



DIOCESE OF BRISTOL
TRANSFORMING. TOGETHER.

Statement of Needs

Bishop of Bristol



Thank you for your interest in the position of Bishop of Bristol.

We hope this profile will help you with your ongoing discernment.

“The role of the Bishop needs to be as pastor and shepherd to their local clergy and then alongside that to be a public face in the Diocese speaking of the love of God for all.”

Feedback from our Diocesan-wide consultation

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The Diocese of Bristol is small enough to know each part and strong enough to serve the world

Our prayer

God of calling,

you call shepherds to lead your people -

Rachel who was the ancestor of your people,

and David who was their king -

Guide by your Holy Spirit all who are entrusted with discerning who you are calling to be our Bishop.

Give us a shepherd after your own heart,

who will serve with humility and vision,

to guide and lead us in your ways.

May this time of waiting be filled with grace, anticipation,

and a renewed sense of your mission in the world.

as we seek to follow Jesus, serve others

and transform the communities of this diocese.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd.

Amen.

The Diocese of Bristol is the Church of England's presence in an area extending from Bristol to Swindon. Here, you'll find a diverse and vibrant community rooted in prayer, justice, and deep relationships. With urban heartlands, rural corners, and a rich mix of cultures and traditions, Bristol Diocese offers both intimacy and impact.

We're looking for a bishop who sees the beauty in walking closely with people, while boldly leading a diocese with national and global reach. If you're called to ministry that is personal, prophetic, and transformative - this is your place.

THE BISHOP WE SEEK



A **Relational Unifier** with an **open** heart who will embody our strong commitment to working together across difference as we serve the diverse communities of our diocese.

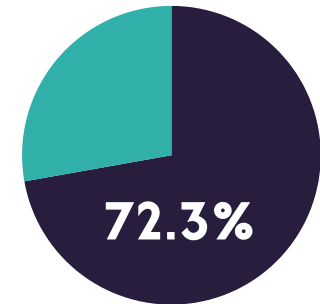
A pastor who is emotionally intelligent with rich social skills and can easily connect with all kinds of people. A bishop who will know and love our clergy and congregations across the spectrum of diverse geographical and social contexts, traditions and theological views, and can work to build bridges and create a culture where all can flourish.



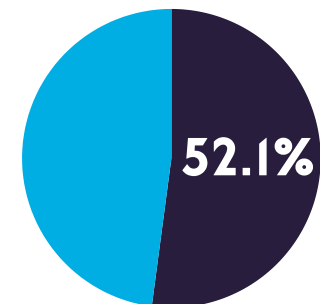
A **Prayerful Example** who can **generously** express a deep faith and spirituality that reaches across the different traditions and contexts of our churches and communities.

A disciple of Christ who before all else loves God and is growing in love of God, expressed in a deep and evident personal spirituality. Whose strength for ministry is rooted in dependence on the Spirit, who is themselves being formed by Christ and calls us to be so too. Who is able to speak accessibly and attractively about questions of faith beyond our churches and into the public sphere.

When surveyed...



mentioned **unity** or associated qualities such as openness, inclusivity, collaboration, or respectful dialogue.



mentioned **prayerful leadership** including qualities like spirituality, discernment, holiness, or a deep relationship with God.



An **Inspiring Visionary** who can **bravely** guide us through the challenges facing the Church in this Diocese.

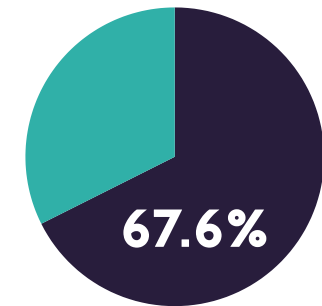
Someone with a vision for the Diocese that is honest about where we are and yet gives us joy and hope as God's Church in a changing society. Someone with proven experience in growing a healthy Christian community in size, depth and impact, who can communicate compellingly with all types of people, and who is able to inspire and enable churches to each flourish in different ways in their own context.



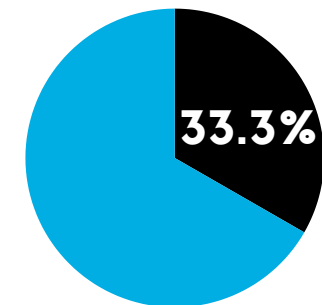
A **Strategic Leader** who can **creatively** embrace our strategy 'Transforming Church. Together' (TC.T), bringing their own vision, insight and energy to develop and build on the work we are already doing.

A leader who is excited by what we have achieved in our TC.T strategy so far, ready to learn from our experiences, build on our successes and try something different where necessary. Someone who can make hard decisions with wisdom and compassion, and can bring others with them.

When surveyed...



mentioned **visionary leadership** qualities such as inspiration, strategic thinking, communication, and the ability to guide through change



mentioned **creativity** or associated qualities like innovation, imagination, adaptability, and openness to new ideas.

THE BISHOP WE SEEK

OUR VISION

CRUCIAL AREAS OF LEADERSHIP FOR THE BISHOP

Church growth & engaging younger generations

Across our diocese, many churches are growing, thriving, and welcoming increasing numbers of children, youth, and young adults. At the same time, others face an uncertain future and continue to struggle to connect with those outside the Church.

We long for a Bishop who can inspire growth - spiritually, numerically, and missionally - and who will help us work together with faith, imagination, and courage to see fresh life breathed into all our parishes.



Financial sustainability

Like many dioceses, one of our greatest threats is financial sustainability. Despite creative investment our plans to increase Parish Share and Diocesan income have not yet borne fruit.

We need a Bishop who can lead from the front in growing our culture of generosity, and who can enable us to make hard decisions if required.

Racial Justice

As a city that played a major part in the transatlantic chattel slave trade as well as being a diocese that serves a richly diverse region, we are deeply committed to the ongoing work of racial justice.

