

# Strategy for Growth, Mission & Ministry



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# STRATEGY FOR WINCHCOMBE PARISH

## Introduction

The parish vision and priorities, as set out in the parish profile produced for recruitment of the new incumbent included a desire to:

- make worship and activities more relevant to families and young people without alienating the established congregation
- reach out into the community, especially the new estates and social housing estates
- greater involvement in the life of all schools
- strengthen and broaden pastoral care
- reverse decline in planned giving

Therefore my initial thoughts for growth, mission and ministry start with these core priorities. In setting out my vision and strategy I do so with the backdrop of the diocesan<sup>1</sup> and deanery vision in mind too. The Deanery Strategic Plan<sup>2</sup> divides the deanery into 3 Mission Areas, which for us looks very much like the old Team. The support we can give each other in mission and ministry will be a benefit to all the churches, and I am mindful that anything we plan to do together should bring blessing rather than be a drain.

I am also mindful of the world in which we are set. Nationally the number of people who would call themselves Christians has declined to worrying levels and, whilst this highlights the challenging times we find ourselves in, it also points to the opportunities that God may be inviting us to take hold of. How we connect with the wider society of 21st century UK may bring challenges on both practical and theological grounds, but, if we keep God at the heart of everything we do I'm sure that we can be humbler, simpler and bolder as we live our faith.

To my mind there are no earth shattering revelations or major changes within this report. Yes there are some changes being proposed, and a direction of travel to enable new areas of ministry to grow. There are moments for radical change, but this is not it. It is however a time for natural progressive change that both values who we are and also move us into a future.

## Core Strategic Plan

In essence the strategic plan for the parish is to enable the church to grow in number and faith. This strategy aims to enhance what we already do in mission of ministry, so that together we reach out into the whole parish with the Good News of Christ. The wisdom of all church growth is that everything begins and ends with God; or as Archbishop Stephen Cottrell puts it: "*Christ Centred and Jesus Shaped*". So this strategy begins with us prayerfully discerning God's will, seeing where he is already working in people's lives, and daring to join in.

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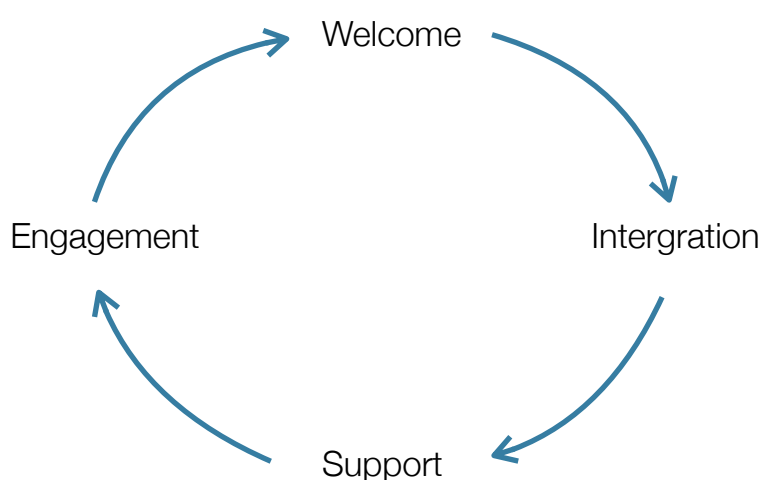
<sup>1</sup><https://gloucester.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/>

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1

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When God offered Solomon any gift he liked as he became king, he sensibly asked for wisdom. Relying on God's wisdom seems like a very sensible way forward for us, therefore I have based our strategy on our need to be WISE.

Therefore the core of our strategy is summed up in four words: Welcome, Integration, Support, Engagement. Without these principles we cannot expect to see people joining our church family, feel (and actually be) part of the church, nor get the support and encouragement needed to actively live the faith in daily life. As we live our faith in daily life we effect the world around us, people see the activity and love of God, bringing people into the fellowship of faith and welcomed into the church family. These core principles map out the cyclical process for church growth:



Having set out the core principles of our strategy for growth I then will give some action points, as I currently see them, for some of the missional areas of our church life. At this point it might be worth making an important side comment about mission and church life. Church life is corporate in nature, it is more than what the Rector wants, and is much more than what the ministers in the church do. It is our collective response to God as we engage in mission and ministry. Working together, using the unique gifts God has given to us, we become more than the sum of our parts and will enable us to make God's Kingdom known in this parish. Some of what we do will involve taking risks, discovering what works and what doesn't - or to put it a spiritual way, discovering how God is inviting us to join in with His activity in His Kingdom. One of the wonderful things about this journey of discovery is that we will learn more from our mistakes than we probably will from anything else.

In order to ensure forward momentum in all areas of the strategy I have identified who the best person is to oversee/lead/initiate the area of ministry. Where the PCC is stated we will identify a person or small group. Our progress will be monitored through this document and reported to PCC every 6 months and published accordingly with those minutes. The aim is to have accomplished all action points in this strategy within 3 years. However, it is also worth noting at this point that how this strategy is lived out will no doubt change and develop over time as our understanding of God's activity broadens and deepens. Therefore the action points for each area will develop over time.

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## Welcome

Both Deborah and I know how good the Winchcombe Parish welcome can be, as do many who have moved into the area. Welcome is an integral part of forming community, and is essential to allow all people to feel valued and loved for who they are as we build an inclusive church.

Welcome is at the heart of all faith communities, as it is a response to that welcome from God to us all. God's inclusive love is constantly seen throughout the bible. We mirror that inclusive love as we open our hearts and doors without barriers or preconditions, no matter how diverse the background or culture of someone may be from our own.

The hospitality of Abraham, and the welcome seen in Jesus' ministry, are classic examples that form the bedrock of our theology of welcome. A Jesus shaped welcome has a generosity that goes above and beyond, an openness to meet people where they are and accept them for who they are. A Jesus shaped welcome also has a willingness to be changed by the encounter.

The hospitality of Abraham shows the abundant nature of welcome. Giving our guests and new family members the very best of what we have, and a welcome that always has their needs front and centre of all we do. We have a privileged position of encountering many visitors on holiday, which is a ministry in itself, and are blessed by people moving into the area from many different places with many different skills and experiences. There is both a settled and transient population, and our welcome is for all.

The hardest task for the church is to welcome the settled population of the parish through our doors. We must recognise there are barriers that prevent people coming to church and build the bridges that enable an encounter with Christ, rather than expecting people to jump to where we are.

## Integrate

Welcoming someone into the heart of the church requires us to allow people to feel and be integrated into the church family. Here we find one of the most complex and sometimes tricky aspects of church life - helping someone feel part of the group, part of the family. This means we must make room for them to flourish in their discipleship.

Discipleship is a life long pilgrimage of learning and exploration of faith, therefore we need ways in which everyone can be encouraged and built up in their faith throughout the whole of their journey. In part we learn more about God, our faith and how to live it, as we gather for worship. The prayers, music, bible readings, sacrament, and (hopefully) homily/sermon, all help us grow in love of God, deepen our faith and enable us to shine as lights in the world.

