



Diocese of Bristol

TRANSFORMING CHURCH. TOGETHER STRATEGY

SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

Transforming Church. Together (TCT), began in January 2021 when Bishop Vivienne Faull invited everyone in the Diocese of Bristol to join a conversation about the priorities under God for the future.

We realised that Christ was stretching our hearts and minds to respond to the most vivid of visions; that humanity might be reconciled, and creation restored. We affirmed that our calling is to follow Jesus, to serve others, and to transform communities.

We discerned that we all place great importance on the values of openness, generosity, creativity, and bravery - which we want to nurture, and to live out, under God. After a further period of discussion, listening and discernment in the first half of 2022, we now have a Synod-approved strategy for the next five years.

Between now and the start of the strategy implementation period in early 2023, we are encouraging everyone to use the time to review and reflect on our plans going forward; to determine the application at parish and benefice level, and to discern which elements are relevant – and possible - in a local context.



OUR STRATEGY

The strategy sets out the groundwork for a period of unprecedented ministerial and parochial revitalisation, increased discipleship, positive social impact, and long term environmental and financial sustainability.

Although the timeframe is over five years, work will need to continue until at least 2030. It is a framework for change, where Parishes, Bishop's Council, and Synods will continue to be engaged at every single stage.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this strategy are as follows:

- To have a form of church in every community, and churches in which all can participate, thrive, and belong.
- To have people who worship God in every aspect of their lives, and throughout their whole lives.
- For the diocese (parishes and benefices) to be recognised as a powerful force for gospel change.
- For the diocese and parishes to be environmentally and financially sustainable.



STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

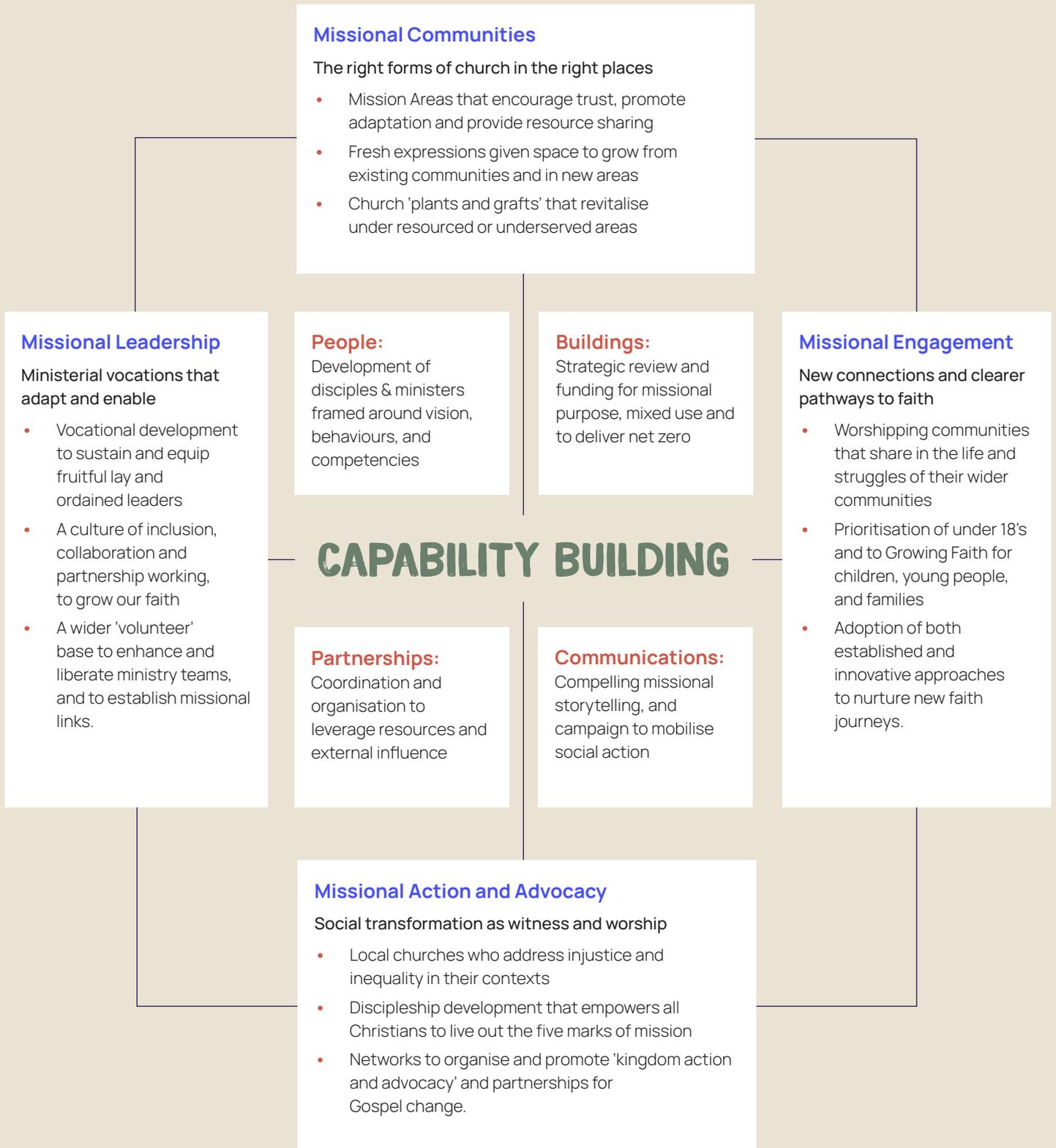
To achieve our strategic objectives, we will focus on releasing our clergy (lay and ordained) to thrive, and better supporting our parishes and benefices to grow. We also aim to get the right forms of church in the right places, and better utilise our existing church properties.