While important steps have been taken in agreeing a racial justice strategy, we are not where we want to be and there remains significant work ahead. Our clergy and senior leadership do not reflect the full diversity of the communities we serve, and culture change in matters of racial justice is needed in all areas of church life. We long for disparate and marginalised groups and individuals to be empowered to give their best, and for connections and partnerships with the diverse Global Heritage Communities and stakeholders to be formed. Many of our church buildings contain items of contested heritage linked to the legacy of transatlantic chattel slavery that need to be addressed. Most notable among these is All Saints Corn Street, the burial site of Edward Colston.

We seek a Bishop who will provide a visible and active role in championing and influencing matters of racial justice and equity at a national and local level, who will fully commit to our racial justice strategy, and who will lead with integrity, honesty and sensitivity to inspire transformation.

Ministry to priority communities

We have made significant investments in resourcing ministry within our priority communities, those places with the highest levels of deprivation, and this remains a central part of our diocesan life. We are passionate about this work and deeply committed to seeing it flourish. There is a strong foundation - but we long to see it go further.

We seek a Bishop with a heart for the poor and marginalised, someone who brings not only compassion and conviction, but also the strategic vision and creativity to help this ministry grow in depth, reach, and sustainability.

Net Zero & Creation Care

As one of the first dioceses to declare a climate emergency, we have sought to lead by example in responding to the environmental crisis. Since then, we have made significant financial investment in resourcing and encouraging our churches to take meaningful steps toward sustainability and net zero carbon emissions.

We are looking for a Bishop who will keep this vital work at the heart of our diocesan agenda not as a standalone issue, but as a natural and necessary outworking of our Christian mission and our care for God's creation.



Diocesan leadership, support and parish relationship

A recurring message through the consultation process and in conversations with Deaneries is a sense of disconnect between parishes and Diocesan Support Services and leadership. It is felt by parishes that there is an imbalance between resource allocated to the centre rather than directly to parishes. There is a mutual desire for connection and collaboration to improve, and for a relational culture of support and encouragement between clergy, volunteers, central support services and Diocesan leadership.

We seek a Bishop who will lead strategically and pastorally to build trust, encourage collaboration and foster a more unified diocesan community.

Living in Love and Faith (LLF)

The Living in Love and Faith process has exposed differences across the Church of England, including in our own Diocese, between those for whom current proposals have not gone far enough, and those for whom they have gone too far. Our next Bishop will need to engage with and respect the decisions of General Synod, acknowledging and working with people who hold a diversity of convictions, sometimes strongly.

We are not looking for a Bishop to hold any one particular view – rather, we look for a Bishop who can clearly and kindly communicate their own convictions while seeking to listen, understand and support those with whom they disagree. We are united in seeking someone who can articulate clearly how they would enable all to flourish irrespective of conviction.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

We undertook an extensive consultation that aimed to ensure...

- engagement of a wide range of voices from across the diocese, including clergy, lay leaders, youth groups, people with disabilities, worshippers with differing theological standpoints and communities with diverse cultural backgrounds.
- the opportunity to highlight the work of the Church and its people in the Diocese, and to people who are not Christians.

The consultation engaged **over 1200 people** in varying formats, from the **survey**, to **focus groups, emails, creative sessions** and more! This included over **420 young people**, through our **Echo Focus** listening programme.



Top 5 themes

- Desire for a Bishop who is present, relational, and inclusive of all.
- Strong focus on community engagement and practical support.
- Urgent need for youth engagement and innovative approaches to ministry.
- Differences of opinion on inclusion and theological tensions across the Diocese.
- Call for strategic and pastoral leadership.



STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES



Respondents to the survey were quite clear that our strengths and opportunities as a Diocese lie in similar areas. Themes across **community engagement, youth and education, social justice and inclusion, practical support, environmental responsibility, interfaith and cultural collaboration, innovation and creativity, and supporting clergy and lay leaders** to thrive were common in both fields.

Reducing bureaucracy and supporting wellbeing was at the heart of this consultation, alongside empowering leaders and volunteers at all levels to thrive through training and resources.

"The Church's commitment to community outreach and social justice is a key strength. Its efforts to include people of different backgrounds, identities, and beliefs help make it more welcoming and relevant to the wider community."

Feedback from our Diocesan-wide consultation

"The clergy are the key strength of the diocese. A group of hard-working faithful disciples of Christ, bringing life and love and an encounter with God to the communities they serve."

Feedback from our Diocesan-wide consultation

TRANSFORMING CHURCH. TOGETHER.

‘**Transforming Church. Together**’ is our diocesan strategy, developed in early 2021 through widespread engagement. Launched in 2022, it is a 3-5 year ambitious culture change programme funded by **£6.9 million from the National Church**, aiming to make our long-term mission sustainable and impactful.

Key objectives include maintaining **clergy numbers**, deepening **faith**, engaging **young people**, supporting **low-income areas**, addressing **racial injustice**, partnering locally, and reaching **Net Zero Carbon** by 2030.

Though taking time to build momentum, **83% of parishes are now actively involved**. We’re piloting cross-parish initiatives and exploring new forms of worshipping communities. As of early 2025, our diocese includes **166 parishes, 100 benefices**, and **5 Bishops Mission Orders**, with increasing clergy capacity.

Achievements in 2024 included appointing **four Growing Faith chaplains**, launching **two operational support hubs** for parishes, **cutting carbon emissions by 20%** (from 2021 levels) and launching our **racial justice strategy**. More work is needed to embed racial justice and strategic, culture-change practices. **Ongoing investment in justice remains central to our vision for the diocese’s future.**

We continue to pray and engage with all of our parishes, that they may join together in our primary mission to **follow Jesus, serve others** and **transform communities**.



OUR PEOPLE

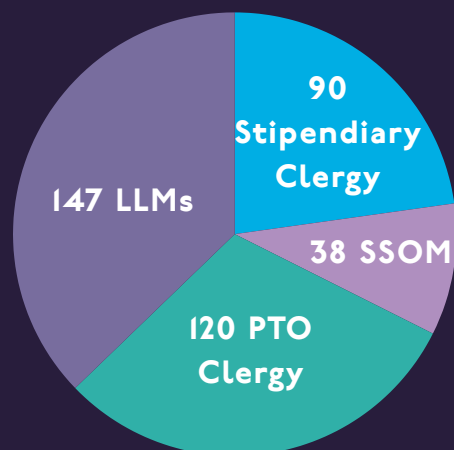
1 million +
population



11,500 worshipping
community



193 parishes



... and countless volunteers, church officers and church members.

