

# DIOCESE OF OXFORD ANNUAL REVIEW

MAY 2022



DIOCESE *of*  
OXFORD

The Diocese of Oxford is the Church of England in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Together, we are the Church, called and sent by God as disciples of Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. We are a living, growing network of more than a thousand congregations, chaplaincies and schools.

Together, we are called to be more Christ-like: to be the Church of the Beatitudes: contemplative, compassionate and courageous for the sake of God's world.

Together, we work with God and with others for the common good in every place in one of the great crossroads of the world.

Together, we are called to proclaim the Christian faith afresh in this generation with joy and hope and love.

Together, we are called to dream dreams and see visions of what could be and see those visions come to birth.

**[oxford.anglican.org/commonvision](https://oxford.anglican.org/commonvision)**

# STRENGTH IN PARTNERSHIP



A series of visits to every deanery began in November with a single aim: to listen and discover how we are after two years of the pandemic. The narrative then was one of weariness and stretched resources. Six months later and it's clear that hope and energy are returning.

We deeply appreciate all that the clergy and lay ministers, church officers and congregations continue to do. The depth of pastoral care, outreach into the community, mastering new skills, and gently steering communities through new challenges have been extraordinary.

This past year we've seen again the strength and depth achieved by parishes and our diocesan staff teams working in partnership. Perhaps no more so than the incredible response from across the diocese in recent weeks to provide over 740 beds and other non-accommodation support for Ukrainian refugees.

Mission and ministry take many forms. From supporting the work of clergy and laity serving their communities to the no less vital tasks of training curates, pursuing the five focus areas of our common vision, and making our churches safe for all, 2021/2 has been another fruitful year.

The following pages highlight just some of the achievements of our diocesan staff, committees, and councils during the past year. While meeting the formal requirement for an annual report to Diocesan Synod, we hope this review also provides transparency, accountability and inspiration to a much wider diocesan audience.

Our country faces enormous challenges and questions in the year ahead, not least the lasting effects of war in Ukraine, the steepest increase in the cost of living for a generation, and the pressing need to respond to the climate emergency. These are urgent needs that will require us to be the best we can be for this time.

We remain deeply committed as a diocese to our common vision to be a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world. We're not there yet, and often fall short of these ideals, but we are seeing a new determination and resilience in many places, thanks be to God.

The Rt Revd Dr Steven  
Croft, Bishop of Oxford

Canon Mark Humphriss,  
Diocesan Secretary

# BISHOP'S COUNCIL

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Bishop's Council is responsible for considering matters of policy, advising the diocesan bishop and determining how matters should be taken forward to the Diocesan Synod. It is the executive committee of the Diocesan Synod and the board of directors of the Diocesan Board of Finance. It is made up of lay and clerical members of parishes, elected by archdeaconry, plus ex-officio members.

## Strategy

Our calling to be a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world has been a key consideration for Bishop's Council in the past year. Whilst the pandemic limited parish capacity for strategic work, the need to respond to the key local, national and global issues was not ignored.

Bishop's Council affirmed five key areas of strategic focus in its July 2021 strategy day to support parishes, schools and chaplaincies in responding to the climate emergency, expanding our new congregations to reach those not yet part of a worshipping community, encouraging discipleship, addressing poverty and inequality, and engaging with children and young people.

Bishop's Council committed to a significant initial programme of work in response to *From Lament to Action* and has already fulfilled its commitment to increase the number of UKME people on Bishop's Council, from one to three, and increased the hours of our UKME Development Enabler, Polly Falconer, to nearly full-time.

A decision was taken in February 2022 to reconfigure our Local Ministry Pathway to strengthen our lay ministry training and no longer provide ordination training ourselves, as explained on page 7.

## Finance

- Bishop's Council approved the draft and then final budget for 2022, and financial statements. Following a full re-tender of our investment management, Newton Investment Management were re-appointed as our investment managers, not least due to their strong environmental, social and governance commitment as well as their good performance and investment team.
- Despite being above the budgeted level, a clergy stipend increase of 2% in April 2022 was agreed, and we hope to increase this further if inflation remains high.

- Bishop's Council and the Diocesan Board of Education decided in late 2021 it was necessary to close the future accrual of the Staff Retirement Benefit Scheme.
- A group to review the allocation of Parish Share was formed and this is now in progress.
- At the end of December, Bishop's Council expressed enormous appreciation to the Revd Canon John Tattersall LVO, who stepped down as Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance after eight years of exemplary service. We welcomed Sir Hector Sants as his successor at the beginning of January.

## Operational

- Significant work to implement the Committee Governance Review was overseen by Bishop's Council, which is now almost complete.
- An Appointments Committee was established, with a mix of skills and diversity, and we are already noticing improvements, with diocesan committees having access to a broader range of people.
- Following a review in mid-2021, Bishop's Council unanimously voted for a restructuring of the Safeguarding team, creating the role of Head of Safeguarding, and an area-specific Safeguarding Officer for each archdeaconry, ensuring greater capacity in this crucial area of work.
- The former Dean of Christ Church raised certain matters with members of Bishop's Council in September and significant time was spent exploring these in detail with the benefit of an independent lawyer. We were assured that there were not systemic matters of concern.
- Bishop's Council have recommended to the national church that there be an independent lessons learned review regarding the church's involvement in matters relating to Christ Church. This is due to take place in 2022.

# MISSION AND MINISTRY

## Children, young people and families

Adapting to the changes and challenges experienced by parishes as they seek to reconnect with children, young people and families has dominated the past 12 months. The embedding of the reshaped Discipleship Enabler roles within each archdeaconry team has enabled us to provide resources and tailored support specific to the needs of each area and to develop new and good relationships with parishes.

Intergenerational approaches to ministry were the focus of webinars and training events for those working with the younger generations.

With fewer people returning to volunteer ministries we have been supporting churches with rediscovering how vital it is that the generations play, learn and work together as they journey in faith.

200+

PEOPLE TRAINED FOR  
WORK WITH CHILDREN  
AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**A**FTER WATCHING THE CHANNEL 4 documentary *The Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds*, Helen Reid was inspired to start an intergenerational group at her church in Oxford. On the first Tuesday of the month, St Ebbe's Church, Headington hosts a coffee morning for little ones and the older generation. It's not only bringing the generations together but encouraging more collaboration in the parish as those from the two local churches, just a two-minute walk apart, join the group.

