



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

DESCRIPTION OF THE DIOCESE

VACANCY IN SEE

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OUR PLACE

The Diocese of Newcastle is an enticing place. We are proud to be the Church of England's northernmost diocese. At 2,000 square miles and stretching from the Tyne Valley to the Scottish Borders, the area encompasses spectacular countryside and heritage coasts. A distinctive combination of rural, rural coastal, commuter rural, market towns, suburban and city centre and urban/suburban estates is home to a population of 824,000 (2019). Newcastle is the regional city but those at the periphery often look north to Edinburgh or west to Carlisle.

Our economy and social characteristics are built on over 5,000 years of continuous occupation, challenge and change. Until the mid-18th century this was primarily an agricultural area, with large estates of hostile hill-country and fertile lowlands, market towns and fishing ports. Social organisation was feudal and often paternalistic. Christianity came early. St Paulinus (an emissary from Rome) reputedly baptised 3,000 people in Easter Week 627AD at the Holy Well in the Coquet Valley. Holy Island is the birthplace of northern English Christianity and a place of deep spirituality and pilgrimage.

The rich deposits of coal, primarily in the south and east of Northumberland, fuelled the industrial revolution and mining villages such as Ashington and Bedlington grew. The area was at the forefront of engineering innovation and ships, steam trains, turbines and armaments were built along the banks of the Tyne. Fishing ports from Tynemouth to Amble and Berwick flourished. Industrial wealth was invested in town centres and municipal buildings. Cheek by jowl, areas of poor quality and cramped workers housing with minimal sanitary provision were developed.

The population of Newcastle increased from 37,000 in 1811 to 294,000 in 1911. In 1882 this rapid growth in population and wealth led to the city being granted city status and the Diocese of Newcastle was born. The first Bishop, Ernest Wilberforce, led a vigorous programme of renewal, renovating and rebuilding church buildings and planting churches to serve new and growing communities throughout the diocese.

In one rural parish alone, the four existing mediaeval churches, which had fallen into a poor state of repair were substantially rebuilt, and two new churches built, between 1894 and 1904.

Much was funded from the new and very significant wealth of industrialists and landowners, and churches played an important role in local communities. In urban areas, churches provided a refuge from drudgery and poor and overcrowded housing. Today we have a rich heritage of 237 churches, many listed, but with traditional benefactors lost and church membership declining.

Rapid growth brought a vulnerability which first emerged after the First World War and the Depression, as lack of investment and industrial decline led to significant unemployment and poverty, exemplified in events such as the Jarrow Marches. By the 1980's almost all of the deep mines had closed and heavy industry, with the exception of some specialised sectors, had mostly moved overseas. This was a particularly difficult time socially, economically and politically. What remained however was a tradition of friendliness, hard work, resilience, self-reliance and a sense of humour, albeit tempered by deference and lack of confidence.

A DIVERSE & GROWING ECONOMY

With an economic output of £17bn (GVA), there are 30,000 businesses providing 415,000 jobs across the North of Tyne Combined Authority, an area almost identical to the diocese. Today's economy is based on manufacturing, business services, tourism and the public sector.

The North East region is playing an important part in the green revolution and major investment in green technology is taking place across Northumberland and Tyneside. The local economy is undergoing significant growth in sectors such as:

- digital and technology, including Sage, a multinational software company.
- [a dedicated UK Science City](#) where Newcastle University has partnered to help businesses access the best possible cutting-edge expertise
- sub-sea and energy, including National Grid investment in the high voltage interconnector spanning 450 miles between Blyth and Norway.
- pharmaceuticals, manufacturing and life sciences, including Merck (now Organon).
- wind turbines at Port of Blyth and Britishvolt's new giga battery plant, a £1.7bn development supported by Government investment of £100m and creating 3,000 jobs.
- Akzo Nobel's world-class plant in Ashington, a former coal mining area, making Dulux paint.

The national bakery chain Greggs originated in Newcastle and is headquartered here. Greggs plc is a FTSE 250 index company.

The public sector is a large employer, including local authorities,¹ universities and health services together with the DWP in North Tyneside, making a significant contribution to the local economy. HMRC is investing in a new office development relocating posts from Washington and Benton, bringing 9,000 jobs to Newcastle city centre. Due for completion in 2027, this will be the biggest of 13 HMRC regional centres. Defra is also increasing its presence on its current site, developing a new hub to enable Defra and organisations like the Environment Agency, Natural England, and Marine Management to work together more effectively.

“Newcastle was selected due to its skilled and vibrant pool of professionals in the local community, as well as its excellent transport links to and from other hubs”

Defra, 2021

The value of agricultural output has increased in recent years and agriculture remains an important contributor to the local economy, although it is no longer the major employer it once was.

Entrepreneurship and innovation are seen in a growing range of SMEs and micro businesses. These make a significant contribution to local sustainability, particularly in our food and drink sector and our rural communities. Many specialist, artisan and micro-businesses are gaining a national reputation with products including local cheese and ice-cream (Doddington), shellfish and fish (Craster Kippers), high quality meat, breads and cakes, award winning preserves and chutneys as well as locally-brewed beers, artisanal gin and, from 2022, Ad Gefrin whisky.

