

# DIOCESE OF OXFORD ANNUAL REVIEW

MAY 2021



DIOCESE *of*  
OXFORD



The Diocese of Oxford is the Church of England in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Together, we are the Church, called and sent by God as disciples of Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. We are a living, growing network of more than a thousand congregations, chaplaincies and schools.

Together, we are called to be more Christ-like: to be the Church of the Beatitudes: contemplative, compassionate and courageous for the sake of God's world.

Together, we work with God and with others for the common good in every place in one of the great crossroads of the world.

Together, we are called to proclaim the Christian faith afresh in this generation with joy and hope and love.

Together, we are called to dream dreams and see visions of what could be and see those visions come to birth.

**[oxford.anglican.org/commonvision](https://oxford.anglican.org/commonvision)**

# AN EXTRAORDINARY YEAR

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It is remarkable what our parishes, schools and chaplaincies have achieved during this extraordinary year. Deep appreciation and thanks go to each of our teachers, our clergy and lay ministers, our wardens, church officers, and volunteers. Your work to minister to the dying and their families, to schools, to those facing food shortages, to your communities in so many different ways has been nothing short of phenomenal.

God's grace has also been evident in the work of our diocesan staff, many of whom have shown great versatility in adapting to the pandemic, providing advice and support to parishes and often working additional hours to meet demand.

This year, perhaps as never before, we've witnessed the tremendous value of being part of a diocese, supporting and listening to one another, working in partnership with each other and across our local communities.

This annual review endeavours to draw out some of those stories by highlighting a selection of activities, support and resources that have originated from our Church House teams, committees and councils.

We have a new format for this year's review. It's designed to provide the necessary accountability and assurance to Diocesan Synod for the work carried out by, and under the auspices of, the various diocesan committees that Bishop's Council largely oversees.

The pages that follow meet that formal requirement for an annual report to Synod, but this review is also intended to provide greater transparency, accountability and inspiration to a much wider diocesan audience. Do let us know what you think of this new approach and format.

In closing, we also want to thank the members of the many committees, without whom the diocese could not operate. This annual review is testament to the prayerful care, time and expertise that you give in service as we all seek to be a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world.

The Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford

Canon Mark Humphriss, Diocesan Secretary

# BISHOP'S COUNCIL

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Bishop's Council has the key role, as the standing committee of the Diocesan Synod, in overseeing the policy, finance and operational activities of the diocese. It is made up of lay and clerical members of parishes, elected by archdeaconry, plus ex-officio members.

Throughout the year Bishop's Council considered carefully, in both its scheduled meetings and additional informal meetings, the many ways in which COVID-19 was affecting the diocese, as it is continuing to do. It oversaw significant savings being made during the year and was grateful for salary sacrifices made by all the senior staff and many other staff. It was necessary to freeze salaries and stipends for one year, which has been graciously accepted by clergy and staff.

Diocesan priorities have been regularly reviewed and discussed during the year as we seek, across parishes, schools and chaplaincies, to be a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world. Bishop's Council scheduled a major debate at Diocesan Synod in March resulting in the declaration of a climate emergency, then followed up with the commitment of resources for this new focus area. The award of national funding for our New Congregations programme was warmly welcomed. As regards children and young people, *Disciples Together* was discussed in some detail before it was launched at the June meeting of Diocesan Synod. The focus of our all-day meeting in July was our common vision, with discussion in groups of the work of each of the focus areas and a decision, in direct response to COVID-19, to establish a new workstream on addressing poverty and inequality.

Significant other business transacted during the year includes:

- Following a review, Bishop's Council decided that up to £5m initially of the glebe portfolio should be available for social investment, responding to the major disparity between the demand and supply for social housing
- £1m (£250K p.a. for four years) was awarded to support less well-resourced dioceses and £50K for the Anglican Communion's pandemic response internationally
- Consideration of the report of the working group set up following the Cowley Deanery Synod motion to look at basic infrastructure in churches, and the award of £200K p.a. from 2021
- The decision to [divest from fossil fuel investment](#) during 2021
- Reports on world mission, the cathedral, Development Fund awards and risk management
- Safeguarding arrangements have been carefully monitored, with governance arrangements further strengthened, [two independent reviews](#) published and good progress on the national Past Cases Review exercise
- Consideration of departmental workplans, including regular opportunities to question heads of department; during the year full reviews of the departments of Communications and Mission were carried out and approved
- Establishment of a [Dignity and Respect](#) in Ministry and at Work policy for the diocese
- The approval of the financial statements, the recommendation to Synod of the 2021 budget and the approval of new assumptions and allocations for the total return triennium 2021-3 to support the mission activity of the diocese, including the extension of the Development Fund for a further three years at £1m p.a.
- Commissioning a much-needed replacement of the heating and air-conditioning at Church House, expected when the building was bought and which was carried out during the January to March 2021 lockdown to minimise disruption
- Consideration of the size and form of Diocesan Synod membership for the next triennium and of the diocesan submission to the national Clergy Remuneration Review.