We also need opportunities for people to meet together in small groups and to play an active role in the life of the church. There are already many groups that meet either to pray or forward a particular area of church life, but we need to be mindful of any gaps in provision, and how we sensitively embed new members into any groups. Opportunities for people to explore their faith is one

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particular gap that I believe we need to address. Whether we try an Alpha or Emmaus course, form groups aimed at a particular demographic, plant a new church, or a combination of such options, will need to be prayed through. The important factor of integration is that we aren't just getting bums on seats, but enabling people be fully part of the church and active disciples of Christ.

We also need opportunities to meet together socially, as this is the best way we really get to know one another. A five minute chat at the end of a service is ok for a quick catchup with people we know, but forming relationships with one another takes time. Social events, trips, pilgrimages and projects all help us form relationships, and in forming relationships we are able to support one another, and build one another up in Christ.

## Support

St. Paul reminds us that we are the body of Christ, and if one part of the body suffers we all suffer. The fact that we have a well established pastoral team highlights the good work already being done in supporting one another, and we will always need a group dedicated to this formal ministry, as well as all the informal pastoral support you constantly give one another.

Another aspect of supporting one another is how we enable one another to use our gifts and talents in the work of Gods Kingdom - not just the practicalities of running the church, but through being engaged in mission and ministry seven whole days not one in seven (to pinch George Herberts words). The scope of this is huge, ranging from the simplest way in which we live our faith in daily life to full time vocations and everything in between. One of the hardest aspects of supporting one another in ministry is allowing people to do things in their own way. Sometimes this means letting go of what has been to enable others to flourish; sometimes it requires us to make sacrifices to support people to do new things.

I would like us to be a church that says yes to new ideas and initiatives, getting behind them and giving them support; nurturing the gift of God in one another, enabling each other to be the people God has gifted us to be. Or to use St. Paul's words: to build one another up in Christ (1Thess 5:11)

The way in which we support one another, and build one another up in Christ, also has a spiritual dimension. Our weekly worship is of course part of that, but spiritual support also includes quiet days, retreats, pilgrimages and study groups to use traditional examples, and Podcasts, Blogs, social media posts and Cafe Church in the more modern world. We will discover what works well in this parish as we step out in faith - firm in the knowledge that we are supporting one another, and that God is with us.

## Engage

When Jesus gave the Apostles the *great commission* at the end of Matthew's Gospel, he didn't say to them go and get some followers, he commissioned them to "go and make disciples". There is a world of difference between being a follower or disciple. A follower just goes along with the crowd,

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whereas a disciple is actively engaged. How we live out our discipleship will change over the years, and that is good for us and the church as a whole.

With the right encouragement and support we can be a church that is able to engage positively with the world around us through our discipleship. Jesus' stated aim in his mission was to give us abundant life. Our faith not only brings life to us, but also to the world around us. When God first began the process of covenant relationship His command to His people was simple - be a blessing to all people (Gen. 12.2, 18.18 & 22.18) Such is God's generosity that it is not just a favoured few who are offered this life giving gift of the covenant, but all nations, all people.

As we engage with the people of this community, serving need, and being a blessing, we develop relationship and then have the opportunity to welcome people into relationship with God, and into His church.



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## Strategic Plan by Area of Church Life

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### Prayer

The parish is underpinned with prayer, and this is a real blessing. Anything and everything we do as a parish has to begin, continue and end in prayer. Outside of Sunday worship this includes: Prayers for the Community; Hear our Silence; Morning and Evening Prayer. All are well established, and I propose no change to the pattern currently in place.

### Areas for Development

**Prayers for the Community** is a good resource for our private and corporate prayers and we should make them available to all intercessors, visitors and on our website.

**Hear our Silence** is an oasis of peace in the busyness of life, and we can make more of it as a spiritual resource through targeted advertising on social media and physically in social spaces. The timings for the group may need considering in the coming months.

**Morning and Evening Prayer** is said in various churches throughout the week, ensuring every church has a public act of worship each week, and is nicely embedded into the weekly routine. This needs to be published on the website to make it more accessible.

**Quiet Days, pilgrimages and retreats** are an invaluable way in which we can set aside time to deepen our relationship with God.

**Prayer stations** relevant to the time of year/festivals to engage visitors to church and create additional reasons for visiting and opportunity to enter into prayer.

### Action Points

1. Update and monitor output on social media and website to enable everyone in their prayers (Leadership Team)
2. Establish an annual Quiet Day in the parish (Ministry Team)
3. Look for, or create, opportunities for retreats and pilgrimages (PCC)
4. Assist the St Kenelm Society develop pilgrimages to the parish and raise awareness of this important local saint (Incumbent)
5. Identify who would create seasonal prayer stations (Incumbent)

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### Sunday Worship

**Christ Church** offers simple, dignified worship but suffers from only having an organist for half the Sunday services. The digital solution is an ok second best.

**St. Mary's**, even post handover will continue as now.

**St. Michael's** is currently trialling twice a month, as was the pre pandemic pattern. This will be reviewed in October. Music on the 3rd Sunday of the month is an issue as no live musician has yet been found, but a digital solution may be an ok second best. This will be reviewed in the



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Autumn along with frequency of services. It is good to have one church in the team that is completely Book of Common Prayer (BCP) as this provides variety and choice.

**St. Peter's** has a good choir and musical tradition. Sunday worship tends to be more formal, the said service at 8am flips between BCP and Common Worship (CW); the 10.30am service is a sung CW service, and the Sunday evening service flips between BCP Evensong/Choral Evensong and a simple said service.

### Areas for Development

Whilst the variety of styles and places of worship are very good, I believe there are some opportunities for development. Whilst working with the diversity of worship styles within the parish I would value some changes at St. Peter's and Christ Church to give a greater sense of unity within the parish as we celebrate the changing seasons of the church's year.

**Canned music** will always be a second best, so developing musicians on a variety of instruments wherever possible is to be encouraged.

**The evening service at St. Peter's** on the 2nd and 4th Sunday could be developed to provide a greater variety - see below under Pioneer Ministry; and Northumbrian Worship could become a more permanent feature on either the 2nd or 4th Sunday.

During the Summer months the additional services at St. Mary's and St. Michael's potentially break the pattern of weekly Sunday evening services at St. Peter's. If we want to be consistent with what we offer, and where we offer it, I would suggest a slight change (ministerial resource permitting) so that the one off Summer Choral Evensong at St. Michael, and monthly Summer Evensong at St. Mary, are additional services. This could work well if the 2nd or 4th Sunday at St. Peter was more "pioneer" in nature and the additional services happened on the same Sunday, therefore attracting a different demographic. That consistency would help with promoting the services on offer - see also Communications below.

**10.30am at St. Peter's** should remain choral in nature. Many people are attracted to this style of worship, and there are missional opportunities for us. Historically there was a good number of young choristers, and I understand the desire for this to be the case again. This is possible as we develop our schools work - see Schools below. As I work with Winchcombe Abbey Primary School to develop whole school worship in church we have opportunity to work with a small group of children to form a chapel choir (or a choir with a better name). This choir could then be invited to sing at special events/services and from there encouraged to join the church choir. This would build on the core group already established by Shelley through her work with the Brownies, and create additional opportunities for them.