"Many of the older generation have fascinating stories and talents to share. We've had an older lady showing the younger ones her dressmaking skills and children bringing their musical instruments to play. It's lovely to see the two generations together and how they enjoy each other's company."



Photo: Paul Bolton



## The journey to net zero

COP26 was the biggest climate event of the year. Bishop Olivia travelled to Glasgow in November to represent the Church of England's commitment to environmental action, speaking at many events. We continued to provide advice and support to churches and parishes switching to more sustainable practices and saw a rise in the number of Eco Churches, demonstrating the progress towards our target of net zero carbon emissions by 2035.

**"At Glasgow, the world glimpsed the possibility of a hopeful future. Hurting God's creation and contributing to the suffering of God's poorest people is not the 'love God and your neighbour' that Jesus commands of us. COP26 showed us the unity of purpose people of faith can bring. This encouragement should reignite in all of us hope for our future."**

Bishop Olivia

## Generous giving

Through the year, our Generous Giving Adviser, Joshua Townson, has supported over 100 churches with giving and fundraising advice and encouraged a renewed focus on the theology of giving. This has included new training materials for churchwardens and a new sermon resource for clergy and lay preachers. We now have 286 churches actively being supported through the Parish Giving Scheme, receiving a total of over £7m (including Gift Aid) in 2021.

- 427 parsonage house audits to inform the diocesan net zero carbon strategy.
- 15% of churches in the diocese are now registered as Eco Churches, with 4.5% holding an A Rocha Eco Church Award, edging us closer to being a Bronze Eco Diocese.
- 113 church energy audits to help make energy-saving changes to church buildings.
- Launched brand new *Be the Change* resources helping young people in schools and churches to take action on the environment.

## Encouraging everyday faith

Over 1,000 people took part in *Come and See* in 2021 and more than 200 church leaders used the resource with their congregations.

The Lord's Prayer was our focus for *Come and See* in 2022. Building on the success of the previous year, we expanded the offer to include resources for families and schools during Lent. .

Working with the national Church, we are leading the development of a brand new Everyday Faith Portal. This expands our Personal Discipleship Plan to other dioceses and grows our network of 500 Encouragers, supporting people to integrate their faith with the whole of life.



Photo: Steven Buckley

## Ordinands and Curates

Thirty-two new deacons were ordained in 2021, despite the challenges of Covid, and were supported by the team as they found themselves arriving in their parishes wrestling with significant pastoral and missional challenges.

A hundred and thirteen curates were supported with Initial Ministerial Education phase 2 (IME2) and additional pastoral care was provided, including careful work with archdeacons to offer assistance to stipendiary curates looking for new roles in an increasingly uncertain future. We delivered 43 training days for our curates covering a range of topics, such as Growing New Communities and Exploring Chaplaincy.

Building on the success of online teaching in 2020, the team developed a blended learning approach for future training and offered support to other dioceses. New assessment and reporting processes were introduced, as part of the House of Bishops' introduction of new Formation Qualities, with an emphasis on fitness-to-practise frameworks.

During the year, the DDO team made significant preparations for the new national shared discernment process, beginning in September 2021.

## Equipping and supporting local ministry

Despite the pandemic, an encouraging number of people have continued to explore their vocations through our network of vocations advisers. We launched a new vocations strategy, which included forming area vocations teams to promote vocations in groups that are currently under-represented.

The diocesan Local Ministry Pathway (LMP) continued to provide part-time training for ordinands and LLMs. The South Central Theological Education Institution, of which Oxford LMP is a core member, received an outstanding report from the external examiner in the autumn.

As part of a wider review, we made the decision to withdraw from providing our own ordination training from September 2022. Whilst the LMP has an excellent track record in training ordinands, changes and challenges, both locally and nationally, led to the decision to support the richness of provision available at local theological institutions and direct our own energies and resources to develop our commitment to a renewed vision for lay training. Our aim is to serve and equip a confident community of those engaged in lay ministry roles.

- 74 people started exploring ordination and another 24 were recommended for training after their Bishop's Advisory Panel.
- Eight new LLMs were licenced following successful completion of their training.
- An online conference supported 70 LLMs in their ministry.
- Grants totalling over £24,000 were awarded to clergy and LLMs to support learning events and retreats.
- A major programme of Mental Health Awareness training for clergy and lay people began in June 2021.

## Growing new congregations

The work to support, nurture and grow new congregations of all shapes and sizes has borne encouraging fruit over the last year, with new groups sprouting across the diocese.

Our aspiration to see a flourishing and mixed church in different contexts is being realised through our seven Resourcing Hubs and the Greenhouses emerging at deanery and diocesan level.

We celebrated the launch of revitalisations at Reading Gateway Church from Greyfriars, Reading; Whaddon Way from St Mary's, Bletchley in Milton Keynes; and St Peter's Church in north Aylesbury.

Revitalisations seek to renew an existing church by grafting leadership, people and resources into them. They may take the form of a church plant or new Christian community, depending on the context.

In June, the Intercultural Mission Resourcing Hub was launched at St Paul's, Slough, supporting and mentoring churches across the diocese to nurture new intercultural worshipping communities in their own contexts.

The first Resourcing Hub for community organising and church growth launched in March this year, at St Frideswide's in Milton Keynes. Partnered with Citizens UK, the hub will embed the tools and methodology of community organising into the life and mission of the church, and resource parishes around the diocese with the tools they need to serve the common good where they are.

We've seen a new congregation plant emerging from St Frideswide's, Water Eaton into a new housing estate in Eaton Ley. Three new Greenhouse projects are up and running, with another eight more to come in 2022.

New Fresh Expressions of church are being identified and supported as they seek to connect with people outside of regular Sunday church, for instance:

- Chatterbox – a weekly coffee and chat session at Cross and Stable Church in Milton Keynes, helping to boost the mental wellbeing of local people.

**30+**  
**MISSION INITIATIVES  
FROM DIFFERENT  
CHURCHES ACROSS  
FOUR GREENHOUSES**

- Toddlers in the Woods and Great and Small Cotswolds – two outdoor children's church groups engaging preschoolers and their carers in an appreciation of creation.
- Madley Community Café – a free and welcoming space for the community to meet and chat on an estate with no other meeting place.



