



Diocese of Canterbury  
CHANGED LIVES → CHANGING LIVES

# STRATEGY UPDATE

## TOWARDS A FLOURISHING & SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Diocese of Canterbury  
September 2022



## Contents

- **Introduction: Bishop Rose**..... 3
- **Our vision**..... 4
- **Playing our part in the bigger picture**..... 4
- **Deanery Plans**..... 6
- **Strategic themes**..... 7
  - Overall working changes..... 7
  - Everyday Faith..... 7
  - Prioritising Young People..... 8
  - Mutuality and Parish Share..... 10
  - Review of Central and Support Costs..... 10
  - Ministry - Lay and Ordained..... 11
  - Structures and Organisation..... 12
  - Church Revitalising, Planting and Church buildings..... 13
  - Environmental Justice..... 14
- **Update on our Financial Strategy**..... 15
- **What next?**..... 16





## Introduction: Bishop Rose



Our Changed Lives → Changing Lives Strategy was set out in the [Towards a Flourishing and Sustainable Future](#) document which was adopted by our Diocesan Synod in July 2021. That was intentionally a first step. It emerged from our season of listening and discernment in Autumn 2020 and incorporated the 'golden threads' from that process that reflected the concerns, opportunities and contexts that our parishes and deaneries were engaging with. It drew these threads together into a number of strategic themes with the expectation that these would be our collective priorities for the coming years.

The document also included 15 individual deanery plans - plans that had emerged from local conversations, reflecting parish priorities, resourcing and vision. Both the strategic themes and the deanery plans were never fixed - each needed to evolve and grow as we got down to the crucial kingdom-building work to which we are all called at every level of our diocese.

And so now we have a new document - not one that replaces what has come before, but that builds on it, reflecting and contributing to this evolution. This document, too, is provisional, an update. It is intended to show how we have progressed since July 2021, how our thinking has developed over this time - and it looks ahead to the further work that needs doing. I am especially grateful to our deaneries and parishes for their continuing work on this - for the care, time and commitment they have shown in developing local plans and in working collaboratively to develop a vision for the future.

As you will see below, there is much to celebrate, even as we begin our recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Our participation in an Easter attendance survey showed that, when you factor in online attendance, Easter Day churchgoing in Canterbury Diocese has recovered to 94% of pre-pandemic levels. Additionally, our six Ignite communities have relaunched and are continuing to grow. Every day I hear wonderful stories of how people are meeting God and being blessed by their parishes - thank you! In all of this, my overwhelming feeling is one of privilege and gratitude. Canterbury is a wonderful diocese to serve - creative, deeply spiritual in its roots and profoundly generous in its character. It is my prayer that we keep hold of some of that excitement as we look to the future together - trusting God with our fears, offering to him our faith and our gifts in return.

Thank you for your part in this work - be assured of my continuing prayers,

+ Rose

**The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin**  
**Bishop of Dover**





## Our vision

Changed Lives → Changing Lives

### 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!

### Therefore we will...

.....

'Therefore we will...' is a recognition that words without actions are empty. It is a commitment to taking real steps *now* to make this vision a reality *soon*. The current actions that flow from this vision are outlined over the rest of this document. Of course, these actions will change and develop over time - and it's exciting that some of our parishes are already considering this vision carefully for themselves, exploring together what actions they will commit to take, what their local 'Therefore we will...' might look like.

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## Playing our part in the bigger picture

As our diocesan vision and strategy have been developing, so too has the Church of England's. Nationally, this is the vision of a Church for the whole nation which is Jesus Christ centred, and shaped by, the five marks of mission. A Church that is simpler, humbler, bolder. The Church of England has three priorities:

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

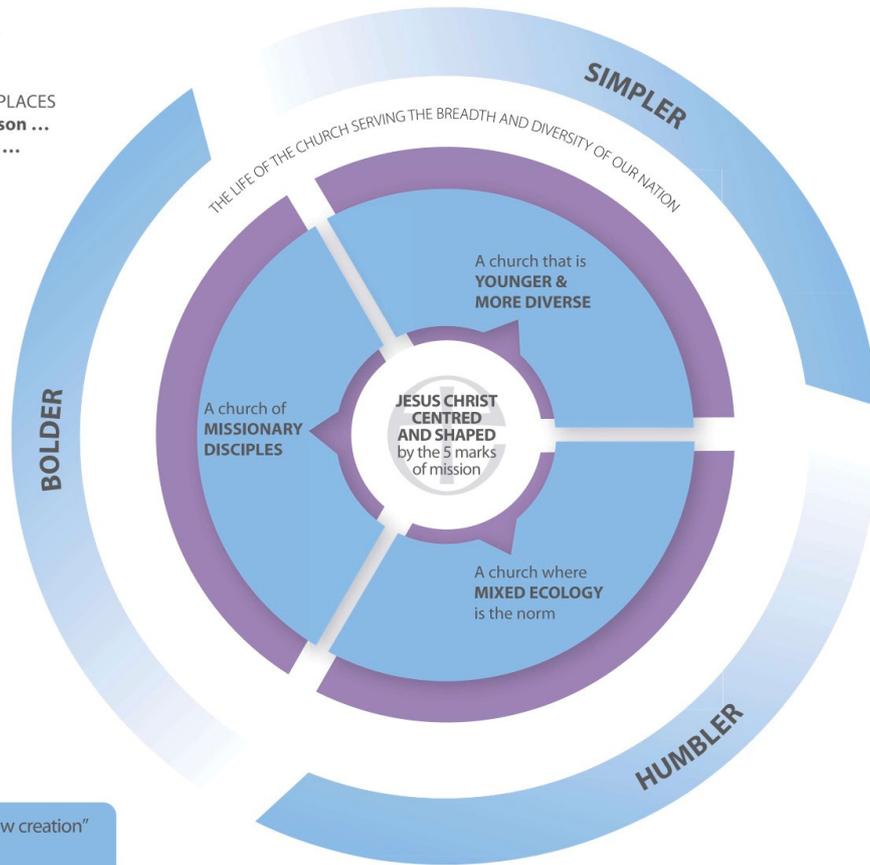
More information about this vision and strategy can be found on [the Church of England website](#). The Church Commissioners have recently announced significantly enhanced levels of funding that will be made available over the next nine years to support the delivery of the national and local vision.





**A VISION FOR  
 THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
 IN THE 2020s**

A CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLE IN ALL PLACES  
 ... a Christian vision for every person ...  
 ... a Christian vision for the world ...



"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation"  
 (2 Corinthians 5:17)

There is a strong alignment between this and our own vision and strategy. Our diocesan vision is intentionally framed around the five marks of mission and our desire to be bolder in faith and action is reflected in our local call to develop confident disciples who are 'open to the Spirit and ready for adventure'. The national commitment to become 'younger and more diverse' is also strongly echoed in our strategic themes and in the work already well underway in our deaneries through parishes, schools and our Ignite communities.

Most importantly, at the roots of both can be found a recognition that the heart of our calling is to become a Church of missionary disciples, confidently and creatively sharing our faith and engaged in changing lives and our communities for the better.

As both national and diocesan strategies evolve, we will need to ensure that the heart of our vision remains strongly linked - and we will work to demonstrate this relationship when seeking national funding for our work.

