

# Growing as Kingdom People

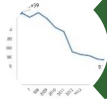
Growing as a healthy and sustainable church

- ◆ worshipping God creatively
- ◆ making disciples
- ◆ sharing hope
- ◆ transforming communities

*“A brilliant 95% of parishes took part on our first round of open conversations at the start of the year – thank you so much for being involved. The conversations have been instrumental in shaping proposals on how we move forward as a diocese. I hope and pray that people will continue to engage as we consider those proposals to work towards a healthy and sustainable church for the future. Only by working together can we ensure that as many people as possible across Worcestershire and Dudley hear the Good news of Jesus.”* Bishop John



## The context revisited\*:



25% fewer people attending church since 2006



% of our church members over 70 has increased to 49%



Lower financial deficit in 2019, but will increase in 2020 due to Covid-19



Covid-19 paused church-going, and increased sustainability challenges

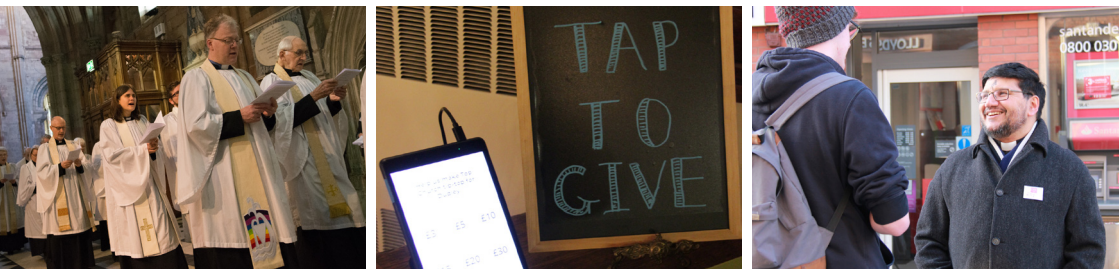


\* Updated from the Open Conversations with 2019 data

*But we remain confident in the grace and goodness of God, and the good news of Jesus Christ is just as relevant.*

## The Big Question:

“How do we prayerfully change so our resources - people, buildings and money, grow healthy and sustainable churches?”



## Introduction

We have set out the urgent need for us to change as the Church of England across Worcestershire and Dudley. Congregations are declining and aging, and we face considerable financial challenges. The pandemic has created additional concerns, but also offers some opportunities. We do not yet know when churchgoing will be able to fully resume in a form which resembles that which we knew before.

However, we are in this together as churches and as a diocese. We seek to grow as Kingdom People, bringing the good news and the love of Jesus to communities across Dudley and Worcestershire. We worship. God creatively together as we make disciples, share hope and transform communities in healthy and sustainable churches.

### This booklet:

- Reflects on the first round of open conversations (page 4).
- Looks at what it might mean to be a healthy and sustainable church (page 5-7)
- Explores principles & a strategy for ministry (pages 8-12) through which we will encourage discipleship and develop new forms of ministry
- Outlines three important plans that we need to put in place to help the transformation of our diocese (pages 14-18):
  - Simplifying our deaneries
  - Reducing the amount of time spent in meetings
  - Introducing a new parish share system.



## The Open Conversations: What we heard

Between December 2019 and early February 2020, our first nine 'Open Conversations' were held across the Diocese to discuss how we best organise ministry in our parishes and how we pay for it. The Children's and Youth Council also held their own conversation on these topics so their voice could be heard.

1,080 people attended these events - that's an amazing 13% of our Usual Sunday Attendance. 95% of our parishes were represented, with only 9 parishes not attending. The very large numbers required us to at times have parallel events in different venues.

More than 350 people submitted feedback afterwards through the feedback forms, the website and by sending in emails.



This was a huge amount of valuable feedback, all of which was read and used by the Diocesan Restructuring Group. You can read the summary produced for the February Synod at: [www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/open-conversations](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/open-conversations).

- With regard to ministry, feedback supported the need for change and to take action. Some challenged whether that change would be radical enough. A need to be more relevant to the needs of the under 40's was strongly endorsed.
- Feedback agreed that we should make it easier for some churches to create a cared-for, open presence with only occasional services and, for those who wish to do so, to close.
- 79% agreed we need considerable change in the structures of how we run the Church.
- With regard to parish share, feedback felt it was vital we had a sustainable system that was easy to understand and where wealthier communities supported poorer ones.