*Katherine Crowsley, a lay Pioneer and church planter in Milton Keynes, started a forest church for her community.*

Photo: Katherine Crowsley



## Diversity and inclusion

We celebrate the inclusion, contribution and ministry of disabled people, those from UKME backgrounds, the LGBTI+ community and other minorities. Our vision is that the church community is only complete when all are welcome.

- We hosted a successful online Disability Conference, facilitated by our Disability Advisor, the Revd Katie Tupling, and appointed a new Chaplain among the Deaf Community, the Revd Hannah Lewis, to grow missional work within and from the deaf community.
- The Revd Canon Janet Binns was appointed as Dean to the new UKME Chapter in the diocese. The chapter offers a space for clergy and LLMs from UKME backgrounds to meet, share and support one another.
- A new UKME oversight group, chaired by Bishop Steven, working with the Revd Polly Falconer, our UKME Development Enabler, began work on how we embed racial justice into all areas of ministry and mission.
- Issues facing women in ministry continue to be challenging across the church - the Bishop's Adviser for Women's Ministry is launching an annual day conference to support and encourage female clergy.
- Our LGBTI+ chaplaincy continued to provide vital pastoral support to people across the diocese. We worked with the Diocese of Canterbury to help launch their own chaplaincy and grow the network.
- We continued to resource engagement with Living in Love and Faith through the work of our Social Justice Adviser, Hannah Ling, who joined us in 2021, and eight LLF Advocates encouraging engagement, answering questions and running facilitator training. LLF had a key part in Diocesan Synod discussions in March.

## Social Justice

*Addressing Poverty and Inequality*, published in November, tells the story of poverty and inequality in a wide range of community and church contexts across the Thames Valley. Informed by a combination of in-depth interviews with church leaders and 149 survey responses, the findings will guide future diocesan support for parishes who are working to alleviate poverty and inequality.

A series of practical 'How to' videos draw on the experience and expertise of community initiatives in the diocese, including support for refugees or running a dementia-friendly café, inspiring others to respond to poverty and inequality in their local area.



Photo: Emma Thompson

Bespoke Citizens UK training was provided as part of Continuing Ministerial Development for clergy seeking to develop their engagement with social justice and respond to the needs of local people.

The ODBF became a Fairwork partner in December 2021, helping to champion a fairer jobs platform, transform the gig economy, and reaffirm our commitment to addressing poverty and inequality.

# FINANCE

2021 highlighted the ongoing pressure on parish and diocesan budgets alike, as the impact of Covid continued unabated. To mitigate the impact of a vacancy rate that was lower than budget, the temporary policy of vacancy periods for stipendiary posts was held at 12 months, and vacancy periods for certain Church House diocesan posts were extended.

Savings against budget were identified and enacted wherever possible, such as the revision of IT contracts. The largest savings occurred in the repairs and maintenance budget for our parsonage houses. A combination of a shortage of contractors, raw materials, and the inability to visit houses safely during the year has meant that a significant amount of this work was deferred to 2022/2023.

Our diocesan Parish Share system has sustained the level of giving but is subject to scrutiny by a Parish Share Review Group, following the results of a diocesan-wide survey in the autumn of 2021. Recommendations for changes to the system will be subject to review in 2022, with implementation proposed from January 2023.

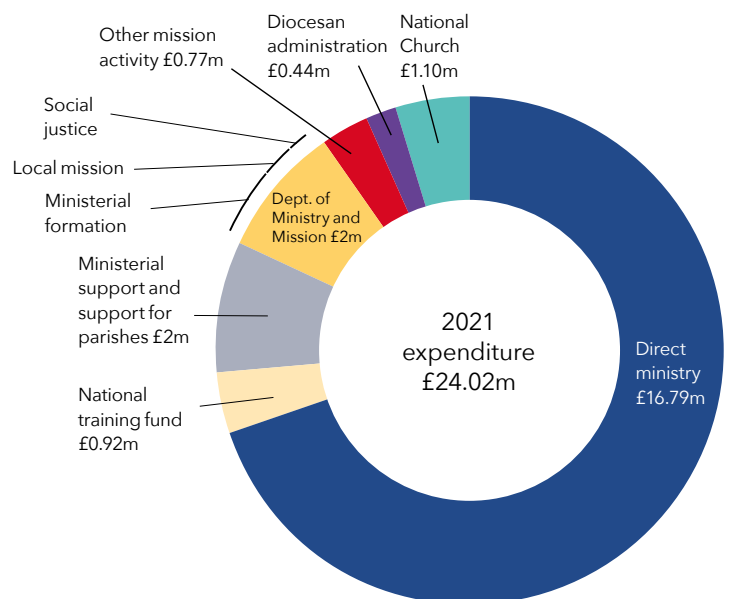
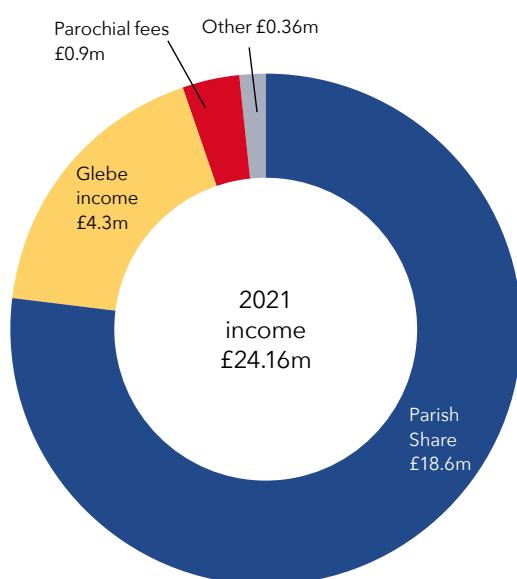
A significant amount of time was spent working with other dioceses, leading on a project to implement a new finance system – our legacy system was 20 years old and no longer fully supported.

The new system went live in February 2022, and our collaboration enabled significant savings in the costs of implementation.

