



Diocese of Bristol

PARISH AND BENEFACTICE GUIDANCE FOR TRANSFORMING CHURCH. TOGETHER

OCTOBER 2022

INTRODUCTION

The journey of Transforming Church. Together (TCT) began in January 2021 when Bishop Viv invited everyone in the Diocese to join a conversation about our priorities, under God, for the future. During the covid-19 pandemic, we carried out months of engagement, prayer, and discernment within church communities and amongst our less-heard groups.

We realised that Christ was stretching our hearts and minds to respond to the most vivid of visions; that humanity might be reconciled, and creation restored. We affirmed that our calling is to follow Jesus, to

serve others, and to transform communities.

We discerned that we all place great importance on the values of openness, generosity, creativity, and bravery - which we want to nurture, and to live out, under God. After a further period of discussion, listening and discernment in the first half of 2022, we now have a Synod-approved strategy for the next five years.

Between now and the start of the strategy period in early 2023, we are encouraging everyone to use the time to review and reflect on our plans going forward; to determine what it means at parish and benefice level, and to discern which elements are relevant – and possible – in a local context.

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

The main Transforming. Church Together strategy is a very detailed and lengthy document, therefore we have created some key materials to help people in our churches and communities understand the strategy as follows:

- Strategy summary document
- Detailed Q & A
- A short PowerPoint presentation that can be used to encourage discussion and generate ideas.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

We are now entering a period of discernment. Until we start the new strategy period in early 2023, Bishop's Council are asking parishes and benefices to reflect on what the strategy might mean for them, and to keep talking, listening, and discussing the activities they feel will make a difference in their

local area. These discussions could simply be at PCC level, or maybe between parishes, and also within Deaneries. We hope they will be clergy-led, with the Area Deans and Archdeacons fully participating.

PRAYER

None of our plans can become real without God's will and the work of the Holy Spirit. Synod 'prayerfully adopted' the strategy - which mentions prayer within it - and we hope that parishes and benefices will be able to build explicit times and opportunities for prayer into their current and future deliberations on our future. The metrics and measurements which come with making a strategy are important to us and yet the will and grace of God are paramount. We will all work to lead on ensuring our strategy is rooted in prayer and will send out more details soon.

QUESTIONS

We know you will have many questions about the strategy and what it could mean for you. We have tried to provide some answers in the attached Q+A, but we know there will be more, so we will keep it updated on the main website. Please contact our communications team if you need any more information at this stage.

The key point is that this is a collaborative strategy, a partnership between all parts of our Diocese. The strategy will serve the mission and ministry of the church in each place.

Q AND A

STRATEGIC PLANNING

What is a strategy?

A strategy is a document which balances the three elements of a plan; the 'Ends' (what we are trying to achieve), the 'Ways' (what we want to do to achieve the Ends), and the 'Means' (the resources needed to fund the Ways to achieve the Ends). They usually cover a 3–5-year period, and they serve as a template for each year's plans, and budget. As events unfold, we may find we have to change the plan, year on year; to reflect changing budgets, learnings, and the external environment.

Why is it so important that we have a strategy?

In a constantly changing - and sometime challenging - world, we are looking to build on what is good: unprecedented ministerial and parochial revitalisation, increased discipleship, positive social impact, and long term environmental and financial sustainability. We need a strategy - to serve as a bedrock for our annual plans and budgets - which clearly sets out the long-term journey we will take, and what we need to do to get there.

Does every organisation need to have a strategy?

Yes, most organisations with a significant budget have a strategy. They provide broad direction and guidance; they prioritise, sequence, and align activities; they define accountability and responsibility; and they provide inspiration and support for those who are asked to make them real. They also provide a clear framework for learning and decision making. An organisation without a strategy risk being reactive rather than proactive and faces the prospect of uncoordinated and inefficient use of scarce resources.

TRANSFORMING CHURCH. TOGETHER

What is Transforming Church. Together (TCT)?

Transforming Church. Together is the name of our strategy for the next five years and will be in effect from January 2023 to the end of 2028.

When will we be launching Transforming Church. Together?

We will be launching Transforming Church. Together in early 2023 and it will guide our activities for the next five years. Within the strategy, we have a set of short, medium, and long-term activities necessary to help make the strategy a reality. What these activities look like at a local level, is a local decision, and not driven from the centre, hence the period of discernment we are entering.

Having learnt from the implementation of previous plans, we expect to see considerable change within the five-year timeframe of this strategy, so we also fully recognise and expect that work will need to continue (learning as we go) until at least 2030.

And finally, whilst we might be able to make plans for the next few years, no-one knows what will happen in the outside world, nor can we be certain we will receive the resources we need. We must therefore be ready to flex our plans to match the available resources, as and when things change.

When did we start working on Transforming Church. Together?

