



CREATING CONNECTIONS TOOLKIT

Connecting with God • Connecting with each other • Connecting with our communities

“*Go and make disciples of all nations.*”

Matthew 28:19

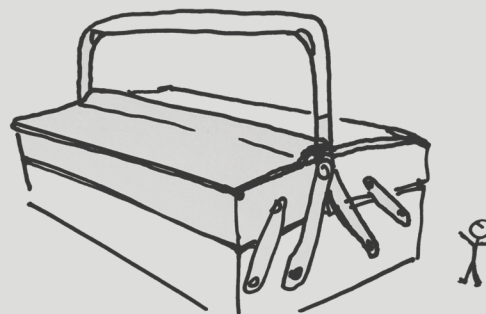
Our vision and priorities can inspire us to new levels of hope and commitment, but in order to do that they must be more than just words on the page. We need to ensure that our vision, as expressed within ‘Creating connections’, is not just something to which we simply pay lip service, but becomes something which guides our prayers, our actions and our decisions at all levels.

Together as a Diocese we are incredibly excited about God’s plans for our churches, our diocese, and our world. We can make a huge difference to our communities as we enable every person, wherever they are, to encounter and connect with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Our hope is that this toolkit will help you to explore and consider how our collective vision, as expressed within ‘Creating connections’, can support and guide ministry and mission within your parish and strengthen our sense of connectedness with one another.

We would encourage you to read this toolkit, access the resources that are being made available and take time as a PCC to consider and discuss the questions it poses. We would urge you to engage with this as a matter of priority.

Please do send in your responses to the questions in this toolkit so that we can pray for God’s blessing on your ministry and mission as you connect with Him, each other and those around you.



INTRO TO THE TOOLKIT

We want every parish to be able to explore what 'Creating connections' looks like in their context.

This toolkit is designed to help your parish explore its engagement with, and response to, our diocesan identity and priorities that connect us together.

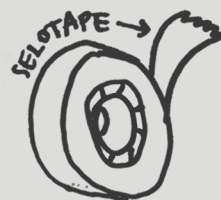
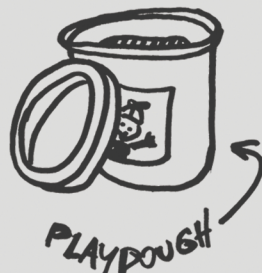
The toolkit is designed for a PCC to discuss together, and should lead to the development

of a response. It will also signpost you to other resources, guides and support that can help you to explore specific issues in more detail.

If your parish already has a mission plan or a strategy then that can help feed into your discussions and response.

Our hope is that your discussions and response to the questions posed will support the development of the ministry, mission and outreach of your parish.

YOU WILL NEED:



HOW TO DO IT!

Start by reading through this toolkit and the 'Creating connections' vision and priorities leaflet.



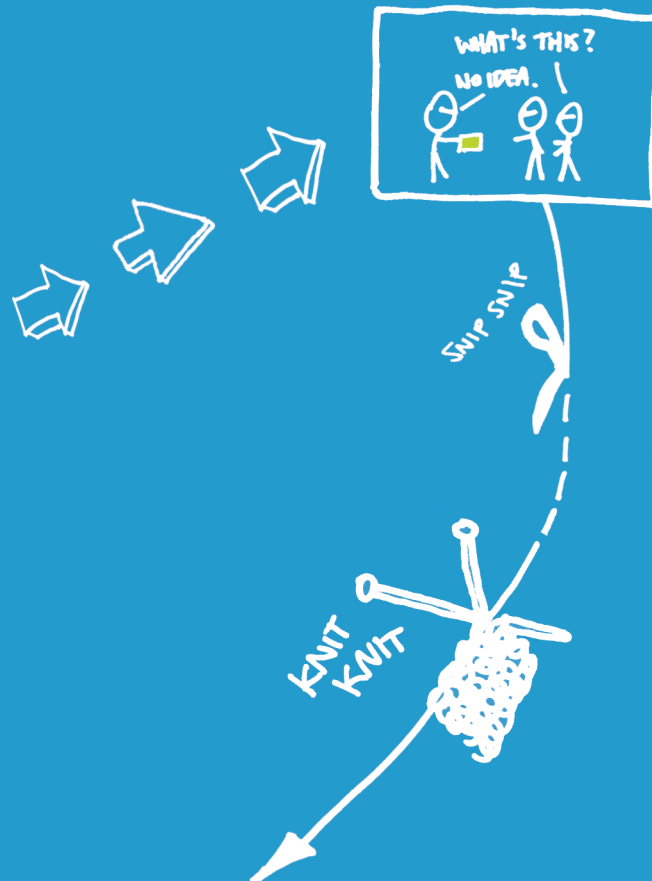
1 Before the PCC meeting



Allocate some agenda time at your next PCC meeting to work through this toolkit as a group.