Going into 2022, we are all too aware of the recent challenge of high inflation rates and the impact on budgets at both diocesan and parish level. This is at the forefront of our current budgetary thinking for 2023 onward. We are also focusing on how we can support our parishes at a time of high inflation, whilst emerging from a pandemic that has impacted historic reserves.

**“Parish Share has held up well, with a 93% recovery against budgeted allocations. This is a remarkable achievement and reflects the huge efforts made by so many people across the diocese.”**

Sir Hector Sants, Chair of the ODBF



Charts based on Management Accounts

# HR AND SAFEGUARDING

- Supported 34 clergy and 14 staff through difficult wellbeing issues.
- Assisted parishes with 18 Development Fund bids involving recruitment of new staff.
- Handled 53 parish and 50 school employment and volunteering enquiries.
- Provided updated information and advice through the Parish HR Toolkit.

Covid continued to impact ways of working for clergy and employees. The HR department worked alongside the senior management, managing all stages of Covid related activities, and advising in line with government policy, including the implementation of a flexible working policy, and regular workplace and home risk assessments.

We continued to address issues of isolation, prioritising mental health, and providing therapy support and signposting. A significant increase in occupational health referrals among staff and clergy enabled us to be better informed when managing return to work and ministry.

12 Authorised Listeners were recruited and the *Dignity and Respect in Ministry and at Work*

policy was implemented. This commits to encouraging and sustaining healthy working relationships in ministry and employment, embedding a culture of mutual respect where bullying, harassment, and discrimination are not tolerated, and facilitating healing where abuse of power has affronted an individual's dignity.

The team worked closely with the Department of Mission and Ministry to address social change, diversity, inclusion, and equality. Work continues in collating recruitment monitoring data and annual reporting to the UKME oversight group to increase diversity.

- Delivered safeguarding training for 4,901 participants in 96 training modules and online training.
- 345 attended area meetings and 124 attended workshops on the new Safer Recruitment and People Management practice guidance.
- Provided guidance to 423 parish safeguarding officers.
- Delivered a culture change in the handling of safeguarding disclosures.
- Supported 20 volunteer safeguarding trainers.

Support for victims and survivors remains at the centre of what we do. A new partnership with Safe Spaces brought more opportunities to support victims and survivors, and through listening and feedback from survivors, during our lessons-learned reviews, we have identified areas that need to be strengthened so that their voices are heard more clearly. We also signed up with thirtyone:eight, an independent Christian charity providing an out-of-hours service for raising safeguarding concerns.

The safeguarding team was reorganised, to ensure that we continue to respond well to safeguarding concerns, monitor day to day caseload, resources, and team productivity. This includes allocating our caseworkers to each of the archdeaconries. A new Head of Safeguarding was

appointed in January, and we reviewed governance of the safeguarding function leading to the creation of two Safeguarding Advisory Panel sub-committees, a Quality Assurance Group, and the Practitioners Forum.

Alongside all dioceses in the Church of England, the Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) was completed successfully, with over 3,000 files reviewed. PCR2 aims to ensure that any file that could contain information regarding a concern, allegation or conviction in relation to abusive behaviour by a living member of the clergy or church officer, (whether still in that position or not) will have been identified, read and analysed by independent safeguarding professionals. We see learning as central to the culture of a safe church.

# COMMUNICATIONS

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Our communications department helps to tell the story of what it means to be church across this diocese, and they support our parishes and Church House teams when things go wrong. This section is a flavour of all that they got up to this year.

## Church at home

Our weekly online diocesan services came to a planned end at Pentecost. Church at Home did a tremendous amount to bring the diocese together during the pandemic. Together with the Revd Charlotte Bannister-Parker, our communications team was responsible for producing over 60 hours of streamed services.

## Online activity

Another notable milestone during the year was the launch of two new websites for ODBF and ODBE with significantly refreshed content. Our websites are now much easier to navigate, with dedicated pages for ministry and church officer roles, and site search is greatly improved. Further improvements to site design and functionality are scheduled for summer 2022.

Several initiatives accompanied the move to new web platforms, including an online disability conference, Black History Month live streams, and a new series of podcasts from Bishop Steven exploring 1 Peter.

Meanwhile, improvements to diocesan email campaigns have ensured that our bulk emails achieved an average 54% open rate in the past twelve months. Diocesan eNews distribution now exceeds 5,500 people each week.

## Impact stories

Two to three parish stories appear each week on the website and in eNews. These provide an excellent hook for local and, on occasion, national media interest. National media coverage this year included an appearance by Bishop Olivia on Radio 4's PM programme with an interview about knife crime, interest in the diocesan presence at COP26 and the involvement of Theresa May MP in the launch of our *Be The Change* campaign.

## Major projects

A number of projects required substantial concept, design, photography and editorial input from the team: *Space Makers: the contemplative toolkit for schools*, made possible by Bayne funding, is a comprehensive pack of resources for pupils and teachers.

Much work was done to support the Diocesan Synod and General Synod elections, the latter involving the filming, editing and posting of 34 candidate videos in less than seven days. *Come and See* this year is another example of the team's skills in design, video production and email automation.

The work when things go wrong continues quietly and efficiently. The launch of a safeguarding case review in 2022 and the associated parish support was but one example during the year of the close collaboration between the Director of Communications and our safeguarding team.

## New people

Madeleine Hayden joined us from Winchester Diocese in September as communications officer and we were delighted to welcome Dr Bev Botting to the team as part time Data Analyst at the end of January. Both bring a wealth of experience to the diocese.

## Pathways magazine

*Pathways* returned in September 2021 following a long break in publication due to COVID. The relaunched magazine has been well received by our churches, albeit with a slightly smaller post-pandemic print run of 18,000 copies per issue. The first two editions of 2022 have included works by prominent Christian artists.



**July 2021**

The Young Christian Climate Network relay to COP26 passes through the diocese.

**September 2021**

Bishop Olivia leads a Service of Remembrance at Reading Minster for those lost during the pandemic.



**October 2021**

The former Prime Minister, encourages children to write to their MP about tackling climate change.

**March 2022**

Over 1,500 people are sent the daily Come and See emails during Lent.