The population of the parish has a relatively large number of people who move into the area later in life, many looking for traditional churches. The welcome on offer to those moving into the area is good, and is an opportunity for every member of the church to look out for people moving into the area and extending the welcome of the church. In this parish people have 3 Anglican churches to choose from, all offering slightly different varieties of traditional worship, a Methodist Church and Free Church.

**Child Friendly church** isn't so much about content as it is about attitude. A child can be enthralled by the music, the drama and the ritual of church. True we need to work at making

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them feel part of what is going on and able to join in, but that shouldn't mean dumbing down, or creating a liturgy that alienates a majority of the congregation. I am striving to make the 1st Sunday in the month more accessible through the sermon delivery and music chosen, and for every Sunday to have some way of including young people. In time, and if more young people are present we could also include them in the prayers, bring up the elements and using musical instruments for example. As and when there is a need we would also look to provide Sunday School type activities, which could be celebrated with a show and tell during the notices section of the service. Some work has already taken place to create a child friendly area in the chapel, south aisle and the option of an area in the choir vestry once the service has started. Whilst long term plans (see churches in the Parish) include adapting the Lady Chapel, there is still some work to be done in the interim.

### Action Points

6. Look at where and when services are held - especially Summer Sunday evenings (Ministry team, leadership team and PCC)
7. Develop musical links with Abbey Primary School (Incumbent and Music Directors)
8. Welcome literature to be produced to invite people into our church community and inform them about service times and special events (Incumbent and PA)
9. To discover musical talents and enable people to use them in worship (Music Directors)
10. Make sensitive changes to Sunday liturgy to reflect seasons of the church's year and common identity (Incumbent)
11. Continue to work with families with young children to ensure they are included and catered for appropriately. (Incumbent, PCC church members with young children)

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## Baptisms

There are a healthy number of baptisms throughout the parish and across the churches. Early in the Summer some changes were made to the process of booking, and new services have been produced. The requirement for a fee for baptisms outside of a Sunday main service has been removed as Baptism is a free gift from God and should not induce a fee.

### Areas for Development

**We need better processes** for meeting with parents before a baptism, and ways to remain in contact with them afterwards.

### Action Points

12. Fix a date in the diary when a Baptism rehearsal will be (Incumbent)
13. Fix "usual Sunday for baptism at each church (Incumbent)
14. Include a GDPR notice on application forms (Incumbent)
15. Create an annual event to invite families to (Incumbent and Toddler Time Team)
16. Give families information about all the services and activities of the church (Incumbent)
17. Send anniversary of Baptism cards with information and invitation to church events/services

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## Toddler Time

Meeting every Thursday throughout the year, we are very blessed to have such a good team of volunteers, and good provision for preschool children and their families.

### Areas for Development

**Communication** with and between baptism families is a key opportunity. Now that we are beginning to get permissions to communicate with families beyond the actual baptism this becomes much easier.

**Facebook** is a communication tool that needs some ownership and development, but the key component is identifying the right person to administer the Toddler Time Page.

**Developing “Diddy Disciples”** Whilst there is an obvious Christian element to Toddler Time, and I wouldn’t want to diminish or change that, I would like to trial something new to introduce a time of worship based on nursery rhythm tunes and simple stories.

### Action Points

18. Improve communications with baptism families to promote Toddler Time (Incumbent and Toddler Time Team)
19. Identify someone to look after the Toddler Time Facebook page (Incumbent and Toddler Time Team)
20. Trial a monthly Diddy Disciples service in the Autumn (Incumbent and Toddler Time Team)
21. Annual event to invite Baptism families to (Children’s Worker, Toddler Time team)

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## Schools Work

**Abbey Primary School** being an Aided school gives us a wonderful opportunity for mission. Weekly assemblies, half termly (where possible) services in church, support of the curriculum and governance are all opportunities for us.

**Winchcombe Secondary School** have made encouraging noises about working together, although have not engaged much with us (and to be honest I haven’t been knocking on their door too often either).

**Gretton Primary School** although not a church school have welcomed Steve Carter’s ministry through assemblies, special services and curriculum support. A new head has been appointed and our hope is that we can continue to have a ministry amongst them.

### Areas for Development

**The musical input**, as already mentioned above, the half termly school services with Abbey school could be growth point to re-establish St. Peter’s junior choir. I hope to be able to work with different classes at school to create and deliver child led worship in church, **based on the Eucharist**. As incumbent I recognise the importance of being a regular visible presence in the school community, building relationships with young people and staff.

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**Winchcombe Secondary School** would be well served by Chris Haslam, especially with his gifts of relating to secondary school children. He will develop a ministry at the school through assemblies, curriculum support and being a pastoral presence, with me assisting from time to time on relevant occasions.

**Gretton Primary School** will continue to be served by Steve Carter as he leads assemblies, curriculum support, church visits and is the main pastoral presence, with me assisting from time to time on relevant occasions.

### **Action Points**

- 22. Support and enable Chris and Steve in their ministries (Incumbent and Ministry Team)
- 23. Develop class created and led services at Abbey School (Incumbent and Music Directors)
- 24. Work with the schools in appropriate ways to support the curriculum (Incumbent and Ministry Team)
- 25. Continued music/choir development with school (see action point 7)

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## **Children and Young People**

Money has been set aside for the parish to engage with the young people of the parish, and this was something that captured my attention when looking for a new post, as it shows the church is serious about its work with children and young people. Two rounds of advertising were unable to attract the right person, so we have paused the process to allow me to get a better feel of the parish, and understand the needs of the young people. WAM has been using St. Peter's Centre (SPC) for its Warm Spaces and Youth Council, and it is good for us to support this work by gifting SPC to them on a Tuesday evening.

My thoughts so far have been in two directions. Firstly centred on a ministry focused on the points of transition (nursery to primary; primary to secondary education), and secondly on someone who could lead and coordinate a young people's activities programme for the church. Holiday provision is sparse in the town, and can be expensive. It would also be good to make use of seasonal displays and/or prayer stations to further improve interaction with visitors.

One possible reason for problems in recruitment to this area of ministry could be that the post is part time. I wonder if there is scope for us to be inventive and draw some additional support from the diocese or from partner churches in the Mission Area.

It is important to create various points of engagement with children and young people with a pathway to enable them to grow in faith. The use of interactive services, special events, Diddy Disciples, holiday clubs and worship in and through school will give points of engagement, and different groups and activities according to age will enable young people to explore and grow in faith.

### **Areas for Development**

**Prayer** and reflection.

**Linking thoughts and plans** to pioneer ministry

**Develop Interactive Worship** through special services at liturgically appropriate times (Christmas, Candlemas, Lent, Easter etc)

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**As we develop** our ministry amongst children and young people we will need to revisit our policy on Confirmation and Admission to Holy Communion. Whilst this is not a huge priority, it is one to think about at a reasonably early stage as it will take a few months to react to a changing landscape which has more young people in our church community.