¹ The main local authorities are Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland and some places on our periphery fall into Durham and Cumbria.

A PLACE OF MISSIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Our People

People here are hard-working, resilient, proud and passionate for their home, and also generous. The warmth of their welcome and friendliness is widely recognised, as well as their good sense of humour and optimism. There is a tendency to be inward-looking but an absence of arrogance or entitlement.

This is a surprisingly diverse area. There is considerable wealth not only in the hands of major land-owning families, but also senior professionals and executives and the people who have made lifestyle choices to move here, often on retirement, attracted by the quality of life and the welcome of the people who live here. There are also areas and people in real need and deprivation. Often, in both rural and urban areas, these sit uncomfortably close together.

Of our population:

- 28% live in the top 10% of most deprived areas of England; and
- 6% live in the 10% of least deprived areas of England.

On the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2019), the area contains parishes amongst the highest and lowest scores in the country. These small-scale statistics highlight differences which are 'averaged out' in many higher-level statistical series.

We partner with [Transforming Communities Together Tyne to Tweed](#) to support parishes across the diocese in developing community mission. At the Cathedral, its lantern tower has inspired the [Lantern Initiative](#) seeking to act as a beacon of light in the heart of the city and offering a sensitive welcome to those who feel particularly vulnerable.

In our local communities, urban and rural, parishes and local churches are often at the heart of helping to transform and enhance people's lives. Across the diocese many congregation members work for independent and third sector organisations in food banks, charity shops, as prison visitors, with the homeless, while also volunteering with church-led activity including Messy Church, toddler groups, lunch clubs, home visits.

In Denton, a deprived urban estate parish, a Children and Families Missioner and Authorized Lay Pioneer has been appointed to work alongside the parish priest. Applying community outreach experience to missional engagement, the post is based at the parish church and works with the community, local agencies and youth groups. A new initiative '[Lego Church](#)' caught the imagination and involvement of young people and was exhibited at the Cathedral. More recently, in collaboration with the adjacent Newburn parish, much needed holiday clubs have been offered, tackling food poverty.

Employment levels are below the national average and unemployment slightly above, with young people (16 – 24) particularly disadvantaged. Income disparity is significant, even within Northumberland, with median incomes in Ponteland being twice that of the median found in Alnwick, Ashington or Blyth.² Median incomes in Northumberland also fell slightly between 2018 and 2019 as against the upward trend regionally and nationally.

² 2019, the median income for Alnwick, Ashington and Blyth was £25k.

Low household income and its impact on child poverty is a particular concern, with foodbanks supporting many of our disadvantaged communities. Located at the Venerable Bede Church, the West End Food Bank feeds 30,000 people annually.

Relative poverty and wealth play out differently in rural areas. Sparsity of population and remoteness create their own challenges, particularly:

- For elderly and infirm people in accessing healthcare and core amenities such as post offices and local shops.
- For younger families with children accessing schools, participating in after school activity and making friends, particularly where parents also have lengthy commutes to work.
- Being 'off grid' increases fuel costs as LPG and domestic oil attract premium charges. Electricity outages also affect pumped water supplies, as experienced in the aftermath of Storm Arwen when some were without water for 8 days.

Counteracting this are strong informal support networks. People 'look out' for each other and there is much kindness. It is this community spirit which provides the essential infrastructure and is often based on local churches.

Although less impacted by the most violent crimes, anti-social behaviour, theft and drugs-related offences (including county lines across the rural areas too) remain a real issue. The theft of material (e.g. heating oil) and equipment (e.g. agricultural) are challenges for rural communities, affecting business and private dwellings. Domestic violence is a significant cause for concern, with the area having amongst the highest reported rates in the UK. Mental health is also a real issue, as the area had one of the highest suicide rates in England and Wales in 2020.



We value the chaplaincy services at [HMP Northumberland](#) and the partnership between the Cathedral and the [Oswin Project](#) which operates the Cathedral Cafe and is staffed by ex-offenders from local prisons.

Education

The Church is one of the largest providers of education, committed to ensuring that every child is able to have the best possible education and the brightest start in life. 12,000 children attend Church of England schools and academies in the Diocese.

[The Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust](#) supports the education of over 2,000 children and young people aged 2-19 across South East Northumberland. Our Board of Education is supported by a Joint Education Team which also serves the Board of Education in Durham Diocese.



Bishop Christine's visit to Archbishop Runcie C of E First School in Gosforth.

There are also examples of good and emerging practice connecting schools, parish churches and families with the Growing Faith Initiative. Recognising the importance of mission to children, young people and schools, we have appointed a new lead for our work with Children and Youth within our Mission and Ministry Team.

Howay the Magpies!

Geordies love football. Newcastle United regularly attracts over 52,000 supporters and the Premier League club and its Foundation works with 60,000 children, young people and adults to encourage attainment, healthy living and employment. Newcastle United is part of the community's beating heart (except among those who support Sunderland!).

