with expert advice and guidance. Facilitated buildings partnerships that enable group capacity.	Attention to buildings can swamp missional priorities, especially where there are missing church wardens and the building falls to clergy to oversee.	Buildings Officer. Building partnerships.

However, it is recommended that a closer look at the practical solutions that can be offered to PCCs ought to be undertaken as soon as possible and developed as part of the wider review of diocesan strategy.

Governance and management

At the heart of all we do is a vision of transformation for ourselves and our communities: no one can encounter God and remain unchanged. As a diocese, we are called together to further God's Kingdom, and having the appropriate support structures in place is key to developing this.

The purpose of diocesan-level governance is to enable the flourishing of local mission and ministry within the diocese, by having effective and efficient decision-making processes, such that the allocation of resources and co-ordination of activities allows us all to most fruitfully work together for the Glory of God.

A review, begun in 2025, found that the current structure is unclear and complex.

Reporting lines are not always clear, with some overlapping remit and several groups lacking Terms of Reference working with those that were or out of date.

A DBF Staff survey indicated concerns over effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency of governance. Although staff understood their role and authority, they saw lack of good cross working and communication and did not think governance overall was sufficiently effective and efficient or clear on how decisions were made.

The following is a summary of the challenges identified in current governance:

- Clarity of authority – which groups/people make decisions over exactly what areas is not clear
- Communication & transparency - leading from confusion of decision making, unclear to many what groups exist and what remit of each is
- Clarity of purpose - some groups themselves unclear what their role was exactly and how fitted together with other groups. Some groups straddle multiple roles.
- Alignment of purpose - Lack of sense of all pulling in the same direction, joined-up under common aim or strategy
- Strategic oversight - lack of clarity of overall strategic direction (particularly felt by ABC members) and ability for oversight
- Efficiency - given the above challenges, unsurprising that sense of groups not being as efficient as they could be

What is required is a clearer, transparent structure to hold all DBF activity together so all pulling in the same direction.

A single group overseeing strategy delivery; including alignment of BAU ('business' as usual activity) and change projects became a recurring theme throughout the consultations (clergy, chairs, committee members, staff, trustees).

A new model, showing clear roles of each group, separating out decision making from consultation/championing roles, and strategic or operational focus with clarity of delegated authority for groups and staff has evolved.

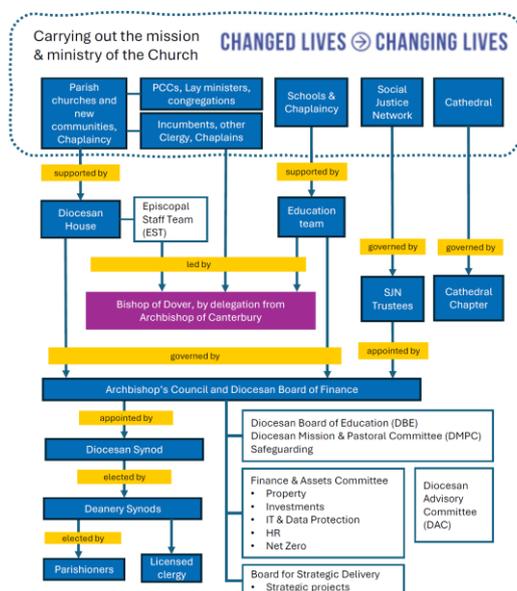
All the governance, leadership and operations/staff associated with the DBF, DBE and other diocesan bodies, ought to be there to support and enable the local mission and ministry of the Church of England in the diocese. Although this review focused just on

the aspects of DBF governance, that is not to diminish or discard any of the other critical elements of the diocese.

A diocese is Episcopally led and synodically governed, which presents unique challenges. It is only the aspects of governance within the DBF that were in scope of the review.

Proposals are expected to be placed before Diocesan Synod in March with implementation from July.

What follows is a working draft of the new proposals:



A copy of the more detailed proposals is in the Appendix.

Canterbury Diocesan Board of Finance (CDBF, the charity or the Board) was incorporated as a company on 29 December 1916 to manage the financial affairs of the diocese and to hold its assets. Every member of Diocesan Synod is a member of CDBF for company law purposes, and similarly Archbishop's Council comprises the Trustees.

The Board is a company limited by guarantee and as such has no share capital. The Board is a registered charity, and its Trustees are the same people who serve as the Board of Directors for company law purposes. The Board together with its subsidiary entities comprises the 'group.'

The principal object of the charity and the group is to promote and assist the work of the Church of England for the advancement of the Christian faith in the Diocese of Canterbury.

The management of the charity and the group is the responsibility of the Trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the Articles of Association.

Strategic Mission Fund

We hope to create a **Strategic Mission Fund (SMF)** which supports the implementation of the vision through the flourishing and growing of Christian communities across the diocese. Through active engagement with the diocesan **Three Things** mission action plan launch in 2025 it is clear there is an appetite for missional growth across this part of Kent.

The Fund will aim to support churches in developing their mission and ministry to children and young people and their families.