### **Action Points**

26. Form a small working party (Incumbent and PCC)
27. Pray (Everyone)
28. Rework the children's worker job description (Working Party)
29. Have a conversation with the diocese to see what might be possible (Incumbent and Diocese initially and then also Working Party)
30. Advertise for a Youth and children's worker (Incumbent and PCC)
31. Plan special services throughout 2024 (Incumbent and Ministry Team)
32. Review confirmation and Admission to Holy Communion Policy (PCC)

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### **Pioneer Ministry**

Outreach into those parts of the parish that we are struggling to connect with is to an extent linked to the Children and Young People's worker, so deliberately next in this report. It is also worth pausing here to consider why people from the harder to reach parts of the parish aren't coming to church at the moment. There could be any number of reasons: they have no faith; organised religion/the CofE is irrelevant to them; Sunday is crammed full of other stuff; church feels imposing; they don't know anyone; Sunday is a family day; the list could go on. Coming into a church community can be a difficult thing for people to do for so many reasons.

Pioneer ministry seeks to overcome those barriers by establishing a Christian community in organic nonthreatening ways, starting from where people are, rather than hoping they'll jump onboard, traversing a huge cultural gap. There is a leap of faith needed here, but rather than people outside the church taking that leap into the church I believe it is the church community leaping outwards.

There are many ways to plant new churches, some are new congregations within the same church; some are new churches on new estates; and others grow in familiar community settings. I mention these three because they are all possible ways in which we might start something new. Which new way cannot be stated yet as we need a time of discernment.

### **Areas for Development**

**Prayer** is the only place to start as we work out the way forward. A nucleus of people are beginning to form, and they will be making prayer the foundation of what is to come. I would also ask that the whole church community prays for God's grace and guidance as we step out in faith.

**Discovering** the "how" and "where" will take the time it takes. The important thing is discovering how we can be a blessing to the people of this parish. Whatever develops, and whatever shape and form it takes, we must trust God to lead us and gift us.

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**Resourcing** our endeavours with the right people is key, and thankfully we have some gifted people to work with. I propose that Steve Carter takes the lead of this strand of ministry, with myself and Revd Wendy Ruffle as consultants and supporting ministers.

### **Action Points**

- 33. Form a small pioneer group (Incumbent and PCC)
- 34. Pray (Everyone)
- 35. Encourage and Support Steve and Wendy (Incumbent and ministry team)
- 36. Discover Venue, Time and Format for a church plant (Pioneer group)

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## **Weddings**

Along with Baptisms, weddings are another happy occasion through which we can build relationships with people. The transfer of St. Mary's to Sudeley shouldn't have too much of an impact on the blessings ministry at St. Mary's.

### **Areas for Development**

**The wedding preparation** offered over the last few years has been limited due to the pandemic and vacancy. It would be good to get back to having a marriage preparation day which is lay led, and I am happy to say that Fliss Hall is willing to lead this.

**Offering blessings** at St. Mary's for all who get married at Sudeley, and in all churches if people have a civil ceremony at a registrars office.

### **Action Points**

- 37. Enable Fliss to lead a group to run a marriage preparation day (Incumbent, Team ministers and team laity)
- 38. Have a PCC discussion about same sex blessings (PCC)

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## **Pastoral**

We are very fortunate to have a great team of people involved in the pastoral work of the church, visiting the housebound, sick, lonely and bereaved. Some also take Holy Communion to a number of the congregation who aren't able to come to church.

### **Areas for Development**

We have already reinstated regular monthly meetings for all those in the formal side of this area of ministry. We will continue to meet for prayer, support and discussions.

The current focus is through St. Peter's, so we need to find ways of ensuring good pastoral care throughout the benefice. One of the main issues for us as ministers is that it may be several weeks between visits to churches, so we need good information fed to me and the pastoral team about those in need.

Informal pastoral care seems to be generally good, but we must not be complacent.

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Post funeral ministry would be worth reviewing to ensure we give the bereaved as much support as is needed and possible for us to give.

### **Action Points**

- 39. Review and develop post funeral support (Funeral Team and Pastoral Team)
- 40. Develop All Souls services
- 41. Identify key people in each church community to be part of the pastoral care process (Incumbent and Pastoral Team)
- 42. Ensure that we look out for those who are missing through illness (Everyone)

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## **Social activities**

It is a joy to come to a parish where there is a healthy round of social activities. Gathering together in social settings enables our relationships to form and develop.

### **Areas for Development**

Forming a social committee would focus our delivery of this aspect of church life whilst spreading the load so that more than a few are left organising all the events.

### **Action Points**

- 43. Create a Social Committee (PCC)

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## **Churches in the Parish**

### **- St. Peter's**

Having such an historic and beautiful church near the heart of the town is a blessing. It is visited by many people every day, and we are custodians of important artefacts and architecture. More importantly we are a place of prayer and worship that is open 7 days a week. The potential sale of the Methodist Church does have implications for St. Peter's as the public space available in the town increases with the development of that building, therefore decreasing the opportunity for St. Peter's to be a venue for concerts and exhibitions. Potentially it also changes the need for St. Peter's to have an adaptable interior as activities run by us could be held in the old Methodist church if Abbey Fields was unavailable or unsuitable.

### **- Christ Church**

The church is well maintained and good example of Victorian churches. Like St. Peter's it is open during the day for private prayer, which is a good thing for everyone. It receives some visitors, although it is difficult to know exactly how many. It is open for Sunday worship twice a month, and this means that with St. Michael's there is worship virtually every Sunday of the year in this part of the parish. Coffee at the hub on the 2nd Sunday of the month has aided church and community interaction, as do special events and festivals.



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- St. Michael's

Open 24/7 this little gem is a lovely place to pray. We have recently trialled Sunday worship on the 1st and 3rd Sunday's of the month, returning to pre-COVID patterns. This will be reviewed in the Autumn.

- St. Mary's

This lovely church is soon to be handed over to Sudeley (if the legal processes can be completed without hitch). We will maintain the ability to conduct Blessings of Marriage after a Civil Ceremony and monthly Summertime Evensong. There may be scope for additional events/ services dependent on the needs of the Castle.

### **Areas for Development**

With a church such as St. Peter's there is a constant tension between being a place of prayer and an attraction. It is a living building with regular worship and activities, and thus there will always be signs of this all around the church. However, whilst the church is not a museum we have the opportunity to show off the history of the building, and it's current life, through well ordered displays and placement of furniture. There are some very helpful display boards and exhibits that visitors are always interested to see, and we could create further prayer stations and displays. Our Eco Team's activities are often commented on by visitors, which is very good, and as they work towards a Gold Award we can make even more of their good work and display.

In the Winter months St. Peter's can be cold. The working party looking at replacement heating will no doubt help us to find a heating solution that is both environmentally friendly and cost effective. It would be useful to have the ability to heat only a small portion of the building for small groups to meet and/or worship. The chapel is the obvious place, as this is a defined area that could be screened off and have independent heating. We could also take the opportunity to create storage cupboards for the Toddler Time toys.