Transforming Church. Together began in January 2021 when Bishop Viv invited everyone in the Diocese of Bristol to join a conversation about our priorities under God for the future. During the covid-19 pandemic, we carried out months of engagement, prayer, and discernment within church communities and amongst our less-heard groups.

We realised that Christ, the Lord of all, was stretching our hearts and minds to respond to the most vivid of visions, that humanity might be reconciled, and creation restored. We affirmed that the calling of each worshipper in the Diocese of Bristol is to follow Jesus, to serve others and to transform communities.

We discerned that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, this Diocese has values of openness, generosity, creativity, and bravery which we want to continue to nurture. We will steadfastly live out our commitment to our neighbours and communities to be 'here with you' for Christ's sake. After a further period of discussion and discernment, we now have a strategy for the next five years.

Is Transforming Church. Together just our strategy?

Yes, Transforming Church. Together is specifically our strategy and has several Diocese of Bristol-specific priorities to meet our more local needs and aspirations. However, it's important to point out that it's also completely aligned with the Church of England's national Vision and Strategy and yet powerfully reflects local realities on the ground in the diocese.

It also seeks to live out the five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion, and so aims to:

- Witness to Christ's saving, forgiving, reconciling love for all people
- Build welcoming, transforming communities of faith
- Stand in solidarity with people who live in poverty and need
- Challenge violence, injustice and oppression, and work for peace and reconciliation and,
- Protect, care for, and renew life on our planet.

Do we have the money to deliver this five-year strategy?

The strategy assumes levels of income which may vary over time; from Parish Share, new sources of income, fundraising, grant-giving bodies, and the National Church. We remain confident that we will receive significant National Church investment from the new year, albeit the amount is not yet known, and we believe therefore that we will have a sound financial framework upon which to move forward with the new strategy. If the resources available change (positively or negatively), we will simply adjust the pace and sequencing of the activities in the change programme. The overall strategy will remain the same.

Has the Transforming Church. Together strategy been approved by our governing bodies?

Yes. Members of Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod approved our new strategy at the beginning of September. The full document is available on our website.

Who is leading on the Transforming Church. Together Strategy?

The Bishop of Bristol and the Bishop of Swindon are leading on the Transforming Church. Together Strategy along with the Dean, Archdeacons, and Diocesan Senior Leadership Team. However, it is important to stress that this is a strategy that belongs to everyone within the Diocese, and decisions on what the strategy looks like locally is a local decision.

We have recently appointed a new Director of Transformation who, along with her team will be responsible for working collaboratively with parishes to develop and implement our strategy as agreed.

Why should Parishes work with the Transforming Together. Strategy?

The strategy envisages significant support to ministers and parishes, so that both can thrive, and grow. We are looking ahead to a period of unprecedented ministerial and parochial revitalisation, increased discipleship, positive social impact, and long term environmental and financial sustainability, but none of this can happen without parishes and benefices discerning what works for them, and what the strategy could mean for them. We encourage all parishes to think what the future could look like and ask themselves – 'what do we need to do to get there?'

We are all so busy already, how will we have the time to deliver the new Strategy?

We fully appreciate how busy many people are, and that parishes can lack the resources (for example, at PCC level) to do all they would wish to do. This is why the strategy envisages targeted support in parishes (for example parish admin support, young people's workers, and school chaplaincies) as well as the provision of expert advice and support from the centre in Hillside House.

How many new staff will you be recruiting to deliver the new Strategy?

We aim to recruit a number of staff to support parishes – mainly locally, and some centrally. Provision of additional staff is dependent on National Church funding so we can't confirm the exact details on staffing and recruitment until we know what funding we are receiving from the National Church. What we can say is that clergy numbers will remain stable over the period (something not many other Dioceses are planning), and we will only increase central staff posts if the roles are funded by the National Church or other grant-making bodies. Availability of funds will determine the pace and scale of the recruitment, however the long-term strategy will remain the same.

What challenges have we and do we continue to face within the Diocese?

We are living in a complex and challenging world. Our society is experiencing seismic changes; global pandemic, Brexit, persistent racism, growing inequalities, the climate crisis, the ongoing digital revolution, debates over human identity, and international conflict, are disrupting and changing both society, and communities. We also face critical challenges at a local level – lack of resources, clergy burn-out, deprivation and social injustice. Our new strategy aims to help us plan and continue to respond - not only to these challenges, but others that come our way.

We have responded to a pandemic with innovation, strength, and grace, caring for our communities and each other. We have seen new worshipping communities grow and develop, and we have faced many of the major issues in society with courage, working towards net zero, committing to racial justice and engaging with Living in Love and Faith. This strategy aims to build on what is good already, and to unleash the potential of our ministers and parishes to spread the good news of Christ.

OUR VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

What is our vision?

Our vision for the future is Humanity Reconciled, Creation Restored.

What is our Mission?

Our mission is to follow Jesus, to serve others, and to transform communities.

