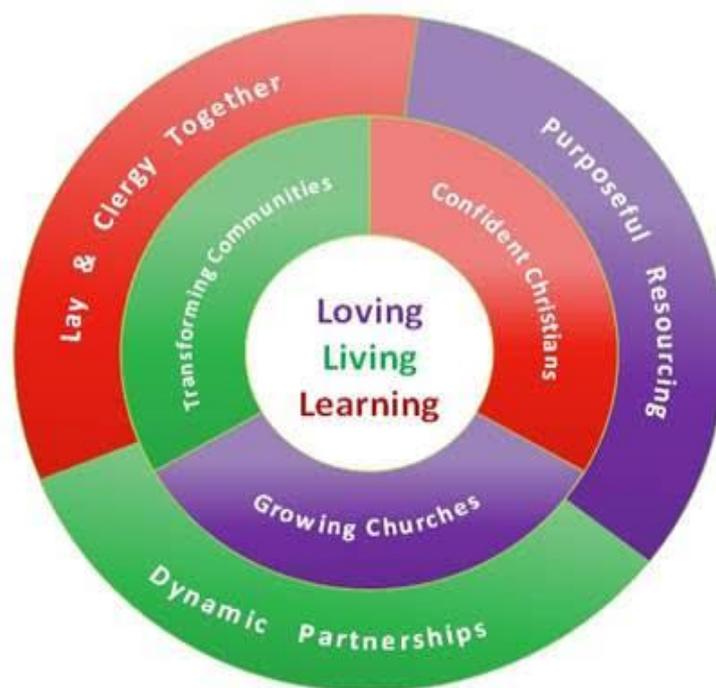


# Maturing in Christ

A strategy for the Diocese of Leeds  
2019 – 2024



*“Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is Christ”.*

Ephesians 4:15 (NIV)

## Contents

Foreword – from the Right Reverend Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds .....	3
Preface - from the Right Reverend Paul Slater, Bishop of Kirkstall, Chair of the Bishop’s Strategy Group.....	4
Introducing the Strategy Framework.....	5
Strategic Goals and Objectives 2019-2024 .....	8
Goal 1: Thriving as a distinctive diocese whose culture is shaped by a shared vision and values .....	8
Goal 2: Reimagining ministry .....	8
Goal 3: Nurturing lay discipleship.....	8
Goal 4: Building leadership pathways .....	9
Goal 5: Growing young people as Christians .....	9
Conclusion.....	10

## Foreword – from the Right Reverend Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds

*“Without a vision the people perish.”* So says Old Testament wisdom. But without a strategy the vision can quickly become a mere dream. Strategy isn’t magic; it is the ‘plumbing’ that gets us from here to where the vision says we need to reach.

This is why I asked a small group of colleagues to do the hard work of thinking, consulting, shaping and re-shaping a strategy document for the young Diocese of Leeds as we continue our development in the years ahead. We should not walk blindly into that future, but be disciplined with our resources and clear about our priorities. All this is done in faith and with much prayerful humility.



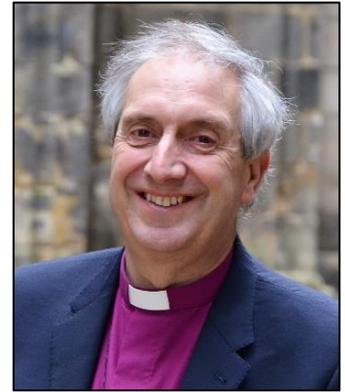
This strategy puts the parishes, schools and churches at the centre – this is the frontline of our mission to the part of England entrusted to us. Underpinning it all is a determination to shape a church that is safe for everyone, that draws people into the praying and generous community of Christians who are themselves drawn by an experience of God’s grace and mercy. Rooted in Loving (God, the creation and our neighbour as our self), Living (incarnational and committed to the world as it is, but holding out a vision for how it might become; striving for the common good and for human flourishing), and Learning (there are no easy templates for all this, and we will get it wrong many times), we want to build confident lay Christians in every parish. Clergy must be resourced and encouraged to enable this. Together, clergy and lay must re-imagine how to do ministry and outreach in a changing and challenging world.