## Healthy and Sustainable Churches

### Enabling Healthy & Sustainable Churches

We may like to think that our churches are healthy and sustainable, but if looked at objectively, are they? Asking these questions will help indicate the health and sustainability of our churches:

#### Health

- To what extent are we becoming rooted in prayer and scripture, and growing in love, trust and understanding?  
Does worship help a range of people meet with the living God?
- Do we see ourselves as disciples called to form, grow and mature other disciples?
- Are there signs of hope and energy, creativity and initiative?  
Are we willing to explore new possibilities?
- Are we keen to discern and respond to God's call to serve and grow, as individuals and as a church community?
- How multi-generational are our congregations?  
Do we engage with children, young people and working-age adults as well as the retired?
- Does the church engage with those outside it, communicating effectively, building relationships, serving community needs, inviting and enabling new people to deepen their engagement with church and faith?



#### Sustainability:

- Is the church appropriately able to sustain its life and ministry, for example through a range of volunteers taking on different roles?  
Do have enough money to cover costs?
- Is the building sustainable, supporting mission and ministry, rather than a drain on time and energy?

A more extensive guide for reflection is offered at: [www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/guide-for-reflection](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/guide-for-reflection)

There is a range of support available to help churches become healthier and more sustainable.

### Becoming Healthier

#### Building on your strengths

Accompanied Parish Development (APD) helps local churches build on their strengths, discern next steps, and turn their dreams into reality. APD team members will work with a group of parishes over a number of months, walking with them to enable growth of local vision and engagement, to make disciples, share hope and transform their communities

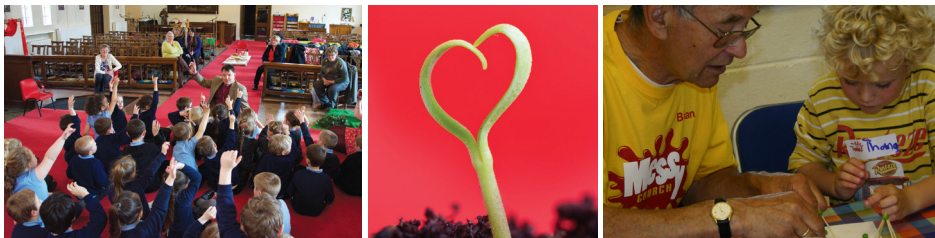
#### Resourcing Churches

Resourcing churches seek to look beyond themselves to resource others in growing. Within the Diocese we have two churches (Top Church in Dudley, and All Saints in Worcester) which are funded by the national church's Strategic Development Fund (SDF). We are also keen to see stronger churches reaching out to work with and support others – and the new Parish Share system supports this.

Through both the two Resourcing Churches in the SDF project, and other initiatives, we expect to see at least six churches either planted or re-invigorated in the next five years.

#### New Worshipping Communities

Many churches across the country have found that in order to help new generations find faith and an expression of worship that they can access, they are needing to start new things. This doesn't have to be a formal "church plant", but may be a new form of service, Messy Church or some other accessible event. Worshipping God creatively will enable new people to join in.



#### Growing in Discipleship

We are called as followers of Jesus to make disciples, of all ages. Our Calling Young Disciples Mission Enablers work with churches who want to reach children, young people and their families. In a healthy church people of all ages will be growing in their faith through catechesis, nurture courses, good teaching and vocational exploration.

Patterns for Kingdom Living ([www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/kingdom-patterns](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/kingdom-patterns)) can help us as individuals grow in spiritual disciplines. Congregations that want to grow numerically by helping others explore faith can be coached and trained in church growth principles.

#### Improving sustainability

##### Lowest Income Communities

The National Church provides the Diocese with over £720,000 a year to support mission and ministry in our lowest income communities. 35 of our parishes contain areas which are in the most deprived 20% communities in the country, and the money is focused on these parishes, which account for 56% of our population.

