

2023 Strategic Framework for Our Shared Future



Identity

Who are we?

As a whole diocese of:

- churches
- church schools
- chaplaincies
- cathedral

...we are partners together in the message and ministry of reconciliation.



Purpose

Why do we exist?

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:18

Therefore, our shared purpose is to:

- Worship God
- Make new disciples
- Transform communities



Support

How do we get there?

For the vision to be realised, our churches, schools, chaplaincies and cathedral will all need to work together.

The Diocesan Board of Finance is providing funding, resources and other strategic support in the following areas...

Vision

Where are we going?


Bishop Christopher says,
“For some time now, I’ve been captivated by one word: ‘Life’. And that’s my overarching vision for the Diocese of Coventry, that we will be bearers of life.”

By 2030, he pictures our diocese having...

- **Healthy Communities** — Meeting social, spiritual and practical needs of those we serve
- **Healthy Churches** — Promoting the essential qualities of church health
- **Healthy People** — Nurturing the wellbeing of everyone who serves the work of the diocese



Restored health



...as we worship the God who heals us

- **New Worshipping Communities** — Reaching out to those who are missing
- **Children, Young People and Families** — Inviting them to come on a faith journey
- **Growing Leaders** — Enabling and equipping both new and current leaders



New growth



...as we make new disciples

- **Loving One Another** — Being a reconciling presence in the heart of our communities
- **Renewing Generosity** — Supporting others with our time, talents and money
- **Renewing the Environment** — Caring for creation, both locally and globally



Renewed relationships



...as we transform communities

Foreword

The Diocese of Coventry is the Church of England in Coventry, most of Warwickshire and a small part of Solihull, and with more than 200 parishes we are a Christian presence in every local community.

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted everyone and the future holds great uncertainties: civil unrest and conflict in many continents across the world, displaced populations and mass immigration, global warming, as well as the war in Ukraine, and on top of everything we face – spiralling cost of living, rising poverty and inequality. All of this affects our local communities, and everyone we seek to serve. As well as bringing emotional stress and material strain, they expose the spiritual poverty of our culture that so easily turns its back on the God of life and relies on its own ways and means.

My vision for the Diocese of Coventry is that, as bearers of the life of God with **restored health, new growth** and **renewed relationships**, we will be sharers of Jesus' gospel of life in a troubled world.

In order to realise this vision we need to work together as a **Whole Diocese** – churches, schools, chaplaincies and cathedral – served and supported by our diocesan staff, synods, boards and committees.

This paper provides a strategic framework for doing so. It is not a set of new initiatives that are being imposed from above. It is a process of listening to the needs of our churches, schools, chaplaincies and cathedral, and then seeking and following God's guidance on how we best support one another, empowered by God's own 'Spirit of Life' and working in the name of God's own Son, 'the Resurrection and the Life'.

I invite you to be part of our shared future.



Bishop of Coventry



Introduction

Like all dioceses, the Diocesan Board of Finance will continue to provide core support to all of our parishes (see the next page). However, the primary purpose of this paper is to outline the **nine areas of focussed support** that will help us move towards the Bishop's vision of restored health, new growth and renewed relationships.

There is no obligation here, we simply want to set out the support that that will be available to you during 2023. Each individual church community, school, chaplaincy and our cathedral is welcome to engage with as much or as little as they want.

You are also invited to help us choose the areas of focussed support that will be needed in subsequent years. This strategic framework will be updated every year in response to an annual cycle of listening, budgeting, approving and reviewing.

Our churches, schools, chaplaincies and cathedral are doing great work in their local communities. Please be assured that I and my colleagues will serve and equip you as best we can, and we are also praying for you during these challenging times.



Diocesan Secretary



Core and Focussed Support

Like all dioceses, the Diocesan Board of Finance provides **core support** to all our parishes.

- **Safeguarding** – Providing safeguarding training and advice, managing casework; and helping parishes to respond to concerns and allegations
- **Finance** – Paying grants, stipends and pensions; managing investments; administering parish share; and producing budgets, reports and accounts
- **Housing** – Maintaining and improving our vicarages and other clergy houses
- **Ministry** – Releasing, recognising and resourcing lay ministry; discerning vocations; training ordinands and curates; managing clergy appointments; providing continuing ministerial development; providing HR support
- **Church Buildings** – Advising about the care and development of churches (including the DAC); helping to find grants
- **Communications** – Sharing news, information and resources with parishes; maintaining the diocesan website, Equip Hub and social media channels
- **Governance** – Arranging meetings and providing briefing papers for Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Council, and statutory diocesan committees

However, the primary focus of this paper is the **nine areas of focussed support** that will help us move towards the Bishop's vision of restored health, new growth and renewed relationships (see pages 5 to 9).