# BUILDINGS AND THE DAC

The Buildings and DAC teams worked tirelessly through Covid restrictions to support parishes, despite limited site visits. A 20% rise in rental income from vacant vicarages covered 5% of Parish Share, meaning contributions didn't need to rise and our parishes were protected during the toughest times of the pandemic. A new highly energy efficient office for the Berkshire team was constructed and designed sensitively to fit close to the Grade 1 listed church at Theale.

The team oversaw and approved a number of large projects that demonstrate the care and commitment of PCCs to their churches:

- Re-roofing of St Michael, Clifton Hampden
- Repair and relaying of 18,000 Victorian floor tiles at All Saints, Boyne Hill
- WC extension and new servery at St Mary the Virgin, Great Brickhill
- Conservation of masonry and windows, and a new cross for the east end at St Mary, Aylesbury
- New lighting, heating, AV, toilets and kitchen at St Mary and St Nicholas, Littlemore



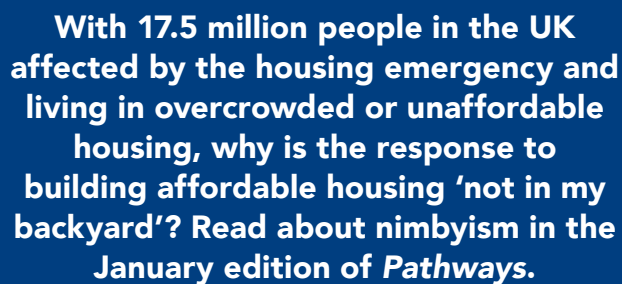
**1,503**

DAC APPLICATIONS  
IN 2021



**73**

SITE VISITS IN 9  
MONTHS



With 17.5 million people in the UK affected by the housing emergency and living in overcrowded or unaffordable housing, why is the response to building affordable housing 'not in my backyard'? Read about nimbyism in the January edition of *Pathways*.



**427**

NET ZERO CARBON  
RESIDENTIAL  
PROPERTY SURVEYS



**113**

MAJOR FACULTY  
APPLICATIONS FOR  
CHURCH REORDERING  
AND NEW FACILITIES



**4**

LOCATIONS FOR  
WORK WITH LOCAL  
AUTHORITIES ON  
POTENTIAL SOCIAL  
HOUSING

# SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat team ensured that governance and advice, from diocesan boards and committees of the Bishop’s Council and Diocesan Synod, was readily available for both parishes and diocesan staff throughout 2021 and into 2022.

2021 saw the implementation of recommendations from the review of governance in 2020, ensuring diocesan governance is as effective as possible in supporting its mission. This created an improved transparency and accountability of committee activities, a streamlining of

membership structures, a standardisation of committee terms of reference, and clearer and shorter reporting lines. Diversity of committee memberships remains a priority and has been aided by the establishment of an Appointments Committee.

- The first Festival Church status in the diocese was awarded, providing a sustainable option for the church to remain open for festival worship and community use, whilst reducing the financial and time burden on the PCC.
- Facilitated legal changes to parish structures to help improve local mission in 30 parishes.
- Guided a further 70 parishes at planning stage, to explore how changes to their legal structures and use of church buildings could refresh their missional opportunities.
- Supported 100 parishes to improve local mission through exploring pastoral reorganisation.

## The Development Fund

Since its launch, the Development Fund has awarded more than £2.5 million to over 130 local church and community projects across the Thames Valley region. In the past year alone, 45 grants amounting to £856K have supported parishes and deaneries with a range of

missionally creative initiatives such as the provision of basic facilities, the recruitment of new church and parish staff, the construction of community centres, youth engagement projects, and projects serving food to local people in need.

**T**HE RENEW WELLBEING CAFÉ at St Andrew’s, High Wycombe provides a space for teenagers from the neighbouring secondary school to take a break from the pressures of school and look after their mental and spiritual health. A grant from the Development Fund enabled youth pastor, Kathryn About, to provide books, crafts, a therapy-style art space, and refreshments every Tuesday afternoon with time for reflection and prayer. The café has already reached over 40 teens who have never stepped in a church before.

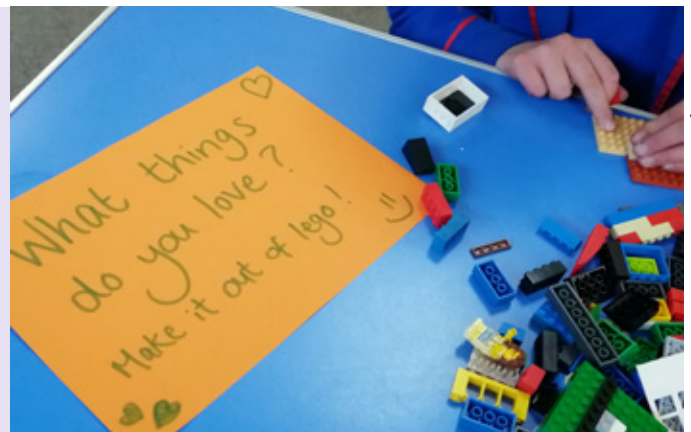


Photo: Kathryn About

## Diocesan and General Synod elections

This year saw the Secretariat, with the Diocesan Registrar and support from the Communications team, handling both the triennium Diocesan Synod election process and the quinquennial General Synod elections (deferred from 2020). This also led to elections by Diocesan Synod onto various diocesan committees in

the autumn of 2021. The committees will benefit from new as well as existing skills and energy to implement mission because of the introduction of streamlining of membership, and an Appointments Committee endorsing candidates for new positions.

# EDUCATION

There are 284 Church of England schools and academies in the diocese, with almost 60,000 pupils. They are some of the best schools in the country, with 93% of them judged 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. In addition, 95% of schools in the diocese are designated as 'good' or 'excellent' by SIAMS.

The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education supported schools and academies through challenging times and ensured timely advice for headteachers and governing bodies. As different Covid restrictions were enforced and eased, ODBE continued to publish guidance for schools detailing support during the pandemic.

The brand new ODBE website, built by the Communications team, provides an excellent one-stop shop for schools to access support and resources. This has been augmented by the introduction of a fortnightly e-bulletin, synthesising communication with schools and providing a platform for news and new opportunities.

A series of wellbeing webinars for school leaders and governors provided support and encouragement to address vital mental health and wellbeing needs. The first HeadSpace mini conference provided an opportunity for headteachers to explore courageous advocacy and how to develop this in their schools.

