

# Diocese Of Worcester Statement of Needs 2024



*Come and join us*



## Welcome to the Diocese of Worcester

We are praying with confidence for a new Bishop of Worcester who is energised by our transformation journey so far and our future plans. We pray for a bishop who will nurture us, embody our diocesan values, help us face our challenges and lead us further into growth.

In the following pages you will be able to encounter the **people and places** of the Diocese of Worcester. We value and cherish building relationships and relational working and we want you to meet people of all ages who live and minister in our diverse communities in Worcestershire and the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley. You will be able to hear directly from them through video links about the **joys and challenges** of living and ministering in the Diocese of Worcester.

You will be able to discover more about the life of our diocese, our cathedral, the work of our six deaneries and our partnerships as well as our strategic priorities and actions and progress on our **journey of transformation and change**.

You will be able to see the outcomes of our consultation process, including the greatest opportunities and challenges, as well as the **most desired attributes** the people of the Diocese of Worcester seek in their new bishop. In the final pages we set out the **gifts, experiences and qualities** we discern are needed in the new Bishop of Worcester.

Our hope is that our Statement of Needs will give you a clear insight into who we are, how we work together and our plans for the future to enable you to further discern your own future ministry.

Professor Lynn Nichol, Chair of Vacancy in See Committee



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▶ 10 Commandments in Black Country dialect

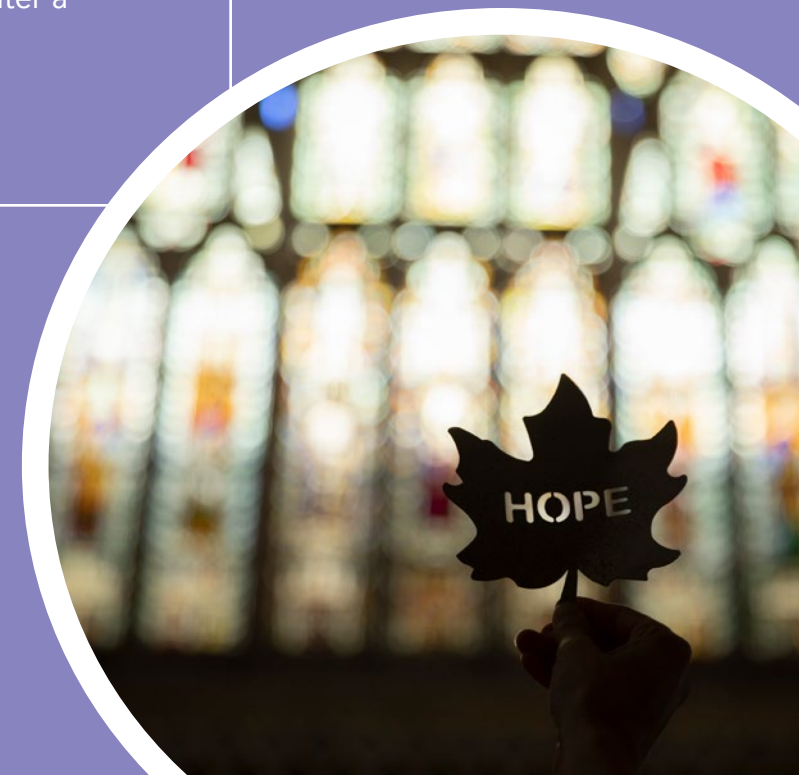
## Vacancy Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for those you call to faithfully lead and shepherd your church.

As we seek a new Bishop of Worcester, help us to be attentive to the Holy Spirit's guidance, give us heavenly wisdom, and bless our diocese that we might enter a new season of growth and fruitfulness as Kingdom People.

For your glory and in the name of Christ. Amen





## Who we are

As a diocese, our key characteristic is that we are relational. We are small enough for clergy to know and be known by their colleagues and their bishops and for lay people to feel part of the whole.

As far as possible we endeavour to engage with each other as people in a relationship through conversation, building understanding and friendships across our diverse contexts and traditions.

We are in the Midlands and occupy the middle ground on most topics – we don't tend to have extremes here, which makes for good dialogue and collegiality. There is however much variety in the Diocese, which includes swathes of beautiful countryside with many listed and picturesque church buildings, much loved by their rural communities, together with densely populated urban areas including significant pockets of deprivation, and a smattering of market towns, new towns and further planned developments.

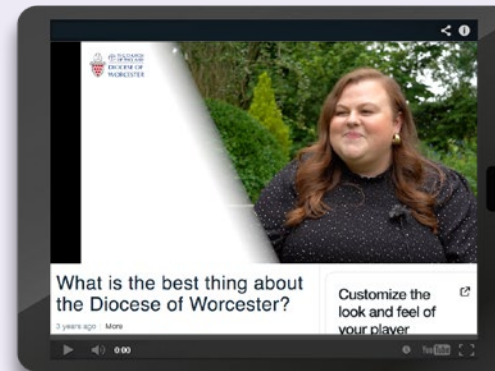
Our people, both lay and ordained, are committed to growing as Kingdom People as we live out our diocesan values of love, compassion, justice and freedom. Most are aware of the challenges we face, and long to see their churches become younger and more diverse and have a healthy and sustainable future. Our congregations serve with dedication and willing hearts as they seek to grow and transform their communities.

Read about what our parishes are doing on the news pages of our website: [www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/news](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/news)

*Come and join us*



The Diocese of Worcester covers an area of 670 square miles and includes the County of Worcestershire, the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley, and a few parishes in northern Gloucestershire, southeast Wolverhampton and Sandwell. The diocese covers a population of 909,000.



▶ Curates – what do they love about the Diocese of Worcester

**92**  
benefices

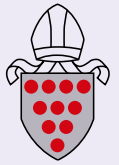
**169**  
parishes

**267**  
churches

### Fun Fact

Worcestershire Sauce is perhaps Worcester's most famous product. It was first produced in Worcester by two chemists, John Wheeley Lea and William Perrins, and went on sale in 1837. It is still produced in the city today, although the origin of the recipe remains a mystery!