As explained in the Parish Share section, around two thirds of the funding will be used to provide around ten extra stipendiary clergy in these parishes. The remainder will be used to fund projects and support resources which will enable us to reach out beyond our existing church members to engage with our poorest communities.

#### Church Buildings

The challenge of maintaining our church buildings is widely known. We are seeking to enable more targeted support for buildings:

- Those key sites which have significant building issues or need support to build capacity to care for them
- Those who opt for occasional use and where a 'package' of maintenance and insurance support could be helpful
- Those where the local community would like to explore closure, whilst maintaining help and guidance for all parishes.



## Focusing on our Smaller Churches

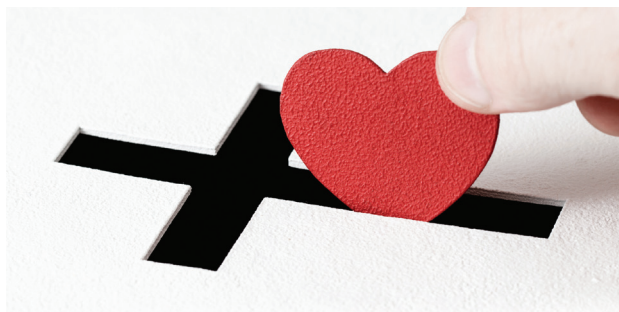
Our smaller churches may have a different role to play in the future. Church buildings often have a valuable place in their local community but it may not be feasible to have worship every week. It could be that the building is used as a community centre or as part of the local school; some contain important pieces of history and are on the tourist trail; some may need to be gently retired. Re-designation could see the building used for occasional services, whilst the church finds new ways of meeting, worshipping and participating in the community. This is likely to be under voluntary local leadership, with oversight from a Smaller Churches Team Leader & neighbouring priests.



*In the northern benefices of the Pershore Deanery plans are being developed to move from three clergy to two full-time clergy & a house for duty role. This will involve some of the churches moving to occasional use.*

## Generous giving of time and money

As disciples of Jesus we are stewards of the resources entrusted to us. Generous giving by individuals to their local church of time and money enables the church to flourish. Generous giving by parishes through Parish Share (see page 16) funds ministry and mission across the Diocese.



## Ministry Overview

Ministry is shared by all of us. As General Synod has put it:

The whole people of God, by baptism, share in bearing Christian presence through worship, witness and service, being the Body of Christ in every and any place and context. In the Church of England, some are called to particular ministries, ordained and lay, to represent and enable the ministry of the whole church. Ministry is continually renewed by the Spirit, responding to the needs of each generation. Signs of renewal are seen where ministry enables the Church to be outward facing and where it is relational, missional, collaborative, adaptive and diverse.

GSMisc 1224 Ministry for a Christian presence in every community July 2019



## Principles for discipleship, mission and ministry

- The Church of England seeks to provide a Christian presence in every community. The parish system remains the bedrock of this provision.
- All baptised Christians are called to mission and ministry in their daily lives, sharing in God's life and mission in the world as they live out Kingdom values of love, compassion, justice and freedom.
- They do this with others in churches and congregations that are transforming communities of faith, sharing God's love, compassion, justice and freedom with one another and with the world outside the church.
- Some are called to particular ministries, whether lay or ordained, and these are always evolving.

### Patterns of Ministry

There are many different ways in which people offer ministry to the Church:

- Serving as volunteers - churchwardens, treasurers, PCC members, parish safeguarding officers, cleaners, young people's leaders etc.
- Authorised Lay Ministers (ALM) offer particular service on behalf of the whole church e.g. as Evangelist, Pastoral Worker etc.
- Licensed Lay Ministers (LLM) are trained and authorised to preach in church, lead worship and carry out other public ministry on behalf of the whole church.
- Employed paid roles in churches; Community Missioner, Operations Manager, Youth or Children's Worker, Organists or other Musicians.
- Ordained ministers - Deacons, Priests and Bishops (Some with a context focus e.g. Prison Chaplain)

*In the Brierley Hill Team, we will appoint a Community Missioner to provide a greater focus on those outside our churches. This will be a full-time paid role.*

### Supporting our clergy

Not all of our clergy are the same.