What are our Values?

Our values, informed by our understanding of Jesus, underpin everything we do and say, and will play a critical role in delivering the strategy. They are:

Openness - we value openness, and we are loving and open to all. Our behaviour is welcoming, we want to be a safe, accessible, kind, and welcoming space for everyone. We want our communities to feel embraced, their diverse needs met, and for them to benefit from a long-term relationship based on acceptance and love for people as God made them.

Creativity - we value creativity, and we co-operate with the work of the Spirit. We are faithful, rooted in faith and responsive to the Spirit. Our communities feel inspired, this is bold and joyful faith, work and worship that engages us all. We want our communities to experience a variety of projects and worship styles, celebrating tradition and innovation in connection to God.

Generosity - we value generosity and receive and give sincerely. We give our time and resources to share what we know of Jesus' love. We want our communities to feel supported and cared for in the way Jesus would do, to experience God's love through our action and an opportunity to journey into faith if they choose.

Bravery - we value bravery, we are courageous with our voices and our actions. Jesus tells us to "take courage, I have conquered the world" (John 16.33). And so, following the repeated biblical command 'Do not be afraid', we acknowledge and learn from our past and actively effect positive change in the world. We want our communities to feel empowered as they are listened to, supported, and partnered with in seeking transformational change. The collective voices and actions of our community will help to bring about transformational change.

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND MISSION DESIGN

What are strategic outcomes?

Our strategic outcomes are, essentially, the things we want to see happen by the end of the strategic period.

What are our strategic outcomes?

We have worked together to devise four strategic options to deliver our mission which are as follows:

- To have a form of church in every community, and churches in which all can participate, thrive, and belong.
- To have people in our parishes who worship God in every aspect of their lives, and throughout their whole lives.
- For the diocese (parishes and benefices) to be recognised as a powerful force for gospel change.
- For the diocese and parishes to be sustainable (environmentally and financially).

How will we achieve our strategic outcomes?

To achieve our strategic outcomes, we will focus on parishes, benefices, and chaplaincies, and invest in:

- Discipleship - our Ministers, Churches, Parishes and Benefices, Volunteers, and Young People.
- Social Action - to deliver Social Justice on several levels.
- Sustainability - making us environmentally and financially sustainable.

What is our overall mission design?

Our overall mission design can be described under four missional objectives:

Missional Communities - The right forms of church in the right places

- Mission Areas (a collaborative group of Parishes) that encourage trust, promote adaptation and provide resource sharing.
- Fresh Expressions of Church (i.e., non-conventional forms of worship) given space to grow from existing communities and in new areas.
- Church 'plants and grafts' that revitalise under-resourced or underserved areas.

Missional Leadership - Ministerial vocations that adapt and enable

- Vocational development to sustain and equip fruitful lay and ordained leaders.
- A culture of inclusion, collaboration and partnership working, to grow our faith.
- A wider 'volunteer' base to enhance and liberate ministry teams, and to establish missional links.

Missional Engagement - New connections and clearer pathways to faith (how people come to Christ).

- Worshipping communities that share in the life and struggles of their wider communities.
- Prioritisation of under 18's and bringing children, young people, and families to faith.
- Adoption of both established and innovative approaches to nurture new faith journeys - taking people from first contact with the church through to confirmation.

Missional Action and Advocacy - Social transformation as witness and worship

- Local churches who address injustice and inequality in their local contexts.
- Discipleship development that empowers all Christians to live out the five marks of mission.
- Networks to organise and promote partnerships (with like-minded partners) to campaign for, and enact, real social change.

Underpinning the Missional activities, work will be necessary on Capacity Building:

People - Development of disciples & ministers; based on vision, behaviours, and competencies.

Buildings – The strategic review of our church buildings, and funding their development for missional purposes, mixed use, and to deliver net zero by 2030.

Partnerships – Building and exploiting our external relationships (locally and as a Diocese) to leverage more resources, and more influence, especially with campaigns against injustice.

Communications - Compelling missional storytelling, and campaigns to mobilise social action.

We have recently appointed a new Director of Transformation who is working with the Bishops, Archdeacons, and the senior leadership team to develop an implementation route map, so we sequence all this work carefully (as far as we are able), and avoid trying to do it all at once.

ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

Can I still provide feedback regarding the Transforming Church. Together Strategy?

Yes. Whilst the strategy itself has been approved, how we implement it is very much a local decision. This is why we are asking Parishes to reflect on what the strategy

might mean for them, to discuss it with other parishes and area deans (and archdeacons), and to generate their own plans for the years ahead. The conversation must continue.

Who do I send my questions to?

If you have any more questions of clarification, please send them to our Communications Team at:

comms@bristoldiocese.org.uk.

We will add to this question bank over time, and keep it updated on our main website.



CREATIVITY
OPENNESS
BRAVERY
GENEROSITY



Diocese of Bristol