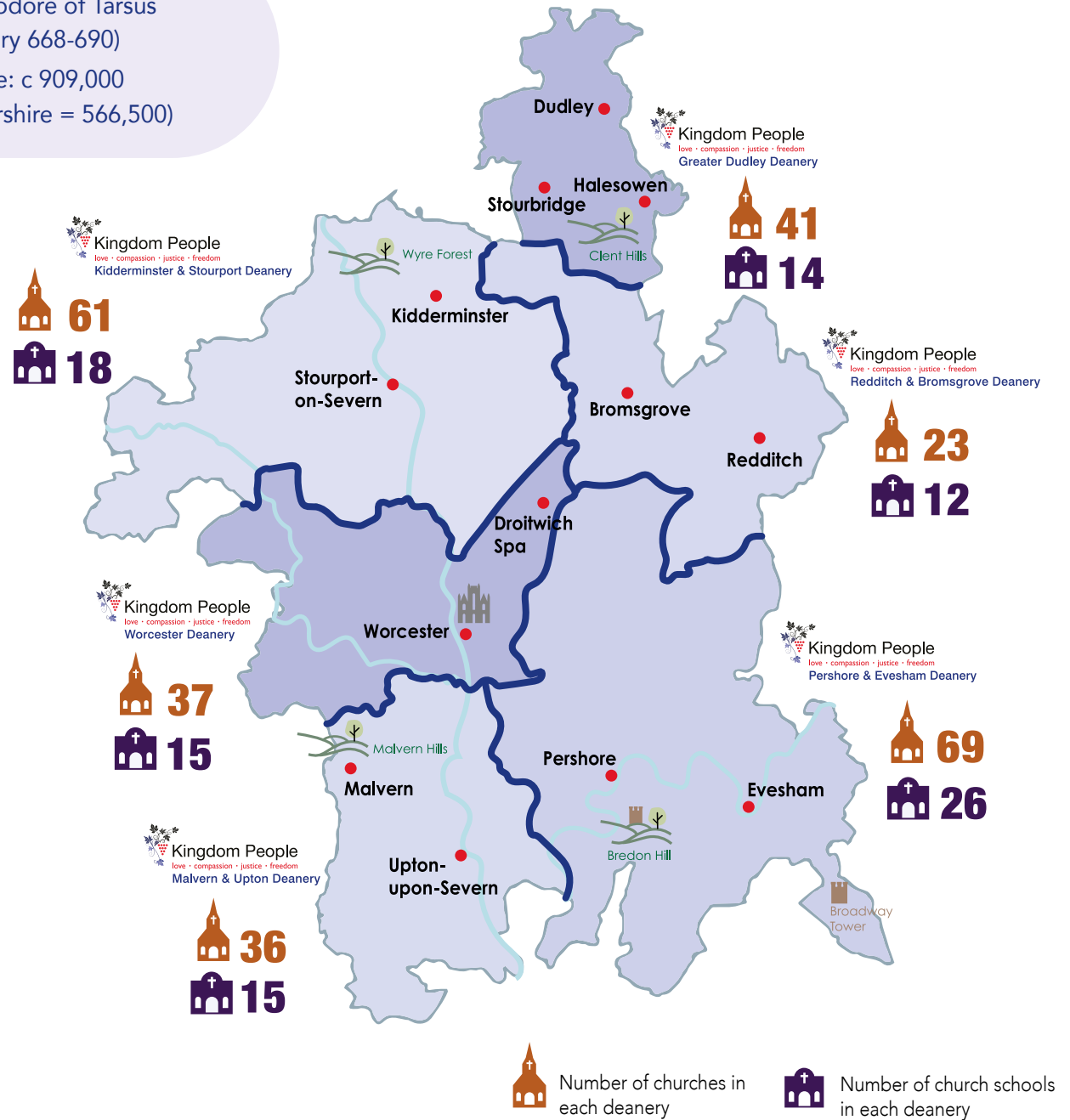
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
DIOCESE OF WORCESTER

Created c 679AD by St Theodore of Tarsus  
(Archbishop of Canterbury 668-690)  
Population of the diocese: c 909,000  
(Dudley = 342,500, Worcestershire = 566,500)

In 2021 our deaneries were reduced from 13 to 6. The Archdeaconry of Worcester includes the deaneries of Kidderminster & Stourport, Malvern & Upton, Pershore & Evesham and Worcester, while the Archdeaconry of Dudley includes the deaneries of Greater Dudley and Redditch and Bromsgrove. In the following pages, each deanery leadership team offers a snapshot of their deanery.

### Fun Fact

The 'sea' of Worcester appears regularly when the river Severn is in flood



# Greater Dudley Deanery

Greater Dudley Deanery consists of the Black Country parishes contained within the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley, with a handful of parishes from neighbouring Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Worcestershire.

The deanery is almost entirely urban and home to around 40% of the population of the Diocese. However, there are many differing centres of population, with a diversity of cultures and ethnicities, each of which has a strong local identity.

The task of growing healthy and sustainable churches in the deanery is challenging. There are many more church buildings than are strictly necessary. Some congregations are quite small and are often ministering in areas of significant deprivation, with limited numbers of people who feel they have the skills and experience to take on positions of leadership in our churches with confidence.

The picture is changing. Significant investment in the churches of the deanery by the national church's Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) to support the diocesan transformation programme, is already having an impact. As the full phase one plans are rolled out, we are confident that we will establish strong sustainable ministry at the heart of the main centres of population. Our hope and expectation is that with some strong local churches, significant growth will be experienced across the entire deanery.

The deanery leadership team includes the Area Dean, two Sub-Deans, and four lay members. Although sceptical when the present deanery system was created in 2021, we've found that being a larger deanery has facilitated greater opportunities for team working between clergy and churches, and for drawing suitably significant groups together for training and support. Deanery gatherings of ALMs, LLMs, children's ministers, for example, are a regular feature. Increasingly churches work together, sharing resources and opening new opportunities for mission.

The Deanery Chapter of over 30 clergy meets every 4/5 weeks and is primarily a place of mutual support and encouragement, as well as a place to discuss matters of business. Deanery Synod acts as a focus and stimulus for parishes to deliver the mission priorities of the Diocese. Meetings are well attended and serve to lift individual churches beyond the parochial and broaden understandings of mission.

Through good, collaborative working within and between parishes, between clergy and laity, and between deanery and diocese, along with a great deal of prayer, we are facing the challenges, growing in confidence and learning to celebrate as God's Kingdom grows.



## Fun Facts

- With its reconstructed 1920s shops, houses, and work areas, the Black Country open-air museum in Dudley was a key location for the filming of Peaky Blinders!
- There is a memorial to one of the 'Busby Babes' footballers, Duncan Edwards, who died in the Munich Air disaster, in a stained-glass window at St Francis' Church, Dudley.



## Case study links:

- ▶ Cradley Heath Community Link
- ▶ New Communion table at Top church
- ▶ Singing Angels



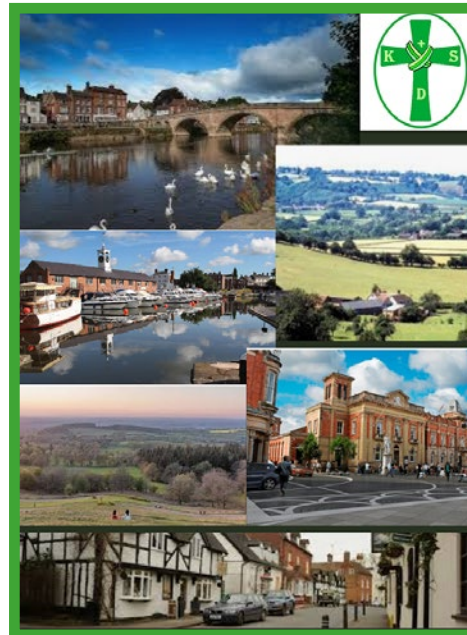
# Kidderminster and Stourport Deanery

The Deanery of Kidderminster and Stourport encompasses both rural and urban areas of Worcestershire stretching from the borders of Herefordshire in the West to Droitwich in the South-East. A deanery restructuring process still being finalised has created more distinct rural and urban parishes better able to support one another. In the West of the deanery, we are developing a collegiate group working across a large rural area covering 26 churches. This 'Muddy Boots' mission area seeks to relish being rural Christians, sharing the joys and challenges that life in the countryside brings. We hope and pray our learning can inform and inspire others.

The deanery leadership team is keen that all synods have a purpose and have been concentrating on the diocesan priorities and how to achieve them in the deanery. A recent synod heard about the 'Gather' initiative with churches given the opportunity to discuss how this could work in their own area. At the last synod we learned how to create Sustainable Flower arrangements in churches (a movement which started in one of our churches) and even had a Generation Game style flower arranging competition between Bishop Martin and Area Dean Tim!