- Some of these clergy will be self-supporting, offering unpaid service as Chaplains, Ministers in Secular Employment or as locally focussed parish priests.
- Increasingly, clergy are looking for part-time roles, wanting to offer their gifts and skills in ministry, but with some financial provision. We need to find flexible ways to enable this, with some clergy paid on an employed basis and providing their own accommodation. They may serve part-time in parishes, schools or, for a time limited focussed piece of work, as interim ministers.
- Some clergy may serve part-time as 'house for duty' (a post where only the accommodation is provided).
- However, most clergy will still be full-time office holders with a house and stipend provided to enable this. After initial training and curacy, most will have significant oversight responsibility, working collaboratively to enable the flourishing of ministry teams and communities of faith. Within these they will seek to enable and release the ministry of others. We must ensure that there is 'no ministry alone'.

### How will stipendiary ministry be deployed?

There are several factors that will influence decisions on how stipendiary (paid) clergy are allocated across the Diocese. Posts need to be stretching but possible as well as affordable through faithful stewardship and generous giving.

These factors may be considered when allocating parish posts:

- the size of civil population – the more people there are, the more souls there are to have 'cure of', and the greater the mission opportunity is likely to be.
- the number of church buildings that the role is responsible for (helped by re-designating a number of smaller churches so clergy have fewer buildings to look after).
- the number of schools and church schools
- the number of church members.

In some cases, an incumbent may have some responsibility at a diocesan level and it is important that this is reflected in their parish responsibilities.

It's also important that the post is **affordable** in terms of parish share contribution in the short to medium-term.

*In 2020 Diocesan Synod agreed unanimously that we will move to a Parish Share system based around the cost of ministry, adjusted for incomes.*

Lowest Income Communities funding from the national church will enable around 10 additional stipendiary clergy to serve in our poorest parishes over and above what can be afforded locally.

Local discussions, led by Area Deans and Archdeacons, will be crucial in making the best possible decisions as to the nature and form of ministry in each locality.



*Two priests due to retire in the next couple of years have approached the Restructuring Group with suggestions about how deployment may be radically different in their parishes as they move on.*

## Voluntary Leaders of Local Churches

At the initial open conversations, we explored the idea:

That in some small churches and congregations the day-to-day leadership and ministry would best be led by one or more voluntary local leaders. They could be Lay people or clergy, but would need to be selected, authorised or licensed and share in ongoing training and development.

This could enable the mission and ministry in some smaller churches and congregations to flourish, usually under the overall oversight of stipendiary minister overseeing a number of churches or congregations.

*A self-supporting minister will serve in Matchborough, Redditch, working with a paid Community Missioner.*

### Feedback was clear:

- 62% of table respondents thought the idea of voluntary local leaders had merit, and a further 30% thought it may have merit.
- Many constructive contributions highlighted aspects that would need care and/or be challenging. These included issues of: selection, oversight, training, avoiding overburdening such people, and how they would be perceived in parishes.
- There was some feedback against the term 'focal minister' used in the first booklet so 'voluntary local leader' is being used instead.
- Matters of selection and training will include both local and diocesan elements.
- Local leaders will not be 'Lone Rangers', but will be committed to regularly praying and learning with others in similar roles.
- We are planning to establish a 'Team Leader for Smaller Churches' (or similar title) working across the Diocese with special responsibility in this area

These will be matters of ongoing development and discernment and there will be a process of continual learning, trialling and consultation

## Please pray

That we all might grow as Kingdom People, worshipping God together in many and varied ways.

For those exploring faith and asking big questions, that they might become disciples of Jesus.

For courage, confidence and hope as we navigate change.

That creative ideas may emerge in our local discussions.

That our communities may be transformed as we serve.

That we may each find ways to play our part in the journey towards healthy and sustainable churches.

That values of love, compassion, justice and freedom will continue to underpin our lives together.



## Enabler 1: Simplifying Deaneries

### A current consultation

There are many different ways in which people offer ministry to the Church:

A consultation about the number of deaneries in the Diocese was launched at the end of July. It suggests reducing the number of deaneries from 13 down to six. All are welcome to contribute to this consultation, which will run until Friday 4 December.