We want to challenge poverty, injustice, exploitation, and exclusion in our communities, and to have a real social impact on those around us.

We are aiming to reconnect with secular society, and particularly with young people and their families.

This will all be underpinned by investing in innovative income generation activities and making a steady transition to net zero by 2030, initially using the Diocese's reserves, and then seeking National Church investment when enabled.

THE OVERALL MISSION DESIGN CAN BE VIEWED IN THIS WAY:



ACTIVITIES TO DELIVER THE PLAN – SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM

We have identified 12 'activities', subject to refinement over time which we need to undertake to ensure we deliver our four strategic outcomes. The pace at which we can commence and pursue these activities will be dependent on our success with Parish Share, generating income and national church investment. Each activity therefore has 'Early Years' and 'Later Years' sections, the exact timing of which will be determined when funding streams are known:

STRATEGY ACTIVITY	SHORT TERM ACTION
1. Ensure our forms of church best serve our communities	Discern potential for new Mission Areas and start up to four.
	Existing and new Mission Areas, together with other interested parishes, join the Church of England's Greenhouse scheme with access to a small seedcorn budget.
	Determine locations for church plant in the New Eastern Villages, Swindon and one further location.
2. Church buildings which serve our communities	Examine the potential to better utilise our church buildings
	Commence projects to develop our buildings for Mission, shared use, and social action.
3. Release ministers to flourish and support their wellbeing	Design and roll out Clergy vocational development, wellbeing, support, and accountability programme.
	Review clergy working hours, patterns and accountability.
	Pilot Area Administration Centres in two Archdeaconry areas.
4. Build pathways into deep, lived-out Christian faith	Develop a diocesan 'Rule of Life' as an outline which can be individually tailored for everyone in the diocese.
	Pilot Discipleship Coordinators as Deanery or Mission Area roles
	Enable every church community to develop an evangelism and discipleship plan (including how the church engages with workplaces and schools).
	Train and commission 'Workplace Wayfinders' as identifiable people who live as Christians in the workplace.
	Review chaplaincy cover and investment across the diocese.
5. Develop our Volunteers	Encourage and support pilgrimages.
	Develop a volunteering and serving policy, provide a recruiting and development plan as well as toolkits, for church volunteers (including wardens, treasurers and other officers).
	Set up a central volunteer support resource that parishes can access to fill parish level gaps in administrative expertise/capacity.
	Pilot schemes for authorised volunteer ministry in leading worship, pastoral care, evangelism and children and young people work.
	Fund safeguarding support and automation.