## Fun Facts

- Roland Hill, born in Kidderminster in 1745, is famed for the introduction of the Penny Black Stamp which reformed the postal system.
- Kidderminster Carpets are famous throughout the world and have been laid in Buckingham Palace.
- Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin was born in Bewdley and died in Stourport-upon-Severn.
- At Shelsley Walsh there is the oldest motorsport venue in the world still using its original course regularly hosting hill climbs, motorsports and social events.
- Led Zeppelin's drummer John Bonham's grave is at the country church of Rushock – fans visit and leave drumsticks on the gravestone.



Each year the deanery meets to celebrate the Eucharist together and join in worshipping outdoors in the glorious Worcestershire countryside. We pray together during Thy Kingdom Come with churches across the deanery praying the same prayers at the same time with one united voice. Our Chapter meets bimonthly to share news and to support one another. The deanery leadership team meets together regularly and works to serve this beautifully diverse community.

Many of our churches are Eco churches or are working towards obtaining their bronze or silver certificates.

## Case study links:

- ▶ Little Seeds in Kidderminster West
- ▶ Walking tour of Bewdley's black history
- ▶ Walking Church in Teme Valley South



# Malvern and Upton Deanery

Malvern and Upton Deanery is contained by two great rivers, the Severn and the Teme, and by the M5/M50/A38 tarmac triangle and the majestic Malvern Hills. As well as two tourist towns, Great Malvern and Upton upon Severn, the deanery is an eclectic mix of expanding new housing and quaint rural villages, farms and agri-economy, places for concerts and places for festivals, walking trails, traveller sites and a few stately homes. It includes some of the poorest areas in the county and some of the most exclusive. There is a myriad of schools (state and independent), and many care homes.

It feels like we have churches everywhere: some at capacity on Sundays and busy during the week: others locked after Sunday worship. We have a vibrant, ecumenical Churches Together in Malvern, and there is great potential for better ecumenical links in Upton.

We recognise that future success is not just about the parish, it's about the wider church. With the presence of a couple of large, gathered churches in our midst, alongside churches that are struggling or fragile, the emerging expertise of some churches in delivering particular types of ministry is being galvanised and we are currently exploring the development of oversight and group ministry approaches to make better use of scarce resources in high demand.

We are developing a new strategic direction with an overarching aim to encourage

extensive collaborative working, across the town and country aspects of parish and benefice boundaries. This represents a significant cultural change in how we "do church" locally; moving away from each church/benefice operating in a silo and shifting the emphasis away from location and size of church determining the ministry/mission response – to a greater focus on the contextual missional needs and how they can best be met. In so many ways, we must move our thinking away from parochial towards people wherever they are.

We aim to work together as a Team of Teams. Across Deanery Synod and Chapter, we provide a safe place for this level of engagement to happen, and for appropriate responses to the challenges ahead to be developed, through prayer, collective research and conversations. We are very mindful of the need to tread carefully but we need to embark on this journey of discovery together, whilst being very aware of Ken Dodd's advice: 'if you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans'.

We have been drawn to the missional zeal of Ruth. "Where you will go, I will go" seems to sum up our direction of travel as we strive to link our towns with our rural places – we risk our churches atrophying if we are too narrow sighted in our thinking.

## Fun Facts

- The Malvern hills inspired many of Edward Elgar's well-known compositions. He was routinely seen cycling around the surrounding and village lanes. Elgar was known to conduct tea dances at the Powick Asylum and at Madresfield Church, he hosted his Daffodil Choir Festivals. We really should be on the Elgar route - or an Evelyn Waugh route because of our links to Brideshead Revisited.
- The Old Hills Parishes, situated between Malvern and Worcester, are the home of Queensbury Rules in Boxing and the site of the very first hydro-electricity power station.
- Legend has it that CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien would frequently meet at the Unicorn Pub in Malvern and seeing a lamp in the snowy landscape was the creative influence for the description of Narnia.

## Case study links:

- ▶ Youth work in Chase Team
- ▶ Messy Church at All Saints, Malvern
- ▶ Create New Worshipping Community
- ▶ Chaplaincy connecting schools and church



# Pershore and Evesham Deanery

We are a deanery of 69 churches, with two towns, many villages and hamlets. In many places, people still identify with the local church building and their community even though most commute for work, school and recreation.

Increasing numbers of lay and ordained people work together across parishes to support the mission and ministry of the Church. Our vision for 2025/2026 is to create three or four mission areas to encourage this collaboration and improve our engagement with younger people, reduce governance, and support the development and wellbeing of lay and the ordained.

We have two large towns with further housing planned. In both centres we are already seeing the early fruits of investing in children and young people's ministry. Smaller grants are also enabling youth ministry in some benefices working alongside the Diocesan Lead for Children and Young People.

Three major strategic housing developments are planned for this deanery.

- Worcestershire Parkway with 10,000 new houses and 50 hectares of employment land. Building is expected to start in the late 2020s.
- Throckmorton new town with 5,000 houses and 60 hectares of employment land.
- Mitton with 1,000 new houses.

The larger two developments offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Church to invest in Christian education and establish New Worshipping Communities.

While such developments will change the physical and social landscape where they happen, existing, largely rural communities want to keep their identity alive and their local church buildings and schools open. The challenge faced by long standing, faithful volunteers is to find new volunteers and a financial commitment for this to be a reality. It does though offer opportunities for creative partnerships between people and church to celebrate local culture, build community and connect with people's innate spirituality. With many such events happening outdoors, it also offers opportunities to engage with local green agendas.

## Fun Facts

- The church in Hanbury was the venue for a wedding in the Archers (and the pub in Inkberrow is also regularly mentioned!)
- For centuries the Vale of Evesham has been regarded as the fruit and vegetable basket of England. It is internationally renowned for its production of asparagus or 'Gras' as it is locally known.



## Case study links:

- ▶ Youth Work in Evesham
- ▶ Working with children and families at Pershore Abbey
- ▶ Pershore town centre chaplains

# Redditch and Bromsgrove Deanery

Working and learning collaboratively in mission and ministry to grow as the family of God.

We strive to make our deanery a place which brings our parishes together to promote a culture of sharing ideas and developments and of lifting our horizon beyond the parochial and benefice groups.

Redditch and Bromsgrove are significant urban centres in the Diocese of Worcester. The deanery as a whole serves over 140,000 people with 23 parish churches in areas of varying affluence and social dynamic in urban, suburban and rural contexts. Our key priority is 'collaboration' as we seek to discern how we can work better together to fulfil our mission, and we are working for all centres of worship across our area to be healthy sustainable fellowships living out their unique call to be Kingdom People.

The Deanery Chapter includes six full time stipendiary ministers and six self-supporting ministers alongside other active ministers with permission to officiate. Chapter is a relaxed and supportive space where we share in fellowship and prayer and seek to support each other. Our lay members bring valuable experiences and skills to support the life and work of the church and the deanery.