### Why are we wanting to simplify deaneries?

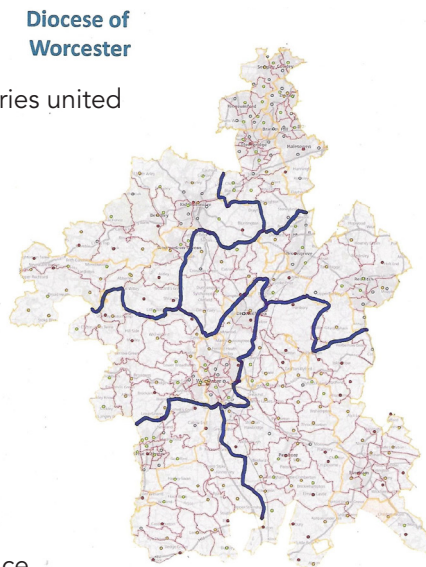
The simple answer is that larger groupings offer us more flexibility in deploying ministry to better meet pastoral and missional needs. Larger deaneries will include more people in each area, and offer a bigger canvas to plan mission effectively.

### What is being proposed?

We are proposing to move to six deaneries.

All but two of our current deaneries are below the bottom of the recommended size for a deanery. The proposal is:

- 1 GREATER DUDLEY**  
Dudley, Kingswinford & Stourbridge deaneries united
- 2 REDDITCH & BROMSGROVE**  
current Bromsgrove deanery plus two benefices from Droitwich deanery
- 3 KIDDERMINSTER & STOURPORT**  
deaneries united
- 4 WORCESTER** uniting Worcester East and Martley & Worcester West, plus the Saltway Team from Droitwich
- 5 MALVERN & UPTON** deaneries united
- 6 PERSHORE & EVESHAM**  
deaneries united plus the Bowbrook benefice



All parishes will be consulted on this change and we want to hear a range of views.

### Where can I find out more?

The consultation document is on the website at:  
[www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/deanery-consultation.php](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/deanery-consultation.php)

## Enabler 2: Simplifying Governance

We've calculated that over 2,000 people hours are spent each year in diocesan governance meetings. We believe that we can improve the way we make decisions about the church at a diocesan level – having fewer, but more effective meetings, and finding better ways of engaging views from around the diocese appropriately.

### What is happening?

Bishop's Council have commissioned a group to review our diocesan structures and report back with an initial report in October.

### Why is this important?

In recent years there have been fewer active church members and our average age has increased. Unless we streamline our governance, a higher proportion of our energy and effort is taken up running the church, rather than engaging in mission.

It's also possible to have better governance with fewer meetings. It's vital to find ways that people can contribute from around the Diocese, and we also need to ensure that we have the right skills present at the right meetings, especially in those areas of church life – safeguarding, the DAC and finance, as examples – which require specialist skills and experience.

### Who will make the decision on this?

Decisions will be made by Diocesan Synod and by Bishop's Council.



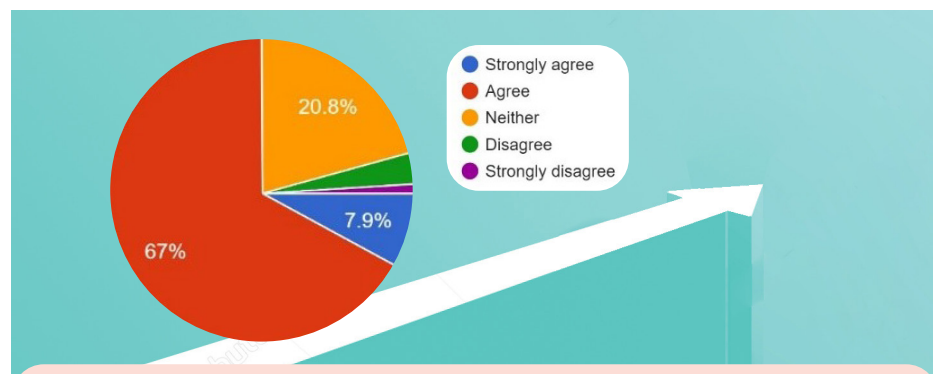


## Enabler 3: A New Parish Share System

### Background

In the last set of open conversations, we explained that the current Parish Share system was no longer fit for purpose as most parishes didn't feel able to pay in full. In 2018 this had led to a difference of more than £1 million between the cost of ministry across the Diocese.