The Diocese of Bristol was the first diocese to ordain women as priests in 1994, and its Diocesan Synod voted unopposed to approve the proposals for women bishops in 2011. In recent years the percentage of women in senior roles and in the role of Area Dean has increased, and the Dean of Women's Ministry sits on the bishop's staff. However, only **26% of stipendiary posts are held by women** and this is a decrease over the last few years. In addition, of the ten largest churches in the Diocese with regular congregations of 150+ only one is led by a woman.



We have four traditional catholic parishes who have passed resolutions under the House of Bishops Declaration. There is a positive and fruitful relationship with the Bishop of Oswestry.



We don't have official data on how many of our clergy are disabled but our records suggest there are a number of clergy living with some kind of disability. Neurodivergent clergy are increasingly being recognised and supported. Four candidates (three clergy, one lay) from the Diocese have participated in the first two years of the Enabling Leaders programme.

There are some clergy in the Diocese with same-sex civil partners, who have felt welcomed and supported. There are clergy who hold a traditional view of marriage. We want our Diocese to be a place where differing views are honoured and all can thrive.

We are keen for our Diocese to live out our commitment to Racial Justice by becoming, and being known as, a place that nurtures UKME / GMH clergy and enables them to flourish.

Clergy wellbeing

Clergy flourishing is a central aim of TC.T and we are investing resources in supporting our clergy in their wellbeing. A key strand of this investment is our clergy coaching programme which has been taken up by 60% of our stipended clergy. Whilst the initial cohort of those receiving coaching has been our incumbents, the programme is rolling out to include self supporting ordained ministers, and our licensed lay ministers.

Our 2024 Clergy Wellbeing Survey suggests a gentle shift towards positivity, with 23% assessing their wellbeing as having improved from the previous year and an increased reporting of clergy enjoying their roles and feeling fulfilled. 68% reported that they feel they are flourishing, although “weary (54%) but hopeful (56%)” remains a consistent theme. Clergy proactively invest in their wellbeing where it is within their control, although they feel some institutional pressures do not support wellbeing.

Feedback from clergy suggests that personal contact from their bishop is a real blessing, particularly during significant events such as bereavements, traumatic events, or ongoing family challenges.

Lay Ministry

Bristol Diocese is supported by about 150 Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) who work across all traditions. In a recent survey, 96% of LLMs said that they felt supported or very supported by their incumbent – relationships tend to be good. Many LLMs focus their ministry on their local benefice, but many also have significant roles outside the local church as chaplains or Christian leaders in the workplace or community.

Alongside clergy and LLMs, new commissioned ministries of worship leading, pastoral care, evangelism and pioneer are being developed. Over 40 worship leaders have been commissioned while the other ministries are still in progress. Young Preachers is a recent development which allows young adults (ages 16-25) to explore a preaching ministry with the support of the diocese and their incumbent. With the increasing reliance on LLMs there are opportunities to consider how lay ministry could be more widely represented in formal governance structures.



Chaplaincy

Chaplaincy is vital to the work and mission of the Diocese. We have stipendiary, salaried, and voluntary chaplains in every part of life – schools, universities, hospitals, prison, workplaces, law courts and armed forces. They are ordained and lay. In the last two years we have identified and connected with all Anglican chaplains, we have over 70 across the Diocese. TC.T includes the provision of Growing Faith Chaplains across the Diocese. We bring all chaplains together twice a year – for a thank you meal and networking at Bristol Cathedral and for a day with inspirational input from a theologian.



Vocations

We currently have 36 candidates in the discernment process for ordained ministry including twelve candidates aged under 30, nine aged 30 to 40, twenty women and five from UKME / GMH backgrounds. While ordination numbers won't reflect this growth until 2028, three ordinands began training in 2024, joining ten already in training. This year, nine deacons and eleven priests were ordained. Discernment for Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM) is also increasing, with the Exploring Christianity course playing a key role.

Five LLMs will be licensed this year, and ten candidates are beginning training, two from UKME / GMH backgrounds, seven are women), with seven more already discerning for next year. We have a close relationship with Trinity College, within the Diocese, and with Sarum College in Salisbury, with whom we hold termly meetings. Most of our ordinands train at these institutions, though some choose Cuddesdon, Wycliffe or St Mellitus.

"One of the great strengths of the Church in the Diocese of Bristol is its diversity of belief and expression. Many churches reflect the character and needs of their local communities, which enables them to serve people in meaningful, relevant ways."

Feedback from our Diocesan-wide consultation

Volunteers and Church members

We are blessed with a breadth of volunteers who are part of the churches across the Diocese. From those in official roles as church officers, to the many many people who offer their time and gifts to community events, projects, work with children, families and young people, our churches are full of those who volunteer and participate in the life of the church, supporting the fullness of the churches ministry.

Church members are teachers and farmers, bus drivers and carers, lawyers and builders, nurses and architects, school children, charity shop volunteers and more. They are the vast majority of the members of our churches and the last word in our “people” section recognises the gifts and callings of all of the people of God. Our strategy aims to enable people to worship God in every aspect of their lives, and throughout their whole lives, as they follow Jesus, serve others and transform their communities.



THE BISHOP WE SEEK

- will ordain both women and men.
- will accept and implement women’s ministry fully, and will actively encourage and support them to flourish.
- will support and enable disabled, neurodivergent and deaf clergy and vocations.
- will continue to support and welcome our clergy in same-sex civil partnerships.
- will support clergy who hold a traditional view of marriage.
- will commit to enabling UKME / GMH clergy to flourish through intentional, sustained action across church structures, leadership and culture.
- will continue to encourage licensed lay ministries to be discerned and valued.
- will delight in the incarnational ministry of chaplains, holding a vision and theology for lay and ordained people being present where people find themselves in daily life.
- will encourage God’s people to live the hope and love of Jesus in all aspects of daily life.
- will commit to continuing to develop a positive relationship with the Bishop of Oswestry.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES

The Diocese of Bristol supports over **70** CoE schools, reaching children, young people and families in every parish. Together we aim to help them flourish at school, church and home, fostering belonging and loving relationships.