Distribute copies of the 'Creating connections' vision and priorities leaflet to all members.

Read through this toolkit, and consider how to proceed.



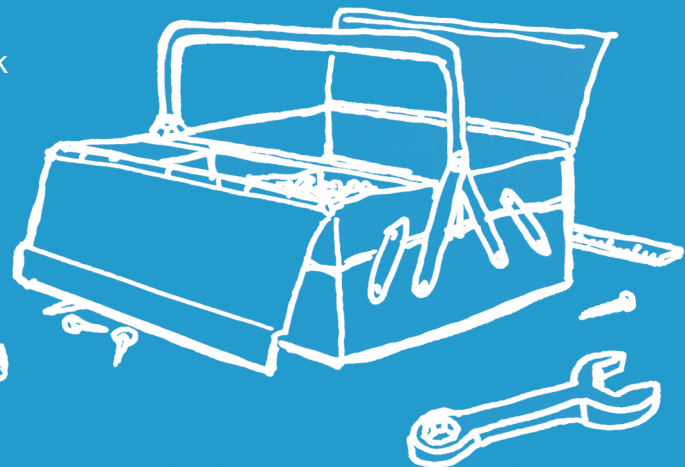
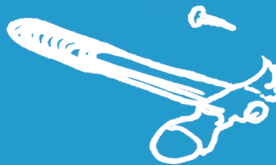
2 At the meeting



At the PCC meeting work through the questions on the purple pages.

You may need to discuss this at more than one PCC meeting in order to have enough time to work through the six question topics. This is fine.

Please do not rush. This is not a box ticking exercise.



3 After the meeting



Appoint someone to write up these notes to form a draft response.

Spend time at the subsequent PCC meeting discussing this draft response and suggesting any amendments to it.



Finalise the response and then send it to Bishop Mike by emailing it to creatingconnections@bristoldicoese.org

Make it happen and review it regularly.

HELPFUL BACKGROUND READING BEFORE YOU START (OPTIONAL)



How to do Mission Action Planning by Mike Chew and Mark Ireland.

A significant and growing number of churches are using the principles of MAP to produce high quality plans for effective mission activity.

Five Marks of Mission.

The Five Marks of Mission are an important statement on mission which expresses the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic mission. www.anglicancommunion.org/identity/marks-of-mission

Developing Healthy Churches: Returning to the heart of mission and ministry by Robert Warren.

This practical guide helps churches identify their strengths and weaknesses and discover what action to take in order to develop the health of their church. The focus is on the quality of the church's life, rather than just its numerical growth.

From Anecdote to Evidence and ***From Evidence to Action.***

From Evidence to Action has been developed using and building on the findings of the Church Growth Research Programme which was

summarised in *From Anecdote to Evidence*, published in January 2014. On the website you can find a guide to the findings and working materials based around some common factors which were found to be linked with growth. www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/report www.fromevidencetoaction.org.uk

How to develop a mission strategy A Grove Booklet by Capt Jim Currin.

This booklet outlines a manageable process using tried and tested exercises, drawn from a wide variety of sources which have been found by a range of churches to help to release their God-given potential. www.grovebooks.co.uk

How to listen to and involve children and young people.

This 'How to...' guide written by Dan Jones, the Diocesan Youth and Children's Advisor, equips parishes, PCCs and clergy to listen to the voice of young people and involve them in the life of your parish. When considering how you will respond to 'Creating connections', it is important to consider the voice of children and young people. This guide will help you to do that. www.bristol.anglican.org/how-to

You may find it helpful to begin by exploring some of these additional Diocese of Bristol toolkits to build up a more comprehensive response to Creating connections.

'How to... Carry out a community survey'

It is vitally important to understand the community to which we are seeking to witness. We cannot simply assume we know our community and what they think of the church and want the church to be. We need

to move from being a church that supplies what we think people want, to being a church that engages effectively from a place of understanding. This toolkit will help you to achieve that understanding.