There are two major universities in the city, [Newcastle University](#) and [Northumbria University](#), together educating 50,000 students, including around 20,000 international students. Both are highly regarded and specialisms include medicine, teacher education and research on allied health professions, biology, computer science and English. The high graduate retention rate of 36% shows that those who come to study often stay.

Pilgrimage, Culture & Tourism

This area is increasingly recognised nationally and internationally as a good place to live and to visit. A rich and diverse cultural and tourism 'offer' can be found across the diocese.

Pre-pandemic, 18.0m people visited annually from across the UK and the world, supporting 15,000 jobs and adding £1.6bn into the economy. There is something for everybody, whether a day visitor, a holidaymaker or a resident.



18 million



15,000 jobs



£1.6 billion

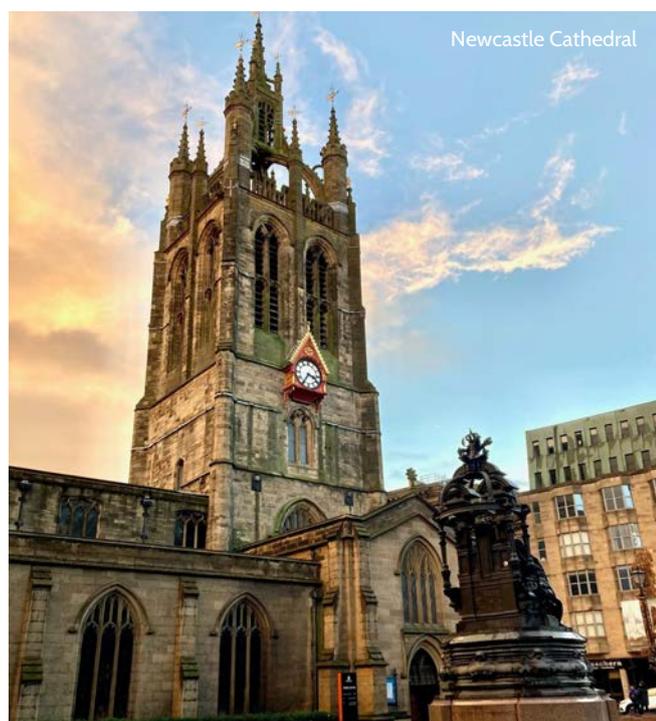
There are three Further and Higher Education Colleges - [Newcastle College](#) with 16,000 students, [Northumberland College](#) and [Tyne Met College](#) - providing the much-needed vocational skills to support industry and business in the area. There is an important role here for connecting with new and emerging sectors, so that the benefits of these employment opportunities are increasingly accessible to young and older people and growth is inclusive.

[St Thomas' Newcastle](#) is our Resource Church, our first project supported by Strategic Development Funding. Launched in October 2019, it has witnessed significant growth, particularly among 'difficult to reach' over 18's. Located close to Haymarket transport hub between the two universities, it now has a regular congregation of over 185, predominantly students.



A service at St. Thomas' Newcastle

[Newcastle Cathedral](#) is set in the heart of the city, looking outwards into the bustle of city life. It has recently undergone restoration as part of a £6.0m National Lottery Heritage Fund project: 'Making Sacred Space Common Ground'. This has transformed the interior and exterior of the building, providing an open, flexible and well interpreted centre to welcome a growing number of visitors. The cathedral community has also shared in a transformation, describing its mission as offering 'radical welcome, inspiring worship and empowering worth.'



Newcastle Cathedral

Spiritual refreshment can be found at:

- [Shepherds Dene Retreat House](#), shared by the dioceses of Durham and Newcastle, an arts and crafts country house set in beautiful grounds at Riding Mill.
- [The Society of St Francis Friary and Retreat House](#) at Alnmouth and the [Northumbria Community](#) near Alnwick.
- [The Seahouses Hostel](#), which has recently undergone a major refurbishment and provides self-catering accommodation for young people to meet and grow together.
- And through the many opportunities for pilgrimage, including [Lindisfarne](#), the [Northern Saints Trails](#) and [Hexham Abbey](#).

Newcastle, with impressive Georgian and Victorian architecture, is a prime shopping centre, and home to famous museums and galleries, theatres and an eclectic range of music and comedy venues. Over the Millennium Bridge on the Gateshead riverbank is the stunning Sage Concert Hall. Announced in January 2022, a new international £300.0m venue for world class business and entertainment, The Sage, is to be built between the Concert Hall and the Baltic. Provincial theatres can be found in the market towns of Alnwick, Berwick and Hexham, and smaller entrepreneurial ventures like Jam Jar Cinema, a social enterprise in Whitley Bay. Storytelling and music are everywhere, celebrating the traditions and heritage of the area.

The area hosts a wide variety of holiday accommodation ranging from family run and premier hotels, to village pubs and guest houses, holiday cottages and caravan parks. These create employment and help sustain local services. Northumberland is home to more [castles](#) than any other county in England. Our natural environment is stunning and visitors are attracted to the [Northumberland National Park](#), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a heritage coastline affording places to relax, walk, observe wildlife, and experience outdoor and leisure activities.