ODBE has been reorganised for the new triennium with a more diverse and representative board and now operates under the new statutory Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021.

- 133 decarbonisation surveys took place in the Voluntary Aided schools and academies in our multi-academy trusts, providing a basis for school decarbonisation planning.
- New chaplaincies were established at five secondary schools and three primary schools, as well as 33 primary schools receiving chaplaincy support. We formed good links with two FE colleges developing the possibility for new chaplaincy posts.
- Headteachers and governors from across the diocese gathered for the ODBE annual service at Dorchester Abbey in November.

## Space Makers

A brand-new contemplative resource for ODBE schools was launched in September, encouraging a time of daily reflection during the school day. Accessible to pupils of all faiths and world views, five contemplative practices help schools to embrace some of the ancient wisdom of the Christian tradition and, in doing so, assist children to navigate the world around them. So far, we have delivered Space Makers training in a third of our schools.



Photo: Steven Buckley



# AREA OFFICES

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Parishes and deaneries in each archdeaconry have continued to meet the challenges of Covid with a mix of creativity, determination, and sheer hard work. Our area offices have supported varied worship, mission and ministry initiatives delivered by our dedicated clergy and lay people.

## Dorchester

- January marked Bishop Gavin's first full year as the Bishop of Dorchester. We saw the development of his focus on rural ministry, working with the newly formed Rural Consultative Group to better support the needs of our rural churches.
- A series of Greenhouse projects were launched: Witney Deanery now has 12 Greenhouse teams, a diocesan Youth Greenhouse began in Eynsham in October, and the newest, in Bicester and Islip Deanery, was formed in January 2022.

## Buckingham

- Pastoral reorganisation of Buckingham Deanery and a review of rural ministry in Wycombe Deanery were completed, along with an ongoing consultation on reorganisation of Newport Deanery.
- There was significant missional activity, creativity and energy in the church planting hubs in Milton Keynes and North Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Slough.
- Major national infrastructure projects including HS2, East-West Rail and Cross Rail, and significant housing developments around Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and High Wycombe continue to present new opportunities and a changing context for mission.

## Oxford

- Planning permission was granted for a major development project at Holy Family Church in Blackbird Leys, with the support of a capital management company and discussion with ecumenical partners.
- A new Bishops' Mission Order was completed for the Anglican Asian Living Church in Cowley.
- Key appointments were made at St Aldate's, St Giles and St Margaret's, and a new mission priest was appointed to the Community of St Frideswide. We are looking forward to appointing a new chaplain at Oxford Brookes University this year.

## Berkshire

- The long-awaited area office construction in Theale was completed and the team moved into the new environmentally friendly space in spring 2022.
- Bishop Olivia led a service on the anniversary of the murder of Oilly Stephens, in Reading, and spoke to BBC Radio 4 about the relationship between social media and a rise in youth violence.
- As a new Resourcing Hub, Greyfriars, Reading launched the first of three congregation plants in partnership with the churches in South Reading.
- Churches have worked with partner organisations to welcome and assist displaced people, refugees, and asylum seekers from Hong Kong and Afghanistan, with language learning and employment.



*Supporting rural churches*



*The area office in Theale*



*Faith story films*

# WORLD MISSION

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“We are pilgrims on a journey, and companions on the road; we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.”

We were fortunate that the easing of pandemic restrictions made it possible to complete a long-planned pilgrimage from York to Växjö, Sweden, celebrating our shared Christian history and creating a future pilgrim way.

Other journeys were made through technology. Social media and online video calling enabled individuals, parishes and diocesan contacts in our many international links to pray and worship together and offer mutual support.

The revived Nandyal link progressed and future exchanges are planned. We were able to walk alongside parish outreach teams we support in Kimberley and Kuruman, and Bishop Olivia convened our anticipated Lambeth guests, enabling them to meet before the conference.

Technology also enabled us to bring people together across our diocese for various events, such as praying for India during the Covid Delta wave, praying for episcopal elections in Kimberley and Kuruman, and a joint discipleship conference with Växjö.

Thanks to live streams we could share in mourning for a beloved partner lost to Covid in Kimberley and Kuruman, celebrate Bishop Brian Marajh’s installation, and support the Mothers’ Union Wave of Prayer service.

We shared learning from partner churches’ mission and ministry and highlighted the need for vaccine equity and climate justice. We began 2022 looking forward to working with our link partners and a new grouping of mission agencies to resource the diocese for advocacy and mission, drawing on the experiences of the world church.

# BOARD OF PATRONAGE

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Patronage is the right to nominate a person to be appointed by the diocesan or area bishop to take up a clergy post during a vacancy. The board met twice in 2021 to discuss and progress vacancies in the diocese.

In 2021, members of the board were involved in 12 vacancy processes, seeing the successful appointment of five incumbents/clergy, with six other vacancies still ongoing at the end of the year.

The Board is constituted under the provisions of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986. It has provision for five lay and three clerical members, elected for six years, in addition to a secretary who is nominated by the Bishop of Oxford. The present Board took office in January 2019.

# COUNCIL FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

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The Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is blessed by the hard work and input of Council members, as well as our support staff. We are looking to reorganise the membership providers to Council and whom they appoint, looking to complete the full membership of Council in 2022.

After much prayer and preparation, in November the ODCD went through the process of appointing a new full-time Chaplain amongst Deaf People, working to celebrate the deaf community and get members and their families involved in every aspect of the Church in the diocese. The Revd Dr Hannah Lewis joined us as the new Chaplain in January and she was licensed by our President, Bishop Steven, in February at the Reading Deaf Church.

Over the last 12 months, thanks to the tireless efforts of our Treasurer, Julie Dziegiel, and our Pastoral, Administrative and Finance Officer, Fiona McNally, we have brought our financial oversight back in-house from external accountants. Our annual accounts for the year-end March 2021 have been audited and submitted to the Charity Commissioners, and show our finances are in good shape for the future.



Photo: Steven Buckley

Online meetings make participation by some members difficult, so we are looking forward to meeting in person again and embracing the challenges and changes of this coming year.

## DT(O)L

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Diocesan Trustees (Oxford) Ltd [DT(O)L] is the diocesan authority which acts as custodian trustee to hold property on behalf of PCCs and other ecclesiastical charities. The management of all trusts lies with parish trustees.