With schools in towns and villages, primary and secondary education, in areas of wealth and in deprivation, our diocesan team provides outstanding support to help schools grow in Christian distinctiveness. We also work with non-Church of England schools, colleges and higher education institutions. Schools are encouraged to be in long term collaboration with other schools demonstrating excellent governance. We support Christian vision, RE, worship and spiritual development. We aim to ensure that all children can experience ‘life in all its fullness’ through a high quality provision that enables them to flourish in all that they are and do. Churches have been innovative in their approach with children, young people and families, from Messy Church and Bubble Church, to supporting youth advocacy and protest, and worship in intergenerational and traditional forms.

15,000 young people
attend our schools



1,700 under 16s regularly
worship in our churches



“
Our Youth Echo consultation found that
Young people want a Bishop who...
“Understands young people and
the challenges they face.”
”



“ ——— Takes action on important issues like mental health, climate change, and inclusion. Youth Echo consultation ——— ”

We are building strong links between church, school and home, supported by a growing chaplaincy network that specialises in under 18s engagement. We are supporting the development of new under 18s focussed worshipping communities, and building the voices of our young people through “Youth Echo” our consultation forum for 9-18 year olds.

Our under 18 strategy reaches towards 2040, recognising the potential interrelationship between school, home and church for children starting school in 2025, through to their adulthood. We recognise that more support is needed for parishes to develop their engagement with children, young people and families beyond traditional models of Sunday School and provision reliant on youth workers. We seek to build the capacity to work with parishes and benefices to develop a bespoke response to their needs, acknowledging this is costly, taking time, finances and skilled support.

We have developed a partnership with South West Youth Ministries (SWYM) to provide training for volunteers, clergy and ministry teams. Our strategy is bold, yet crucial as we develop pathways and environments which facilitate spiritual formation and meet the needs of children, young people and families as we seek to respond in love.



THE BISHOP WE SEEK

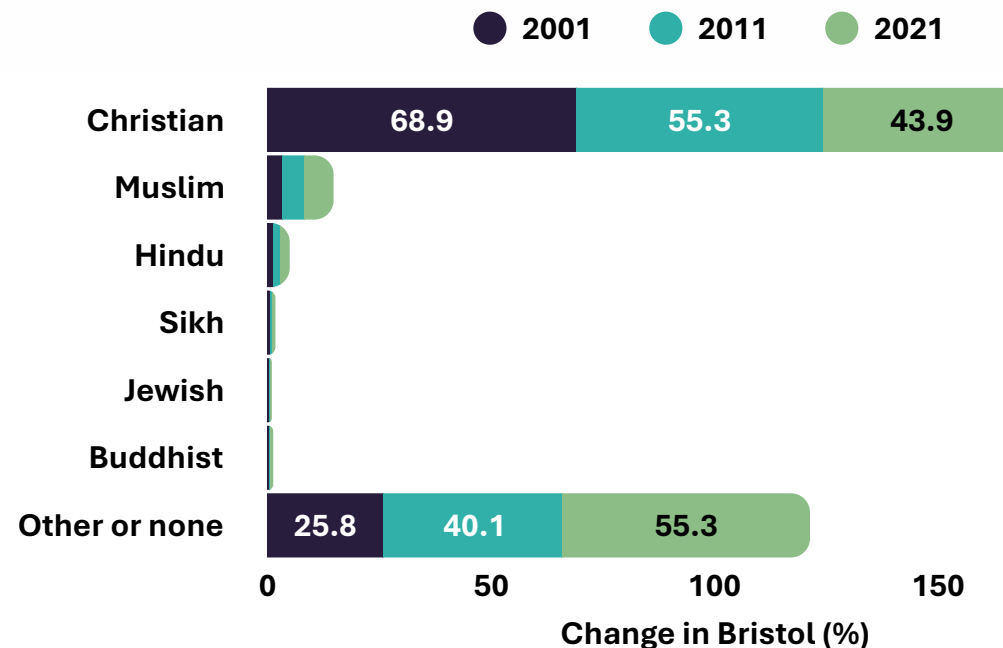
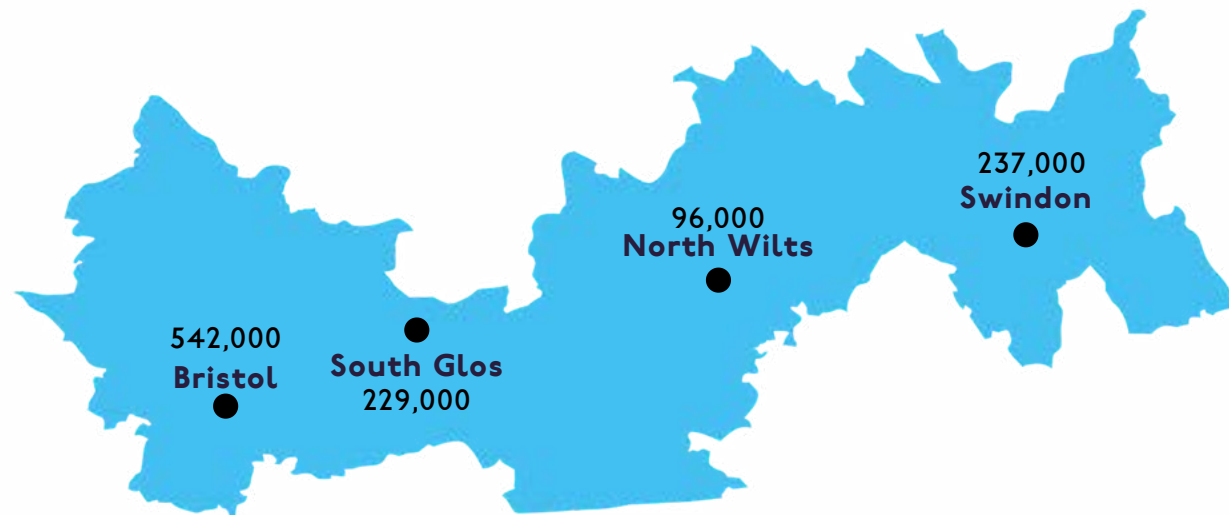
- will have an excitement and passion about putting children, young people and families at the heart of the mission and ministry of this diocese.
- will courageously lead a culture that builds strong intergenerational communities where everyone belongs, is able to contribute and is served with an excellent education.
- will champion the voice of our vulnerable young people and their families throughout our strategy and action showing the transformative love of Jesus in all we do.