'How to... Carry out a parish review'

Understanding the story, resources and opportunities within your parish is important if we are going to be able to use them effectively for the growth of God's Kingdom. This guide will help you to review the life of your parish and the resources available to you.

'How to ... Help people discover and use their strengths and gifts'

This toolkit will show you how to work with your congregation to help people explore their gifts and strengths, and how they can use them in the service of God's church.

SWOT and SMART.

When evaluating and looking at the life of your parish it can be helpful to explore these four topics:

- Strengths:** Characteristics of the church that may give it an advantage in its mission;
- Weaknesses:** Characteristics of the church that may be a disadvantage in comparison with others;
- Opportunities:** Conditions outside the church that could create opportunities for growth;
- Threats:** Conditions outside the church that could create challenges for the church.

When writing goals or aims you should ensure that these are:

- Specific:** Is the goal specific enough for clarity?
- Measurable:** Is there a way to measure the success of the goal?
- Achievable:** Is the goal truly achievable?
- Relevant:** Is the goal aligned with your overall plan?
- Time-bound:** Is there a timeline associated to the goal to ensure a completion date?

All available from www.bristol.anglican.org/how-to



CONNECTING WITH GOD

For Christians, to be connected with God is primarily about being, as St Paul would have put it, “in Christ”.

This new relationship shapes and empowers our lives and our faith. We journey towards God in worship, through the Scriptures and in prayer. We follow and learn from Jesus’s teaching and example, and can be changed by the Holy Spirit to become more like Him.

Q. In what ways does your parish help people to connect with God and experience the Gospel, both within the church community and outside it?

Q. What things would you like to do to enable people within your church congregation to grow in their relationship with God and their discipleship in the coming 12 to 24 months?

Q. What things would you like to do in the coming 12 to 24 months to enable people who do not yet know Christ to connect with God and experience and encounter the good news of Jesus Christ?

Q. How will you achieve these?

Salt & light on a hill
made of peace →



CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER

To be connected with each other means to reflect the unity and the diversity of the Holy Trinity within the Body of Christ.

This unity in diversity can be experienced at every level within the Church. St Paul tells us that we have to work at this: “Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). An important characteristic of being an Anglican is that we are a part of something bigger: a diocese, the Church of England, the worldwide and catholic Church.

Q. In what ways does your parish help people to build strong relationships in fellowship with each other?

Q. In what ways does your parish connect with other parishes within the Diocese or ecumenically with other churches?

Q. What things would you like to do, in the coming 12 to 24 months, to build on these connections?

Q. How will you achieve these?



To be connected with our communities is to be an incarnational Church.

We participate in the mission of God by being planted and rooted in our local contexts. The call of the Church of England is to proclaim the Good

News afresh in each generation and to be a sign of God's Kingdom in every community. We must develop a proper understanding of the communities that we are seeking to serve.

In a post-Christendom context, this is a challenge for us. This means we have to start with people where they are, not where we might like them to be.

Q. In what ways does your parish connect with your local community and the different groups within it?

Q. What things would you like to do in the coming 12 to 24 months to further connect with your local community?

Q. How will you achieve this?



Priority 1. MAKING DISCIPLES



As disciples and disciple-makers we need to engage in both personal and corporate prayer and bible study, and encourage each other to follow Jesus more closely and deeply. We must also commit to the demonstration and declaration of the Good News and to inviting people into a living relationship with Jesus.

Q. What are your plans for making disciples and encouraging deeper discipleship in the coming 12 to 24 months?

Priority 2. GROWING LEADERS



Leaders make a difference. The only ship that doesn't need a captain is anchored in the harbour. We need to be intentional about rearing the right kind of leaders, lay and ordained, who are fit for the challenge of re-connecting in a post-Christendom context.

Q. What are your plans for encouraging and enabling people to serve as leaders within your parish in the coming 12 to 24 months?

Q. How will you build up, support and invest in those who serve as leaders?

Priority 3. ENGAGING YOUNGER GENERATIONS



To fulfil our call to proclaim afresh the Good News in each generation, we need to connect far more effectively with those aged 40 and under. We particularly need to develop skills and confidence as we find new ways to engage and make disciples of younger generations helping us to pass on the baton of faith and see lives transformed.

Q. In what ways will you seek to support, disciple and reach out to younger generations in the coming 12 to 24 months?



CREATING A RESPONSE

We would like you to take your responses to the questions and formulate them into a Vision / Strategy / Action Plan document for your parish.