Nightlife Economy

With a variety of bars, clubs and restaurants, Newcastle is renowned for its thriving nightlife, often regarded as one of the most exciting outside London.

Launched in 2008 [Newcastle Street Pastors](#), based at Cathedral House, have made a significant contribution to the safety of the night time economy in the city centre, Tynemouth and Whitley Bay. Their contribution has been recognised by Northumbria Police and Best Bar None, who have awarded them excellence and special recognition awards respectively.



Caring for God's Creation

We recognize that engaging with the potentially disastrous consequences of the climate crisis is both a theological and ethical imperative, and an opportunity to engage fruitfully with many people who are not currently engaged with the church.

Of 58 registered eco churches, 4 have achieved silver awards and 17 a bronze award. [Our Environmental Policy](#), was approved by Synod in November 2019 and we aim to achieve Eco Diocese Bronze status in 2022. This is becoming a real 'open door' to connecting with local communities, particularly young people.



Housing

Overall there is a wide range of housing choice in the diocese with some of the least expensive housing in the country and some of the most expensive outside London, especially in commuter hotspots west of Newcastle and in the Tyne Valley.

At St Mark's Shiremoor, an established smaller urban estate surrounded by new build housing, a parish priest was appointed in 2021 with a combined remit of Deanery Mission Enabler. Recognising the missional opportunities in a major programme of new build estates around the Rising Sun Country Park in Benton, a partnership of priests and laity are helping to connect new communities.

In the interwar and post war period significant public sector house building in new suburban estates accommodated the population growth. The two World Wars also left a legacy of vacant agricultural workers cottages and country houses were demolished leaving rural communities fragmented and unsustainable.

In Newcastle, clearance of unfit terraced housing lagged behind the closure of the shipyards and armaments industry which they were built to support. The Byker Wall (now Grade 2 listed) was built to retain the sense of community it replaced.

The Scotswood Road clearance blighted the west end until recently, when the Council released the land for private development, as it has also done in Great Park, playing an active part in the regeneration of the city. North Tyneside is also adopting a proactive approach, bringing forward brownfield sites (sometimes using CPO powers) for mixed housing development. Former industrial sites are being developed for business and housing, such as at Ouseburn in Newcastle and Smith's Dock in North Shields.



Housebuilding is buoyant around most towns and rural and coastal villages are also under pressure. Whilst small scale developments in rural areas can help to sustain local economies and communities, they can be unpopular, not least where demand for second homes lifts prices beyond the reach of local people and adds pressure to existing physical and social infrastructure. Increasingly common in Northumberland is the imposition of 'primary residency' restrictions and a recognised need to strengthen affordable housing provision.

Connectivity & Transport

The Diocese is served by the A1, A19 and A69 trunk roads. Longstanding ambitions to upgrade the A1 North of Alnwick have not yet materialised. Travel by rail on the East Coast Main Line from Newcastle to London (3 hours) and Edinburgh (90 minutes) is fast and frequent and there are good Trans-Pennine and Cross-Country services.



The light rail [Metro](#) system serving Tyneside and Newcastle carries 37 million passengers a year. A major investment in new rolling stock is underway to replace the 1980's stock. £34m is also being invested from the 'Restoring your Railway' fund in the [Northumberland Line](#) which is being reopened for passenger services. New stations are being built between Ashington and Newcastle, reconnecting some of our more challenged former coal mining areas into the wider economy of Newcastle and North Tyneside. Due to open in 2024, this should help stimulate economic regeneration and community development.

Public transport is generally good in and between urban areas, but is limited in more remote areas leaving people without access to a car widely dependent on community transport or taxis.

[Newcastle International Airport](#) had 5.2m passengers in 2019 and serves regional and international destinations, including Dubai, an important passenger hub for those travelling east and also a key route for cargo exports and imports. [The Port of Tyne](#) has a daily ferry to Amsterdam, modern cargo facilities including major involvement in offshore wind-power, and a cruise terminal. There are also smaller ports at Blyth and Berwick.

With increased homeworking and the emergence of microbusinesses, superfast / fibre broadband and mobile phone coverage is essential, but not universally available in either rural or some urban locations.

Interfaith

The area is also one of the least ethnically diverse in the country with 93.5% identifying as White. This ranges from 98% in Northumberland to 89% in Newcastle, with 11% of people overall and 24% of schoolchildren self-identifying as Black or Asian. This marks a significant demographic shift.

Whilst the number of other faith communities is smaller in the diocese than in many other parts of the country, faith groups contribute significantly to renewal in disadvantaged communities and faith leaders are often able to engage more deeply than statutory agencies. The Committee for Inter-Faith and Ethnic Relations (CIFER) is at the centre of the interfaith dialogue and brings together faith leaders from across the spectrum. Recent initiatives include Pathways from Abraham, Voices of Faith and Festivals of Light. In addition, CIFER has organised conferences, training days and study visits for our own clergy, readers and others interested in interfaith working. Collaboration with Durham Diocese is planned for 2022 looking at institutional racism. In addition, our former Bishop has built up strong relationships with leaders from other faiths through the Newcastle Council of Faiths.