OUR REGION

Our region stretches from the Bristol channel in the West along the M4 corridor and the Great Western Railway to Swindon in the East.

The Diocese has a population of 1,050,000, with a **worshipping community of 11,500**. It includes the City of Bristol and its associated suburbs in South Gloucestershire, together with the Northern part of Wiltshire and the Borough of Swindon. Three quarters of the population live in the greater Bristol Area.

Presence and Engagement parishes are formally defined as those with either 10% of the population of one other faith or 25% with a mix of other faith population. Bristol has 7% of the total population formally in the 'P&E' category and another 7 with the national average Muslim population. The latest census data also reflects that a greater number of people identify as having 'no religion' than any other faith group.



Bristol

The City and County of Bristol is a vibrant, diverse, and culturally rich city with a long history of innovation, independence, and social conscience. As a major port, Bristol played a significant role in the transatlantic slave trade, a legacy that continues to shape the city's identity and dialogue around justice and reconciliation. The toppling of the Edward Colston statue in 2020 was a powerful moment of protest that echoed Bristol's long tradition of activism, from the 1831 Reform Riots to the St Pauls uprisings and more recent climate and social justice movements.

The city is a place of creativity: the birthplace of Banksy, the home of Wallace and Gromit, and a centre for festivals. It has a top ranked university which attracts students from all over the world, contributing to the city's innovative and international atmosphere.

Today, Bristol remains a city of strong convictions and progressive values, often at the forefront of national conversations around inclusion, environmental sustainability, and equity. However, it is also marked by deep inequalities. Demographic data suggests the population is young and highly educated, however there are significant disparities in health, education, and life expectancy across the city, particularly between the more affluent north and the deprived inner-city wards in the south and east. High levels of child poverty, housing insecurity, and racial inequality present ongoing challenges. Bristol is the third most secular city in the UK. This presents challenges but also opportunities for the Church in an era of what nationally some are terming the 'quiet revival'.





South Gloucestershire

South Gloucestershire, a unitary authority since 1996, lies mostly within the Diocese of Bristol and looks more to Bristol than Gloucestershire. Major employers include the Local Authority, the Ministry of Defence, aerospace industries and Royal Mail, but the heavily-developed area around the M4/M5 interchange brings a whole range of businesses.

South Gloucestershire, especially east of Bristol, has seen rapid housing development since the creation of Bradley Stoke in 1987, with much of the inner greenbelt now lost or under threat. Despite this growth, over 40% of the area remains greenbelt, helping separate Bristol from Bath. The population is projected to grow by 25% before 2043 and is mainly concentrated around Bristol's fringes.

The area hosts the majority of the University of the West of England (UWE) - ranked in the UK's top 25 by the Guardian in 2021 - and the country's largest robotics lab. However, local schools face funding challenges, receiving nearly £500 less per pupil annually than the national average.

South Gloucestershire also offers much for nature lovers and historians, with sites like the Severn Estuary, ancient woodlands and nature reserves, and the historic towns of Yate and Kingswood. Highlights include Dyrham Park and Acton Court, considered the most original Tudor house in Britain.

North Wiltshire

The northern part of Wiltshire that lies in the Diocese of Bristol is very different in character to the south; in fact, they are literally as different as chalk and cheese! The chalk downlands of South Wiltshire supported sheep farming. North Wiltshire's rich pasture made it a centre for the production of dairy products which in earlier times meant cheese. One fifth of Wiltshire is in the diocese with a population of 96,000. It is mainly rural but includes the towns of Chippenham and Malmesbury. There are three Ministry of Defence sites in the region that have a significant presence.

Chippenham is an ancient Saxon market town known as the site of a Viking attack on King Alfred in 878. From the mid-19th to mid-20th century it was a major centre for ham and dairy production. The arrival of the railway spurred industrial growth, including the railway signalling firm now known as Siemens (formerly Westinghouse). It hosts other industries including plastic pipe manufacture, but largely serves as a commuter town for Bristol and Swindon.

Malmesbury, built on an Iron Age hill fort, grew as a market town around the 7th century Abbey, and lay on the ancient London to Bristol road. Once a centre for wool spinning and weaving, its largest modern employer is Dyson which has its research and design headquarters there.





Swindon

Swindon grew from a market town during the English Civil War into an industrial hub with the arrival of the Great Western Railway in the 1840s. The borough includes older settlements like Highworth and surrounding villages. Industrial growth continued with aircraft and automotive manufacturing in the 1940s but declined from the 1960s, marked by the closure of the railway works in the 1980s, and Honda in 2021.

Swindon expanded rapidly from the mid 20th century with large housing estates, including recent developments in areas bordering the Diocese of Salisbury. Despite growth, parts of Swindon - especially post WW2 estates - experience significant inequalities in health, education and life expectancy.

The town has long-standing Polish and growing Goan communities. The Great Western Railway medical fund, an inspiration for the NHS, is remembered in the name of the current hospital. Today, Swindon is a major centre for logistics, finance and public bodies including UK Research and Innovation, the UK Space Agency, and the National Trust. It also has a growing student population, supported by regional university partnerships and a town centre regeneration plan which includes the creation of a Student Quarter aiming to foster student life.