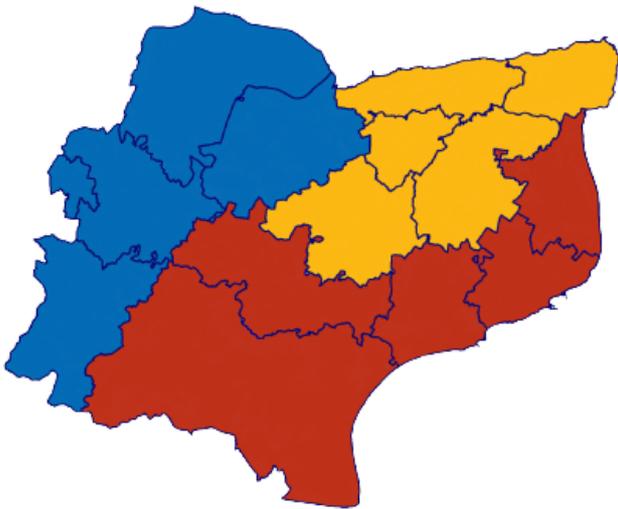




## Deanery plans

One of the great strengths of our diocese is the confidence we place in planning at a deanery level – and in the expertise and knowledge of our lay chairs and area deans in particular. Our 2021 report included detailed plans developed by each of our fifteen deaneries with the support of their archdeacons and our diocesan staff team. These plans emerged from a series of focussed conversations about mission, finance, ministry and buildings and have further helped to shape our strategy as a whole.

Like our broader strategy, the deanery plans continue to develop. Deaneries are working to refine and develop their ideas and to forecast resourcing needs and challenges. Over the past few months, a template has been created to help deaneries lay out and monitor the key elements of their plans and develop the potential to join up themes and activities across multiple deaneries. This will enable us to offer credible evidence when seeking the support of national funds for local initiatives.



Deanery Mission Accompaniment is widely valued but cannot be sustained in its present form now that we have fewer diocesan staff. At the same time, it's clear that a more focused way of training and supporting area deans and lay chairs is required in their complex and challenging roles.

We've found that Action Learning Sets are the most effective way of enabling mutual support, challenge, training and focused action and have been working to pilot this concept with deanery leadership teams. We hope this will see area deans & lay chairs from three deaneries offering one another mutual support through facilitated action-centred learning. Initial feedback is very positive and we're hoping that all five of these groups will be established by autumn 2022 to incorporate all deaneries.

As this work continues, we're placing greater emphasis on mutuality across our diocese, deaneries and parishes - where the needs, resources and challenges of our individual parts help to shape and develop our collective mission and ministry. We're also seeking to better share stories of what's working well - and what lessons have been learned - more widely, so that we can learn from and be inspired by one another.

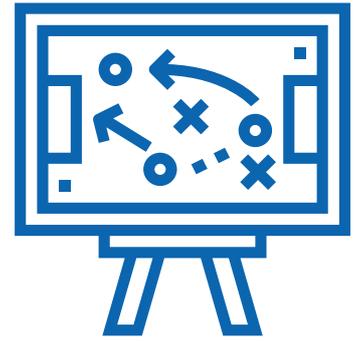




## Strategic themes

### Overall working changes

Our strategy is about how we can become a flourishing diocesan family. This inevitably means a renewed focus on growth - both in terms of spiritual maturity, but also numerically. We are unashamedly seeking to grow our congregations and establish new worshipping communities. It is now clear that growth should have been explicitly included as a theme in its own right in our original document, rather than leaving it as implied. In the future, we will look to make this much more explicit. When we are ready to share the next iteration of our deanery plans, we will need to define more clearly what we believe flourishing communities look like and whether expressing that explicitly in our expected outcomes would be helpful.



Work on our Church Buildings theme showed that there was very little appetite for more radical approaches in our parishes and deaneries. Everywhere the focus seems to be much more on how we might re-energise congregations and parishioners to re-imagine their church buildings. Therefore we have chosen to incorporate this strand of our work into our Church Revitalisation and Planting theme.

During the Covid-19 pandemic it became even more evident that so many of our churches are actively and generously involved in social action in their parishes, seeking to meet the needs of those who are most vulnerable in their communities. This work is developing well and, while we remain committed to supporting that, it does not need a separate focus.

However, one area of our commitment to God's world that does need more focus is that of our care for creation. In particular, we are committed to the Church of England's goal of achieving carbon net zero by 2030. Our Social and Environmental Justice theme has therefore been simplified to allow us to focus more intentionally on environmental justice.



### Everyday Faith (formerly 24/7 Discipleship)

The change of name reflects what we want to see - ordinary people using ordinary language to talk about and live out practically what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Bishop Rose's four priorities - Prayer, Bible Study, Generosity and Evangelism - are not only embedded in our vision statement, they are part of our everyday lives as Christians, promoted and supported in schools and churches in every corner of our diocese.