Our Synod meetings seek to provide information and support and grow relationships. We have a number of exciting and innovative projects taking place. In Bromsgrove we are looking to make strategic appointments to allow this part of the deanery to embrace its distinctive identity. In Redditch we are developing the Redditch Mission Area (RMA). This project seeks to realise the benefits of churches working more collaboratively to enable each to become healthier and more sustainable. We want to provide practical, centrally funded support, enabling our churches to develop their local missional identity, and encouraging people to share in areas of mission which are better done collectively. A recent example of such collaboration was the Christmas Toy appeal that brought volunteers together from across the RMA. This successful venture was recognised with an award from the High Sheriff and is a testament of what can be achieved when churches all work together. In addition to this we have a significant, centrally funded, church renewal at St Stephen's Church in Redditch town centre, where a new Renewal Lead Minister joined in September. These are exciting times for us as a deanery and diocese.

## Fun Facts

- In 1967 Avoncroft Museum was opened to the public following the rescue and reconstruction of a medieval merchant's house from Bromsgrove, and soon became England's first open-air museum. It now has over 30 rescued and restored buildings.
- At one time 90% of the world's needles were manufactured in Redditch and its surrounding areas.

## Case study links:

- ▶ Celebrating the Redditch Mission Area
- ▶ Star church in Tardebigge
- ▶ Christmas Toy Appeal
- ▶ Bromsgrove Pizza church



# Worcester Deanery

Worcester Deanery encompasses a large area spanning both the eastern and western sides of the River Severn. Serving a population of 149,405, it includes the city of Worcester and the historic Spa town of Droitwich.

The deanery consists of 28 parishes with 37 churches located in areas of varying affluence across urban, suburban and rural contexts. The presence of the Cathedral and All Saints Resourcing Church located in the city centre enriches the deanery and we are blessed that both lay and ordained members from these communities are very much part of Chapter and Synod.

Significant housing developments are underway in the deanery with urban extensions around Rushwick and Lower Broadheath and churches are already working collaboratively to find ways of engaging with these developing communities.

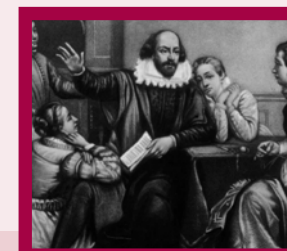
Following discussions in Synod, the deanery leadership team has identified three priorities that we believe will help us to engage more fully with the diocesan transformation strategy. Through praying for each other, communicating more effectively and working collaboratively where appropriate, we hope to further the mission of the Church and see more people of all ages come to live as Kingdom People.

Increasing numbers of ordained and lay people are working together to support the mission and ministry of the Church and are embracing the diocesan priorities of engaging with children, youth and families and developing new worshipping communities.

We currently have two Children, Youth and Family (CYF) workers in post and in both contexts they are working across parishes, which is enabling greater collaboration. A Student & 20s Missioner in post at All Saints Resourcing Church enables mission among those studying at the University of Worcester.

A number of parishes are developing new worshipping communities and providing ways for people to connect with or explore faith through Messy Church, Breakfast Church, Walking Church, Wild Church and Gather.

The deanery leadership team recognises the challenges that people within the parishes are facing with regards to finance, upkeep of buildings and the decline of faithful worshippers and volunteers. Through Chapter and Synod we endeavour to engage in ongoing discussions around these challenges to enable people to share concerns and feel supported. Given the challenges there is remarkable sense of hope for the future across the deanery.



## Fun Facts

- For the past two years, the Bishop of Worcester has been crucified in the Worcester Passion Play. It's not compulsory though!
- It is believed that William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway at St Martin's Church in Worcester. Unfortunately, the relevant page of the marriage register has mysteriously disappeared!
- Droitwich is famous for its brine springs, or wycles, which are the source of its salt. The brine is 10 times saltier than seawater and is similar in density to the Dead Sea!

## Case study links:

- ▶ Jess Fellows: Student & 20s Missioner
- ▶ All souls service in Warndon
- ▶ Children's choir in Leigh ▶ Hear their singing

# Worcester Cathedral

Worcester Cathedral is a magnificent sight as it rises majestically above the River Severn. It is one of the most iconic and famous buildings in the region and forms the backdrop to one of cricket's most enduring images when viewed from the county ground. Among the bishops buried here are St Oswald and St Wulfstan; others laid to rest here include King John, Prince Arthur Tudor and the former prime minister Stanley Baldwin.

Although the present building was begun in 1084, Worcester Cathedral was founded in 680, and for nearly 1400 years has been a centre for Christian worship and witness. The rhythm of daily worship continues to be offered here to the glory of God and in service to the city, the county, the Diocese and the world. Excellence in liturgy is matched by a very high quality of music supported by a range of cathedral choirs. The cathedral musicians also contribute to the Three Choirs Festival, established in the eighteenth century and the oldest choral festival in existence.

The cathedral employs 69 paid staff and around 130 volunteers, many of whom offer their time and expertise in several different areas of cathedral life.

The cathedral has made good progress in recent years towards

becoming an Eco Cathedral, having achieved the Eco Church Silver Award in March 2023. The cathedral is now actively working towards the Gold Award. Initiatives have been broad-ranging, including: Living Gently on the Earth, a community engagement and teaching programme; political and campaigning efforts such as the Worcester parliamentary candidates' debate at the time of the COP28 conference; an annual Green Fair; regular outdoor services; green landscape management; and the transfer of investments away from fossil fuels.

Our visitors come from all over the world. In 2023, we welcomed 181,655 visitors through the door (156,788 of whom were adults). These figures do not include those who attend services, events or as part of school or other pre-booked groups. For each individual, their visit offers the possibility of a transformational encounter.

We continue to be inspired by our Benedictine heritage which underpins every aspect of vision and strategy: at the heart of our vision is the overarching aspiration for the cathedral to be a place of prayer, learning and welcome.

Our vision is built on five strategic goals, that in 2025 Worcester Cathedral will be:

- A community welcoming everyone to share our amazing heritage
- A place of breadth and depth in worship and prayer
- A place of learning, discipleship, and nurture
- A catalyst for campaigning and raising awareness on the environment and social justice
- A resilient organisation with stable finances.

This is underpinned by our values, that at the heart of everything we do lies the commitment, as a Christian community inspired by our Benedictine heritage, to prayer, learning and welcome; and promoting the values of love, compassion, justice and freedom.

## Fun Facts

- One of the stained-glass windows in Worcester Cathedral features a pink giraffe.
- Alongside the tomb of King John, the Cathedral also holds the chantry of Prince Arthur. Being next in line to the throne, Henry VIII spared the Worcester cathedral from destruction during the English Reformation due to his brother's chantry.
- The cathedral bells are considered as one of the clearest and finest toned rings ever cast. They are also the fifth heaviest ring in the world.





## Parish support

One of the blessings of the Diocese of Worcester is its relational nature and the emphasis on working as a team.

The Bishop’s Staff team and other senior leaders work together to guide, lead, inspire, support and encourage all who work in diocesan, school or parish contexts. They remain connected with all aspects of diocesan life, learning, listening and taking decisions about our overall vision, priorities and resources.

The senior team work alongside a committed team from the diocesan office, Bishops’ and Archdeacons’ offices who are focussed on supporting the parishes whenever possible. With expertise available in areas including HR, Safeguarding, Church Buildings, Mission and Ministry, Finance, Governance, Education, Parsonages and Communications, enquiries from parishes are responded to quickly and members of diocesan staff offer a range of training opportunities. We also enjoy having fun together with regular coffee and cake mornings, jacket potato Thursdays and sharing pizza with the Cathedral staff team.