Ecumenical

We also work with other churches across the northeast as members of [NECAT \(North East Churches Acting Together\)](#) which seeks to help churches better work together and establish partnerships to serve our communities. The Bishops of both Newcastle and Durham are members of NECAT's North East Church Leaders Group.

Three parish churches have longstanding Local Ecumenical Partnerships and others work informally with other denominations.

Politics

The North of Tyne Combined Authority was established as part of the Devolution Deal. It is controlled by the Mayor (Labour), the Leaders of Newcastle and North Tyneside Councils (both with Labour majorities), and Northumberland (currently Conservative but with no working overall majority). There are nine MPs, six Labour and three Conservative, including for Blyth Valley, the first 'red wall' constituency.



Interfaith Week celebration at Newcastle Cathedral

Engaging with Civic Society

Successive Bishops of Newcastle have forged deep and respected relationships with civic partners, although the emphasis on Newcastle in the Bishop's title can sometimes make this more difficult beyond the City of Newcastle itself. In addition to major civic services and events, recent activity has included networking with business leaders; bringing together people who might not normally meet and brokering fruitful relationships (eg Chief Constables and Prison Governors); chairing the North of Tyne Economic Board; networking with Lord Lieutenants, High Sheriffs, Lord Mayors, major landowners. The senior representative of the church, the Bishop is not only in a position of influence in national debate (eg on poverty and the economy of the North East), but also able to offer safe spaces and to inspire interest and engagement with our faith, as has often been the case in visits to schools, sporting events and local communities.