Progress made on this strand of our strategy includes:

- Our [Deepening Discipleship course](#), both online and in real life, has drawn people closer to God, as well prompting some to look for new ways to serve (see Ministry).
- [Changing Lives Conversations](#) continue to be a very simple way of breaking down barriers to everyday evangelism by encouraging ordinary churchgoers to talk to each other about the difference their faith makes in their lives. They also help us to explore how we can better support one another as Christians, day by day.
- Our [Changing Lives Prayer Network](#) encourages anyone who prays to listen for God's voice and connect with each other in solidarity through prayer. The network produces a range of resources to enable us all to pray more and pray more deeply.
- Use of [Dwelling in the Word](#) - a distinctive way of listening to God, scripture and each other - has reached way beyond its original use by those directly involved in Missional Learning Communities (see Church Revitalisation & Planting) to become a deeply fruitful experience for many in our parishes.
- Our [Year of Living Generously](#) has prompted many to explore new generous habits and reflect on how each of us can step into God's 'flow of generosity'. While some explore generosity in relation to money (see Mutuality and Parish Share), it's so much more than that - it's an invitation to let our gratitude for God's generosity infuse everything we do and all that we are.



## Prioritising Children and Young People

We want to see children, young people and households coming to faith, growing in discipleship and contributing confidently and creatively to the Kingdom of God. Church schools and parish churches stand at the centre of this mission, promoting a deeply Christian vision of life in all its fullness and emphasising that this fullness and flourishing is for everyone. We are called to reflect the breadth and diversity of God's people and we are impoverished when children and young people are missing from our life.

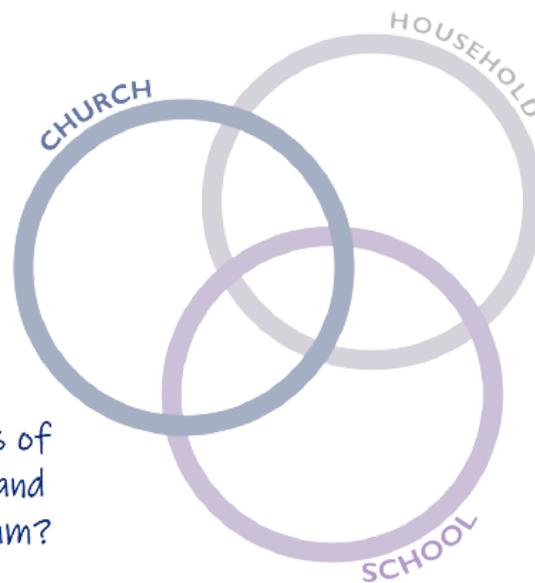
Progress made on this strand of our strategy includes:

- St. Mary Bredin Church in Canterbury has become our first [Growing Faith](#) (GF) Hub, serving our wider diocese with advice, support and resources for discipling children and young people. It has begun with a focus on nurturing faith conversations in households and connecting with schools. The purpose of the Hub (and others as they evolve in different contexts) is to practice the principles of GF and share that practice through training, resourcing and networking.





Where would the people active in your worshipping community fit in this diagram?



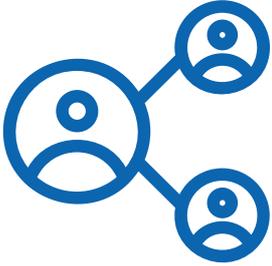
Where do the activities of the church, household and school fit in this diagram?

