



Diocesan growth strategy and church planting Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

September 2020

'Growing the heart of England' Vision for 150 new worshipping communities by 2030

INTRODUCTION

For some years now the whole Diocese; Churches and worshipping communities, Cathedral, Schools and Chaplaincies, have embraced and driven forward our integrated Whole Diocese Strategy. We have described this strategy as:-

A strategy for spiritual and numerical growth in the Diocese of Coventry

We are familiar with the underlying principles on which it has and continues to be built and implemented:-

Believing firmly that 'All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself, through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation' (2 Corinthians 5.18)

- *our purpose as a Diocese is to Worship God, Make new disciples and Transform communities;*
- *our vision is to nurture healthy churches that become (naturally) growing churches that become (naturally) self-propagating churches;*
- *our approach is to operate as a Whole Diocese of church communities, church schools, Christian chaplaincies and the Cathedral;*
- our six shared objectives (currently viewed through the lens of BAME and young people) focus our activities:
 - Making the gospel known throughout the Diocese so that people become followers Christ.
 - Strengthening the health of churches and organisations across the Diocese in the 8 Essential Qualities (8EQs) identified by NCD.
 - Enabling the wellbeing, development and flourishing of clergy and lay people across the Diocese.
 - Equipping the whole Diocese for the work of reconciliation.
 - Promoting life-long Christian education across the Diocese.
 - Delivering positive community transformation.
- *our shared commitment is to work with determination and zeal towards a fuller representation of social, cultural and ethnic diversity of our region in our church communities, visible and participating in the worship, ministry and life of the church.*

Built on this foundation, our new mission objective is to launch 150 new worshipping communities across the diocese by 2030.

Within our strategy for Church growth and Church planting, there is a specific re-focusing on growing the church in city and urban areas and estates within our wider strategy through church re-vitalisation plants and fresh expressions of church.

Community transformation, evangelism and growing disciples who express faith in every sphere of life are integral to our vision for mission and growth.

1. How is our strategy developing?

As noted above, our Diocesan objective for growth is rooted in a long-term investment in the development of healthy churches using the Natural Church Development principles (NCD) and the Eight Essential Qualities.

Healthy churches are naturally growing churches that we want to become naturally self-propagating churches. Our developing strategy seeks to build on this work, in an attitude of faith-filled, prayerful adventure.

We will continue resourcing 'healthy church' **now** with a specific focus on a particular (target) group of parishes / benefices that actively participate with the 8EQs, along with a number of other churches that do not currently engage with 8EQs but have potential for growth or are in communities where there is great mission potential and need.

To grow toward our objective of 150 new worshipping communities, 6 Regional Mission Hub Churches Hubs (with additional Associate leader investment in each), will partner with our target group of churches / parishes to facilitate and enable contextually sensitive mission and growth. Our City centre resource church, St Marks, will be an additional resource with a specific emphasis on church planting in city and urban areas and estates. In addition, St. Marks are building capacity and a developing a wider resourcing vision to support other church planting opportunities in other parts of our diocese, outside of the City.

Our Mission Hub churches and Resource church will be served and supported by our centrally based re-structured resource team based in the Diocesan Office.

We will seek to serve and bless our communities, being intentional about going for numerical growth, making disciples who make disciples. The good news of Jesus Christ who brings release to the captive, good news to the poor, and the message of God's favour will be at the heart of our vision to be agents of transformation in our communities.

Our Diocesan growth strategy will be resourced by fostering more vocations, innovative 'mission led' deployment of clergy and licensed lay ministers, developing local mission and ministry teams, investing in training resources (including online mission and ministry learning resources via our Equip on-line learning platform).

To grow toward our vision of 150 new worshipping communities, a particular emphasis of the role of mission hub churches will be the enabling of new congregations / worship communities / church plants – Our expectation is that a large proportion of churches engaging with this additional focused enabling will be those who are already utilising Healthy church 8 EQ resource.

Our integrated strategy for 'church planting' will include initiating new church communities (church plants) in areas of new housing, urban estates, and in other developed communities where mission potential exists.

There will be a particular emphasis on areas of high deprivation and urban areas, seeking funding via Strategic Developments made available for mission re-vitalisation in such contexts.