Creating a permanent cafe style area at the west end of the nave in St. Peter's would create a welcoming space that is uncluttered.

Strengthening the existing good links between Christ Church and Gretton Village Association will help us serve the community and celebrate annual or special events together.

Cafe Church has been used in the past at Christ Church, and could be again, and there are plans to do a prayer walk around the parish.

### **Action Points**

44. Consult the architect to look at ways in which the chapel could be sensitively enclosed and efficiently heated (Sept PCC to vote on this proposal after discussion)
45. Continue to explore the best heating solution for St. Peter's (Heating Working Party and PCC)
46. Walk through church to ensure we maximise welcome and engagement with the buildings (Incumbent and Leadership Team)
47. Optimise displays and season activities to engage visitors

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48. Identify opportunities to develop informal worship, such as Cafe Church, at Gretton (Incumbent and Gretton Mini Meeting)
  49. Organise a prayer walk and special service at Gretton (Incumbent and Gretton Mini Meeting)

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## Communications

How we communicate with one another and the community has always been important, and in this digital age new forms of communication make it easier to communicate with many people, but also adds a layer of complexity to the task.

The parish magazine is a fantastic tool in communicating what we do, as well as advertising future events. The team keep it relevant and interesting with informative articles and news; and copies are received by 400+ households.

Websites are becoming more and more the shop window people use to know what a church is like, and to discover service times and events. Our website has a clean and modern look, and the main events and news is kept up to date. However some navigational and page developments would help.

ChurchSuite gives us a good platform for communication and management, however we don't always optimise its potential for communication with people on the fringes of church.

### Areas for Development

Our digital presence is increasing with the use of Twitter and Facebook, and it would be good to keep this growing through informative and engaging posts, celebrating what we have done, and informing people of future events.

To maximise our use of ChurchSuite we need to ensure that we capture details of people who come to Life Events, concerts and other events that draw people from the community into our churches.

Produce a quarterly leaflet advertising all events and services in all our churches for distribution in Airbnbs, TIC, Hotels, B&B's pubs.

### Action Points

50. See how we can make full use of ChurchSuite (Incumbent, Leadership Team and PA)
51. Capture events digitally for use on Social Media and Website promoting our life as a parish (Everyone)
52. Add web/Facebook/Twitter links on all communications and website
53. Create template for a leaflet and update and distribute quarterly (PA, Ministry Team, Wardens & Incumbent)

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## Finance and Resourcing

Try as I might to avoid the elephant in the room, how this strategy will be financed and resourced cannot be ignored (and I am grateful to our treasurer Charlie for his input and encouragement for this section). Whilst we might step out in faith, trusting that God will provide (and from

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experience I know he does), we still need an idea of the cost of this endeavour. The biggest and most important resource needed is you and me. Our time, gifts and talents are precious gifts, and there will no doubt be competing demands on where our energy goes. The key for us all is to discern what God is calling us to do in service of his kingdom today. We may not be able to do what we used to do, and that's fine; what is our role in God's church now, what new thing is he inviting you to do today? The important thing for me, and the rest of the ministry team, is to equip, encourage and enable you in that vocation so that working together God's will be done.

There are some big ticket items in the plan, particularly action points: 28, 42 and 43. Some money has been put aside for a youth and families worker, the PCC is already mindful of the need of funding for the heating system at St. Peter's, and new money will be needed to fund enclosing the chapel (if this is possible). Some trust funds can be approached to assist funding, using matched funding from our own reserves. However, we will need to cost these items in detail when we have decided the hours for the youth and families worker, discovered the best heating system and how we might enclose the chapel. It would be wrong to guess at the heating and chapel costs, but the cost of a Youth or Children's worker is around £35k per annum.

Medium cost items such as venue for the church plant (action points 35) may take some direct startup finding. When we know the what, where and when of a pioneer church we will be able to calculate the cost, however, whatever we do should be self funding within 2 years.

Low cost items include action points 5, 15, 22, 30, 44, 45 and 50 would increase the budget of the costs of ministry by approximately £2k pa. Whilst some money will be recouped through visitor donations (5 and 44) and increased congregations (30 and 45), action items 15, 22 and 50 would be through direct PCC funding (or to put it more accurately through what we give to the church through regular giving). The benefit of each of these items will only be evident over time, and seeds sown, such as school services, may not grow for many years to come, but the benefit to God's kingdom as a whole is priceless.

Other action point items would either be no cost or self funding, although it would be good to offer subsidised places on Quiet Days, Retreats and Pilgrimages, which would either need to be budgeted for annually, a trust fund set up through fund raising events, or costed into full price tickets.

## Concluding remarks

There is much to think and pray about in this strategy, and I hope as you've read it that there has been a growing sense of hope and even excitement for the future. Please think through the questions in the "Your Thoughts" section below and let us know what they are. You, your thoughts and your support matter, so please let us know what you think and how you would like to join in. There will be a Q&A session on Saturday 14th October at 11am at St. Peter's, where in person conversation will help us answer your questions and hear your comments.

The Diocesan LIFE prayer:

God of hope and transformation, who in our Lord Jesus Christ offers the gift of life in all its fullness, send your Holy Spirit and grant us joy in our following and vision in our leadership.  
May we be rich in imagination,  
confident in faith,  
and courageous in our engagement with  
the people and places of this diocese.  
As we share your life with the world, keep us rooted and grounded in love  
as we bear witness to your glory and pray for your Kingdom to come. Amen.

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## Your Thoughts

Having read this strategy and development plan, what are your thoughts.

- Has something been missed?
- What challenges are there in implementing this plan?
- Where are the opportunities for us as a church to be a blessing?
- From this plan (and your thoughts of what has been missed) which are the priorities for time, energy and finance?
- How is God calling you to engage with His Kingdom in this parish?

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# APPENDIX 1

## Deanery of Tewkesbury and Winchcombe Draft Deanery Strategic Plan – update 26 April 2023

The Deanery has held four facilitated days and the outcomes from those days form the basis for the Draft Strategic Plan below, which is made up from separate documents prepared by the Area Dean following each meeting.

The purpose of the Tewkesbury and Winchcombe Deanery is to be a beacon of hope in Christ in our communities, sharing ministry together which start from 3 Mission Areas

### How we work together



Working together we will:

- listen to God to shape our specific mission and ministry in this deanery.
- share our expertise and resources so as to increase our effectiveness and fruitfulness and enable mutual flourishing.
- make new disciples by finding new ways of telling our story, explain our faith and

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give a reason for the hope that is within us.

- serve our communities by working in partnership with others to witness to God's love and address global issues confronting our generation so that all may flourish
- be a channel of communication (up and down) to diocesan structures for reporting and envisioning.

### **Diocese vision and values:**

As a Deanery, we are committed to the Diocesan LIFE (Leadership, Imagination, Faith, Engagement) vision and we believe in the transforming power of the gospel, as we are shaped by and centred on Jesus Christ.