This work will be reviewed each quarter, together with any progress towards the Bishop's vision.

We want to ensure that our work and resources are focused where they are really needed, therefore we have also created an **annual cycle** which involves Bishop's Council, Bishop's Core Staff Team, Area Deans and Diocesan Synod.

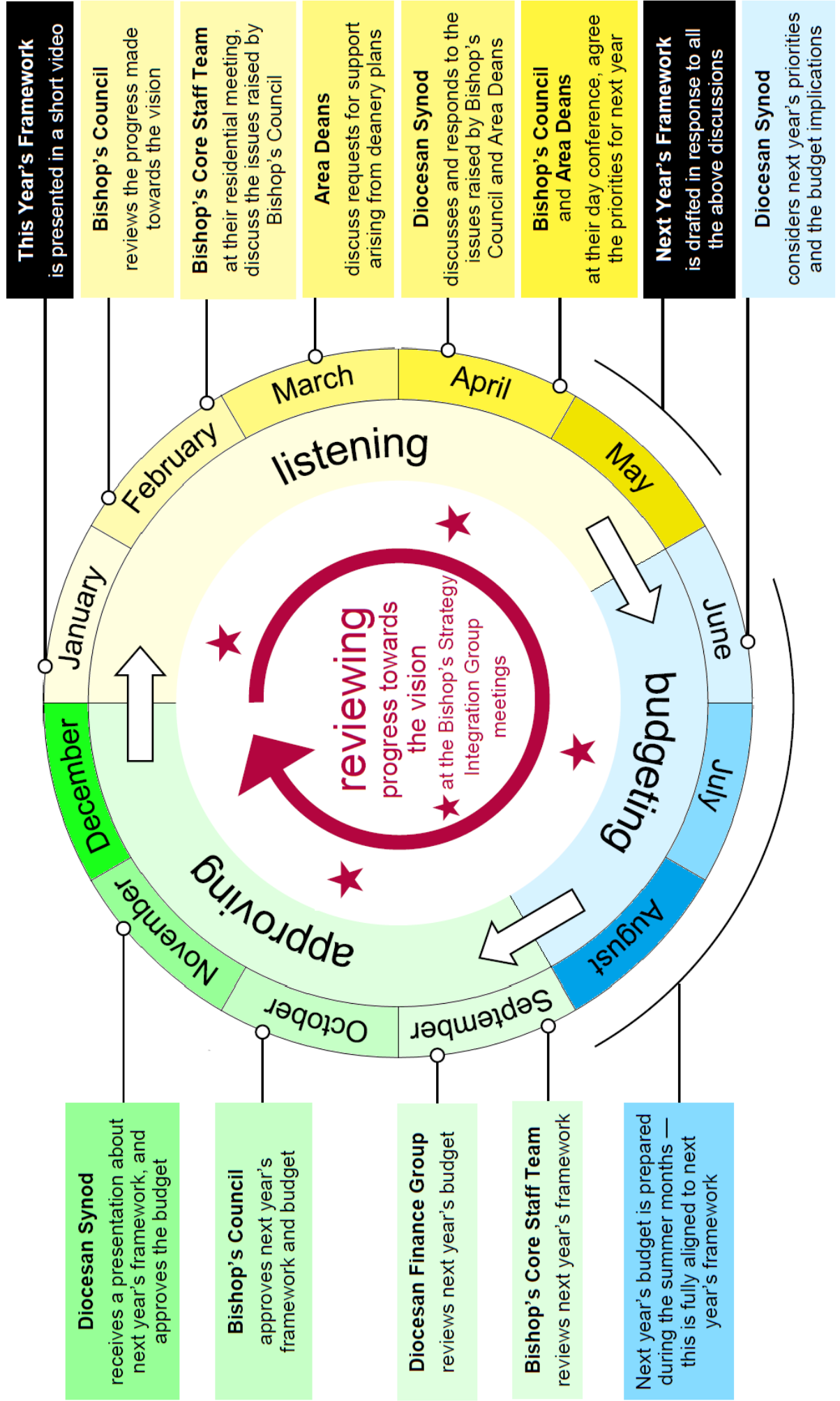
Our aim is also to provide opportunities to hear from churches, schools, chaplaincies and cathedral.