2. Are we creating 150 new parishes?

No.

We will resource our parishes across the diocese to grow new congregations in the parish. This might be a new worship service that is particularly suitable for those with little previous contact with church, or an all age worship service. This might be in the parish church, a church hall or in the local school, or other venues. Some of these might be described as a fresh or new expression of church (see below for more information). Essentially, these new congregations or worshipping communities will be another but distinct part of the local church family. In some areas of major new housing development, there might be a need to start a new church and explore whether that would be a sister church within an existing parish or a new parish.

3. Will we continue to use Healthy church resources?

We greatly value our NCD (church health) data and the experience and support gained by the healthy churches team over a number of years. Our data shows that prior to the pandemic, churches across the diocese had improved by an average of 7 points between 1st and current surveys. The two groups of churches that have gained the most from NCD are those that had poor health at the start of the process and those that re-surveyed frequently. Our data also indicates some churches could best be described as compliant in the way they have engaged with NCD but there are still plenty that are enthusiastic about the approach and find it helpful.

With the ending of the Accelerate project in sight, and the consequent reduction in funding for our healthy churches work, besides the varying degrees of engagement in the process, we have decided to strengthen the health of our churches in a more targeted way. We are focussing our resources, primarily, on those churches that are clearly following the NCD cycle; repeating surveys regularly, setting action points to address their minimum factor and forming small teams to ensure that action points are followed through. We will continue to support churches that wish to apply healthy church principles if they are committed to the NCD process. NCD tools for developing congregational goals, empowering leaders and changing church culture will continue to be available to all churches. Those churches that don't have a history of deep engagement in NCD principles can still benefit from our Mission Development Mornings which are available to every parish – 32 parishes have undertaken these in the last two years.

We are committed to using our experience and what we have learnt about healthy church principles to support the growth of new and emerging church communities.

We will still be making good use of our experience with Natural Church Development / Healthy Church tools and resourcing this centrally. However, we recognize that some churches do not engage with this process as evidenced by the increasing time intervals between successive surveys, and feedback that it is about compliance rather than engagement for health and growth.

As we start to grow new churches, based on principles of church health, we expect that at an appropriate point in their life they will want to make good use of our Healthy Church support and experience.

Our expectation is also that churches not making use of Healthy Church resources will still be eager to make use of the enabling work that will flow from the Hub churches across the diocese.

(We recognise there will be some churches that will not seek to engage for a variety of reasons with any enabling resource that we currently offer or will make available in the future.)

4. How shall we increase the diversity of our congregations?

Bishop John leads our race equality steering group. A key aspect of the work of this group is to challenge and provide leadership on increasing the number of vocations for leadership both lay and ordained from our parishes, and in the recruitment of BAME leaders to existing posts in the diocese. There is real commitment to work with determination and zeal towards a fuller representation of social, cultural and ethnic diversity of our region in our church communities, visible and participating in the worship, ministry and life of the church. We will be recruiting an intercultural mission enabler to help our shared vision become a reality.

5. What is a new worshipping community or a church plant?

This term can embrace a wide number of expressions of church or congregation! It can be confusing.

New worshipping communities vary in size, context and church tradition. Examples include establishing a missional community in a home (A Small group with an intention to seed a new missional community in a village or estate), 'planting' a new congregation into an estate, revitalising an existing parish church, reopening a closed church, building a new church in a new residential community and starting a new congregation to reach a different group of people

Fresh expressions of church – this term has been used for almost twenty years now and refers to types of church that do not normally fit into traditional or inherited styles of church or worship – some better known examples of this are Messy Church, café churches, church in a pub, churches meeting on the beach, Tube Station is a well-known fresh expression of church for surfers and beach lovers, at Polzeath, Cornwall

Of those worshipping in fresh expressions, around 55+% have had no previous contact with church, 25-30% used to go to church but had stopped (de-churched) and the rest also worship in local parish church in other services too.

It is important to note that the number of people worshipping in so called 'Fresh Expressions' is equivalent to the average number of worshipper in a diocese! They reach new people and encourage returners.

Church plant – a fresh expression could be a church plant! – see above.