How it is being delivered:

1. Missional leaders – missional focused, well-equipped team leaders, who can realise the vision in their benefice.

This will be achieved by better support for recruitment and development of Missional Incumbent Leaders through:

- The appointment of missional leaders where vacancies arise.
- Strengthened approach to clergy and lay development – leadership development, mission accompaniment, peer communities to share learning

2. Mission – an outward-facing culture of mission, evangelism, and service within Christian communities.

- Missional leaders are supported to develop outward-looking, missional congregations, along with support for key activities in deepening discipleship
- Missional Incumbents are given appropriate support and development
- Support and resources for activities deepening discipleship
- Resource focused on working with benefices to develop missional groups
- Diocesan-wide LYCiG process for interested churches
- Access to a Strategic Mission Fund (SMF) to support locally discerned missional activity

3. Attendance Revitalisation

We will develop and support parishes that have demonstrated significant growth, enabling them to act as models and mentors for other communities.

These parishes will be equipped to offer resources, guidance, encouragement, and support to neighbouring parishes. Each place will be equipped for planting in the form of parish plants/grafts and New Worshipping Communities.

Additionally in XX of these contexts we expect to be able to strengthen and resource them for planting/grafting into churches within our Revitalising Churches workstream. They will actively demonstrate that the challenges of declining attendance, lack of outreach and unsustainability can be overcome.

- Replicating and sharing success
- Utilising knowledge from previous experience, deliver new worshipping communities, increase church attendance and commitment to faith through context specific

- Support to resource others – sharing knowledge and expertise with others in similar context
- Applying innovative approaches in places where opportunity and potential has been identified
- Providing resources for ministry in places of new population or significant population change
- Providing evangelistic ‘access to faith’ through established Arts activities, including choral music

4. Financial Strategy

Plans have been presented throughout 2025 setting out how the Diocesan Board of Finance could secure a sustainable missional and financial future:

- Balancing the budget by 2030
- Selling unused housing and bringing together a programme of Glebe sales
- Submitting a funding request to SMMIB
- Seeking a settlement with the National Church Institutions
- Controlling costs

To succeed, all five challenges must be met.

This represents a cautious approach while we assess the impact of the funding changes in 2026, but it produces a roadmap to a balanced budget with scope for flexibility in how and when that is achieved.

To ensure stability as we approach 2030, Synod approved the following measures and aims:

- Payment of at least 92% of Parish Share by 2030
- A commitment to pay Parish Share is given before an appointment is made
- To provide as much certainty as possible regarding clergy numbers
- To provide increased support for parishes recruiting clergy

5. Vocations – locally discerned and developed leaders in Christian communities who enable the delivery of the vision.

- Incumbents are encouraged to be leaders of vocational development and to discern new lay ministers.
- Flexible training is available to all that is clearly publicised and promoted, delivered locally (wherever possible) or online.
- Vocation champions are deployed across the diocese.
- Resource focused on intentionally identifying and developing people into vocations.

6. Intentional focus and intervention on ‘Doubling the Number of Children and Young Disciples’

- Investment in mission resources (including the recruitment of children and families and youth missionaries) in agreed priority locations to develop work with younger people.
- Rural Resourcing Hubs and Groups
- Church plants

- Employed Pioneers, supporting areas as identified in locally discerned plans.

7. Diocesan support offer that enables a focus on mission and growth at a local level.

- Project and Programme Managers to support monitoring, reporting, governance, and evaluation.
- Communications capacity and support for the change process.
- A data analyst to support improved data collection, analysis, and mapping.
- Resource to ensure timely response and support to requests from priority areas that enable better focus on mission (e.g. HR, buildings, governance, finances, income generation).

8. Harder to fill vacancies

With decline in attendance and other financial challenges such as maintaining church buildings, rising costs etc. parishes have felt increased financial strain. The diocese has been running at a deficit for several years and selling assets to meet the gap, but this is not sustainable. So, we need to focus on improving our financial situation and finding a way to meet our costs sustainably.

What will the funding be used for

- Leadership development, learning sets and mission accompaniment
- Development of training and support resources
- Resources to support development of missional groups
- Investment in paid context ministry (children & family, youth, pioneer)
- Church planting
- Overall programme support, (Programme Director, communications support, HR)

Programme Support, Development and Review

The Governance Review has identified the need to streamline and clarify governance arrangements. Specifically in relation to the strategy, the new Board for Strategic Delivery will have responsibility and oversight of the delivery of the board's strategy. It will ensure that alignment of all resources in support of strategy delivery is maximised.

A new Strategic Delivery Director will chair the new board, supported by a small secretariat function to ensure smooth operation. The Strategic Delivery Director is a part-time role.

The Programme Office will oversee the extended number of strategic projects and interventions set out in this document. It will focus on ensuring that good project management is in place and clear measurement of progress, budgets, and outcomes. It will take the lead on annual SMMIB project reviews.

With the retirement in June 2026 of the Strategic Programme Manager, the Strategic Delivery Director will take the lead on overall programme management. It is proposed that there be two project managers to manage the increased number of projects across the strategy.

A full-time Data and Measurement Analyst has been in place since August 2024 and has significantly enhanced the availability and analysis of critical data to bring insight to inform our strategy. This role needs to continue.

A part-time strategy accountant was added to the Programme Office in April 2025. This has made a significant difference to the financial management of the programme. With the expansion in the number of projects going forward, it is proposed to increase this to a full-time role.

Half a post in the Media and Engagement team is funded through the strategy to ensure that our strategy is fully embedded. It is proposed that this will continue.

Possible Resources

- Strategic Delivery Director – part-time
- Board for Strategic Delivery secretariat – part-time
- Senior Project Manager
- Project Manager
- Data & Measurement Analyst
- Strategy Accountant
- Media & Engagement Officer – part-time