I commend the work done by the Strategy Group and I strongly endorse this document. Now it needs everyone in the diocese to grapple with it and consider how to develop it in our own particular contexts, be it parish or deanery or Episcopal Area. We must work at developing our praying, our giving, our loving and our reaching out to those in our parishes. The strategy has been presented – the work now begins. I pray we might do this with joy and courage.

+ Nick Baines Leeds

## Preface - from the Right Reverend Paul Slater, Bishop of Kirkstall, Chair of the Bishop's Strategy Group

*"He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth. All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together". (Colossians 1: 15-17).*



In a world which is increasingly ignorant of or unimpressed by the Jewish/Christian roots at the heart of our culture in Britain today, holding to this statement from St Paul that all things are under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, requires a certain holding of nerve, but the belief that the whole of life is under God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, is at the heart of this strategy. This includes the church, the different communities we serve and the physical environment in which we live.

St Paul's letter to the Colossians goes on to express the ambition for every Christian to be mature in Christ (v28) and in the letter to the Ephesians chapter 4, maturity is seen as the goal for a church, confident in Christ, seeking to relate both within itself and to the world beyond.

One thing, which flows from a conviction that all things belong to God in Christ, is that the church has the resources for effective mission and ministry.

So the aim of our work on strategy has been to answer the question: "What does a mature Church of England, confident that all things belong to God in Christ, look like in these parts of Yorkshire, with our many different contexts?"

The givens are:

1. Being part of the Church of England, we are part of an episcopal church, with episcopal leadership, synodical governance and cathedrals;
2. We have a Diocesan integrity with five distinct areas; and
3. A commitment to territory through our parishes, which are at the heart of our engagement in God's world.

Two things which flow from confidence are 1) an ability and willingness to listen to what people are saying, and 2) a clarity in shaping and following through unambiguous priorities.

In drawing together this strategy, the Bishop's Strategy Group has sought to listen to a wide range of people from different perspectives and contexts and then to distil out carefully some clear priorities for us as the young Anglican Diocese of Leeds. In doing this, we have wanted to put some clear blue water between the vision for this diocese and how the three historical dioceses did things, and indeed to sit relatively lightly to the transition arrangements which have been in place since Easter 2014. This means that as we implement this strategy we will have to engage confidently in a process, which identifies both what parish support we want to resource well in the years ahead and also what we must stop doing.

Now is the time to take forward this strategy to realise our vision for the future, with clear direction and priorities within a sustainable budget - confident that God has given us all that we need to fulfil his purposes for his Church in this part of Yorkshire.

+ Paul Slater

## Introducing the Strategy Framework

The Diocese of Leeds was created on Easter Day 2014. Over the next three years, priority was given to building appropriate structures, making key appointments and rallying around a shared vision. This included a degree of 'front-loading', to provide extra 'start-up' resourcing for a young diocese at a formative stage. Attention then turned to the development of diocesan strategy. The challenge was to help the diocese thrive in dynamic equilibrium in the longer term, with its members heeding God's call to serve others, young and old, while growing in Christian maturity. Bishop Nick asked a small working group, chaired by Bishop Paul Slater, to take forward this process.

After much consultation, the Bishop's Strategy Group went on to design a framework for realising the potential of this unique 'three-into-one' diocese. Its main pillars are 'enabling means' for implementing the shared diocesan vision. The framework will need to bear the weight of a strategy spanning the multiple challenges within a diverse 21<sup>st</sup> century diocese, while building on the Church of England's *Renewal and Reform* programme.

Current challenges include:

- The national 'retirement tsunami' of clergy
- A drive to increase vocations to ordination by 50%
- Changing patterns of ministry for inherited and pioneering forms of church life
- The call to empower lay people and promote 'whole-life' discipleship
- Distressingly low numbers of young people and children involved in church life
- A relative shortage of applicants for clergy posts in the Northern Province
- Unsustainable financing of the current scale of church activities
- Abundant opportunities in parishes, schools and the workplace for Christian witness and working together for the common good.

Encompassing these challenges, the purpose of the strategy is to bring to fruition the established diocesan vision for:

*Confident Christians, Growing Churches, Transforming Communities*

At the same time, in keeping with the related value statement, the strategy should help the diocese flourish as an arena for:

*Loving, Living, Learning*

To enable the strategy to be well-founded, characteristics of each part of the vision statement were considered in turn, including associated resources and activities. An attempt was then made to evaluate their current status within the Diocese of Leeds. A 'SWOT' analysis was undertaken, considering strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each of the three component parts.