A church plant is when a leader, team, sometimes with a small 'seed' group from another church together begin a new missional activity to establish a church. This might be in a new housing area,

an existing housing estate. Church plants reach new people and can grow and plant further plants to reach more people, new to faith.

The following links will provide more information and examples.

The Gregory Centre for church multiplication: <https://www.ccx.org.uk/>

Fresh Expressions: <https://freshexpressions.org.uk/>

House of Bishops Statement on Church Planting and the Mission of the Church June 2018

Church planting is one among a variety of ways by which the Church of England seeks to share in the apostolic mission by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and drawing people into the adventure of discipleship. It is complementary to, and not a replacement for, other vehicles for mission, understood according to the breadth of meaning set out in the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission¹. While church planting is generally characterized by a focus on the first two marks, that does not entail a neglect of the other three. All are integral to the Church's witness.

1 The Five Marks of Mission are: To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; To teach, baptise and nurture new believers; To respond to human need by loving service; To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth. (Bonds of Affection-1984 ACC-6 p49, Mission in a Broken World-1990 ACC-8 p101)

Planting new churches is a long-established and effective means of establishing the presence of a Christian community to witness to the gospel in new places, and of enabling that witness to be shared with more people in all places. It is integral to how the Church of England has shown its commitment to apostolicity and sought to express its catholicity.

All our churches were once planted. There have been previous periods in Church history of intensive planting of churches: notably for the Church of England in mediaeval times, Queen Anne's 50 New Churches, the Victorian era, and the interwar period.

In the past, church planting in the Church of England generally led to the formation of new parishes. The parish system has long been the Church of England's way of establishing churches, proclaiming the gospel and providing pastoral care in every community. That system has however never been fixed, and it has always evolved to adapt to new cultural and social conditions, for example through medieval chantry chapels, chapels of ease, or Victorian parish creation. In our day, Bishops' Mission Orders, church revitalisation and church planting are some of the ways in which this very adaptable system continues to evolve.

In this context, church plants can include entirely new church communities, or fresh expressions of church, or new congregations within existing church communities. The concept of church 'planting' can also include initiatives to revitalise existing churches through 'grafting' leadership, people and/or resources into them. We encourage and commend all such initiatives.

6. What is a mission hub church, and what will they do?

A Mission Hub Church is a parish church, but one where a leader and its congregation have a developed sense and vision for sharing in mission locally, and a clearly expressed desire, ability (or potential with added investment) to resource others in mission, evangelism, and enabling new ways of being church such as Fresh Expressions.

(Evidence shows that Fresh Expressions often attract those who have left parish churches with inherited or traditional forms of worship (De-Churched) or have had no previous contact with Christian spirituality.)

Some hubs churches will have larger, more gathered congregations, with those coming from beyond the parish, but having a growing desire to help grow the church in the community they live in too, and to be in a wider enabling partnership with others irrespective of tradition or style of worship. Some will have leaders with particular charisms that facilitate leadership with a wider emphasis than parochial leadership in a parish / benefice.

To achieve good coverage of the diocese we have identified 6 potential locations for our regional mission hub churches. Due to population density 2 hubs are proposed to serve Coventry, 1 in Nuneaton/ Bedworth , 1 in Leamington Spa, 1 in Alcester (but possibly working with Stratford on Avon too), and a sixth situated in Rugby. The locations enable us to offer enabling support to other parts of our diocese including rural areas.

A Mission hub church will offer a gathering point and a focus where people can come from local churches that the hub is seeking to enable and support. They will facilitate learning together, (especially for lay leaders/teams), encourage and share good practice, develop local mentoring between churches. They will be a little like a modern day version of a minster church to serve and equip churches around them. They will accompany and enable development of new congregations and ensure that central resources are drawn on in the right way to support this work. (If you think of a wheel then there is a hub connected by spokes to a rim. The design (connection) enables the wheel to rotate and perform its role.)