- Significant work has already been done to map the presence and ages of young people in our churches, as well as engaging in conversations with parishes which have a missional focus on children and young people - or would like to explore this further.
- We are currently exploring ways of resourcing more children and young people's ministers in our diocese, projects for churches to initiate youth ministry, and models of chaplaincy which better connect schools and parishes.
- We've also made some research bids to support our collation of current evidence on good practice in this area.
- To encourage and equip young leaders our new [Youth Council](#) (launched late in 2021) exists to hear and share the voice of young people across the diocese, to release them into leadership positions and develop their leadership skills.
- Several of our schools are now participating in the Archbishop of York's Youth Trust [Young Leaders Award](#).
- Deanery leaders are being encouraged (alongside parishes) to connect with senior leaders from local church schools to allow their voices to be heard in the deanery planning process
- We have established a training programme for new headteachers that better helps them to explore the importance of leading a church school in a Christ-like manner. The programme investigates what roots them theologically and sustains them personally and helps headteachers to develop and promote mutual collaboration in their community.





## Mutuality and Parish Share



We need to work out a financial model that is sustainable and that recognises that we are not all the same. Paul reminds us in his letters that we can only truly flourish when we *all* flourish. This means taking a hard look at how much we can afford to spend.

Progress made on this strand of our strategy includes:

- In 2021, Diocesan Synod agreed a 10% cut in the overall level of Parish Share that would be requested for 2022 - this was in the hope and expectation that every parish would fulfil their commitment to pay - and that those with more resources than others might consider giving more than the level requested to support parishes that are struggling. Some have already committed to do this and we hope to see that generosity grow over the coming years.
- [A Year of Living Generously](#) was launched throughout our diocese in November 2021.
- Early 2022 saw the creation of the new role of Generous Giving Adviser, who will be available to work with parishes to address their needs and concerns in relation to giving - in addition to the support and advice offered by the wider Finance team.
- In July 2022 we published a [simplified annual financial report for 2021](#) in line with our commitment to be transparent and make the figures more understandable to a wider audience.
- Our Deanery Finance Roadshows in autumn 2021 offered a significant opportunity for parishes to ask questions and raise concerns about the financial challenges we face. We look forward to more of these in September and October 2022 and expect these events to be a regular part of our collective budget-setting timeline every year.



## Review of Central and Support Costs

In 2021, we committed to taking a comprehensive look at all aspects of our central services in order to deliver significant cost reductions while seeking to continue to meet parish needs. The work undertaken so far has sought to ensure that central services are aligned to supporting the delivery of deanery plans and meeting the needs of our parishes.

Progress made on this strand of our strategy includes:

- Reduction of ministry training costs. The driver for this has not been to cut costs but to better match the supply of future ministers to the likely retirement/relocation profile of our existing clergy. In reality we were training more than we needed.





- A strategic review of all our properties has been completed to determine those needed for ongoing ministry, those that will be retained to generate rental income, and those that might be appropriate for selling. The repayment of the Covid-19 loan (see below) has been facilitated by this.
- Delivery of ongoing savings of £200,000 so far, with work continuing.
- There were a number of one-off savings totaling up to £100,000 made in 2021. However, it's important to note that some of these savings have been offset by inflationary and other budget pressures, so the 'net benefits' do not necessarily reflect the total savings that have been made.
- A number of specific projects listed in our original plans have been completed, with further work continuing - these include:
  - The permanent removal of several vacant staff posts
  - Ceasing the production of Outlook magazine
  - Finding other ways to access and release strategic investment funding
  - Transfer to the national Parish Giving Scheme (in progress)
  - Seeking opportunities to achieve better rental returns from our properties
  - Consolidation of office accommodation into one property (Diocesan House)
  - Streamlining our administration and events management functions



## Ministry - Lay and Ordained

In 2021 we highlighted the need to review all forms of ministry, prioritising the mutual relationship between our different ministries and seeking to support the development of discipleship and vocation for lay and ordained people in our diocese.

Progress made on this strand of our strategy includes:

- The Deepening Discipleship course has been thoroughly revised and successfully delivered online three times and face-to-face to over 45 participants. The course will be offered twice a year online and resources will be provided to deliver it locally, where preferred.
- Courses for local lay ministry have been reviewed and delivered on themes such as pastoral care, worship leading and funeral ministry. Depending on the level of interest, these courses will be delivered annually using a mix of in-person sessions supplemented with online learning. We are developing a series of equipping for ministry workshops in the coming months and continue to review all of our training.
- [Anna Chaplaincy](#) is now well established with 20 Anna Chaplains and nine trained Anna Friends. The course is delivered twice a year and is open to lay and ordained people. To support this ministry further, we are establishing support hubs and developing more training, particularly for Anna Friends and volunteers.