OUR CHURCHES

Bristol is a diverse and vibrant Diocese. We serve communities from across the geographic, cultural and socioeconomic range. As such there is a significant diversity of churches. From traditional parishes to innovative new worship communities and fresh expressions, our churches express the whole breadth and depth of the Anglican tradition in varied and life-giving ways. We have a shared commitment to transformation and outwork that in numerous different, contextual and creative ways. We long to see transformation in both our communities and our churches seeing humanity reconciled and creation restored.



In many ways we share both the hope and challenges experienced across the Church nationally. There are stories of growth and renewal - of new disciples, flourishing worshipping communities, and impactful community projects. At the same time, many churches face the challenges of ageing buildings, limited financial resources, and the need to engage new generations. Some are grappling with deep questions about identity and mission in an increasingly secular culture. Others are pioneering new models of leadership and collaboration to respond to changing demographics and ministry needs.

The Diocese of Bristol has shared a longstanding relationship with the dioceses of the Anglican Communion in Uganda. Whilst we have not held an active diocesan partnership since 2023, many of our churches and deaneries maintain strong links with partner churches. They enjoy regular communications, sharing stories of faith in different contexts, and visits to deepen and celebrate their international friendships.



OUR DEANERIES

Bristol City

City Deanery spans central Bristol, from Filton in the north to Hotwells on the harbourside. It includes parishes with both high deprivation and significant affluence, and serves diverse, often highly secular communities. Alongside our 25 churches across 20 benefices, the deanery is home to Bristol Cathedral, several BMOs and an Anglican Religious community. There is strong ecumenical and civic engagement, particularly through partnerships with charities, schools, and Citizens UK. The deanery values theological reflection and mutual respect, and clergy have been intentionally exploring scripture and difference together, seeking unity in Christ through shared mission and love of neighbour.



Bristol South

Bristol South lies south of the river and includes 20 churches across 14 benefices, with one local ecumenical partnership. Most parishes are geographically compact and situated in areas of significant deprivation, including Hartcliffe, Withywood, and Knowle West which are among the most deprived nationally. Ministry here is deeply rooted in the local context, with a strong focus on incarnational outreach through warm spaces, community cafés, food banks, and support for refugees and asylum seekers. There is a shared commitment to serving those in need, and a strong culture of mutual support among clergy, though Synod engagement remains a challenge. Opportunities for mission include working more closely with the Deanery's 36 primary and 8 secondary schools, and deepening connections with numerous care homes.

Bristol West

Bristol West covers diverse contexts — from urban priority areas to rural parishes and affluent suburbs — with 21 churches in 19 benefices, including one Mission Area and one LEP. There is a wide range of church traditions and ministry styles, and a strong culture of collaboration among clergy and laity. Monthly Chapters and Synods are places of learning, prayer, and support. Churches are actively engaged in local communities through schools work, food banks, refugee hubs, bereavement care, and justice initiatives. The presence of Trinity theological college and university residences brings a richness of opportunity for forming and supporting future leaders.



Chippenham

Chippenham Deanery is centrally located, spanning areas north and south of the M4, including parts of South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. It comprises 25 churches in 7 benefices serving large rural communities, with some urban development. The towns of Chippenham and Corsham are expanding, attracting industry, retirement communities, and new housing due to strong transport links. The churches, some in historic locations like Lacock and Castle Combe, reflect the full range of Church of England tradition and worship. We're active in civic and agricultural life, with outreach including food banks, cafes, youth and schools work, and ecumenical partnerships. A new full-time youth worker is helping to grow engagement, and recent confirmation numbers show healthy parish growth.

Kingswood & South Gloucestershire

Kingswood and South Gloucestershire is a predominantly suburban deanery, extending into rural areas to the east. It is marked by rapid housing development and population growth, which is shaping mission priorities for the years ahead. With 25 churches in 14 benefices, the deanery holds a wide variety of church traditions, including large growing churches and smaller local congregations. There is strong children and families work, active foodbank ministries, and recent church planting and grafting. The deanery is outward-facing and mission-focused, with a deep desire to share God's love in new and growing communities.



North Wiltshire

North Wilts is a largely rural deanery of 31 parishes in 6 benefices, centred on the town of Malmesbury, working together as the North Wiltshire Mission Area (NWMA) — a unique, collaborative model developed through Strategic Development Funding since 2017. The deanery has prioritised youth engagement, including a Youth Mission Enabler and internships based at the local secondary school, and is seeing renewed connection with teenagers through Youth Alpha. Another key initiative is the Athelstan Pilgrim Way — a network of walking and cycling routes linking all 36 churches, encouraging spiritual exploration and community connection. The culture is one of deep collaboration and shared leadership between clergy and laity.

Swindon

Swindon Deanery includes 37 churches in 17 benefices and 3 BMOs, covering a broad range of traditions from traditional Catholic to evangelical. The congregations reflect Swindon's diverse community, and many churches offer practical support, including supporting food charities. Despite being geographically distant from Bristol, the deanery is fully integrated in the Diocese, and hosts an Exploring Christianity course with participants from across the region. Swindon is rapidly growing, with a church plant in a new development east of the town. Churches and leaders meet monthly and there is a well-attended annual ecumenical prayer event for the town.



“

St Stephen's isn't a city centre church, so we rely on active promotion for recognition and support. Being part of the PCN lets us be authentic without having to justify our context or financial needs. It also provides a judgment-free space to share experiences, support one another realistically, and exchange good practice—helping us stay longer and healthier in our roles.

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OUR PRIORITY COMMUNITIES NETWORK

Many communities across our Diocese have suffered from decades of underinvestment from national and local government, leading to significant social and economic disadvantage. Across the Bristol and Swindon area, around 30 of our parishes fall within the top 20% of the national indices of multiple deprivation (IMD). Clergy and churches in these areas often face unique challenges, particularly limited resources.

The PCN network, part of the TC.T programme, is our strategic response to this - aiming to see clergy and churches in deprived areas flourish through intentional investment and support. We've committed significant resources, both centrally and locally, including administrative support, lay ministry funding, centralised training and a strong network for mutual support. Already, we are seeing encouraging signs of sustainable growth, and a positive impact.