The annual cycle is shown on the following page. It has three phases:

- **Listening** – January to May
- **Budgeting** – June to August
- **Approving** – September to October

Once approved, an updated version of this strategic framework will be published each year.

Annual Cycle ...listening, budgeting, approving and reviewing



Healthy Communities

Meeting social, spiritual and practical needs of those we serve

Helping and serving lies at the heart of our diocesan purpose to “transform communities”. The need is greater than ever, since the health of local communities has been weakened by the pandemic – and is further threatened by the cost of living crisis.

Churches, schools, chaplaincies and the cathedral are serving their local communities in a wide variety of imaginative ways – some of which are being supported by Diocesan Mission Fund grants. The diocese is also supporting other projects – particularly in the most deprived parishes. For example: [Saints Nuneaton](#); our [Rural Life Officers](#); the Warwick [Message Bus](#) to enable youth work initiatives; support for poorer communities with food and fuel poverty; and [support for refugees](#).

During 2023 we will:

- Support Together for Change, including Saints Nuneaton [Phase Two](#) and [Fresh Start](#).

*“You are the salt of the earth ...
you are the light of the world.”*

...says Jesus in Matthew 5

Healthy Churches

Promoting the essential qualities of church health

For over a decade, the Diocese of Coventry has been encouraging churches to engage with [Natural Church Development](#) (NCD). In particular, the [eight essential qualities](#) of healthy churches has been promoted as a means of helping them to flourish.

The national Church of England is also promoting “healthy churches” from a safeguarding perspective. Our churches must be safe and welcoming places for all – this is an imperative of the Christian gospel.

We are also developing a strategy for the long-term sustainability of our church buildings.

During 2023 we will:

- Re-launch our support for healthy churches – based on the principles of NCD – within the context of our [diocesan growth strategy](#).
- Develop a plan for the ongoing legacy of the Serving Christ project.
- Implement a diocesan Safeguarding Action Plan in response to [Past Cases Review 2](#).
- Introduce a system to assess the long-term sustainability of our church buildings. This will inform a church building strategy in 2024.

*“The earth produces of itself,
first the stalk, then the head,
then the full grain in the
head.”*

...says Jesus in Mark 4:28

Healthy People

Nurturing the wellbeing of everyone who serves the work of the diocese

A wide range of [clergy wellbeing resources](#) is available on the diocesan website, nevertheless a clergy wellbeing survey in June 2022 revealed that the average wellbeing of clergy had declined during the previous three years.

We have no data for lay people, but it is highly likely that the wellbeing of lay people has also declined as a result of the pandemic.

Lessons learnt from promoting clergy wellbeing will be applied to Readers, churchwardens, headteachers, and everyone who serves the work of the diocese.

During 2023 we will:

- Develop a very simple self-assessment tool to anonymously monitor the wellbeing of clergy and lay people (including Readers, churchwardens and headteachers).
- Publish and start to implement a Clergy Wellbeing Plan.
- Continue with our programme to refurbish clergy houses.

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

...says Jesus in John 10:10

New Worshipping Communities

Reaching out to those who are missing

Worshipping communities come in all shapes and sizes. Some large ...some small ...some in the city ...some in our towns ...some in the suburbs ...some in villages ...some are quite traditional ...some are more contemporary. But they all have one thing in common – they are committed to worshipping God, making new disciples and transforming communities.

Some of these new communities might look completely different to anything that has gone before. Perhaps aimed specifically at people who have never been connected to a church. Some might be more familiar, like messy church or café church.

During the pandemic we saw the amazing development of online worship gathering people together, reaching out to new people, drawing them into the life of the church. We value this diversity, and our vision during the current decade is for new worshipping communities that are equally diverse.

During 2023 we will:

- Partner with Mission Hubs to celebrate and support the launch of new worshipping communities in a range of traditions and contexts. These include choir church, quiet gardens, new monastic communities, [The Collective](#), [Messy Church](#), [Forest Church](#) and [Muddy Church](#).
- Identify, prioritise and develop plans for worshipping communities in new housing developments.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."

...says Jesus in Matthew 9:37-38

Children, Young People and Families

Inviting them to come on a faith journey

The Diocese of Coventry is a trailblazer diocese for the national [Growing Faith](#) initiative. The aim is to find ways for churches, schools and families to work together in supporting the faith development of children and to celebrate and recognise their place in God's family.

Each year Coventry Cathedral welcomes over 20,000 school children to experience the presence of God through worship and learning, and providing opportunities for staff and pupils to know the reconciling Christ and His ministry

Our Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) is also strengthening the partnership between churches, schools and families through 'Alive 2023' – a praise party and picnic for 12,000 primary school children.