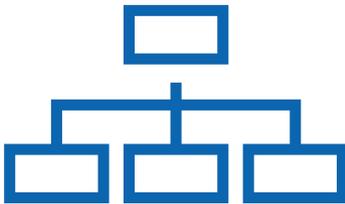




- [A Canterbury Diet for Discipleship and Lay Ministry](#) is being developed to provide a framework for good practice (discernment, training, recognition, supervision and review), support and networking. As part of this framework resource groups have been established for pastoral care, Anna chaplaincy and worship leading to develop good practice. This will be developed further in the autumn of 2022.
- Training for [Licensed Lay \(Reader\) Ministry](#) continues to be provided by [St Augustine's College of Theology](#), with three new candidates starting in September 2022.

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## Structures and Organisation



This theme incorporates reviewing all aspects of our diocesan structures to better support flourishing ministry for all. The hallmark of this work has been our renewed focus on deaneries as the key missional unit for developing local strategy.

Progress made on this strand of our strategy includes:

- The continued development of deanery plans, with the support of our archdeacons and diocesan staff team. This has been aided by the creation of a template to help deaneries better lay out and monitor the key elements of their plans and develop the potential to join up themes and activities across multiple deaneries.
- The development of Deanery Action Learning Sets to enable mutual support, challenge, training and focused action. Feedback from the initial pilot of this work has been very positive and we're hoping that all five of these groups will be established by autumn 2022 to incorporate all deaneries.
- Discussions with the Church Commissioners underline the need for these plans to evidence embedded local projects.

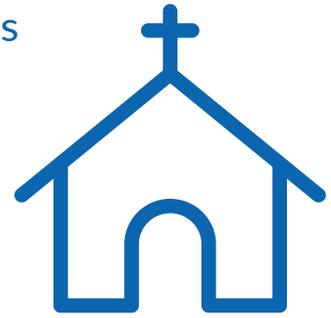
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## Church Revitalisation, Planting and Church Buildings

Several of our original deanery plans mention the need for church revitalisation or planting. In some situations, this will be about reinvigorating existing churches with missional intent. In others, it may be about planting into new areas, such as a recently developed housing estate. This theme also incorporates our work on church buildings.



We are working on a number of strands:

- A toolkit to enable every parish to see what they're doing in their community and looking at what could be possible.
- Exploring what 'planting' and 'revitalisation' means in the different contexts of our parishes.
- Making the best of our buildings, which could mean small changes to serve our communities better or, in some of our benefices, concentrating regular worship in some buildings while using others in different ways such as Festival Churches.

Progress made on this strand of our strategy includes:

- Participation in a national study of Easter 2022 attendance to better understand the impacts of the pandemic and the role of continuing with church at home offerings. This showed that attendance held up much better in churches still offering church at home. Further work on this is in development.
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, our Missional Learning Communities shifted to online meetings, which enabled the first two waves of seven participating benefices to continue (now combined into one larger group). The next wave will be launched in 2023.
- St. George's Church in Deal has been commissioned to offer programmes in specific models of church rejuvenation and planting to other parishes and deaneries across our diocese.
- Our Ignite communities have experienced a successful - and much-needed by their communities - restart after Covid-19 restrictions lifted, despite the challenge of the Omicron variant and significant changes in staff and host incumbents. We are considering how we might continue to support Ignite communities and enable the model to continue to establish new worshipping communities elsewhere across our diocese and further afield.





## Environmental Justice

At the heart of this theme lies a commitment to sharing the good news of Christ through our actions and decisions, honouring God's call to build a better world for everyone and to care for the gift of creation. We will prioritise climate action through our [Care for the Environment Policy](#) in parishes and schools, with a particular strategic focus on our deaneries and deanery plans. We are working with the national Church on their timetable for a carbon-neutral future by 2030.