THE BISHOP WE SEEK

- will continue to build upon our commitment to resource the most deprived areas of our Diocese.
- will be a prophetic voice to the forgotten and marginalised people and places.

OUR MISSION AREAS

Mission Areas are part of our Transforming Church Together strategy. A Mission Area (MA) brings together parishes committed to developing a coordinated approach to mission across a wider geographical area; to focus, share and multiply mission resources and practice; and to provide a context in which new leaders and ministers can explore vocation and develop in a mission focused setting. They enable high levels of ministerial support and collegiality in ways that aren't always possible within a Deanery. There are three established mission areas across the Diocese, with two more in formation.

OUR BISHOP'S MISSION ORDERS

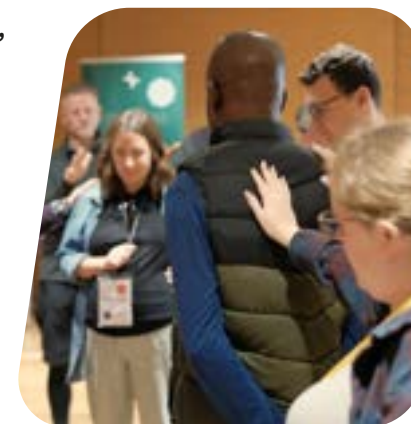
There are a number of BMOs in the diocese, demonstrating our commitment to creativity and our ability to work missionally across parish boundaries. Each BMO has a Bishop's Visitor to support and encourage their ministry and governance.

Resource churches

The diocese has two resourcing churches, St Nicholas in Bristol and Pattern Church in Swindon, as part of the strategic development fund initiative in 2018. They were commissioned to focus particularly on reaching young people, planting churches and responding to social issues.

Both have grown significantly since they were launched, and average weekly attendance across the two churches is almost 600 adults, with approximately 150 under 18s.

Both resourcing churches have planted new churches which see over 100 people per week. In 2022, St Nicks planted Concord Church in Bristol and Pattern planted The Well in Swindon. Pattern Church further planted The Light Church (in Salisbury diocese) in 2025.



Emmanuel Bristol

In 2007 50 people planted a new worshipping community from Christ Church Clifton meeting in a local school. Since then, Emmanuel has grown significantly. It now has expanded into three separate congregations across Bristol, with a combined average weekly attendance of 431 adults and 187 children.



Hazelnut Community Farm

Launched in 2020, Hazelnut supports churches in transforming their land into vibrant eco-congregations, spaces that deepen worship, foster community engagement, and respond to the urgent challenge of climate breakdown.

Partnering with churches across diverse contexts, and to a wide network, they help reimagine underused gardens and outdoor areas as places of prayer, environmental action, and welcome. This work supports the Diocese of Bristol's net zero commitments and helps churches become more active and rooted in their local communities.



Shine Pinehurst

Shine Pinehurst works with local residents to improve the opportunities and activities available to local people, especially young people. Many of the people they work with face a number of challenges because of deprivation including poor housing, low income, risk of exploitation and low aspiration.

They provide pastoral and practical support to families facing crisis as well as supporting community projects including holiday activities, a community garden project and a big community fun day each summer.

THE BISHOP WE SEEK

- will value the local church, in line with our strategy, deeply understanding the challenges faced by parishes and will commit to continue to creatively explore different ways to resource local ministry.
- will be passionate about the growth of the parish church in size, depth and unity; reminding us of what is possible in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- will commit to seeing churches experience revitalisation and transformation offering hope and vision that far outweighs the scale of the challenges.
- will remind us of what is possible in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- will continue to encourage and support bold and creative expressions of church.
- will support the vocation and leadership of the resource churches and BMOs.

OUR CATHEDRAL

Since the appointment of the current Dean, Bristol Cathedral has worked closely with the Bishop of Bristol and the wider Diocese. Our mission aligns with the diocesan vision and strategy, with additional focus on worship and supporting our bishops.

As a small to medium sized urban cathedral, we face significant financial challenges while pursuing ambitious goals. Our vision is for everyone in the Bristol and the wider Diocese to see the Cathedral as their cathedral – a welcoming, peaceful resource in a busy world.

Like many historic institutions in Bristol, the cathedral carries the legacy of the slave trade, having benefited from the generosity of traders and philanthropists over centuries. Addressing this legacy and confronting racism are central to our social justice work, as well as aligning action with values in response to homelessness, modern slavery, and environmental sustainability.

The Dean leads on issues of racism, inclusion and memorialisation, both with the Cathedral and the diocese. Our congregation is increasingly diverse, though we like many churches continue to seek growth in size, depth and diversity.

Our staff team has expanded significantly over the past 3 years. It is a collaborative, supportive group representing a range of ages and life experiences. We maintain a close, effective relationship with the Bishop's office and Diocesan colleagues.



THE BISHOP WE SEEK

- will work in genuine partnership with the Cathedral, valuing its contribution to the life of the Diocese.
- will support the mission of the Cathedral, recognising its distinct dynamics and context.

OUR RESOURCES

The Diocesan Support Services (DSS) exist to enable ministers, parishes and schools to thrive. They are made up of 50 core staff who provide this service, and another 30 who are funded by the National Church, or other grants, to implement our TC.T strategy (until 2030). They are led by the Diocesan Secretary/CEO and a senior leadership team of seven directors.

DSS operates from Hillside House, a modern open plan office space, close to the motorway and Bristol Parkway station therefore easily accessible from across the Diocese. The extensive facilities mean this is a valuable resource for training, Diocesan events and meetings.

The diversity of DSS staff is high, where all protected characteristics are represented, and staff engagement levels, measured through a staff survey, are also well above third sector norms at 73%.