THE DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE SERVING THIS PLACE

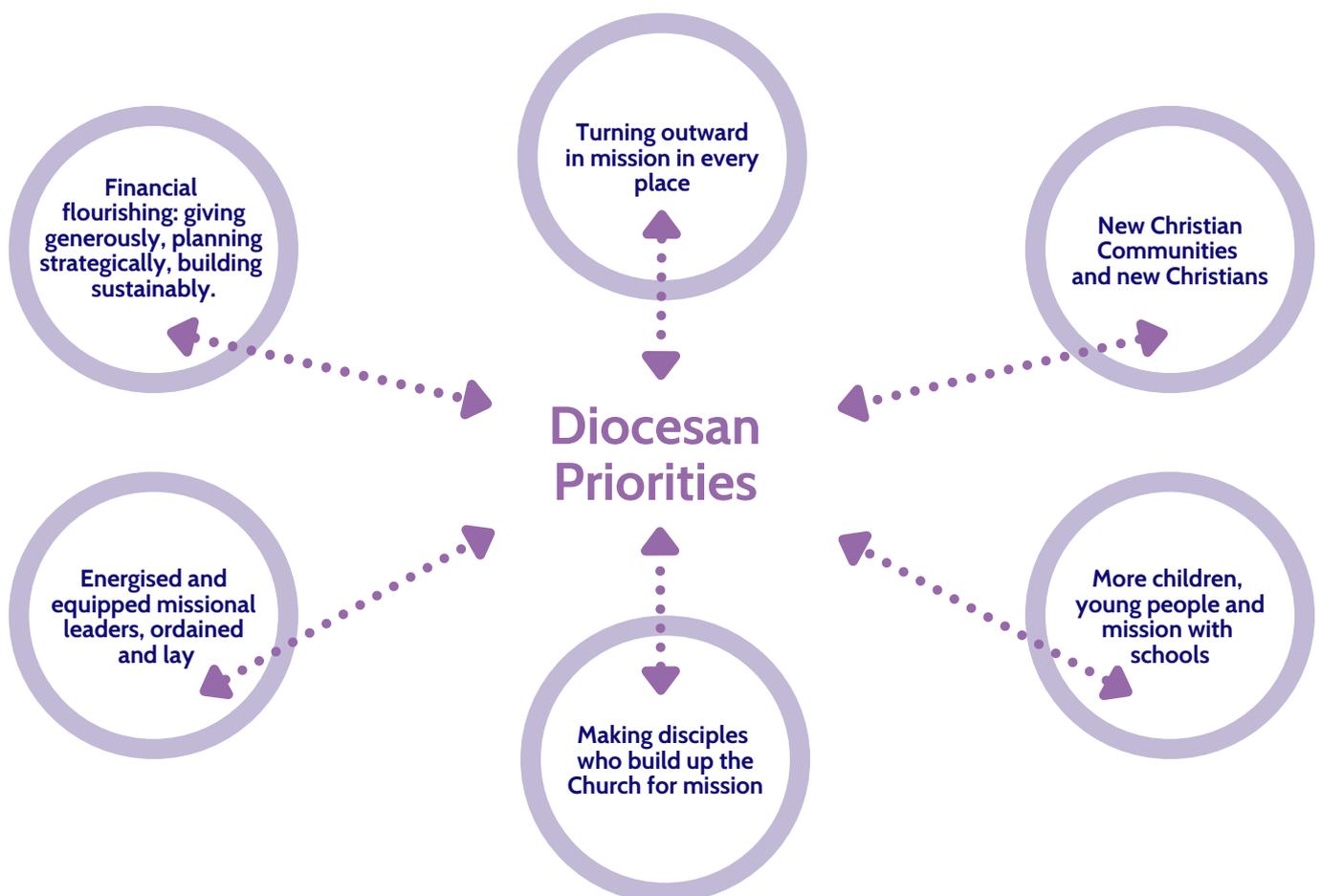
Our Church in Our Place

Three values have long been core to our understanding of God's mission in this place: generous, engaged, open. We have recently revisited these values to help inform our strategy and seek to be Open to God's transforming love; Generous with God's transforming gifts; Engaged in God's transforming work in the world. The three values underpin our vision, Growing Church Bringing Hope.

Our Strategy

In 2021 we agreed six priorities following an extensive consultation which had begun when [Bishop Christine's Presidential Address to Diocesan Synod](#) in May 2019 spoke into a Kairos moment.

This seminal moment caught the imagination of many and led to renewed momentum. A review of Parish Share, a new Generous Giving Team and a collaborative approach to budget setting were put in place. Over the next two years consultations, conversations, reflections, workshops, discussions in PCCs, Deaneries, Chapters and at every Synod, in informal groups and between individuals explored what the Kairos moment meant for church in every place. Whilst the pandemic resulted in almost all of this joint discernment and collaborative working taking place on Zoom, the whole process has enabled a wider involvement and sense of ownership from beyond 'the normal suspects', with a positive impact on culture, trust and engagement.



Our Resources for Ministry

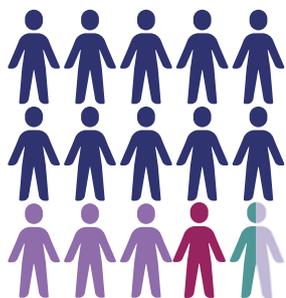
237 churches serve 169 parishes across 122 benefices within 12 deaneries. We have two Archdeaconries: Lindisfarne with 25% of the population and by far the largest geographical area, including some of the most remote communities in England; and Northumberland which has the majority of people but in a much smaller area. Each Archdeaconry is home to a distinctive combination of contexts and differing identities, opportunities and challenges both for the communities and the churches which serve them.

Pastoral and sacramental care for:

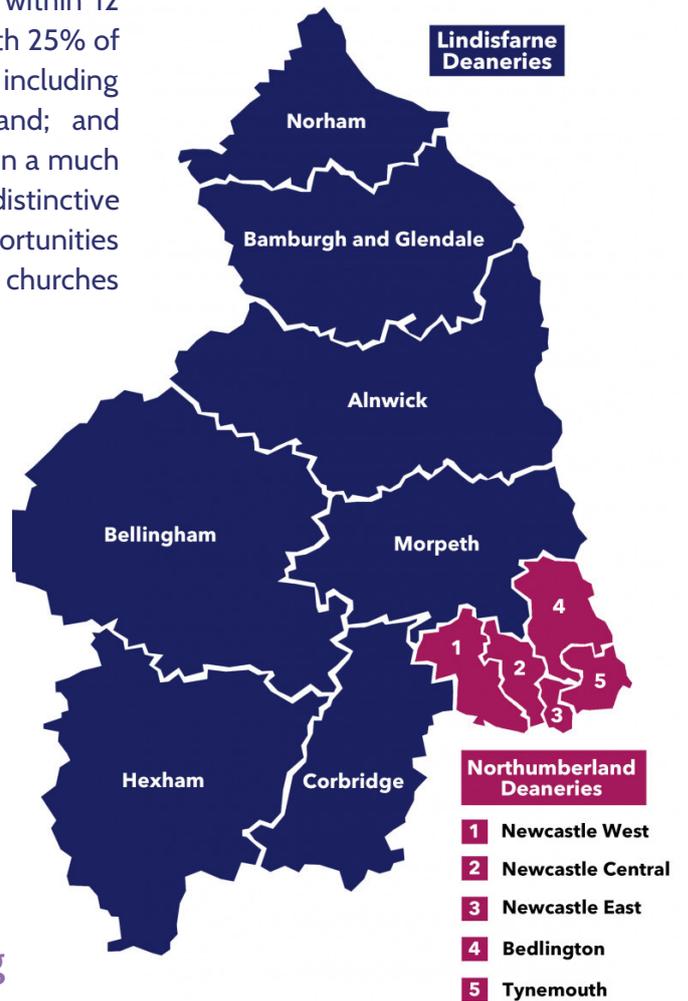
- 5 parishes, with 8 church communities, is with the Bishop of Beverley; and
- 2 parishes, with 2 church communities, is with the Bishop of Berwick.

