Helping our churches to flourish

A strategic planning toolkit for parishes, benefices and deaneries in the Diocese of Leeds

Based on the diocesan strategy *Maturing in Christ*

“Instead, 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)
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What is strategic planning?
Strategic planning is simply the process of identifying WHAT we are aiming to do (our goals and objectives), HOW we will get there – that is, the specific steps we need to take, WHO will do what, and WHEN we plan to take these steps.

Why plan?
God has given us gifts and resources, and Jesus sent us out with the Great Commission, to make disciples of all people. He also recognised that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

If we are to make best use of our few God-given resources – time, talent and treasure – we should know what we are trying to achieve by when and by whom.

Our five-year plans are but a tiny part of God’s overall mission for us. But if made and carried out prayerfully, they might be the most important part of becoming all that God wants us to be in our particular part of the Diocese of Leeds.

The Diocesan Strategy
Our diocese has been engaged in making a new strategic plan for the years 2019-2024. Maturing in Christ is a five-year strategy for the whole of our diocese. It is intended to help us all to work towards the diocesan vision of Confident Christians, Growing Churches, Transforming Communities.

Three “enabling means” were discerned as being foundations for the strategy: Clergy and Lay Together, Purposeful Resourcing and Dynamic Partnerships. These are ways of doing things that will help us to achieve our goals.

The strategy comprises five goals, with a set of diocesan-wide objectives associated with each goal. A summary of the strategy is given at appendix 2.

In many deaneries, benefices and churches, we are taking many of these steps already, and have much to celebrate.

You are now invited to undertake your strategic planning with the five goals of the diocesan strategy and the three enabling means in mind. As you do so, you might prayerfully consider how the goals and objectives of the strategy can support the growth of the Kingdom of God in your communities. As part of that consideration, you might form new plans or review existing activities, to be able to take full benefit of all that is going on in the diocese as a whole.

MATURING IN CHRIST
a strategy for the Diocese of Leeds

Goal 1: Thriving as a distinctive diocese whose culture is shaped by a shared vision and values.
Goal 2: Reimagining ministry
Goal 3: Nurturing lay discipleship
Goal 4: Building leadership pathways
Goal 5: Growing young people as Christians
Developing your plan

Your own strategic planning may be carried out at any level – as a single parish, a benefice or a deanery – or you may be part of a different kind of missional community. Whichever is most appropriate in your context, the overall approach is the same.

This toolkit is intended to help develop your strategic plan – or refresh it if you already have a plan in place such as a Mission Action Plan, LyCiG plan or similar. It is designed to help you have conversations about what you are currently doing and what you may want to focus for the future. It invites you to consider your place in the wider diocese, and assist you in making your plan based on your chosen goals.

Your action plan may include:

- Things you are currently doing that are to be celebrated;
- One or two initiatives that will further help to achieve your mission;
- Where necessary, actions to guide you towards those few objectives that apply to all parishes by 2024; to help, these are highlighted in bold type on the worksheets.
- Identification of things you could stop doing, to make space for any new initiatives.

As you think through your own planning, it would be useful to bear in mind the three “enabling means” which inform the diocesan strategy. These are: Clergy and Lay together, Purposeful Resourcing and Dynamic Partnerships.

How to use this toolkit

The toolkit comprises a five-step process, which you might undertake in a variety of different ways to suit your needs.

First of all, decide who is going to be involved in your strategic planning process. This might be your PCC, Standing Committee, Leadership Team or a small group convened especially for the purpose. Or you might want to involve the wider congregation. The decision will vary depending on whether you undertake the planning as a deanery, a benefice or a single parish.

You will need to decide who leads the planning process. This might be a member of the clergy, or a lay leader in your church – or someone who has specific experience of planning, perhaps in their work context. Or you might want to seek help from your Area Dean, Archdeacon, Area Bishop or a member of Diocesan Staff.

You’ll need to set aside time for the planning process. This could be a dedicated PCC meeting, a special planning day, or a series of meetings where you can break it up into smaller chunks.

Then before you do anything else, you’ll need to review the toolkit. It consists of two parts:

PART 1 guides you through the five-step process.

PART 2 is the appendix, full of resources and background information for you to use as needed.