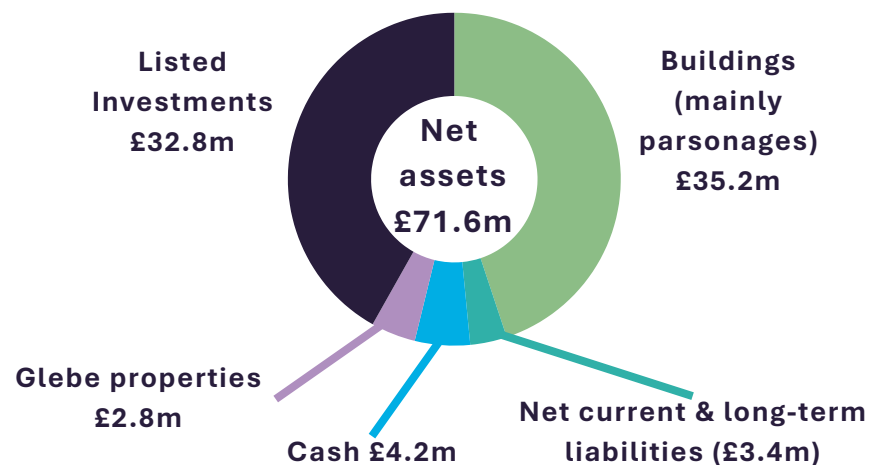
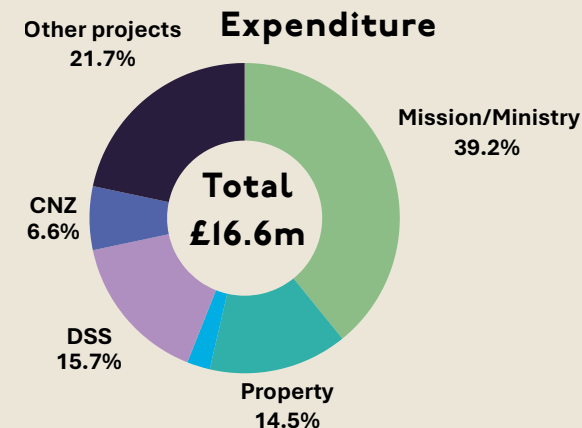
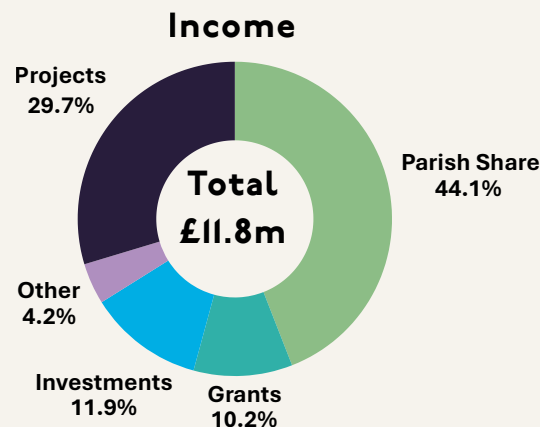
OUR FINANCES

The health of parish finances varies widely across the Diocese, but in most places there is a positive ethos of mutual support and encouragement. The overall Parish Share receipt has declined since 2019. It does not cover the cost of stipendiary ministry within the parishes.

Our finance team has modernised our systems and introduced total return accounting. The increased support that Diocesan Support Services can give to parishes has been largely funded by a grant from the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board. We are applying for a further tranche to continue this vital service.

Our strategy plans for a budget deficit which steadily reduces towards 2028. However this stretching target has become significantly more challenging due to increased National Insurance contributions, the rise in stipends and the national Diocesan Finance Review. The Diocesan strategy committed us to growth, including by maintaining clergy numbers. These challenges require a strategic and focussed response.

A briefing note on our finances has been prepared, and is available as a separate document in the candidate pack.



THE BISHOP WE SEEK

- will be prominent in growing our culture of generosity, recognising that improvement is needed.
- will enable strategic conversations about financial priorities.

SAFEGUARDING

We are a Diocese that is committed to championing safeguarding as a culture that is integral to our ministry. In this we are supported by a strong and stable diocesan safeguarding team, which works closely with clergy, parishes, and senior leadership. We were an early recipient of an independent audit from INEQE which commended the Diocese and Cathedral for their exemplary safeguarding practices and highlighted areas for further improvement to ensure ongoing safeguarding excellence.

We are part of the South West Regional Group led by a Regional Safeguarding Lead who supports and quality assures operational safeguarding practice within the Diocese.

External scrutiny is provided by the Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group. It is chaired independently and includes professionals from statutory and voluntary agencies as well as representation from parishes. We also work with the 4 local safeguarding partnerships, Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs), the police, and the Charity Commission, ensuring safeguarding is subject to multiple layers of independent accountability.

“The operational delivery of safeguarding via the Diocese Safeguarding Team is universally recognised and appreciated across the DBF, parishes, the Cathedral and College. The team is made up of a capable and blended group of suitably qualified professionals, led by a highly effective DSO.

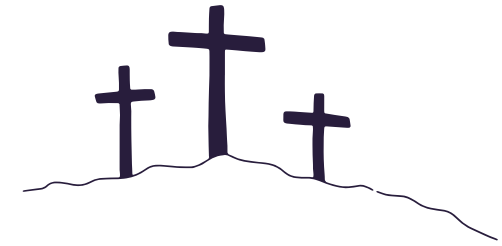
INEQE Audit, 2024

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THE BISHOP WE SEEK

- will embody and exemplify the highest standards of safeguarding practice leadership and culture.
- will be pastorally sensitive and responsive to the needs of survivors and victims of abuse.
- will continually seek to ensure all our worshipping communities are safe and supportive environments for everyone.

FROM THE VACANCY IN SEE COMMITTEE



Thank you for the time you have taken to read our Statement of Needs for the next Bishop of Bristol.

Please know that we are praying for you as you discern whether this is the role that God is calling you to explore for the next phase of your life and ministry.

“

The role of the Bishop needs to be as pastor and shepherd to their local clergy and then alongside that to be a public face in the Diocese speaking of the love of God for all.

**Feedback from our
Diocesan-wide consultation**

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DIOCESE OF BRISTOL

TRANSFORMING. TOGETHER.

TRANSFORMING CHURCH. TOGETHER. TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES. TOGETHER.



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