During 2023 we will:

- Submit a bid to become a national Growing Faith Hub.
- Produce resources for churches to use in CofE schools to run 'Alive' after school clubs.
- Pilot these resources in at least one deanery.
- Support at least one deanery to hold an 'Alive Sunday' intergenerational service.

"Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones."

...says Jesus in Matthew 18:10

Growing Leaders

Enabling and equipping both new and current leaders

Three important roles of every diocese are to inspire people, to help them hear God's call in their own lives, and to equip them for their unique ministry.

In the Diocese of Coventry we are developing our [Equip Hub](#) to provide a single point of contact for high quality learning, training and resourcing. We are populating it with locally produced resources that showcase good practice and innovation from across the diocese.

During 2022 we developed a new framework for releasing, recognising and resourcing lay ministry across the diocese. A key part of that process was a diocese-wide consultation to discern what patterns would be most helpful. In September, Bishop Christopher reviewed the survey results and approved the framework that emerged from those results.

During 2023 we will:

- Develop new features and resources in the Equip Hub.
- Start to implement a new Lay Ministries Framework.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

...says Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20

- Develop a support network for ordained ministers from UKME backgrounds, and review how best to grow more leaders with UKME backgrounds.
- Help to prepare a larger than usual number of ordination candidates for national discernment.

Loving One Another

Being a reconciling presence in the heart of our communities

When we see divisions around us in the world and close to home, the [Difference](#) course is equipping communities and individuals to build community cohesion, navigate disagreement, and cross divides through our everyday encounters.

Our [Race Equality Steering Group](#) has developed a strategy to improve race equality within the diocese. This is done through consultation with the Race Equality Advisory Group (REAG) and churches.

At a national level, the Bishop of Coventry played a leading role in the [Living in Love and Faith](#) (LLF) project. This has produced many helpful resources to help the whole Church to learn how relationships, marriage and sexuality fit within the bigger picture of a humanity created in the image of God, and to understand each other better.

At an international level, our cathedral continues to promote reconciliation through the [Community of the Cross of Nails](#). Their three guiding principles are: Healing the wounds of history; Learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity; and Building a culture of justice and peace.

During 2023 we will:

- Promote and run a variety of courses, including Difference, LLF and [Amazing Grace](#).
- Continue to implement the Race Equality Strategy.
- In partnership with Coventry Cathedral, develop resources to support churches in their calling to be a reconciling presence within their communities.

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

...says Jesus in John 13:35

Renewing Generosity

Supporting others with our time, talents and money

Our [parish share system](#) is based on the principles of generosity and mutual support. However, when faced with financial hardship, everyone finds it more difficult to be generous.

The pandemic and the cost of living crisis are causing financial difficulties throughout the Church of England.

Church members who are struggling to heat their homes and put food on the table find it harder to financially support their local church.

Churches, facing rising fuel bills and falling donations, find it harder to pay their parish share. That in turn makes it harder for the Diocesan Board of Finance to provide the level of support that parishes really need.

[Living Generously](#) explores how people can live a generous life in response to Christ’s generous act of love on the cross.

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

...says Jesus in Acts 20:35

During 2023 we will:

- Promote the Living Generously course.
- In partnership with churches, develop an overarching strategy and resources for renewing generosity.
- Respond to the energy and cost of living crisis.

Renewing the Environment

Caring for creation, both locally and globally

The [Diocesan Environment Group](#) continues to inspire, encourage, challenge and resource people to take seriously our God-given vocation to care for the earth, particularly via the promotion of [Eco Church](#).

The Net Zero Steering Group is also co-ordinating work to measure and reduce our carbon footprint across the diocese. Data from parish energy audits and the [Energy Footprint Tool](#) will enable us to further analyse our current environmental impact and establish the steps needed to reduce it.

Action plans will be produced for the key focus areas – churches, schools, the cathedral, diocesan offices, clergy housing and work-related travel. Further resources and support will be developed also to help individuals and churches care for God's creation.

During 2023 we will:

- Obtain an Energy Performance Certificates for any clergy house without one – and produce a costed and prioritised plan to work towards net zero in all clergy housing.
- Provide targeted support to help churches to find and submit data for the Energy Footprint Tool.
- Continue to implement our Net Zero Strategy.

*“Look at the birds of the air;
they neither sow nor reap nor
gather into barns, and yet your
heavenly Father feeds them.”*

...says Jesus in Mathew 6:26