Led by the Bishops of Worcester and Dudley, the Bishop’s staff includes the Dean of Worcester, Stephen Edwards, Archdeacons of Worcester and Dudley, Mark Badger and Nikki Groarke, the Diocesan Secretary, Andy Todd, Director of Mission and Ministry, Roger Latham, Director of Education, Tim Reid, Director of Communication, Sam Setchell, Dean of Women’s Ministry, Becky Elliott, who represents the needs of ordained women across the Diocese and the Bishop’s Chaplain, Stuart Currie.

Here’s what some of the parish support team felt was needed in our new bishop



The Diocese of Worcester is committed to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults to worship and grow in Christ safely. We believe that making our churches safe for all is everyone’s responsibility and we all have a role to play. To support us in this, our diocesan safeguarding team provides professional advice and training, as well as supporting those who may have suffered abuse.

# Church schools

There are 99 Church of England schools in our diocese, across all deaneries and spanning two local authorities (The Metropolitan Borough of Dudley and Worcestershire). The wide variety of our schools includes small, rural primaries with mixed age classes and large, urban schools. We also have both two-tier and three-tier arrangements for education in our area, including first and primary schools; some with maintained nursery provision, middle schools, high schools and secondary schools.

Currently 92% of our schools are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and 93% of schools have been judged by SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) to be living up to their foundation as a church school, enabling pupils and adults to flourish through their vision and practice.

The Diocese has a mix of maintained local authority schools, stand-alone academies, and schools within Multi-Academy Trusts. A small number of maintained schools have also entered into a formal agreement as part of either a Soft or Hard Federation.

Just under half of our schools have now converted to become part of a Multi-Academy Trust. The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) currently works with 14 Multi-Academy Trusts with varying numbers of church schools within them. We have established two of our own Trusts – The Diocese of Worcester Multi-Academy Trust (DoWMAT) – to predominantly serve Worcestershire schools, and Elements Diocesan Learning Trust (EDLT) – to serve the schools within the Borough of Dudley that often have very different contexts to those situated in Worcestershire.

The DBE values all our schools for their individual and unique contribution to education, alongside schools that are not designated as Church of England. We encourage schools across the Diocese to support one another regardless of their size, location or academisation status.

The Education Team, on behalf of the DBE, offers services and support to all Church schools. This includes formal training and support on all aspects of Christian vision, values, distinctiveness, worship, spirituality and Religious Education. The team also provides additional services for school effectiveness and leads the region's offer for National Professional Qualifications which are open to all schools.



“ 92% of our schools are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted ”



## Links:

- ▶ Gather
- ▶ Church & School Partnership Award
- ▶ Overbury CE School Global Neighbours award
- ▶ Marcia Harris retires after 34 years at Cradley CE Primary







As a diocese, we have formal links with the Anglican Diocese of Peru and the Anglican Diocese of Morogoro in Tanzania, as well as an ecumenical link with the Evangelische Kirche in Mitteldeutschland (EKM).



“The fundamental purpose of the links is forming a relationship between dioceses in different contexts.”



## Our overseas partnerships

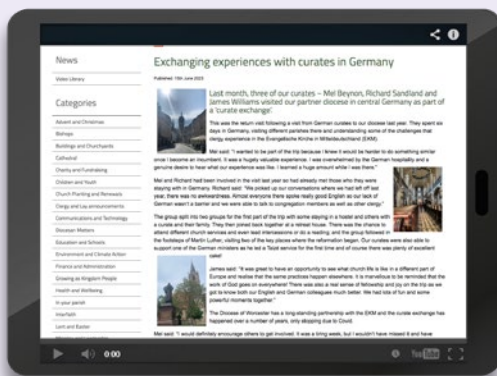
We have three formal overseas links with the Diocese of Peru, the Diocese of Morogoro in Tanzania and the EKM in Eastern Germany.

The fundamental purpose of the links is forming a relationship between dioceses in different contexts. We aim to pray, journey and learn together, sharing with each other our experiences, mission and ministry. Clergy from our link dioceses are invited to the UK for the clergy conference, and often on other occasions, while there are also regular visits from Worcester to Peru, Morogoro and the EKM. Visits both ways highlight the amount we can learn from each other and the enrichment of sharing together in God's mission. Under the umbrella of the diocesan links, individual links exist between parishes and schools.

Bishop Godfrey Sehaba from Morogoro writes: “The link with the Diocese of Worcester has been a genuine pleasure and has offered valuable insights together with unwavering support which are crucial to our progress and fuels the development of our institutions, parishes and the diocese at large. The dedication to the partnership has been an instrumental for the growth of our diocese. Thank you all for being our trusted partners. We look forward to more fruitful collaboration beyond the tenure of the current retiring Bishop.”

From the EKM in Germany: “We value the personal encounters in which we affirm what we have in common and learn from each other to overcome differences. We share the same experience of an increasingly secular society, challenging us to think critically about our faith and practice.”

Bishop Jorge Luis Aguilar Ocampo from Peru said: “The possibility for Peruvian clergy to meet those from Worcester changes our perspective about the Anglican Church. The Diocese of Worcester has the respect and gratitude of the Anglican Church of Peru for all it has done as we walk together in spiritual solidarity. As we face new challenges, including deepening the formation, learning and spirituality of ministers and laity, and the creation of a new missionary diocese, we recall with gratitude the importance of this partnership in our growth and look forward to continuing to work closely with our friends in Worcester.”



▶ Read about a visit to Germany by some of our curates



# Help us face the challenges

Many of the challenges we face are not specific to us, although the way they impact our diocese is unique. This is not an exhaustive list, but reflect the key concerns which emerged from our Open Conversations in 2019/20, when we invited people to discern together what we should be prioritising. Over a thousand people attended these gatherings – in some places we had to double up at the last minute in an extra venue – so we have a good sense of the key challenges in the parishes.

- The Demographic Challenge.** Based on the latest available data, our Average Weekly Attendance across the Diocese was 1.01% of the adult population, and 0.70% of the child population (compared with national averages of 0.99% and 0.93% respectively), having declined by around 27.43% overall since 2019 (compared to a national average of 23%). Nearly half of our worshipping community is aged over 70 – significantly above the national average of 35.6%. How do we engage more effectively and accessibly with the vast majority of people in our communities for whom the Church is unfamiliar or, worse, irrelevant? What would it look like if children, young people and families were at the heart of what we are, whilst still cherishing our faithful established congregations?
- The Ministry Challenge.** 60% of our churches have weekly congregations of fewer than 30, only 13 of more than 100. Between 2013 and 2023, the number of stipendiary clergy fell by 15%. As a result of these and other pressures, clergy feel increasingly stretched. How do we enable them to thrive amidst the very particular challenges of ministry in this environment? How do we best enable lay ministries to flourish alongside ordained ministry?
- The Financial Challenge.** Following a £1m operating deficit in 2018, we made a number of significant changes to bring our result now to a break-even position. Central to those has been the introduction of a Ministry Share system providing greater transparency around the cost of the ministry which benefices receive (adjusted for congregational income). This has enabled us to take important steps towards helping a greater number of churches to achieve financial sustainability, despite sustained economic pressures in all our communities but especially the most deprived. In addition, we have leveraged the Diocese’s historical reserves to support our **Transformation Programme**, with external funding via the Diocesan Investment Programme.