You should condense your discussions and responses to the questions on the purple pages into one short summary. This then forms the basis of your Creating connections response – a statement of celebration of all that God is doing in and through your parish, and also your God-given plans and hopes for the future.

We suggest that you circulate your draft plan to key members of your congregation to get their feedback, comments and suggestions. You should then bring this feedback to a PCC meeting and discuss the draft response. Following this, any amendments can be made before it is finalised and shared.

What you have discovered, discerned and decided through the discussions should now inform the life and activity of your parish.

Advice on how to do this and some example response documents can be found in our guide: *'How to... Develop an action plan or strategy'*, available from www.bristol.anglican.org/how-to





SHARING YOUR RESPONSE

Please share with us the response that you have created.

We would love to hear about your plans for mission so that:

- We can pray for you and bless all that you hope to be and do in Christ's name;
- We know how to better resource and support your ministry and mission;
- We can help you connect with other parishes who have similar plans;
- As a result ideas can be shared, support offered and best practice developed.

Please send your response document to creatingconnections@bristoldiocese.org

OPTIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC RESPONSE

We would also love you to send us three photos that represent your church and the life of your parish.

These photos will enable us to produce a collage and album of photos that depict the essence of 'Creating connections' across the Diocese.

Please send your photos to creatingconnections@bristoldiocese.org ~ and make sure you only send us photos that you, and the people in them, are happy for us to publish and put online.



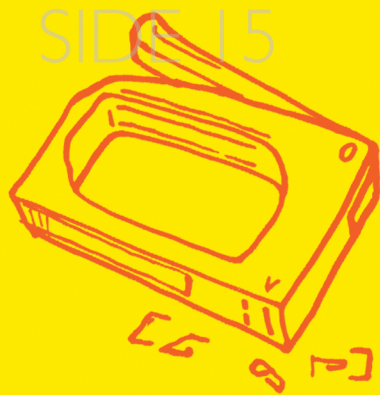
TAKING ACTION

You now need to put your plans into action.

We recommend that you keep the detail of your response as a standing item on your PCC agenda to enable the PCC to ensure and evaluate progress. We also recommend that you appoint someone to be responsible for championing the plans you made within it and making sure that it remains a useful, living document and not simply something that gathers dust on a digital bookshelf.

Over time, as you review your progress, or in response to the changing situation in your parish, you may make changes or updates to your document to ensure that it continues to be a useful influence over the life, mission and ministry of your parish.





ADDITIONAL TOOLS AND SUPPORT THAT MAY BE HELPFUL

If your discussions have led to further thinking, then you may find some of these additional resources helpful:

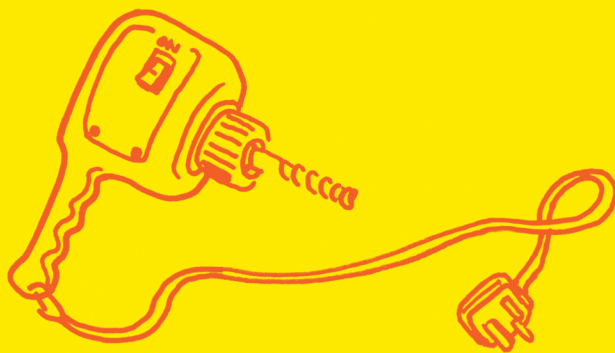
1. The 'How to...' series of guides that are available on the Diocesan website:
www.bristol.anglican.org/how-to

2. *'How to ... Use your building effectively'* a guide to help your church consider the

ways it can make the most of its buildings.

3. Training – a wide range of training opportunities are available to you and these are listed in our Training and support brochures on the Diocesan website:
www.bristol.anglican.org/training

4. Support from our specialist advisors – Youth and Children's Ministry, Ecumenical partnerships, Communications, Safeguarding, Finance, Ministry development, Vocations, Ministerial Support, Governance, Property, HR, Schools, and Accessibility.



A SPECIALIST
ADVISOR



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

If you would like to speak to anyone about this toolkit or the process, please contact Chris Priddy, Head of Parish and External Relations, at the Diocesan Office.

Chris.Priddy@bristoldiocese.org
Tel. 0117 906 0100



Diocese of Bristol
Creating Connections



Large print and electronic versions of this document are available by phoning 0117 906 0100, or at www.bristol.anglican.org/creatingconnections