Any church can work with their nearest mission hub church, identify what needs they have in order for them to grow, and what gifts and experience they could share with others via the hub network. This will enable the sharing our gifts for mission and ministry in new ways between different churches and traditions. Churches wishing to work with Mission Hubs may choose with whom they work to ensure strong relational fit not just geographical proximity

St Marks Swanswell (Our City Resource church planted in 2017 at the invitation of Bishop Christopher) will provide a distinct additional resource, with a particular emphasis on resourcing / training for church planting in our city and urban areas and beyond.
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Diocesan Mission Hubs Churches



Criteria for selection as a Hub

- Already previously identified as resourcing church
- Evidence of Church Growth
- Geographical reach
- Experience of planting
- Passion for planting
- Gifts of generosity and hospitality
- Desire to work in partnership with others to grow church
- A willingness to work together to realise the diocesan strategy



What will the Hubs do?

- Facilitate learning for faith sharing
- Growth in baptismal call/discipleship
- Enabling and growing Fresh Expressions
- Pioneering support
- Lay enabling/mentoring
- 'Growing Faith' – children/family/school
- Young adults
- Promote and facilitate a Diocesan 'Mission apprentice' scheme
- Initiate new congregations themselves (Church plants)



Every church in our Diocese has its unique shape & call. We are all part of one body. The developing call of Hubs will be to work with local churches to facilitate, accompany, encourage growth in ways that are appropriate for their traditions and contexts.

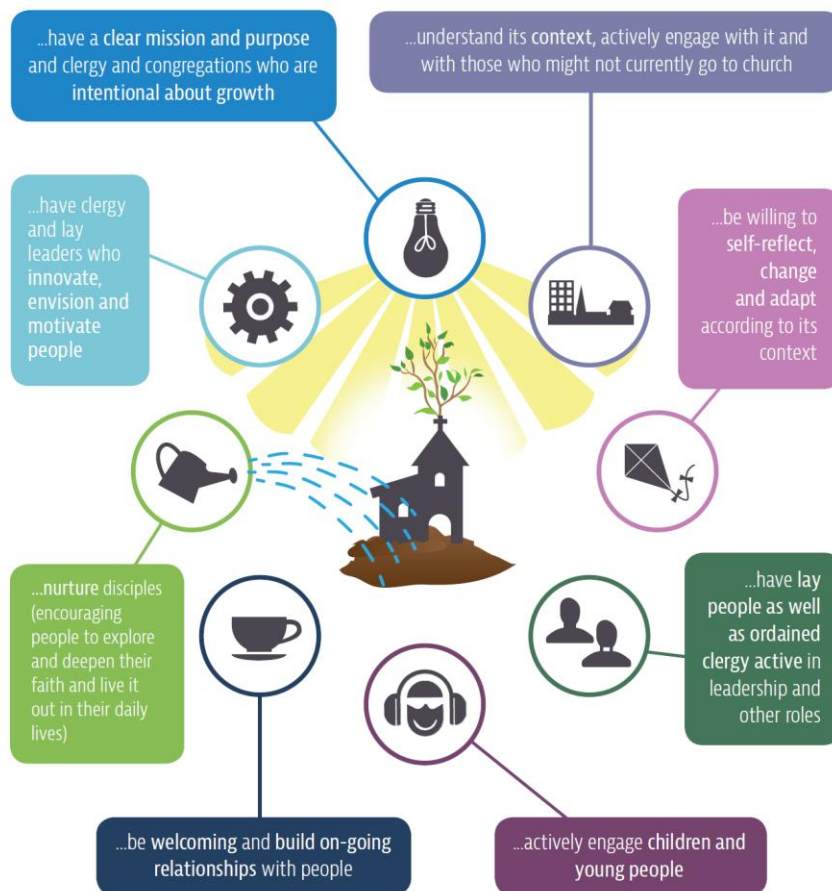
Diocesan Mission 'Hub' Churches – Criteria for selection

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Church growth research – see link, identifies some key factors of growing churches which have helped identify potential hub churches.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/church-growth-research-programme/anecdote-evidence>

A GROWING CHURCH IS LIKELY TO:



Source: Anecdote to Evidence Church Growth report 2015.

7. Why are Mission Hubs located where they are?

Why can't every Deanery have a mission hub church?

Placement of Mission Hub churches in each Deanery would be cost prohibitive and would be an unequal distribution of resource. The geographical placement of six hubs provides the appropriate balance to the density of our population whilst still providing good reach to the wider diocese.