*A note on terminology:

Throughout this guide, reference is made to a parish/benefice* in the context of strategic planning. However, the process applies equally well to a deanery, other grouping or different type of missional community. Please therefore substitute the most relevant designation for your context.
The five-step process

Step 1: The process begins with prayer, or by sharing a liturgy together (suggestions in appendix 1).

Step 2: ‘Taking stock’ is a series of questions to help you review where you are now in carrying out your mission (page 7).

Step 3: Use the summary information to identify which of the five strategic goals you want to work on further (you can consider one, several or all of them, in any order that you like). You’ll need to decide whether to consider these in the same meeting or at a further planning session.

Step 4: There’s a worksheet for each goal, to help you identify what you’re already doing, anything new you might consider and anything you might want to do differently (pages 9 to 18).

Step 5: Write down your plan. There’s a simple form to help you do this, or you can use your own format. (Appendix 6). Don’t forget to review your plan regularly. Part of your plan should be to decide who does this and how often. Your Area Bishop and Archdeacon would welcome being sent a copy of your plan to inform their support and prayer for you.
Step 1: Prayer and discernment – what’s God’s plan for us?
The first and most important question to ask ourselves is: do we know what God’s plan is for the mission of our church/parish/benefice?

We should respond to this question prayerfully. That may be as simple as praying a short prayer before we begin discussions. Or by taking time for reflection before a strategic planning meeting. Or by wrapping our discussions in a liturgy that could culminate in celebrating the Eucharist together.

Appendix 1 offers a selection of prayers and passages for reflection together with a form of Eucharist for you to use if you wish.

I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you.

Jer 29:11
Step 2: Taking stock - where are we now?

Some questions for discussion

- What is our vision for what God is doing in the parish/benefice* and how is this being implemented?

- What opportunities for mission have we discerned through prayer and listening to the needs of our local community? How well are we contributing to transformation in our community and caring for creation?

- What would our ‘dream’ be for our church, if we could start afresh today? What would be our priorities for ministry? How far does this differ from where we are now?

- To what extent do we support a ‘have-a-go’ culture, where reasonable risks are taken to allow people and activities to develop, with mistakes seen as an opportunity to learn?

- How are lay church members encouraged and equipped to take leadership roles in the life of the church and beyond?

- Are we growing? Do we have a Leading your Church into Growth (LyCiG) plan in place?

- How do we encourage people whatever their age, ability or disability to grow as disciples?

- What opportunities do we have to enable children and young people to be part of our church family?

- How financially stable are we? What steps can we take to meet our financial responsibilities, including paying our parish share, and ensure our priorities are properly resourced?
Step 3: Review the strategic goals – which area(s) shall we focus on?

This step can be undertaken with reference to any existing plans already in place, e.g. a LyCiG plan, Mission Action plan or outcome of a visioning process, reviewing these within the framework of the five goals of the Diocese of Leeds strategy.

The five goals for our diocese as a whole between them cover many aspects of our ministry as the Church of England in the Diocese of Leeds. They are intended to help us focus on those areas that can have the most impact on our ability to be church in this place at this time.

- Referring to your responses to the ‘taking stock’ questions, select which of the five goals, summarised below, you would wish to concentrate on and go to the relevant worksheet(s).

You might choose just one goal, or several, or tackle all of them in whatever order of importance is right for you. A summary of the goals is included in the appendix.

Goal 1 – Thriving as a distinctive diocese whose culture is shaped by a shared vision and values
   - This goal is about how we work together as a large, young diocese, from parishes, benefices and deaneries to Episcopal Areas and the diocese as a whole. Objectives cover our planning, culture and finances.

Goal 2 – Reimagining ministry
   - This goal is about how we can meet the challenges of the 21st century in the way we run our churches and reach out to our communities. Objectives cover church growth, how clergy and lay lead together, our impact on the environment and local communities, and how we relate to those only slightly connected to church.

Goal 3 - Nurturing lay discipleship
   - This goal is about helping people to grow in faith and live it out each day. Objectives cover running nurture courses, helping people to express their faith confidently, undertaking deeper learning or training and linking Sunday worship with the rest of the week.