# MISSION AND MINISTRY

## Children, young people and families

A highlight of 2020 was the launch at Diocesan Synod of the [Disciples Together](#) report in June in support of our new strategy for children, young people and families, approved by Bishop's Council. This strategy represents a significant moment in our life as a diocese; we all know that there has been a growing gulf between our work and the reality of life for young people and in the culture at large. This groundbreaking report explores how we can embrace the key shifts

we need to make for the benefit of God's world and outlines steps for our future ministry.

*Disciples Together* has revitalised our relationships with people across the diocese. We were thrilled to see the synergies between Church House, parishes and congregations; something that has been strengthened by embedding Discipleship Enablers into the fabric of church life, following a team restructure.

# 104

**YOUTH, CHILDREN OR FAMILIES MINISTERS IN THE DIOCESE OF OXFORD**

**THE REVD KEVIN COLYER** joined St Michael's Church, Bray at the height of lockdown, and discovered a great new way to engage and get to know the younger members of his congregation – without, as he puts it, 'boring them with long sermons and unrelatable Bible stories.' Instead, he is trialling worship in the digital realm with the help of the computer game, Minecraft, in which players explore an online world via avatars.

'Even if the children are buried deep in their "world", parents and siblings often end up engaging in some really interesting conversations on Zoom, which is so great to see and hear. It feels wonderful to be part of this new expression of church – something which we hope to build on once the pandemic is under control.'



Photo: Revd Kevin Colyer



## Responding to the Climate Emergency

In March 2020 Diocesan Synod [declared a climate emergency](#), establishing an Environmental Task Group to lead our response to the threat of climate change. In little over a year, the diocese has become one of the leading voices in this area. We are marching towards our aim of net zero carbon emissions by 2035.

**“Our response must be nothing less than an ecological conversion of every person and every part of society... it is the responsibility of every family, every workplace, every village, town and city, every company, and every public institution.”**

Bishop Steven

- The diocese no longer has any direct investments in the oil and gas producing sector
- 10% of churches in the diocese have had energy audits
- Number of churches on renewable tariffs has increased since 2018
- New online EcoHub launched
- Emissions from clergy housing, schools, diocesan and area offices offset
- Travel and procurement audited to improve the diocese’s environmental credentials
- Significant investment put into supporting the task group, with an additional full-time post.

## New faces



We welcomed our first BAME development enabler, Revd Polly Falconer, in February 2021, strengthening our resolve to encourage, support and promote BAME vocations, participation and representation at all levels in the diocese. As a diverse, multi-

cultural diocese, we need to be reflective of our community and their needs. Polly is a vital force for good in promoting a better understanding of racism, racial issues and cultural diversity.

Polly’s role is community-based as she works with colleagues and communities across the diocese to

develop an understanding of the root causes of under-representation, helping us to move towards resolving the issue and supporting the increasing number of BAME Anglicans in the diocese.



In January 2021 we welcomed the Revd Dr Andrea Russell as deputy director of mission. She aims to make licensed ministry open to all, and ensure that the structures and content of training, from initial exploration to ongoing ministerial development, enable all to flourish.





## Ordinands and Curates

Revd Dr Quentin Chandler was appointed as Head of Vocations and DDO in January 2020.

Despite disruptions caused by the pandemic, 19 ordinands were priested and 26 deaconed by December. Friends, family and parishes were able to share in the services, thanks to the livestreaming of no fewer than 14 ordination services in September.

The Bishops' Advisory Panel (BAP) moved online and we are delighted that every Diocese of Oxford candidate attending a BAP was recommended for training.