Ministry in Numbers

At 1 February 2022 our 147 licensed clergy in post are grouped as follows:



- 103 Stipendary**
- 27 Self-Supporting**
- 4 House for Duty**
- 8 Chaplaincy**
- 5 Employed**



Incumbents 82	Curates 30	Readers 53	Clergy with PTO 167
	Associates 19	Readers with PTO 47	
	Chaplaincy / Other 16	Authorised Lay Ministers 42	Hon Asst Bishops 7

Supporting Ministry

The consultations to agree our strategic priorities have helped to develop cultural change across the diocese and to refocus resources to support parishes, clergy and lay leaders. We recognise and value all our missional leaders, but are acutely aware this value is not always felt. Pressures from the impact of COVID, uncertainty about financial resources and the national debates about the changing nature of ministry are also contributing factors causing low morale in our clergy, lay leaders and in worshipping communities. Supporting parishes in their worship, prayer and mission and being able to respond to people where they are is essential if we are to continue to develop the cultural change which has begun. Our strengthened support for mission and ministry includes resources to:

- explore ordained ministry, assist the formation of those in their curacy and encourage the ongoing vocation and formation of all those in licensed ministry.
- develop lay ministry, Authorised Lay Ministry, and Everyday Faith (160 people have completed training over the past two years).
- work closely with Lindisfarne College of Theology and Cranmer Hall for training in both ordained and lay ministry, and in continuing ministerial formation.
- encourage younger vocations through the Ministry Experience Scheme and New Wine Discipleship Year.
- train spiritual directors and organise spiritual direction across the diocese.

In addition to formal training, we also seek to affirm and help more informal ministry, including all those who support their local churches in so many different areas which may not be recognised as ministry (finance, giving, churchwardens etc).

St Thomas' ran an online Alpha course in 2021 which supported parishes across the Diocese. St Thomas' has also supported the [Mission Initiative Newcastle East \(MINE\)](#) with detached youth work across Walker and Byker.

To give two current examples, in the rural coastal area of Embleton, nine separate communities have been brought together under one incumbent. In February 2022 the communities will begin to explore and affirm the gifts and vocations which already exist to help to grasp the opportunities to develop new relationships and 'do mission differently'.

Similarly, cross licensing of the two clergy now supporting Bellingham Deanery and a strong group of licensed lay ministers is stimulating mission and may also provide an example of a different approach with relevance elsewhere.

Deaneries are at various stages in considering re-energising mission and ministry, including some which are not yet at the stage of imagining a different future driven by opportunity rather than decline.

Financial Resilience

A diocese born out of Durham in the industrial era, Newcastle has few historic assets, low levels of investment income and is heavily dependent on parish share receipts and national church funding. Between around 2000 and 2017 these increased year on year, but not at the rate needed to sustain the budgets approved by Synod. In 2018 parish share receipts started to decline in absolute terms.

This decline has been compounded by the pandemic and changes in National Church Funding. Whilst the introduction of Lowest Income Communities Funding to support ministry in poorer areas has been welcomed and given us much needed help, the reality is that the overall changes have caused significant pressure.

The budget has been managed, primarily, by increasingly long delays in filling clergy posts, with inevitable impacts on parish ministry. At the same time parish share, based significantly on parish income, was becoming regarded as a disincentive to giving in a diocese where giving levels were within the lowest quartile nationally.

A Changing Approach

A number of things came together in 2018 / 2019

- a recognition of the disconnect between Synod decisions on the budget and the willingness / ability of parishes to meet the parish share asked of them;
- the need to put our finances on a sustainable footing and to take difficult decisions – including on deployment; this was the first reference to our budget sustaining c80 full-time equivalent incumbent status stipendiary clergy;
- the establishment of a new Generous Giving Team, positioning giving as part of our discipleship; and
- Synod's decision to carry out a broad-based review of Parish Share. The Review Group's Report was widely welcomed for its openness and honesty and resulted in Synod agreeing new methodology in [June 2020](#). The pandemic has delayed its full implementation.

The budget setting process also changed to encourage active engagement by parishes on the quantum and shape of the proposed budget (including priorities), with parishes being invited to indicate what level of parish share they would be able to offer compared with the previous year. This fed back into the budget put to Synod for approval, demonstrating that we valued and acted on what we had heard.

Formal Accounts and Account Management

The [latest audited accounts](#) are for 2020. The 2021 Financial Statement will be available for Diocesan Synod in May 2022.

Over the last three years we have also updated and strengthened our financial management, improving our stewardship and enabling us to better support parishes and deaneries.

The Impact of Covid

We recognise there has been significant decline in some of our churches, exacerbated by the pandemic in the past two years and reflected in fewer people, fewer young people and children, less money, less impact. But we also see much that is bringing hope throughout the diocese and the huge opportunities for change and transformation through the good news of Jesus Christ.

The impact of COVID on parish share received in 2020, 2021 and offered for 2022 is a reduction of around £0.5m (-10%) on the amount achieved in 2019, to just short of £4.0m. In 2021, the total share received came to 100.1% of the total offers parishes had made. Although early days, this positive response suggests that cultural change is presenting itself.

