

Shaped By God Together FAQs

What's this all about?

We've all experienced changes in how we exist as church communities recently. We recognise opportunities in what is happening but also long for the return of some elements of our pre-pandemic life. At the same time, we see that we will have to tackle some challenges ahead.

'Shaped By God Together' is a process **of prayerfully and practically working out together how we live out our Everyday Faith in a new world.**

Anyone who is part of any of our diocesan family of communities - churches, schools, chaplaincies, fresh expressions of Church, Cathedral, religious communities etc - is invited to reflect on and share their recent faith experiences in order that we can **learn together how God is reshaping us.**

We want to use that learning to explore together a **new diocese-wide framework for our ministry, finance and buildings** to establish ways of working that enable all to flourish despite the challenges we face. This will be finalised in summer next year after the coming period of discernment and processes of reflecting back to the wider diocese

What's involved? Shaped By God Together will involve several different elements:

1. **A Call To Pray** so that each of us seeks God's guidance and listens for God's answers and direction, both at the start and throughout the Shaped By God Together process.
2. **A 'Gathering Stories - Generating Insights' project** that we hope everyone will take part in to share what's been happening in their faith life, both good and bad, before and during the pandemic. Hearing individual stories and experiences about Everyday Prayer, Everyday Witness and Everyday Action will help us together to see where God might be leading us in our various and diverse communities.

The process uses a software system called NarraFirma to capture and collate our individual experiences (without sharing anyone's names). The Mission and Ministry team and a group of specially trained Research Assistants from roles which represent a cross-section of the diocese will also help collect stories in a variety of other ways whether face-to-face, phone or written. These trained assistants understand the variety of different contexts we each work in across the diocese and will help gather those stories in a variety of ways: in person - face-to-face or on the phone; online or on social media, or from print etc so that everyone who doesn't wish to, or is unable to, engage online, is fully included and equally listened to. You can find out more about how to join in on our **[Gathering Stories - Generating Insights web page.](#)**

The process will be accessible to everyone in a variety of ways from face-to-face listening sessions, printed paper, social media opportunities and an online platform etc. Individual needs and abilities can be accommodated so that everyone has a chance to be heard regardless of age or background.

As well as capturing stories and listening to experiences, it will include a phase of analysing patterns and identifying common themes that emerge with representatives

of all of our faith communities so that insights are genuine. This learning will then be shared widely with everyone towards the end of the process in clear and transparent ways.

Please email or call Bishop's Research Assistant Josh CrickdeBoom on josh.crickdeboom@leccofe.org or **0116 270 8985** if you have specific queries or aren't sure who to talk to or how to share your stories, ideas or any concerns.

3. **Parallel processes** that will take account of what we are learning from the 'Gathering Stories - Generating Insights' work in order to:

- (a) Enable more people to discover and follow God-given callings (recognising and enabling different vocations and ministry)
- (b) Establish our future budgets and how we share the resources God generously provides us with
- (c) Further support our communities with the challenges/opportunities of their buildings

This will involve:

Ministry: Looking at a new shape of ministry for clergy and lay leaders with a revised approach to vocations, training and support as part of a new diocese-wide framework. There will be a transition phase in which we all explore potential new shapes of ministry. This will be about trialling and innovation without setting anything in concrete.

Finance: Diocesan Synod will set our budget for 2021 this autumn, and a draft budget for 2022 will be submitted to Synod for consideration early next autumn.

Buildings: Finding ways to ease the burden of managing buildings on small congregations, honest reflection about the immediate and ongoing viability of buildings (costs and maintenance versus sustainability of use in terms of mission) and exploring the use of viable buildings by local communities as part of the new diocese-wide framework.

Our Bishop's Leadership Team has established four working groups. You can read more about each here on our [Shaped By God Together web page](#). Matters for decisions will go to Diocesan Synod and Bishop's Council.

Key dates for council meetings, diocesan synod, etc can be downloaded on a Shaped By God Together timeline also available on the [Shaped By God Together web page](#).

4. **Catalysis and innovation.** This will be a time of looking for patterns and learning from the Generating Stories – Gathering Insights work that can help us catalyse new actions and models of working. The software called NarraFirma (<https://narrafirma.com/>) provides material for us to work with both quantitative and qualitative data sets. Interesting patterns are identified, and these are brought to different groups who have contributed to the stories and insights process for sense-making and action.

We look at the actionable insights generated – in groups of people who are largely the story contributors, look through selections of stories to illuminate interesting patterns and consider how those insights might reveal promising new approaches to worship, ministry, spiritual experience and network building.

These will be reflected back and there will be a phase when our faith communities can experiment with emerging ministries and different ways of working which they may wish to explore (without risk of setting precedents or being judged) in a 'safe to fail' environment.

We will continue to gather stories through this phase to see what is working, what isn't, and what to assess what is happening and reflect back to the wider diocese. Please be reassured that through spring 2021 and beyond everybody will continue to be involved in the process of seeking to discern how we are being Shaped By God Together.