Any church can work with their nearest mission hub church, identify what needs they have in order for them to grow, and what gifts and experience they could share with others via the hub network. This will enable the sharing our gifts for mission and ministry in new ways between different churches and traditions.

Some churches already naturally share learning, mission and ministry and work in creative partnerships with those around them; this would continue of course.

8. What is the difference between St Mark's resource church and mission hub churches?

St. Mark's is our city centre resource church. A number of resource churches have been funded through the urban regeneration fund at Holy Trinity Brompton and diocesan funding. They are churches that offer a particular 'style' of church, but what they are really gifted in, is with their leaders, to build capacity to resource other city churches to start new congregations; and mission to students and young adults. Revd Phil Atkinson is the Vicar of St. Mark's Swanswell, our resource church. The church is investing in teams, teams not just for themselves but in order to give ministry away and so they have a particular role. The evidence from the resource churches that have been established for longer, in various other dioceses, is that they are starting to do this work, planting new congregations and in a variety of church traditions. St Marks are already building capacity ready to support city centre / urban church plants, and have started some resource support work in the Coventry.

A Mission hub church will offer a gathering point and a focus where people can come from local churches that the hub is seeking to enable and support. They will facilitate learning together, (especially for lay leaders/teams), encourage and share good practice, develop local mentoring between churches. They will be a little like a modern day version of a minster church to serve and equip churches around them. They will accompany and enable development of new congregations and ensure that central resources are drawn on in the right way to support this work. (If you think of a wheel then there is a hub connected by spokes to a rim. The design (connection) enables the wheel to rotate and perform its role.)

9. How will rural churches be resourced as part of this vision?

The proposed mission hubs at Alcester/Stratford, Rugby (a sandwich surrounded by rural communities) and Leamington Spa will support and serve rural communities in facilitating and enabling growth of new worshipping communities. Additionally the proposed hub at Westwood has a particular experience in facilitating 'missional communities' (Christian groups that can be seeds for new congregations to grow. This model works especially well in rural communities). It is important to note that the hubs will work in a partnership model facilitating context sensitive approaches to church growth. Part of this enabling will inevitably draw on the expertise of leaders / churches in rural, who can share learning and good practice in a wider way via the work of the hub.

The Archdeacon Missioner is also working with a group of rural leaders to explore specific models for developing mission and ministry in rural communities.

10. Some of our church buildings can be a drain on resource for mission; what help and advice is available to help us re-purpose or close church buildings?

There are a number of possibilities to explore regarding the mission opportunities of our buildings. With the support of the Director of Operations Stephen Davenport, Clare Strachan who leads on church buildings strategy, advice can be given on how to re-purpose a building, setting up community interest groups, leasing of buildings, or exploration of a 'festival church' model. This model removes the requirement for weekly worship, but enables opportunities for worship at key festivals such as Christmas and Easter, to be utilised.

11. Will the older generation be left behind by fresh or new expression of church?

On the contrary, many older church members are playing an active role in the re-visioning of the mission of local churches through fresh expressions such as Messy Church, Café churches. Our vision supports inherited or traditional forms of worship alongside new ways that congregations can form and worship. This approach is sometimes described as a 'mixed ecology' of church.

12. Will there be additional investment / support to help the development of Digital resource / church?

The advent of Covid-19 has presented major challenge and disruption to every aspect of life, including how we gather for worship, fellowship and serve our communities. The inspiring adaptability of our churches in using social media, digital streaming worship, either live or recorded has encouraged us to a new mission opportunity of connecting with a much wider group of people than usually attend our churches. A digital task group has been formed to identify specific strategies for developing our church on-line and further support and resourcing of our churches for digital mission and ministry.

13. How will we fund our growth strategy?

The growth strategy is initially being funded from multiple sources which includes capital and investment income from the diocesan endowment assets, and from grants we have received from the national church. (Capacity Funding, Lowest Income Community Funding, Strategic Development Funding)

14. What effect will this have on parish share?

Initially, within the first five years, this will not have an impact on parish share. Like all the projects that the diocese commits to, the aspiration is that the strategy becomes financially sustainable through the generosity of those within the diocese.