During 2021, DT(O)L assisted parish managing trustees with their plans for mission by handling 74 property transactions, such as the sale of property and the grant of leases that provide capital or income to support church work. Parish managing trustees have also been assisted with the release of permanent endowment that has been applied to support outreach.

DT(O)L is the sole trustee of the Oxford Diocesan Church Schools Uniform Statutory Trust.

The trust monies arise from the sale proceeds or rent of closed schools and schoolhouses in the diocese. In 2021, grants totalling £328K were given to promote the work of ODBE, enabling advice and support to be given to school and academy personnel who contribute to outreach and mission across the diocese. DT(O)L regularly reviews the investments of this trust in line with its Statement of Investment Principles.

# INTERFAITH RELATIONS

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As we emerge from the pandemic restrictions, we have been renewing our encounter with members of the various faiths and their communities in the Thames Valley region. Interfaith events and regular meetings have been attempted through video conferencing, but there is nothing to replace on-site hospitality and personal contact in building good interfaith relations.

2021 provided us with the opportunity to take stock and for Archdeacon Jonathan to provide an interim chairing role to the committee, which has now become more long-term. To make the role more sustainable and provide some driving force, the Revd Dr Paul Smith, North Buckinghamshire Area Interfaith Advisor, joined as Co-chair of the committee.

We very sadly lost the Revd Sue Burchell as a long-serving Area Interfaith Adviser for Dorchester. Although we anticipated her retirement, we did not expect her death so shortly after retiring. We are grateful to the Revd Canon Richard Cook and the Revd Dr Alan Race, who have joined us as the Dorchester and Berkshire Area Interfaith Advisors respectively. We are continuing to look for additional interfaith advisers, especially lay people, from each deanery.

## Key aspects of developing interfaith work

We have focused on pursuing an initiative to make the committee the corporate interfaith adviser for the diocese, linking into national initiatives and local resilience forums.

As in-person contact has resumed we have been part of a range of events, developments and plans across the diocese such as:

- a joint Christian-Muslim foodbank in High Wycombe
- a service of reconciliation marking Holocaust Memorial Day in High Wycombe
- friendship walks in Banbury

- scriptural reasoning in Oxford
- prayer shawls in Maidenhead
- civic and faith community co-operation in Milton Keynes.

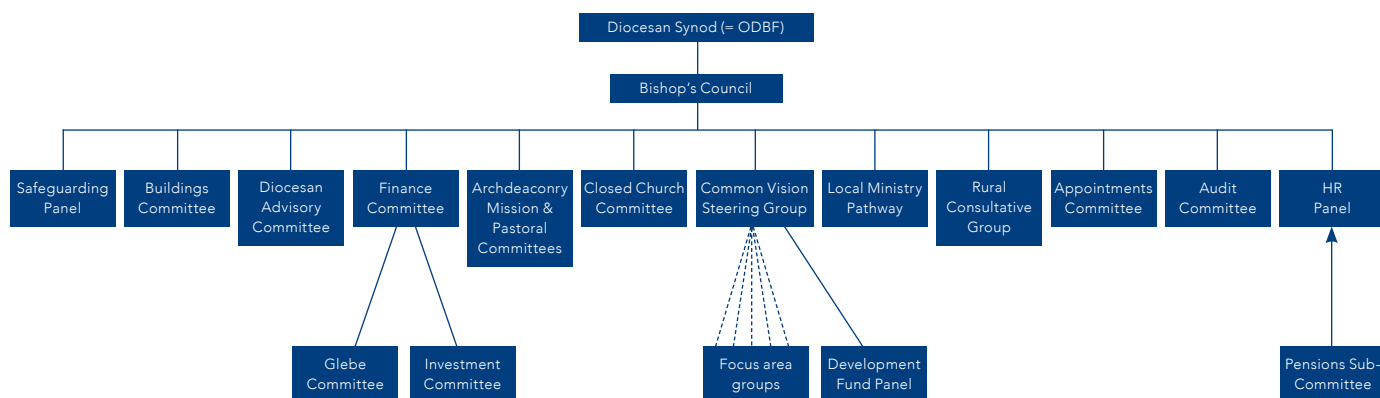
We look forward to marking the 800th Anniversary of the Synod of Oxford with public gatherings and the opportunity to highlight interfaith co-operation today, particularly repenting of past hostility to the Jewish people, giving thanks for present relations and resolving to move forward in friendship and solidarity.

# GOVERNANCE

There are a wide range of boards, councils and committees which promote and oversee particular aspects of activity in the life of the diocese such as buildings, appointments and safeguarding. Each committee has specific responsibilities from Diocesan Synod or Bishop's Council to discharge certain duties on their behalf.

Recommendations from a governance review that was undertaken in 2020, to ensure the diocese's governance is as effective as possible in supporting its mission, have now been approved by Bishop's Council and implemented. Consideration was given to the applicable statutes that govern many of the committees' activities, as well as the Charity Governance Code and the Nolan Principles of Public Life.

The recommendations have improved transparency and accountability of the committees' activities by streamlining membership structures where legislation allows, clarified the purpose and responsibilities of committees through standardised terms of reference, and made reporting lines clearer and shorter. Increasing diversity of committee memberships has been further aided by the establishment of an Appointments Committee.



The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE), Oxford Diocesan Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODCD) and DT(O)L are separate legal entities with an accountability to Diocesan Synod.

Partnership in World Mission and the Interfaith Committee have an accountability to Diocesan Synod but will also have engagement with both Bishop's Council and the Senior Management Group.