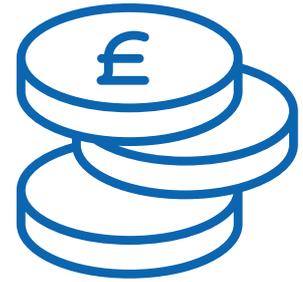
Progress made on this strand of our strategy includes:

- Encouraging every parish to join [Eco-Church](#) and use the [Church of England's Energy Footprint Tool](#). In addition, we are recruiting Eco-Champions to lead on climate action in every deanery.
- We have recently received grants totalling £80,000 from [Marshalls Charity](#), to enable our churches to undertake carbon-reducing work.
- Our Property team are committed to increasing what we spend on our ministry houses to better insulate them and to get as many as we can to Energy Performance certificate standard 'C' by 2028. There is a clear plan for all our properties which is regularly reviewed by our archdeacons and Property Director.
- With further money being released by the Church Commissioners for areas of social deprivation and climate action, we will consider applying for a full-time paid environmental worker for our diocese to work with parishes, schools, our Property team and Diocesan Advisory Committee, thus increasing our resources for climate action.





## Update on our Financial Strategy



Our 2021 strategy document included a bold commitment to reduce the overall amount of Parish Share requested by 10% for 2022. This would rely on every parish aiming to pay all of their Parish Share - and some parishes paying more than that as an act of generosity to support parishes that really couldn't meet it all. There was also a commitment to allocate Low Income Community Funding up front to provide much greater clarity for our parishes.

Before our Diocesan Synod voted on this significantly reduced budget in November 2021, there was a series of Financial Roadshows held in every deanery throughout September and October. This allowed wide-ranging discussion of the planned budget and the expected Parish Share levels, as well as a fuller discussion of the financial concerns of our parishes and wider diocese. Attendance levels for these events was very good and the question time regularly exceed the allotted time by some margin. This was an important time to establish better trust and to do some myth-busting - and this commitment to openness and transparency is key for our diocese moving forwards. There will be further Deanery Finance Roadshows in autumn 2022 as this approach becomes embedded in our annual budget cycle going forward.

### Is this approach working?

Parish Share payments for 2022 currently seem to be holding up well, which is very encouraging. Visible generosity from parishes that are able to pay more than has been requested of them is just under £5,000 across the whole diocese. This is lower than we had hoped, but nevertheless demonstrates real generosity on the part of those churches and offers a promising start. There may also be some parishes that are offering support to others by direct giving.

During 2021, our financial situation required us to take advantage of a £2.5m Covid-19 loan, made available to us by a government scheme, with repayments to be made from the sale of property no longer required for ministry. This loan has now been fully repaid without incurring any interest charges, and some smaller loans have also been repaid. Whilst this is encouraging in some ways, it does mean that we have a smaller base of properties as a result of surviving the pandemic.





Our 2022 budget was based on the explicit assumption of an average of ten full-time equivalent clergy vacancies over the year (which was estimated based on the experience of previous years). Subsequent monitoring shows that we are now running at around seven, which has an adverse effect on our budgets. However, on a positive note it does reflect that, over recent years, our diocese has been better able to attract more clergy for our vacancies, and that periods of interregnum will therefore have reduced on average.

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## What next?

There is much work to be done - and our strategy and priorities will undoubtedly continue to change and develop as we remain responsive to God's call and open to the needs of the world around us. However, we must balance that responsiveness with the need to remain focused and clear, undertaking the work that is set before us.

In addition to the priorities listed above, some of these key pieces of work include:

- Continue to develop our deanery plans, listening carefully to the needs of our parishes, schools and local lay and ordained leaders.
- Continue to develop work on our strategic themes and ensure they reflect the priorities identified in our deanery plans.
- Assess what national funding will be available for the work we want to do and understand the relevant application processes.
- Review our central support structure and resourcing to better support delivery of our strategy and meet the needs of our parishes.
- Carefully monitor our financial progress and continue our consultative and transparent process to agree a robust 2023 budget.