Goal 4 – Building leadership pathways
   - This goal is about having the right mechanisms in place to help both lay people and clergy develop as leaders. Objectives cover supporting the laity in their call to be leaders, increasing the number of ordinands, curates and interns and helping people to grow as leaders outside the church.

Goal 5 – Growing young people as Christians
   - This goal is about reversing the decline in the numbers of young people coming to faith. Objectives cover making sure all churches are welcoming places for children and young people, and actively drawing them in, enabling young people to participate in community-based initiatives and supporting faith development in our church schools.
Step 4: Work through the relevant strategic goal worksheets

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

“Instead, 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)

Our aspiration - by 2024:
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.

- What is the most important part of this aspiration for us?
- How might we be energised by our place in the body of Christians which come together to make up the Diocese of Leeds?
- How are we living out our commitment to the safeguarding, care and nurture of everyone within our community and to care for God’s creation?
- Who else might we work with in our parish/benefice* as we seek to build the Kingdom of God in our locality?

Help is at hand!

Diocesan Office: see introductory leaflet at appendix 5.
Learning Communities on Diocesan Learning Platform
See additional resources for church growth and evangelism at appendix 4.
**Diocesan strategy objectives include:**

You can find the Diocesan Strategy Objectives and Initiatives Document [here](#).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alignment of strategy, vision and values across the diocese**.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A ‘have-a-go’ culture that underpins the work of clergy and lay together, and fosters mutual trust.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial sustainability that maximises the use of assets for mission, ministry and stewardship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The dynamics of a large diocese that works through Episcopal Areas, deaneries and local churches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- How does the work we do in our parish/benefice* contribute to the diocesan objectives, to help us all thrive as a distinctive diocese with a shared vision and values?

- Is there anything else we could do?

- Who else might we need to work with?

- What’s the first step we need to take?

**Objectives in bold type are those which apply to all parishes**

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Goal 2: Reimagining ministry

“So 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)

Our aspiration:

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.

- What is the most important part of this aspiration for us?
- How are we already seeing transformation in our community?
- What could we do that would help us to be church more imaginatively in our context?
- How do we bless our clergy and lay leaders and support them in working together for the glory of God and transformation of our community?

Help is at hand!

Leading Your Church into Growth Team, Lay Training Team, The Environment, Fresh Expressions, Diocesan Learning Platform
Diocesan strategy objectives include:

You can find the Diocesan Strategy Objectives and Initiatives Document [here](#).

1. At least 75% of our churches and all three cathedrals are growing.
2. Models of ministry are developed and implemented that are financially sustainable, authentically Anglican and missionally appropriate.
3. Churches and cathedrals have identified model(s) of ministry in which clergy and lay lead together in flourishing partnerships.
4. More people are taking part in more authorised ministries in more parishes, leading to growing confidence and shared leadership.
5. Churches, cathedrals, chaplaincies and church schools can evidence the positive impact they are making on the environment.
6. Churches, cathedrals, chaplaincies and church schools can evidence the positive impact they are making on their local community.
7. All churches are intentionally engaging both with those loosely connected to church life and those with no connection at all**. 

- How does the work we do in our parish/benefice* contribute to the diocesan objectives for imaginative ministry to flourish in our context?
- Who else might we need to work with?
- What’s the first step we need to take?

**Objectives in bold type are those which apply to all parishes**
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)

Our aspiration:

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. 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.

➢ What is the most important part of this aspiration for us?

➢ How well do we help each other to grow in our calling as Christians?

➢ How are we already seeing people coming to faith through baptism and confirmation. Could we do more to intentionally support them?

➢ What are we already doing that helps us to confidently share our faith throughout the week?

Help is at hand!

Digital Learning Platform; Lay Training Officers. Enquirers’ and nurture courses include START, Alpha and Pilgrim. Many great materials and resources for small group sessions are available.
Diocesan strategy objectives include:

You can find the Diocesan Strategy Objectives and Initiatives Document [here](#).

1. All clergy prioritise teaching the faith and growing disciples.

2. **Every benefice and cathedral has at least one enquirers’ course or other opportunity per year for exploring the Christian faith, and at least one course or group for developing discipleship per year**.

3. 50% of people in our congregations are able to express their faith confidently.