Contingency arrangements, funded by both the National Church and from the sale of assets, have enabled us to meet the shortfall of £0.5m in 2021 and £0.6m in 2022. Throughout this period the Finance and Generous Giving Teams have worked alongside parishes and deaneries providing support, advice and encouragement.

Working in Partnership

In addition to working with other dioceses regionally, in the northern province and nationally, we particularly value our close relationship with Durham Diocese where we have each brought distinct contributions which have enabled us to deepen and strengthen our support for the particular needs of each diocese. This is seen in the [Joint Education Team](#) and in the recently expanded Communications Team where collaboration has enabled us to bring together a wider range of skills, including digital expertise. This facilitates working together where there is common cause, particularly on issues where a wider voice for the North East is needed. These new arrangements have helped us to extend our reach, which has been particularly valuable during the pandemic and the development of Growing Church Bringing Hope.

Separately funded, and serving both dioceses we greatly value the [Religious Resource Centre](#) located at Church House, North Shields which provides learning and support material for parishes, schools and theology students.

The wide-ranging mission and ministry of chaplaincy is important in healthcare, education, the military, business and industry, as well as Anna Chaplaincy among others, ministering at the intersections of the church and the wider community.

The Generous Giving Team worked with Northumberland County Council and Newcastle City Council to extend their COVID Village Hall support schemes to Church Halls. Over £400K was paid to local churches.

Whilst these steps are helping to deal with the 'here and now' of COVID, it is increasingly clear that the tension between holding down the budget and vacancies continuing where they need to be filled cannot be sustained. This underlines the importance and urgency of agreeing an intentional deployment plan to progress the Next Steps of our strategy.

From our discussions with parishes, any recovery from the impact of COVID on their resources is likely to be long-term and very slow. This raises some serious questions to address as we move towards 2023, not least about sustainable levels of ministry and what funds can be made available to assist parishes with their post COVID recovery.

A Safer Church Open to All

Irrespective of who we are, how we live our lives and the views we hold, our deep-rooted inclusive catholicity, seen in our liturgy and theology, flows through our values - Open, Generous, Engaged. We are Open to diversity around identity, gender, sexuality, disability, race, age; and seek to be Generous in our approach to difference, and Engaged in the issues of the world. Relationships and the ability to live together in 'good' disagreement matter.

We have a deep commitment to safeguarding and making our churches safe places for all. Over 80% of our parishes are now fully compliant with our Safeguarding Dashboard, ensuring they are up to date with processes such as safer recruitment and people management. Our Safeguarding Team is engaged nationally as part of a pilot to identify best practice for implementing changes to the role of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers (as recommended by IICSA); and as a pilot user and early adopter of the new National Case Management System. We completed our Past Case Review 2 (PCR2) in 2021.

We are deeply committed to Living in Love and Faith (LLF) and believe that exploring our differences together in a safe and loving environment can help us to grow closer to each other. Many deaneries and parishes have already engaged with LLF and an Open Synod held online in June 2021 attracted a particularly strong attendance, achieving a wider engagement both geographically and in terms of diversity.

Wider Partnerships



We enjoy partnerships with the Dioceses of [Botswana](#), [Møre](#) and Winchester. These long standing and well-established relationships have been particularly fruitful and we value the opportunities they each provide and the deepening relationships they offer through prayer, mutual learning, support and action.

The Diocese of Newcastle

This is our Diocese - an enticing place - a place and people of missional opportunity.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Decision Making, Accountability and Delivery

This is a summary of the principal structures in place to resource decision making, accountability and the delivery of the Diocesan Strategy and responsibilities.

Diocesan Synod

Usually holds 2 formal meetings a year and 3 Open Synod Forums (including 1 for finance). Members of Diocesan Synod, both elected and ex-officio, are also Members of the registered Company responsible for the finances of the diocese.

Safeguarding Advisory Panel

Independent Chair:
Jackie McHanwell.

Houses & Glebe Committee

Chair: Canon Roger Windass
The Houses and Glebe Committee looks after the functions of the Parsonages Board.

Bishop's Council & Board of Finance

Chair: The Bishop
DBF Chair: Canon Simon Harper
The Synod's Standing Committee takes a strategic overview of the life of the Diocese and develops policy and priorities under the direction of Synod and the Bishop. The Council also acts as the Board of Directors of the Newcastle Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd.

Board of Education

Chair: The Revd Gill Alexander supports church schools and collaborates with the Diocese in support of work with young people and children. A company limited by guarantee and a registered charity it is supported by a joint staff team which also serves Durham Diocese.

Mission & Pastoral Committee

Chair: Liz Kerry
The DMPC fulfills a strategic role in developing mission & patterns of ministry to meet the changing needs of communities.

DAC

Chair: Canon Roger Styring
The DAC's objective is to enable church buildings & churchyards to be resources for the mission of the church.

Finance Group

Chair: Canon Simon Harper
A sub-group of the Board of Finance responsible for the management of diocesan finances.