- We are stronger when working together and alongside God's Plan.
- All member ministry.
- Investing in people and programmes which excite young people to explore and grow in faith
- Developing diverse lay and ordained leaders
- Encouraging new and courageous ways of worshipping in different places which connect with more people
- We believe as inter-generational church communities we can offer God's love in new and creative ways.
- we value diversity in worship
- we are committed to living simply and responding prophetically to environmental and social need.

### **Who do we want to serve.**

- we long to be a visible Christian presence in every village and town for all people.
- we are passionate about engaging with children, young people and families.
- we want to increase our Christian impact in primary and secondary schools.
- we chose to be outward facing, working closely with our community partners.
- we want to be active in areas of new housing.

### **Issues and challenges – 'the future they are currently in'**

#### **1. Church attendance and profile**

- Rural communities are vulnerable, with some potential church closures.
- Café church services and town centre congregations are growing.
- Bishop's Cleeve village has since significant development in the past decade – 14,000 people at 2021 Census (10,000 at 2011) with more housing since.

#### **2. Finances**

- Christian stewardship needs to be set in a framework of spiritual growth. Without growth in faith and commitment to Biblical giving, the outlook for financial health across the churches will remain challenging and the subject of continual struggle.

#### **3. Governance**

- As a result of a post-pandemic shift in how people choose to spend their time, fewer people seem willing to volunteer for key roles within the church or deanery.
- Benefice Councils are starting to form, to consider issues that have an impact across

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the benefice and help all our churches maintain joined-up thinking and action.

4. *Church of maintaining large or expensive listed churches set in small communities*
  - In five years, most church buildings, including those with small worshipping communities are likely to be maintained.
  - In the rural context, some of these are being supported by the local community.
5. *Finding new ways of engaging with families beyond Sunday*
  - Opportunities are wide open for involvement with schools but there are fewer volunteers to resource this.
  - Finding LA and community governors can be difficult, but Church of England schools where the incumbent is automatically a Foundation Governor are well served.
  - Youth connectors could potentially help and Sportily, is presenting new opportunities. In general, engagement with children and families is scarce due to limited resources.
6. *Community engagement*
  - Ideas but limited resources.
  - Foodbanks are a real success as a Church/community partnership.
  - Church people are involved in community life/leading in the local non-church groups, e.g. book clubs, gardening.
  - Retired people tend to be most involved – is this reflection of the population?
7. *Discipleship*
  - There are some home/Life groups and prayer groups but this is not widespread.
  - High engagement of congregations with the life of the church BUT with some exceptions.
  - Depending on churchmanship, some people do not like the term 'Missionary Disciples' and see their church attendance more as 'serving at the temple'.
8. *Evangelism*
  - Pre-pandemic, an Alpha course was being run, but due to context it didn't translate well to online.
  - There is a need for intentional sharing of faith and nurture between parishes e.g. Lent courses, Alpha, now we can meet face to face.
  - Some new initiatives (e.g., Café church and Church on the Hill) are attracting people.
9. *Leadership (Clergy/Lay)*
  - In the short term, how to sustain ministry across the deanery is a concern. However, new clergy are in now in place in Winchcombe and Bishops Cleeve. Likewise an appointment has been made for Tewkesbury, commencing in September 2023. There are still 3 vacancies.
  - (Over) dependence on retired clergy.
  - Ministry load is not evenly spread and is unsustainable. DSP has the potential to deploy clergy more effectively.
  - Increasing demand for technical bureaucratic roles (Safeguarding, GDPR, H&S, risk assessment) – fewer people are able or seem willing to fulfil these roles.
  - A lack of voluntary resource is a key issue in lots of areas of church life.



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## **Environmental threats and opportunities taking into account of the diocesan vision and challenges.**

The target has been set for 0% zero carbon footprint for all our parishes.

## **Vision statement and what we prayerfully plan to accomplish.**

Our vision for where we want to go is outlined in four vision statements followed by a proposal of how we intend to get there.

### **1. We want to see our worshipping communities fully alive to the work of the Spirit: viable, vibrant and mutually flourishing that are:**

- mission-orientated, community-focused, locally routed
- where leadership is relational, collaborative, supported and visionary
- where governance is simplified and structured sustainably
- where all ages are represented, disciplined, valued and encouraged and supported to lead and volunteer.
- where all ages are equipped to witness to God's love throughout their week.
- where stewardship (generous and sacrificial) is taught and practised as part of discipleship to enable our worshipping communities to be financially sustainable
- where good health produces growth: in prayer, love and service
- where stories are shared frequently of God's activity and reality.

### **2. We want our buildings to be assets not burdens, fit for purpose to further the work of the Kingdom by:**

- deploying some creative thinking around community use and support
- identifying a person with building expertise from within the Deanery to support Parishes
- sharing of knowledge and skills: of grants available for completing quinquennial work and how to work towards the diocesan target of net zero for our carbon footprint.

### **3. We want to be worshipping communities that are outward looking by:**

- focusing on children and families – Developing partnerships with schools, community groups, uniformed organisations, parent and toddler groups
- building relationships with young people aged 11 to 18 years – Supporting mentoring work in secondary schools, sports activities, Teens in Crisis
- reaching out to people over the age of 60 – Friendship clubs, care home ministry
- developing strategic pathways to enable those pastoral connections

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(weddings, baptisms, funerals) to find a way into the worshipping community (Alpha courses, etc)

- pioneering ministry on new or existing housing estates
- participating in opportunities to serve: Foodbanks, CAP, Chaplaincies, Street Pastors
- finding new ways of telling the story, explaining our faith and giving a reason for the hope within us

#### **4. We want to work together ecumenically with other denominations within our communities by:**

- encouraging clergy to meet regularly with local ministers for prayer, planning and support.
- celebrating together where appropriate; recognising the different strengths on offer – that we are not competing but co-operating
- find ways to share our resources in mutual support and benefit, serving the poor
- becoming known as the church in the community *for* the community, that is trusted, fun, accessible, inclusive and welcoming.

#### **How do we intend to get there?**

We recognise that the shape and geographical size of our deanery is such that it is unrealistic to expect this level of partnership to be effective across such a wide area. However, through identifying three distinct Mission Areas there is a greater possibility of collaborative working together to encourage initiative, provide support and work to our respective strengths.

#### **Communities are how people relate to one another.**

The phrase 'mission community' sums up what we need to be as a church. Mission communities help us to work together, support one another better and break down any sense of isolation. They enable us to be more flexible in our mission and more responsive to the different contexts and cultures of our deanery.

A mission community aims to express the fulness of the church locally. This will include:

- regular prayer and worship
- pastoral care
- evangelism and mission, often in collaboration with our ecumenical partners
- opportunities for learning, teaching, nurture and growth for disciples of all ages
- youth and children's work and worship
- equipping members for ministry and the development of ministry teams, so that no-one ministers alone.
- connecting with the local community, especially in service to the poor

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- good administration and stewardship of time, resources and buildings.

If our mission communities are to flourish, they need to be more than just a structure. They need to live and embody the life of Jesus Christ and to share that life with others.

**Jesus came so that we may have life in all its fullness.**

This is our vision and our hope for the church in the Tewkesbury and Winchcombe Deanery working in **three distinct mission areas** focused on the market towns of Tewkesbury and Winchcombe, and the village of Bishop's Cleeve.