5. **Wellbeing** support. Recognising that these times have increased the need for each of us to take proactive care of our own mental health and to look out for others. There is a range of support and resources available on [Wellbeing web page](#) for you to explore and use. These will be updated regularly.
6. **Together In Hope** will provide ideas and resources for those who want to reach out and work in partnership with others in their communities to nurture hope and work together for the wider common good at the same time as engaging in this process of internal reflection and discernment. You can read more [here](#).
7. **Moving forward together** with a clear understanding of our future shape as a diocese from September 2021 onwards.

When will things happen?

Prayer: Now and throughout the next year. As well as the initial Call to Prayer, there will be regular opportunities and reminders for individuals and communities to pray about our future, our decision-making and listening to God's lead.

Gathering Stories – Generating Insights:

Stage 1 - Everyone is invited to take part and share their experiences and stories - 1 September 2020 for four weeks.

Stage 2 - Representatives of all our communities in the diocesan family help us identify emerging patterns that show us how God is at work in our different contexts. As those patterns and insights emerge, our communities will be encouraged to explore what God might be doing through experimentation and trial innovation - October 2020-spring 2021

Stage 3 – Discussions on what new diocese-wide framework might be required to help us support what has been learned and to enable us to follow where God is leading - January-February 2021

A New Diocese-wide Framework:

Stage 4 – Consultations on that new diocese-wide framework – March-April 2021

Stage 5 – Finalise new diocese-wide framework - May 2021

Stage 6 – Consult on local application of new framework - June-August 2021

Stage 7 -Support local application of new diocese-wide framework - September-December 2021

Key dates:

In terms of the parallel processes of ministry, finance and buildings (see previous FAQ 'What's This All About/What's Involved' for detail), there are key dates for the relevant bodies to meet and agree/finalise elements of our new diocese-wide framework as we go through the coming months, including Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod. These can be downloaded on a Shaped By God Together timeline also available on the [Shaped By God Together web page](#).

What will change?

We don't yet know what changes will come out of this process but we are committed to listening to you and listening to God together so that, as the united body of Christ, we can discern how to meet the challenges and make the most of the opportunities that we are presented with in coming months and years. We will continue to pursue our vision; the Kingdom of God. Whatever changes do come, we remain committed to our [Shaped by God](#) strategy and our diocesan values of *Creativity, Attentiveness* and *Generosity*.

How will I know what's going on?

As has been the case throughout lockdown, Bishops Martyn and Guli will continue to communicate through Pastoral Letters to clergy and licensed lay leaders as well as Youtube video messages to everyone throughout autumn of 2020 and spring 2021. You can see the playlist of weekly video messages issued by Bishop Martyn during lockdown by subscribing (free of charge) to [our Youtube channel here](#).

Archdeacons Claire and Richard will continue meeting regularly with Area Deans and Lay Chairs to update them and hear how things are in our local communities and respond to emerging needs.

Study days will be held for clergy and licensed lay leaders in October 2020, March 2021 and October 2021.

Deanery Synods, Bishop's Youth Council and PCCs will be given updates to share and discuss as part of the joint learning we will do together in coming months.

Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod will discuss and vote on proposals as they emerge.

The [Shaped By God Together web pages](#) will be updated regularly and news will be shared there as well as on our [weekly e-newsletter Diomail](#).

In addition, online versions of **Shaped** magazine and printed paper materials that share stories that emerge, reflect experiences (both good and bad) and provide updates to all of our diocesan family, will be made available in a variety of ways throughout the coming months.

There will be additional communications for Pioneer gatherings, schools, DFEMA, chaplaincies, and our wider diocesan networks.

Please email Communications@leccofe.org if you have any queries.

How can I deal with feelings of uncertainty, worry, exhaustion or sadness?

This is an unsettling time. We recognise that whilst there is thanksgiving for the blessings we have, and that there is some excitement about new opportunities as we see God at work, there is inevitably uncertainty. This can be difficult and not everyone is ok all of the time through uncertainty and transition, so we are committed to prioritising wellbeing. We want to promote a culture in which we look out for each other and encourage and enable each to take responsibility for self-care.

To this end, Bishop Guli is leading a 'Wellbeing and Return Working Group' and has already established a range of support to clergy, licensed lay leaders and their families.

As part of that support, there is also a new [Wellbeing web page](#) which includes information about some of that support as well as a range of resources for volunteers and members of congregations to use. It includes information on reflective practice, spiritual directors and spirituality as well as suggestions on how to ensure you are taking good care of your own mental health wellbeing. Our new Counselling Coordinator, Anissa Chung, is developing the counselling service and more resources are planned for the coming year. Keep visiting the [Wellbeing web page](#) to see what's available to you and keep up with the latest updates. You can see some Wellbeing events on our [Events and Training calendar](#).