Out of this exercise, three 'enabling means' were discerned:

*Clergy and Lay Together, Purposeful Resourcing, Dynamic Partnerships*

These serve as foundations for the Diocese of Leeds' strategy for cultivating its shared vision.

*Clergy and Lay Together* means making the most of the distinctive, diverse gifts and contributions of clergy and lay people, as well as improving their capacity for working collaboratively.

*Purposeful Resourcing* ranges from stewardship to specialist posts and sector support, training, equipping for weekday living and 'resource churches' - churches that can benefit ministry beyond their parishes.

*Dynamic Partnerships* includes joint ventures with funding agencies, working with the National Church with Strategic Development Funding, with local councils, networking with Fresh Expressions practitioners, co-operation with training institutions and engagement with link dioceses.

With this framework in place, a plan for the five years 2019-2024 could then be constructed with targets, timescales and budgets. It was clear from the challenges summarised above that our strategy would need to focus on building or improving the way we do things around the diocese, in order to better equip us all to reach out to congregations and communities in a transformational way.

The next stage was to set our strategic direction by establishing our five goals. They are:

1. Thriving as a distinctive diocese whose culture is shaped by a shared vision and values
2. Reimagining ministry (both clergy and lay)
3. Nurturing lay discipleship
4. Building leadership 'pathways'
5. Growing young people as Christians.

These are set out in pages 8 and 9 of this document. Each goal is illustrated by verses from scripture that provide inspiration for that particular area of work. Each is further supported by a goal definition that imagines what will be in place in 2024 when the goal is realised.

The goals will best be achieved by setting objectives and initiatives that work to this end. An accompanying document sets out a series of associated objectives to support each goal. These are measurable and are stepping stones along the way. They are best achievable through a strong focus on the enabling means.

In the same document, a range of practical initiatives is proposed at a diocesan-wide level, which parishes/benefices may choose to implement at local level, or may simply draw inspiration from. Unlike the goals, which set a direction for the next five years, the objectives and initiatives may need to change as the world changes, as the church changes and as the Diocese of Leeds develops.

This strategy framework therefore provides a superstructure both for designated initiatives and for creative improvisation in parishes, deaneries, episcopal areas and other instruments for resourcing ministry and mission in the diocese. Within the five-year term of the diocesan strategy, specific programmes and projects can be devised at different stages, including contenders for major grants from the Church Commissioners' Strategic Development Fund.

Since it is God's Church in which we serve, God's mission in which we participate and God who ultimately brings growth, the strategic plan for 2019-24 will intentionally combine systematic and prayerful planning with responsiveness to God's unfolding purposes in this richly varied diocese.

## Strategy Framework



Sharing a vision for  
Confident Christians Growing churches  
Transforming communities

Characterised by  
Loving Living Learning

Enabled by  
Clergy and lay together Purposeful resourcing  
Dynamic partnerships

Achieved by  
Thriving as a distinctive diocese Reimagining Ministry  
Nurturing lay discipleship Building leadership pathways  
Growing young people as Christians

## Strategic Goals 2019-2024

### Goal 1: Thriving as a distinctive diocese whose culture is shaped by a shared vision and values

*“Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ”.*

Ephesians 4:15 (NIV)

**With Christ as our model for Loving, Living, Learning, we are all energised by what it means to be part of the Diocese of Leeds and *all* see the diocese as “us” rather than “them”: a body of maturing Christians with a shared story to tell and a distinctive part to play. We are all committed to the safeguarding, care and nurture of everyone within our community, and to God’s creation. Together, we are working in a diocese that, because of its scale, is making a unique contribution to building the Kingdom of God, while operating at a local level in every parish and episcopal area.**

### Goal 2: Reimagining ministry

*“Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up”.*

Ephesians 4:11-12 (NIV)

**In the context of a shared understanding of what it is to be the Church of England in this diocese, a varied range of models of ministry are flourishing that are appropriate to context, faithfully yet imaginatively Anglican and financially sustainable. All clergy and lay ministers are working confidently in fruitful clergy/lay partnerships, our churches are growing and local communities are seeing signs of transformation.**