Not every parish can offer every aspect of the Church's life and ministry, but by joining in partnership with neighbouring churches and forming a mission community, we gain the critical mass and diversity of the gifts of the Spirit that enable us to work together more effectively and sustainably.

**Actions and activities to encourage fulfilment of the Vision.**

The Deanery Strategic Plan will be led by the Deanery Leadership Team, consisting of 4 Area Deans, with clergy and lay representation from across the deanery, and through three mission communities led by an Area Dean, clergy, and laity [Tewkesbury, Bishop's Cleeve, Winchcombe. Roles are responsibilities as suggested below.

The proposal is that each of the three mission communities (MC) will be led by an Area Dean each taking the responsibility for implementing the plan in their mission area (MA) leaving the fourth Area Dean free to coordinate Chapter meetings, Deanery Synod, Standing Committee and Deanery Mission and Pastoral Groups, and alongside with the Lay Chair, co-ordinate and chair DSP Meetings,

**1. We want to see our worshipping communities fully alive to the work of the Spirit: viable, vibrant and mutually flourishing.**

- Inspiring clergy, PCCs, readers and lay leaders to own the deanery vision through PCC meetings and groups.
- Including the Deanery Strategic Plan in parish profiles to ensure applicants are supportive of the leadership values expressed – relational, collaborative, visionary and appreciative of the need to simplify structures of governance.
- Clergy and PCCs to be responsible and accountable to the deanery for paying Parish Share in full.
- Clergy deployment to be dependent upon financial sustainability and need.
- Separate funding to be sought for pioneer ministry and the creation of new worshipping communities.

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**2. We want our buildings to be assets not burdens, fit for purpose to further the work of the Kingdom.**

- Identify 'buildings champions' within the deanery to be the 'go to' people to help parishes with buildings maintenance and development/reordering.
- Identify people willing to share knowledge and skills on fundraising.
- Consider the need for buildings/property/places of worship and gathering in connection with the creation of new worshipping communities in areas of new housing and places/estates where the church doesn't currently have a presence.

**3. We want worshipping communities that are outward looking.**

- Bring together those people who are working in children and families, youth and over-sixties ministries to share ideas and establish networking hubs within the deanery for these demographic groups.
- Through Chapter and mission communities, develop shared experience and resources on occasional offices and the creation of pastoral connections to worshipping communities.
- Provide opportunities for people to hear about the community outreach and engagement activities within the deanery.
- Hold workshops, encourage preaching series and other activities that will help people to tell the story, explain their faith and give a reason for the hope within us.
- The DLT and mission communities to explore the need for new worshipping communities in areas of new housing and places/estates where the church currently doesn't have a presence.

**4. We want to work together ecumenically with other denominations within our mission areas.**

- Encourage ongoing support for Churches Together and ecumenical co-working within the deanery and mission communities.

**5. Identify a number of areas for Deanery wide shared working on Finance, Buildings, Schools and Youth Pioneering.**

- Establishing networks – WhatsApp; Twitter; Facebook etc

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## Next Steps

- Understand and have knowledge of resources available for future.
- What ministry is needed and what may be available.
- Information on buildings – data – how do we maintain and fund.
- Within mission areas – plans for future deployment of clergy and pastoral
- Reorganisation/readers/Lay ministry.
- Define what is Deanery wide and what is Mission area.
- Affirm Mission Areas

## Mission Areas

As suggested previously the proposal is that each mission community (MC) of which there are 3 will be led by an Area Dean who takes responsibility for implementing the plan in their mission area (MA). Each Mission Area Lead will identify a Leadership Team and pattern for implementing mission and ministry.

Plan and facilitate good relations between the clergy and laity, providing opportunities for engagement, conversation, planning and prayer. This will be done through having a shared and local sense for 'this deanery' and the right support structures in place.

**Population:** as more people move to the Deanery with multiple new housing projects, the missional opportunity is obviously huge. The realities of post-pandemic, and in some areas often aging, worshipping communities with limited time to volunteer, means that in many worshipping communities the time commitment to church and mission is noticeably reduced. If this trend continues there will be fewer Christians to engage missionally with an increasing number of people and an ever-increasing level of need.

**Finance:** we recognize as a Deanery that not every Benefice is unable currently to contribute via parish share sufficient funds to support the cost of stipendiary ministry which the Diocese has committed to the Deanery. We are aware that the Diocese are exploring other ways of generating income to support the cost of ministry. Linked to this we would like to take the opportunity to review how we use our buildings and other resources currently including how they could be used in different ways in order to generate more funds.

## ***Roles and responsibilities – who will do what***

### **Deanery Synod reps/PCCs:**

- To put forward names for a team to begin scoping a Deanery Finance & Buildings Project.
- To share the expectations document about the role of Deanery Synod Reps and encourage

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people to stand for election at their APCMs who will take an active role in seeing the DSP implemented.

**Deanery Standing Committee (DSC):**

- To review the joint actions required to implement the DSP.