▶ Read our latest annual report and accounts here on our website

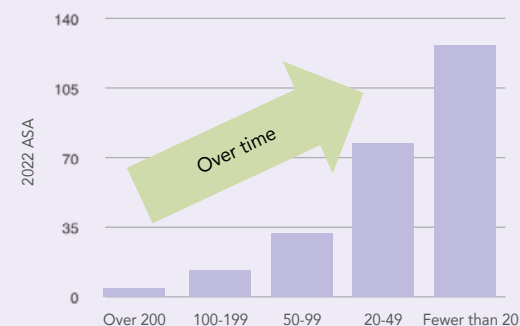


From our consultation:

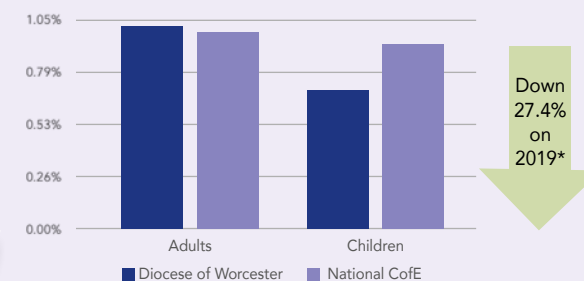
“ A bishop who is able to be a focus for unity within the church and genuinely will value and affirm ministry and churches from every tradition in words and action.

... Someone who understands clergy wellbeing.”

Church size



Age profile in the Diocese



43 of our parishes are among the most deprived 20% of the Church of England. 66.58% of our population live in those 43 parishes.

\*Based on 2022 Statistics for Mission data, the most recent year for which we have the national comparator.



## Our vision and priorities

Our diocesan vision is to grow as Kingdom People, sharing the good news of Jesus' love in Worcestershire and Dudley through churches that are growing in health and sustainability.

As the body of Christ, we seek to join together to worship God, make disciples, share hope and transform our communities, living out our values of love, compassion, justice and freedom.

### From now until 2030, we aim to:

- **Double** the number of children and young people worshipping in our churches.
- Create **100 new worshipping communities** offering a range of ways for people to come to faith and worship God. (eg Forest Church / Café Church / Walking Church).
- **Invest in the renewal** of around a dozen churches to ensure that each major area of population has at least one church with 150 people attending weekly, enabling them to support other local churches.
- Underpin these by investing in our clergy and lay leaders, providing **training and development** opportunities to enable them to grow and feel supported and equipped for mission.

We want to strengthen and resource our churches to help them explore what it means to grow in health and sustainability in their own context and hope that our diocesan plan has something for everyone who wants to grow. We are very aware that one size doesn't fit all and there are a number of ways in which churches can get involved.

Over the next few pages we will give more detail about our priorities as well as case studies showing how our churches are living out our vision to grow as Kingdom People.



From our consultation:

“The diocese is already on a clear journey with a carefully constructed long term plan, formed after wide consultation. The new bishop needs to be excited about the direction of travel, and willing to join in, whilst bringing their own gifts to the table.”

“Someone who has a vision that will help the diocese to move forward and make tough decisions where necessary in parishes.”



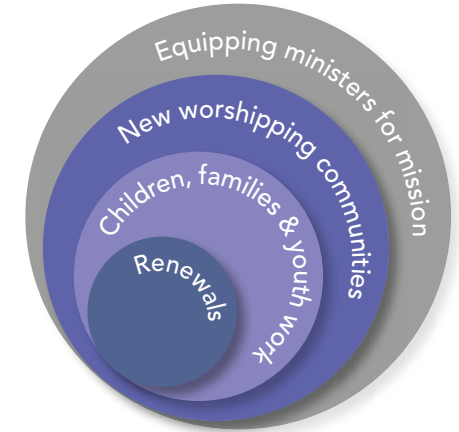
▶ Rich Johnson, vicar of All Saints, Worcester and National Leader of New Wine explains what he loves about the Diocese of Worcester

## Join our journey of transformation and change

Our journey of transformation and change began with our Open Conversations, so where we have ended up is truly a collaborative and consultative effort.

As the feedback from these conversations was reflected upon and dug into more deeply, we formed and agreed a long-term plan for the Diocese, together with three main priorities and an underpinning priority, and four purposes around which our churches could unite: to worship God, make disciples, share hope and transform communities.

▶ More information about our priorities can be viewed here



Significant investment is targeted towards fulfilling our agreed goals. We were the first diocese to secure funding from SMMIB under their new partnership programme, which is enabling the renewal of a number of churches for mission over the next seven years. We have also committed our own resources in a Healthier Churches Fund, enabled by a Total Return policy, through which we are enabling parishes to employ Children and Families Workers and start New Worshipping Communities. One of our mantras is, “one size doesn’t fit all”, so we support all parishes who are keen to grow in a variety of ways and offer bespoke coaching through a pioneering Mission Accompanier scheme.

We long for a bishop who will be excited to join with us on this journey. The direction of travel is clearly set, but we are learning all the time and consciously embracing emergent change as plans develop, so there is much scope for our new bishop to join in as the future of the diocese takes shape and bring his or her own hopes and dreams to merge with ours.

## Praying for Growth

A dedicated period of prayer that our diocese will grow both spiritually and numerically over the coming years.



## Praying for Growth

### Praying for our Vision

God of all grace and goodness,  
you lead us into the way of love and life:  
hear our prayer for your church in this place,  
may we offer you our hearts and minds in worship,  
bring others to walk with us as disciples of Christ,  
and share the hope to which you have called us,  
that by the work of your Spirit  
we may see lives and communities transformed,  
and be drawn ever more deeply into your life of love,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.



## Praying for Growth

### Praying for our Priorities

Generous God,  
by your Spirit lead your church into growth,  
and into the mature humanity  
that reflects the image of Christ our Saviour.  
So equip our ministers with the gifts of your Spirit  
that we may kindle anew the flame of faith  
among children and young people,  
renew our churches with your life and love,  
and help new communities come to birth  
and lift their hearts in worship,  
that, joined as one body together,  
we may find a voice to sing your praise,  
now and in all eternity.  
Amen.



# Children and Young People

Children are at the heart of our church life, and we want to support churches to grow engagement and ministry with our young people. Our aim is to double the number of children and young people involved in church life from 1,400 to 2,800 by 2030.

Addressing the significant imbalance in age demographics is our number one priority. If we are able to involve a greater number of younger disciples in the church, some of these will come to church as families, increasing the number of adults in the 25 – 50-year-old bracket.

To meet this goal:

- We will increase the number of paid children and youth workers to ensure we have one flourishing children and young people's ministry in each major population centre, and at least two such centres in each deanery
- We will develop intergenerational New Worshipping Communities (NWCs), and some aimed at children and young people, as part of our goal to launch a hundred NWCs by 2030
- We are working closely with the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) to launch Gather congregations in association with our church schools, and to nurture spiritual formation through strong collaboration between our churches and church schools

In August 2024, we have 14 children and youth ministers in posts across the Diocese, five of these are funded through the Healthier Churches Fund, with funding for a further three roles approved by Bishop's Council. Funding from SMMIB will see recruitment of a further five roles before the end of 2024.

Our employed workers are connected via 'WhatsApp' to share resources, prayers and ideas, plus termly gatherings allow time to share experiences, highlights and challenges together. Once a year, a retreat affords space to reflect on ministry from a more personal perspective.

As the network grows, we aim to meet additionally in deanery hubs, to support ALMs and other key leaders in the area through the offer of advice, training and an invitation to join together for key events across the year.