### Goal 3: Nurturing lay discipleship

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters”.*

Colossians 3:23 (NIV)

**All members of our congregations are maturing in their calling as Christians in the whole of their lives and take seriously the five marks of mission.<sup>1</sup> Parishes and benefices are seeing more people coming to faith, reflected in the number of baptisms and confirmations, including teenagers. Nurture courses and small group participation are the norm, people are supported to express their faith confidently outside church, and all is intentionally underpinned by prayer.**

---

<sup>1</sup> To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

To respond to human need by loving service

To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

## Goal 4: Building leadership pathways

*“You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others”.*

2 Timothy 2:2 (NLT)

**We have identified processes to attract, discern, train and continuously develop lay and ordained leaders, from informal exploration to accreditation. Lay and clergy are motivated to take responsibility for their own vocational development, and are provided with diverse opportunities for doing so. Leadership potential for people of all ages is being developed.**

## Goal 5: Growing young people as Christians

*“Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and all the people”.*

Luke 2:52 (NLT)

**Children and young people are part of a welcoming, enriching and safe worshipping community in every benefice and cathedral. They are provided with a supportive context for maturing in their faith, living out that faith in practice. Every child in a Church of England school encounters Christ and the Christian faith in a way which enhances their lives.**

### Some definitions

**Goals** – long term aims that we want to accomplish. In the case of this strategy, the goals will take five years to realise.

**Objectives** – concrete attainments that can be accomplished by following a certain number of steps. Each objective may have its own time scale, within the five-year period of the strategy.

**Initiatives** – the steps to be taken to achieve the objectives. Many of the initiatives listed in this strategy will be taken at the centre. Episcopal areas, deaneries, parishes and other missional communities will need to identify initiatives specific to them, which contribute to the achievement of one or more of the common goals.

**Resource Church** - is a church which is: designated a resource church by the Diocesan Bishop; part of a diocesan strategy to evangelise a city or town and transform society; intentionally resourced to plant and revitalise churches; which develops a pipeline of leaders for further planting; provides other resources for mission across a city or town.

**Resourcing Parish** – a parish which supports and benefits ministry beyond its own parish.

## Conclusion

The challenges and opportunities summarised in the introduction demonstrate why we must take action now.

The diocesan strategy creates a route map for the next five years and aids our progress towards the diocesan vision of *Confident Christian, Growing Churches, Transforming Communities*. The five goals within it are the means by which we can mature into the kind of church we are called to be across this very diverse diocese, and by which we will be equipped to reach out to the world around us.

No single parish, benefice, chaplaincy or missional community is expected to focus equally on all five goals; each is invited to identify where, in its own context, the emphasis needs to be placed as we progress towards 2024. Decision-making must be rigorous, driven by clear priorities and take account of the unavoidable constraint on resources, despite having faith that God will provide the means we need. A toolkit for parishes, benefices and deaneries, *Helping our Churches to Flourish* supports this strategy document and offers a structure for planning and decision-making at local level.

Within the strategy framework, every episcopal area, deanery, parish and other missional community should be able to create and continually review its own action plan that is applicable to its specific context and level, while being aligned as closely as possible with the overall direction of the whole diocese. When all plans come together, each contributing to the whole, they will enable us to make substantial progress towards our strategic goals.

Finally, the framework provided by the strategy should also guide us into what we stop doing. Resources are limited, at all levels, and much as we desire to serve God in every way possible, we have to ensure we work within our means – even the abundant means that God will provide. So in making new plans and building in key areas, we must be rigorous about decisions to give some activities lower priority, whether that means stopping, delaying or simply achieving more slowly.

Ultimately, any strategy has to align as closely as possible to our discernment of God's plan. It needs to be continuously underpinned by prayer. In considering the strategy, you are invited to consider prayerfully your part in it and support its implementation.

February 2019

### **Bishop's Strategy Group**

The Right Reverend Paul Slater, Bishop of Kirkstall (chair)

Mrs Debbie Child, Diocesan Secretary

The Very Reverend John Dobson, Dean of Ripon

Canon Mrs Jane Evans, Member, Leeds Board and Diocesan Synod

The Venerable Andy Jolley, Archdeacon of Bradford

The Reverend Canon Andrew Norman, Director of Ministry and Mission