# TABLE OF COMMITTEES

| <b>Committee/Company</b>         | <b>Chair</b>                          | <b>Secretary</b>          |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Audit                            | Mr Simon Richards                     | Mr John Orridge           |
| Appointments Committee           | Bishop of Oxford                      | Mrs Sue Zajac             |
| Bishop's Council                 | Bishop of Oxford and Sir Hector Sants | Diocesan Secretary        |
| Board of Patronage               | Revd Dan Heyward                      | Revd Prof Brian Griffiths |
| Buildings                        | Mrs Sue Scane                         | Mr David Mason            |
| Closed Churches                  | Mr Basil Eastwood                     | Mrs Maggie Metaliaj       |
| Common Vision Steering Group     | Bishop of Oxford                      | Ms Janet Rogers           |
| DAC                              | Revd Derek Witchell                   | Ms Liz Kitch              |
| Development Fund Panel           | Mr John Sykes                         | Ms Janet Rogers           |
| DMPC                             | Bishop of Oxford                      | Diocesan Secretary        |
| DT(O)L                           | Revd Canon John Tattersall            | Diocesan Secretary        |
| Glebe                            | Mrs Sue Scane                         | Mr David Mason            |
| HR Panel                         | Mr John Sykes                         | Mrs Poli Shajko           |
| Interfaith                       | Ven Jonathan Chaffey                  | Mrs Claire Barratt        |
| Investment                       | Mr Richard Horlick                    | Mr John Orridge           |
| Local Ministry Pathway           | Bishop of Dorchester                  | Revd Dr Phil Cooke        |
| ODBE                             | Bishop of Buckingham                  | Mr Tony Wilson            |
| ODCD                             | HH Christopher Tyrer                  | Mrs Fiona McNally         |
| Finance                          | Sir Hector Sants                      | Mr John Orridge           |
| Partnership in World Mission     | Bishop of Reading                     | Bishop Henry Scriven      |
| Rural Advisory & Reference Group | Bishop of Dorchester                  | Revd Charles Chadwick     |
| Safeguarding Panel               | Mr Peter Hay                          | Dr Louise Whitehead       |

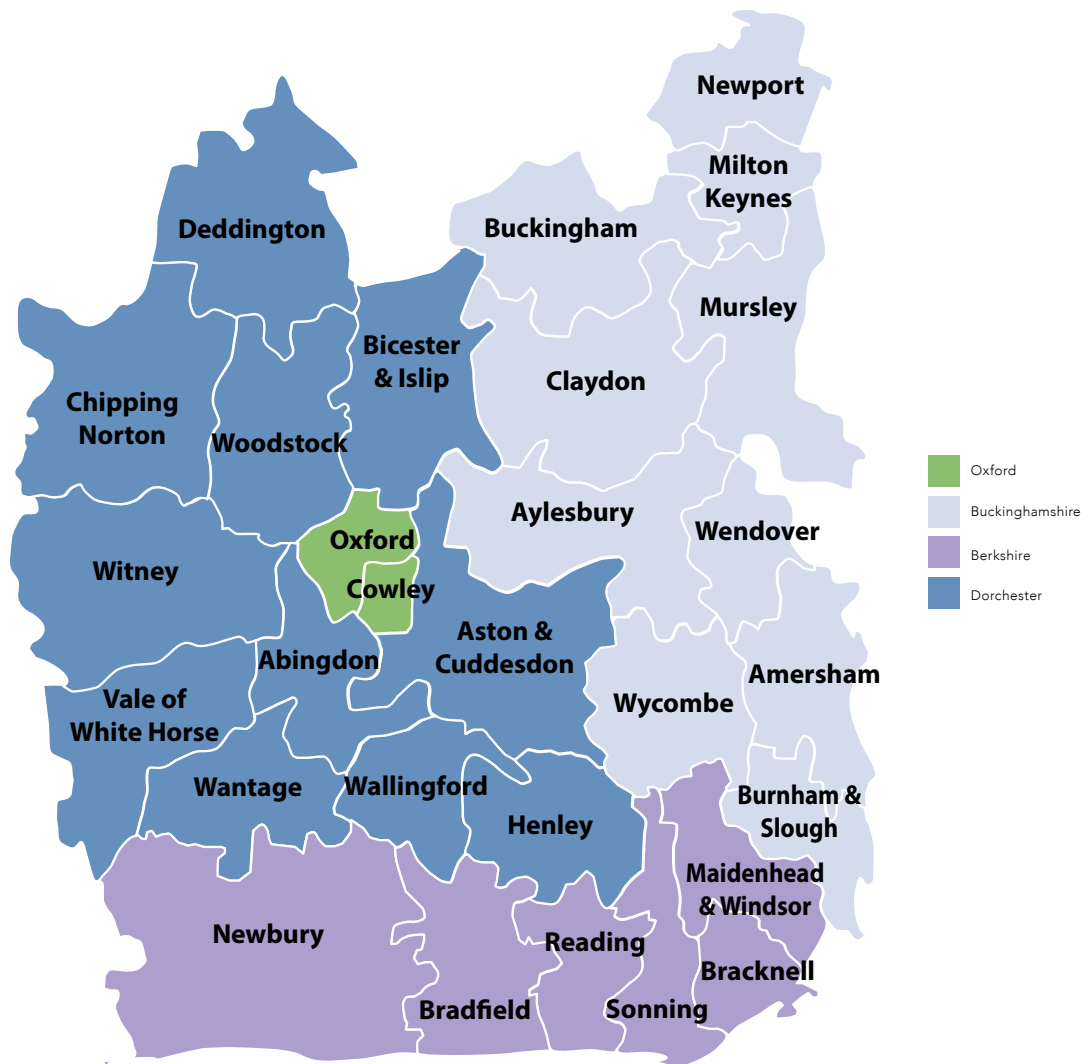
## ACRONYMS

BAP Bishops' Advisory Panel  
 BMO Bishops' Mission Order  
 DAC Diocesan Advisory Committee  
 DMPC Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee  
 DT(O)L Diocesan Trustees (Oxford) Ltd  
 IME2 Initial Ministerial Education for curates  
 LLM Licensed Lay Minister  
 LMP Local Ministry Pathway  
 ODBE Oxford Diocesan Board of Education  
 ODBF Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance

ODBST Oxford Diocesan Bucks School Trust  
 ODCIR Oxford Diocesan Committee for Interfaith Relations  
 ODCD Oxford Diocesan Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
 PBSC Planning and Budget Sub-Committee  
 PCR Past Cases Review



# DIOCESE *of* OXFORD



We have more parishes and churches than any other diocese in the Church of England.

There are 808 churches in 29 deaneries serving a population of 2.4m people and 284 Church of England schools serving 60,000 pupils.

Together, we work with God and with others for the common good in every place in one of the great crossroads of the world.