## Case study links:

- ▶ Partnership enables children and youth worker
- ▶ Holiday club at the Church of the Ascension
- ▶ Children & young people's worker at Norton and Wollaston





# New Worshipping Communities

The second of our priorities as part of our vision to grow as Kingdom People is to create 100 New Worshipping Communities by 2030.

Some people feel there are barriers to them attending a traditional church service. They may be families with young children, be part of the neurodivergent community or have disabilities, or they may have never been to church before and are worried about knowing what to do and when.

New Worshipping Communities (NWC) help ensure we are offering a range of ways for people to come to faith and worship God. They offer a more informal and relaxed form of worship, sometimes in a different setting to a church which members of the community may be more familiar with and feel is more accessible.

We have partnered with Myriad (part of the Gregory Centre for church multiplication) to deliver a learning pathway to support churches who have recently started or who are about to start NWCs. The partnership with Myriad has also funded an Administrator to support this work. The SMMIB funding has enabled the appointment of a part-time New Worshipping Communities Enabler to work with churches on this priority and we have also been exploring how we can also work with Greenhouse.



Read more about the learning pathway and meet the NWC support team:  
[www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/news/a-focus-on-new-worshipping-communities](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/news/a-focus-on-new-worshipping-communities)

## Case study links:

- ▶ 3Ts in Brockmoor
- ▶ Beoley Church@4

# Renewals

The third of our strategic priorities is to invest in the renewal of around a dozen churches to ensure that each major area of population has at least one church with 150 people attending weekly, enabling them, in time, to support other local churches too.

In some cases, the renewal will be led by a new incumbent, with appropriate training and skills. In other cases, the existing incumbent will work with additional resources to enable a step change in missional capacity and growth. We envisage all these churches will have some degree of paid children's/youth work, some operations/administrative capacity and the possibility of part-time paid worship resource.

In March 2023, the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) of the Church of England agreed in principle to an estimated investment of £6.8 million – with funds released as detailed plans are developed, which will support the renewal of seven churches in Dudley and Redditch. This will form phase one of our plan and to date funds have been released for the renewals in Halesowen, Stourbridge, Kingswinford, Netherton and Old Hill and St Stephen's, Redditch.

Planting new churches and revitalising existing worshipping communities is a key role for our two resourcing churches, All Saints in Worcester and Top Church in Dudley.



“ ... to invest in the renewal of around a dozen churches to ensure that each major area of population has at least one church with 150 people attending weekly ”

▶ How All Saints in Worcester has been supporting other churches

## Case study links:

- ▶ St Peter's Church in Bengeworth
- ▶ Being a Resourcing Church

# Equipping Ministers for Mission

Our underpinning priority is to invest in our clergy and lay leaders, providing training and development opportunities to enable them to grow and feel supported and equipped for mission.

Equipping all our ministers for mission, whether lay or ordained, is of vital importance for us to grow as a healthy and sustainable church. Coaching is used in a whole variety of fields to enable people to grow and develop.

Our Mission Accompanier scheme not only provides support and coaching to the leadership team identified by the parish, but also works with the incumbents themselves. On the basis of feedback from parishes, we are now extending this to enable Accompaniers to work with their parishes for longer, and for more parishes to be paired with a Mission Accompanier.

The 'Auxiliary Pathway' began in September 2022 as an alternative way for individuals to train to become locally-focussed ordained ministers. This is a two-year part-time, training course delivered by the diocesan Mission and Ministry team with input from the bishops. During the two years, candidates will explore their vocation to ordained ministry alongside theological learning attend a national BAP before they are ordained. At our ordinations in June, four deacons and ten priests had trained through the Auxiliary Pathway. They are all now serving their local churches as non-stipendiary clergy.



## Case study links:

- ▶ Peruse our latest training brochure
- ▶ Mission Accompanier supports Beoley
- ▶ Mission Accompanier support in Old Hill
- ▶ An update on the Auxiliary Pathway



# Something for everyone who wants to grow

We want to strengthen local churches and encourage and resource them to explore what it might mean to grow in health and sustainability in their context as they worship God, make disciples, share hope, and transform communities. One size doesn't fit all and through our diocesan priorities, there is something for all churches who want to grow. This could be accessing a Mission Accompanier, support with setting up a New Worshipping Community or working with our Dean of Smaller Churches.

Smaller churches are defined as those with an active church membership of 20 or fewer, which is around 45% of the churches in the Diocese. They are 95% rural and the majority are listed buildings. 15% of the active church members of the Diocese are within the Smaller Churches which serve 10% of our population.

The Dean of Smaller Churches works with these churches to help them understand how best to use their buildings, so they are less of a burden, how they can streamline governance, share administration and explore and affirm new models of ministry in these parishes.

The Dean of Smaller Churches was a role new to the Diocese in 2021, nationally funded and, at its inception, nationally unique. Borne out of the recognition that there are specific challenges faced by our many smaller churches to remain or become 'Healthy and Sustainable', the purpose of the role is to work both proactively with individual smaller churches in their context and to work strategically to find ways of supporting the whole population of smaller churches.



## Case study links:

- ▶ Joint councils
- ▶ Muddy Boots mission area

# Diocesan vision: Worshipping God

Alongside the worship offered in our churches, we are very fortunate to have a diocesan retreat centre and two religious communities based in the Diocese, which are centres of prayer and worship for the diocese and beyond.

Holland House is the retreat centre and conference centre owned by the Diocese. It is set in three acres of beautiful gardens sloping down to the River Avon in the village of Crophorne, just outside of Evesham. The centre runs a variety of courses and quiet days and is well known for its gardens and its locally produced food!

The Franciscan monastery at Glasshampton in Shrawley, West Worcestershire, provides a comfortable place to stay on retreat, or a few days 'away from it all', somewhere to work, study, pray and to spend time with God.

Mucknell Abbey is a contemplative monastic community of nuns and monks living under the Rule of St Benedict and part of the Church of England. They are always happy to welcome people visiting on day or longer retreats who are willing to help create and sustain an atmosphere of quiet and prayerful recollection. Visitors can join the community for the Eucharist, Daily Offices and lunch.

In addition to their ministry of hospitality, both monastic communities play an active part in the life of the Diocese, as well as supporting us through faithful prayer.



## Case study links:

- ▶ Archbishop Justin's prayer pilgrimage across the Diocese
- ▶ Explore some of the different ways we are worshipping God in our churches



# Diocesan vision: Making Disciples

## Reaching those moving into new homes

We want to see more people find and grow in the love of God! Our parishes are reaching out to new people in many innovative ways and with huge amount of new housing being built across the Diocese, this is an important area of focus. As a diocese we are exploring how we can facilitate some form of mobile mission – perhaps with a Diocese of Worcester coffee van or place where people can sit and chat.

We have developed a ‘welcome pack’ to help parishes reach out to new homes being built in their area. The A5 folder is designed for parishes to be able to include a whole range of useful information about the local area, with the contact details for the church on the inside front cover. There is also an editable

A5 flyer on which service times and other groups run by the church can be listed – this can be printed by churches and included as one of the flyers inside the folder.

Parishes can order quantities of the folder to be printed for them or can get some printed themselves. The aim is to offer something which makes it easy for churches to reach out to those people who might be moving into the many new housing estates popping up. If information like bus timetables and details of the doctors’ surgery and schools can also be included alongside church information, then people are more likely to keep it somewhere handy.