STRATEGY ACTIVITY	SHORT TERM ACTION
6. Engage under 18s	Identify good practice and opportunities for development of church and school partnerships. Develop provision between schools, homes and churches using the Growing Faith network and resources.
	Develop local church-school-home link workers/ lay and ordained school chaplaincy (10 new 'Growing Faith Chaplains' additional to mission areas and church plants).
	Build support and training networks for those working with children and young people across parishes.
7. Support low-income communities	Targeted investment in 10 Deprived Priority Areas (parish admin support and youth workers).
	Revitalise the Diocesan Estates Network.
8. Communicate and deliver positive change against injustice	Build local partnerships with public, private and third sector organisations who share our concerns.
	Identify key local campaigns and social actions.
	Pilot a partnership with Citizens UK in a Deanery or Mission Area.
9. Inclusion and Racial Justice	Fund parish Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) audits.
	Develop Diocesan EDI guidance for all protected characteristics to ensure our churches are welcoming to all.
	Re-establish Ministry Experience Scheme.
	Further resource and develop our existing contested heritage work.
10. Build Income	Assess utility and /return on investment of 'trading' .
	Maximise grant-funding opportunities.
	Develop a marketing and fundraising strategy.
	Market and fundraise new income.
11. Build Partnerships for Gospel Change	Research and identify potential partners for delivering change, campaigning and generating income.
	Support church communities to maximise local opportunities.
	Generate fruitful local, regional and diocesan partnerships.
12. Achieve Net Zero	Support personal and parish involvement in reaching net zero.
	Use reserves to decarbonise our schools, clergy housing, and churches with an emphasis initially on the high emitters, and those projects which support clergy wellbeing.
	Develop partnerships (internally and externally) to support individual decarbonisation projects.



RISKS

As with any strategy, there are risks. We know that there will be pressures on Parish Share, and we cannot be certain of our future levels of income (from investments, grant-making bodies, and the National Church).

The current economic pressures will also challenge the investment needed to implement the strategy. As things evolve (positively or negatively) we will simply adjust the pace and scale of the change programme, however the strategic objectives will remain the same.



FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Diocese has carried a significant operating deficit over the last few years. The Diocese aims to resolve this situation by the end of the strategic period, by reaching a point where annual income (from Parish Share and other activities) is in balance with annual expenditure.

Each year we will adjust our expenditure to reflect the changes in our income, using our strategic objectives as a guide.

CONCLUSION

Transforming Church Together is Christ-centred, founded on the Anglican Marks of Mission, the wonderful work and witness of church communities across our Diocese, and the need to make changes to ensure we have a thriving church for years and years to come.

It envisages a more proactive approach to our work, and a brave excursion into new forms of partnership and income generation. And as we do this, we want to be known for living out our values, even when that is tough and challenging.

The strategy started with a wide conversation with our communities and others and will only conclude successfully with the continued prayers and active support of the same communities. We know that success will only be possible through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the energy of our ministers, parishioners and partners on the ground.

The Diocesan leadership and support staff will do all they can support each context in this. We have so much good to build upon, things we need to change, an exciting vision that we are called to, and the joy and challenge of working together to sustain and grow our church in our communities.

May God be with us as we embark on this truly exciting phase of our Diocesan life.

God of the Way, you call us to leave familiar places and to set out on new paths. Enlarge our vision of your work in the communities we serve, speak to us through the people we encounter, and open our hearts to your love.

Give us courage and boldness to engage together in this time of prayer and discernment; and by your Holy, life-giving and creative Spirit, renew your church in prayer and service, and in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CREATIVITY
OPENNESS
BRAVERY
GENEROSITY



Diocese of Bristol