4. At least 2,000 lay people in the diocese are members of the digital learning platform (DLP), and 1,000 are actively making use of courses, resources and learning communities.

5. All benefices have at least one person engaging in deeper learning or training beyond nurture course level.

6. A nurture group for young people is taking place in every deanery.

7. Sunday acts of worship include at least one reference to living out Christian faith in Monday-to-Saturday settings.

- How does the work we do in our parish/benefice* contribute to the diocesan objectives for nurturing lay discipleship?

- Who else might we need to work with?

- What’s the first step we need to take?

**Objectives in bold type are those which apply to all parishes**
Goal 4: Building leadership pathways

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others”. 2 Timothy 2:2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our aspiration:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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 all people whatever their age, ability or disability is being developed.</td>
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</table>

➢ What is the most important part of this aspiration for us?

➢ How do we help each other in nurturing and discerning vocation?

➢ How do we enable people to take responsibility for growing and developing in their faith and vocation?

➢ How do we work towards ensuring the growth of God’s Kingdom through changes in the life of our parish/benefice*?

Help is at hand!

Diocesan Director of Ordinands, Vocations Team, Lay Training Team, Digital Learning Platform
Diocesan strategy objectives include:

You can find the Diocesan Strategy Objectives and Initiatives Document here.

1. Numbers of ordinands and curacies will increase.
2. An intern programme will operate in each Episcopal Area.
3. As part of a culture of fostering and discernment, lay disciples are supported by clergy and lay in their call to be leaders. At least 75% of churches have lay people who are on a leadership pathway, accessing training, coaching, mentoring and being supported by clergy and laity.
4. Christian leadership outside church is developing (workplace, schools, community engagement).

➢ How does the work we do in our parish/benefice* contribute to the diocesan objectives for building sustainable leadership pathways?

➢ Who else might we need to work with?

➢ What’s the first step we need to take?
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)

Our aspiration:
Children and young people are part of a welcoming, enriching and safe worshipping community of 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.

➤ What is the most important part of this aspiration for us?

➤ How do we welcome children and young people into our worshipping community?

➤ What are we already doing that supports children and young people to mature in their faith and transform their communities?

➤ How do (or might) we support those in our schools to encounter Christ and the Christian faith in a life-enhancing way?

Help is at hand!
Diocesan Children Young People and Families Team. Training and support for a wide range of children, young people and family ministry and mission areas. Can also provide links to practitioners happy to share their experiences of opportunities with schools. Diocesan Learning Platform for training opportunities, information and a range of resources.
Diocesan strategy objectives include:

You can find the Diocesan Strategy Objectives and Initiatives Document here.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Every cathedral and church is a welcoming, enriching and safe place for children**.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>All cathedrals and 75% of churches have children and young adults actively involved in the church community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Every church and cathedral can articulate and facilitate its provision to teens and identify where accessible opportunities for growing in discipleship can be found locally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Every episcopal area will have at least one community-based initiative in which young people are engaged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Every cathedral and church contributes to the well-being and faith development of children in schools in their parish or catchment area, beginning with regular prayer**.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The synergies between church schools and churches are stronger:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Every church school has a faith/discipling opportunity outside school hours.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Every child in a church school is offered an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way which enhances their lives.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A nurture course takes place for every church secondary school each year.</td>
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- Which of the diocesan objectives will the work we do in our parish /benefice* contribute to, to enable children and young people to flourish?

- Who might we need to work with?

- What’s the first step we need to take?

**Objectives in bold type are those which apply to all parishes**
Step 5: Building our plan – how we will get there

Identify key initiatives – either existing initiatives that you plan to continue, or any new steps you intend to take.

Consider WHO will lead the initiative, WHEN key activities will take place, WHAT help, support or resources you might need and WHICH of the overarching goals from the diocesan strategy this fits within.

You might also like to consider what you might STOP doing in order to make space for new initiatives.

Use the simple table in appendix xx to note your plan. Be sure to review this plan regularly.

Your Area Bishop and Archdeacon would welcome being sent a copy of your plan to inform their support and prayer for you.
Appendices

1. Prayers and liturgy


3. Additional resources: Mapping your community

4. Additional resources: Church growth and Evangelism

5. Details of diocesan teams, people and places who might be able to help you

6. Form to write down your plan