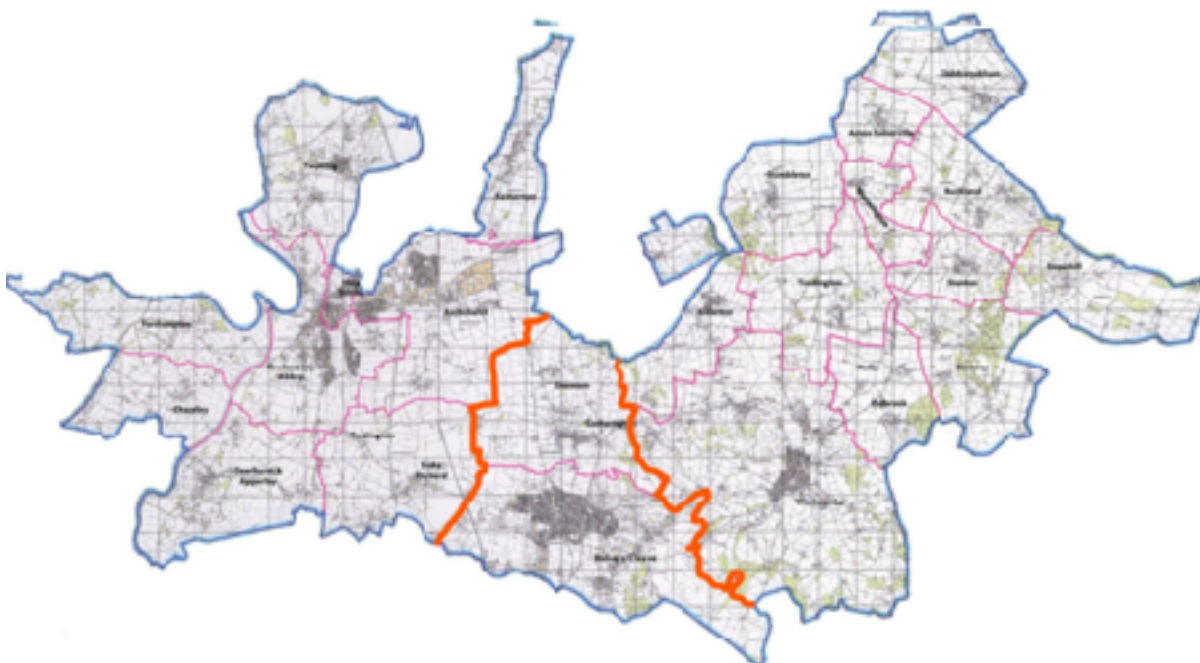
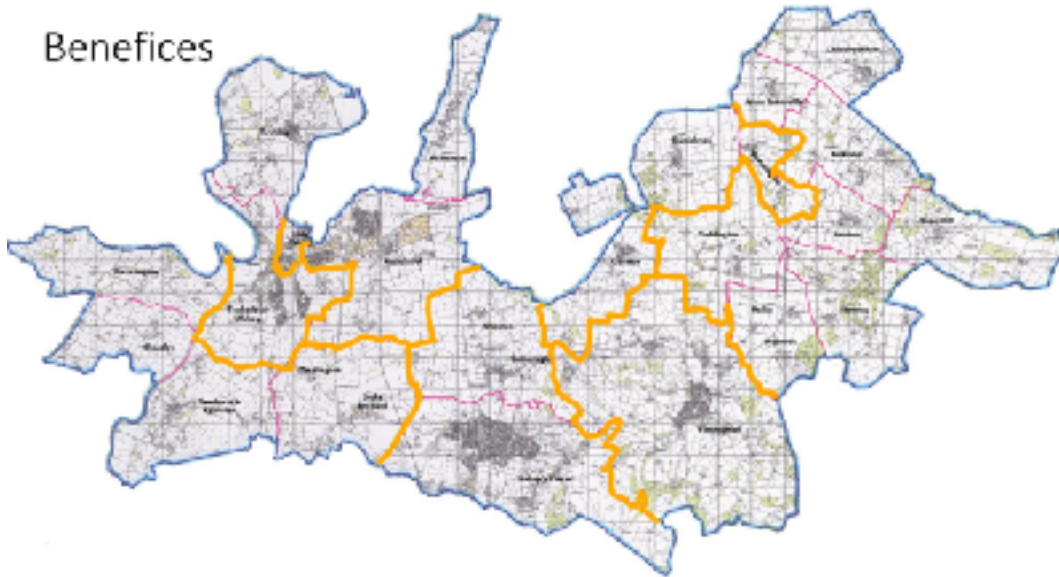
**Collaborative working:** To begin to gather information that shows us where we have different areas of expertise within the Deanery which could be shared, and to investigate how we share challenges and best practice between groups such as Treasurers, Churchwardens and Parish Safeguarding Officers.

***Risks and success factors***

Key risk: despite vision sharing, and invitation to use gifts and talents, people choose not to engage. We acknowledge that we have no leverage except the relationships we have with one another. We are also sensitive to the fact that decisions to change the shape of ministry must not be seen as a failure of those who have faithfully given energy, time and money often sacrificially.

Key success: we begin to have more courageous and hopeful conversations and begin the journey together of shared commitment and accountability that will give us a firm foundation for the future.

## Benefices



**The Deanery of Tewkesbury with Winchcombe is:**

**3 Mission Areas; 30 Church buildings; 11 Clergy [8 full stipendiary, 1 x 2/3 time 1 x Team Vicar [HFD]; 3 Secondary Schools; 1 Additional needs school; 14 Primary Schools**



<b>Tewkesbury Mission Area Clergy</b>	<b>Church Building</b>	<b>Worshipping community</b>	<b>Secondary School</b>	<b>Primary School</b>
<b>Vacant [stipend] Revd Canon Nick Davies</b>	<b>Tewkesbury Abbey</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>John Moore CP 180 Pupils Queen Margaret CP 180 Pupils Tewkesbury C of E 272 pupils</b>
<b>Vacant [stipend]</b>	<b>Tewkesbury Abbey/ Celebrate</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>Queen Margaret CP 180 Pupils</b>
<b>Rev Ron Hesketh [HFD] Retired?</b>	<b>St Margaret's, Twyning</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>Twyning CP 114 Pupils approx.</b>
<b>Rev Stephen Walker [Stipend]</b>	<b>Holy Trinity Tewkesbury</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>Mitton Manor CP Tewksbury C of E</b>
<b>Vacant [Stipend]</b>	<b>St Nicholas Ashchurch</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Tewkesbury Secondary School Approx 1500 Pupils</b>	<b>Tirlebrook CP 210 Pupils</b>
			<b>Alderman Knight Additional needs School – 208</b>	<b>Northway Infants 180-135 in 2020/21 Ashchurch CP 147-140 in 2020/21 estimate Carrant Brook 180 – 170 in 2020/21 estimate</b>
	<b>Kemerton</b>	<b>Yes</b>		

<b>Severnside Benefice</b>				
<b>Rev Ilse Ferwerda [2/3 stipend]</b>	<b>Apperley</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>Deerhurst and Apperley C of E</b>
	<b>Deerhurst</b>	<b>Yes</b>		
	<b>Tredington</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>Tredington CP</b>
	<b>Stoke Orchard</b>	<b>Yes</b>		
	<b>Chaceley</b>	<b>Yes</b>		
	<b>Forthampton</b>	<b>Yes</b>		
<b>Bishop's Cleeve Team and Mission Area Clergy</b>	<b>Church Building</b>	<b>Worshipping community</b>	<b>Secondary School</b>	<b>Primary School</b>
<b>Rev Tim Garrett [Stipend]</b>	St Michael's BC with Southam	Yes Yes	Bishops Cleeve Secondary – 1,400 pupils approx..	Bishops Cleeve Primary Academy – 605 Pupils
<b>Team Vicar [Stipend] vacant</b>				
	Woolstone with Gotherington	Yes		Gotherington CP – 204 pupils
	Oxenton	Yes		
<b>Winchcombe Team and Mission Area Clergy</b>	<b>Church Building</b>	<b>Worshipping community</b>	<b>Secondary School</b>	<b>Primary School</b>
<b>Rev Canon David Penny [Stipend]</b>	St Peter's Winchcombe	Yes	Winchcombe Secondary School – 489 Pupils	Winchcombe Abbey C of E School – 300 Pupils
	Sudeley Manor	No		

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	Gretton	Yes		
	Stanley Pontlarge	Yes		
<b>Rev John Newcombe Team Vicar [Stipend]</b>	Buckland with Laverton Aston Somerville[closed]	Yes Yes No		
	Snowhill {C of Ease}	Yes		
	Stanton	Yes		
	Stanway	Yes		
	Toddington, Didbrook & Hailes	Yes Yes		
	Childswickham	Yes [moving To Worcester Diocese]		
<b>Oak Hill Benefice</b>				
<b>Rev Julia Hook Team Vicar [HFD]</b>	Alderton	Yes		Oak Hill Primary C of E School- 52 Pupils
	Dumbleton	Yes		
	Great Washbourne	Yes		
	Wormington	Yes		