### Case study links:

- ▶ Confirmation candidates from Community Link
- ▶ New service in Norton
- ▶ New Worshipping Communities in West Worcester Beacon



# Diocesan vision: Sharing hope

One of the ways in which we share hope in our communities is **our response to the climate crisis.**

A diocesan environmental strategy was first developed and accepted by diocesan synod in 2008. Since then, synod has adopted a policy in 2021 to become carbon net-zero by 2030 as well as a statement of environmental policy in 2023.

Our work on climate crisis is a missional strategy which is part of the diocesan vision to grow as Kingdom People. We seek to realise this vision both through the priorities that enable numerical growth, and through commitments to worship God, share hope, make disciples and transform communities as a Church of love, compassion, justice and freedom. Alongside numerical growth in healthy churches, we also long for growth in the depth of our discipleship.

Our environmental strategy helps us realise our commitment to transforming our communities and churches to care better for our environment and to safeguard a sustainable future for our planet. We cannot credibly worship the creator God while allowing His creation to be abused; the Gospel cannot be credibly proclaimed if we ignore the destruction of our world; and we cannot be credible agents of God's rule if we do not put our own house in order and play our part in slowing, mitigating and preventing such destruction. How we live in this world, how we exercise our responsibilities to the natural world, how we act justly for the poorest and most vulnerable, are matters central to our missional calling to be Kingdom People. Only by careful, and sacrificial, attention to such matters can we truly share hope and the love of Jesus.

As a diocese we are committed to working toward net-zero emissions and becoming a gold Eco-Diocese by 2030 as well as developing our role as leading public witness to the need for transformation in both church and society.

## Case study links:

- ▶ Sue Adeney video reflection on Eco Church & creation care
- ▶ CARL Rogation service



# Diocesan vision: Transforming Communities

Churches across the Diocese are involved in a range of projects to make a difference in their communities and there are also a number of diocesan social justice initiatives, including the **Racial Justice Forum**.

We want to work towards a church where every person, regardless of their race or ethnicity, feels truly seen, heard, and valued. A church that not only preaches the love of Christ but embodies it in its interactions and decisions.

The Racial Justice Forum consists of individuals who are committed to making the hope of a fairer society a reality. To help guide us in our work, we have developed a Racial Justice Charter and Terms of Reference, which set out our aspirations for inclusive worship, diverse congregations and to work towards transforming our church communities. We aim to do this through understanding our existing landscape better, providing regular communication, developing ways of promoting better understanding, and learning about our historical links to slavery.

Our forum links with the nationally funded West Midlands Racial Justice Programme that will deliver projects to help each diocese to promote racial justice and tackle racism, and our racial justice work is supported by prayer and reflection. We seek God's guidance on all that we plan and do to bring about a more diverse church family where racial justice is no longer an aspiration but a lived reality.

Other social justice initiatives include:

- The diocesan Criminal Justice Affairs Group: [www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/criminal-justice](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/criminal-justice)
- Faith at work in Worcestershire: [www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/faith-at-work](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/faith-at-work)
- BCUIM: [www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/bcuim](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/bcuim)



## Case study links:

- ▶ Pickersleigh Community fridge
- ▶ Clent community hub
- ▶ What it's like growing up in Dudley and how Top Church is serving the community







# Joining the conversation

Our consultation process placed our relational approach, and value of building understanding and friendship through conversation at its heart. The Vacancy in See Committee wanted as many people as possible from across Worcestershire and Dudley to join us in conversation to help inform the discernment process for the next Bishop of Worcester.

We launched two online surveys; a general survey for anyone living in our region to fill in, with a second survey with 'bonus' questions for those involved with a church in the Diocese.

To enable those without internet access to take part, we distributed postcards alongside the diocesan prayer diary and at diocesan and deanery events asking leaders to support those without internet access by organising a discussion and then letting us know people's views.

Almost 500 people provided feedback either through one of the surveys or by emailing the responses from their discussions. We received responses from all deaneries, from both clergy and laity and people from a range of ages (although the majority were aged 45 – 77).

## We asked everyone five questions:

- Using only three words, what qualities do you think make a good bishop?
- What, in your opinion, should be the bishop's three key priorities for the first five years?
- What are the biggest three challenges faced by the church in your setting or context?
- What are your top three hopes for the Church over the next few years?
- What are the three biggest opportunities for the Church?

## We also asked those involved in a church:

- What would you want us to consider when drawing up the Statement of Needs
- Where do you see your church fitting into the current diocesan priorities and long-term plan?

Pictorial representations of the words that consistently appeared 'in the conversation' are on pages 35-38. Although space does not permit us to present all the outcomes of the survey, the answers to the survey were prayerfully considered by the Vacancy in See Committee and they informed our discernment process and now infuse this Statement of Needs in the qualities sought, key priorities identified, challenges set out and hopes and opportunities articulated.

We also asked children and young people in Church primary and secondary schools across the Diocese. Watch a film of their responses.



▶ Watch some of our children tell us what they think our new bishop should be like



## What are the biggest opportunities for the church?



“Someone with a passion for mission, evangelism, and pioneer ministry”

**What qualities make a good bishop?**



“An inspirational catalyst”

**What are your greatest hopes for the Church?**



“A listener and a pastor”

## What are the biggest challenges in your context?



“Someone who understands  
the characteristics of  
small rural churches  
and communities”

## What should be our new bishop's key priorities?



"A natural communicator of  
Christ's love for all"



## The Bishop we want to join us

We have started on a significant journey of transformation and change. The people of the Diocese of Worcester are seeking a woman or man as our diocesan bishop who will join us as we continue forwards.

We are seeking a wise, deeply prayerful, humble and compassionate leader and pastor who will engage with us, and lead us further in this ongoing adventure of faith and mission.

We seek a bishop who:

- can lead us into growth and help us deepen our vision of transformation, further grounding it in a theology of mission, with personal experience of leading strategic change.
- shares the excitement and is energised by our transformation journey.
- recognises the challenges we face, including those of rural and smaller churches, and will communicate and courageously engage with these and other communities to develop a culture of mission and change.
- values relationships and relational working.
- can nurture us and embolden us in mission as Kingdom People in Worcestershire and the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley.
- is focused on discerning and developing the gifts of others
- recognises the challenges in ordained and lay ministry, understanding and modelling well-being and self-care in their own approach to their vocation and encouraging, supporting and equipping others to do the same.
- has evidence of a clear and lived commitment at every level of church and diocesan life to fostering equality, diversity and inclusion across differences in gender, race, class, disability and sexuality.
- will joyfully ordain women as deacon and priest. and adhere to the five guiding principles.
- is confident and articulate in representing the church in the public square, speaking with theological literacy and compassion into national and local situations, providing contextual leadership for those not actively involved in our churches as well as our congregations.



As is the case across the Church of England, there are different views held within the Diocese about the *Living in Love and Faith* process and outcomes. Our culture to date has been inclusive, and we sense that most of our clergy and congregations would wish to be supported by their bishop to use the Prayers of Love and Faith fully.

We need a bishop therefore who:

- will be affirming of people who are LGBTQI+, honour and implement decisions made in General Synod, and who will wholeheartedly value, embrace, support and work with those whose convictions are different, committed to ensuring all are protected to flourish.
- will be an example of how to live generously with 'unity in diversity', who is known for relational collegiality and collaborative engagement across traditions, and who will set a culture in which the outcomes of Living in Love and Faith can be taken forward with love and respect for all.