Most people who submitted feedback after the open conversations either agreed or strongly agreed that "we are heading in the right direction with our thinking", and fewer than 5% disagreed or strongly disagreed.



During those conversations participants told us that the three things that were most important to them were:

- Having a system that is simple and easy to understand
- The system should be sustainable in that it is fit for purpose for some years to come and
- The wealth of church's members should directly affect a parish's contribution.

Other frequently expressed views included that we should continue to encourage giving and generosity, that buildings were a very significant underlying issue, and that significant change was needed.

### A New Approach

In February 2020, following the open conversations feedback, Diocesan Synod adopted in principle a new approach to share calculation. In future, share requested from a benefice\* will be the cost of the ministry in that benefice adjusted by the incomes of the church's members.

So in principle, a benefice with church members with average incomes and one full-time stipendiary vicar would be asked to contribute the cost of a stipendiary priest (calculated as around £64k a year).



Parishes whose members have above average incomes would contribute more per priest, to enable those on lower incomes to contribute less.

This system has several advantages:

- It is simple and easy to understand.
- It's stable – unless the amount of ministry allocated, or the incomes of those attending change significantly, the share requested will rise broadly in line with inflation.
- The incomes element preserves the 'common purse' principle of mutual support across our diocese.
- It doesn't penalise growth – a benefice is not asked for a bigger share contribution just because they have encouraged new people to church.
- Unlike the current system, the 'Lowest Income Communities' (LInC) funding we receive from the national church can be allocated directly to support our least wealthy parishes.



\* For the purposes of the Parish Share, a 'benefice' is the area to which clergy are deployed. It could be a single parish, a group of parishes or a team ministry.

## Enabler 3: A New Parish Share System

### A Possible Way Forward for 2021

Synod had planned to review the details of the proposed new system in time to allocate 2021 Parish Share using it. Coronavirus not only disrupted this, but is causing significant challenge to parish and diocesan incomes. Parishes have lost a significant proportion of 2020 income from cash collections in services, fees, hall bookings and fundraising events. This disruption is likely to continue for some time.

We need a pragmatic way forwards. In June 2020, Diocesan Synod considered an approach for 2021 share requests, and a final decision will be made at the November meeting. In short:

- For most parishes, any increase in the parish share requested will match the change in stipends and wages. This is likely to be between 0% and 2%
- If the 2019 share contribution was more than the parish will be asked for through the 2021 income-adjusted cost of ministry system, then the parish will be asked to maintain their 2019 contribution.
- All parishes will receive an explanation of how their current share request compares with the likely request using the incomes adjusted cost of ministry model.

It should be stressed that until Synod has made decisions on the detail, this is not confirmed, but is the likely direction of travel. It is also understood that the effects of the pandemic will last well into 2021, and will affect many parishes' ability to contribute share. Again, we will need to get through this together as best we can.



## So what next? How can I play my part?

### Personally...

- **Share** what you have heard in this round of open conversations with someone who does not have access to zoom.
- **Pray** for the Church across the Diocese – using the pointers on page 13 and also the diocesan prayer diary.
- **Reflect** on how you might be able to contribute to our growing as Kingdom People;
- How might you **grow** in your own discipleship?
- Could you share your **faith journey** with others to help them?

### As a local church...

- Carry on the **conversation** within your PCC and congregation – you will find some resources on the diocesan website ([www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/open-conversations](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/open-conversations)).
- **Identify** where your church needs to change, and decide what you will commit to, for that change to take place.
- Let **ideas** bubble up about creative ways to become healthier and more sustainable where you are
- **Engage** in local discussions about how your church relates to others in the area or in the community context
- **Feed back** to your Area Dean, Archdeacon or a member of the Diocesan Restructuring Group, any good ideas emerging and case studies of transformation.

### Resources available at [www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/open-conversations](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/open-conversations):

- A guide for theological reflection.
- A filmed version of the Open Conversations session which can be used at PCC meetings etc.
- Case studies from different parishes.

   
[www.cofe-worcester.org.uk](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk)



 THE CHURCH  
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