During the year the DDO team undertook significant preparations for the new national shared discernment process, beginning September 2021.

- 9 full academic courses and 25 day courses transferred online for ordinands, curates and Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) in training
- 68 people supported in their exploration of vocation to ordained ministry
- 13 new LLMs completed training and admitted
- Supported 103 curates and 106 training incumbents.

## Personal Discipleship Plans

PDP Training continued throughout lockdown. We now have over 450 trained PDP mentors/encouragers supporting people in their everyday faith. In January, work began to extend PDPs to employed Children, Youth and Families ministers across the diocese. This cadre will go on to mentor and encourage others through the PDP process.

## Fostering generosity

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Joshua Townson, Generous Giving Advisor, the Parish Giving Scheme enabled 5,000 regular givers in 268 churches to provide regular income to their local church. Online donations proved fruitful too. In November and December alone, churches in the diocese received c. £40k through our recommended online donations provider.



*Paul and his mentor chat about the difference a PDP has made to his faith journey.*

## Growing New Congregations

As we began 2021, there was a renewed focus on growing new congregations, with the appointment of a project manager and the support of a Strategic Development Fund grant of £2 million approved in 2020. The New Congregations programme will support our parishes in growing 750 new congregations over the next decade, establishing Fresh Expressions of church through local, contextual, outreach and innovative church planting and revitalisations.

[A new film premiered in March 2021](#) featuring three people who've each grown new expressions of church. Thanks to support from the Development Fund, two resourcing hubs have been established (see below examples) as well as others in Milton Keynes, High Wycombe and Slough.

**15**  
**DEANERIES EXPLORING GREENHOUSES TO GROW NEW WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES.**

**7**  
**NEW CONGREGATION RESOURCING HUBS IDENTIFIED, SUPPORTED AND FUNDED.**

**A Greenhouse** connects teams of people with others who are also finding new ways to share the Good News with their community and grow a Fresh Expression of church.

**Resourcing Hubs** in the diocese reflect the need to work in both rural and urban areas. Resourcing Hubs are committed to giving themselves away to bless others, to share the good

news of the gospel with those outside our normal Sunday services, and to grow new congregations of new Christians in new places.

**Church planting** also draws people into the adventure of discipleship. It is complementary to, and not a replacement for, other vehicles for mission.

### St Mary's Cogges, Witney Deanery

St Mary's, Cogges is a vibrant church on the edge of Witney, with a desire to become the first market town Resourcing Hub, planting Fresh Expressions of church, equipping rural church mission and supporting church and congregation planting in the Cotswolds and beyond. Their vision is that in the next 10 years, the deanery will have lots of Fresh Expressions of church

of all sizes, sorts and shapes, bringing life to their community. Investing in younger leaders and looking outwards will ensure an ongoing pipeline of new Fresh Expression opportunities. They have a heart to share their time and resources with others – particularly through developing youth projects, and convening the first Greenhouse.

### North Aylesbury Team, Aylesbury Deanery

The North Aylesbury Resourcing Hub works in an urban context, drawing on the skills of a number of clergy to create a new team, which will build thriving new congregations in both the deprived estates and ever-expanding communities of the town. Attendances in the team area have risen from around 150 to more than 300 over the last three years, and this project is the next step: enabling more growth in the area, including a series of identified church plants, and the extension of this work into areas beyond their boundaries.

The revitalisation of St Peter's, Quarrendon will continue under a full-time minister, bringing new people to faith through innovative outreach work such as a community garden, breakfast church and exercise classes. Three potential church plants have been identified in the area. The North Aylesbury Team will offer experiential learning through teaching days and encouraging the development of learning communities that engage in shared reflective practice. In addition, there will be online, small group or even one-to-one coaching sessions.



# FINANCE

COVID-19 brought substantial areas of concern for the diocese in early 2020. Parochial ministry costs were over budget and we anticipated the pandemic would impact Parish Share. Under the oversight of the Planning and Budget Subcommittee and Bishop’s Council, significant savings were identified to the diocesan budget for 2020 and 2021 and we worked even more closely with deaneries to ensure that mission and ministry could continue to be provided.

The predicted sharp decline in Parish Share did not materialise, thanks to the hard work and dedication of so many to maintain parish giving. 94.4% of Parish Share was received in 2020 – an incredible achievement.

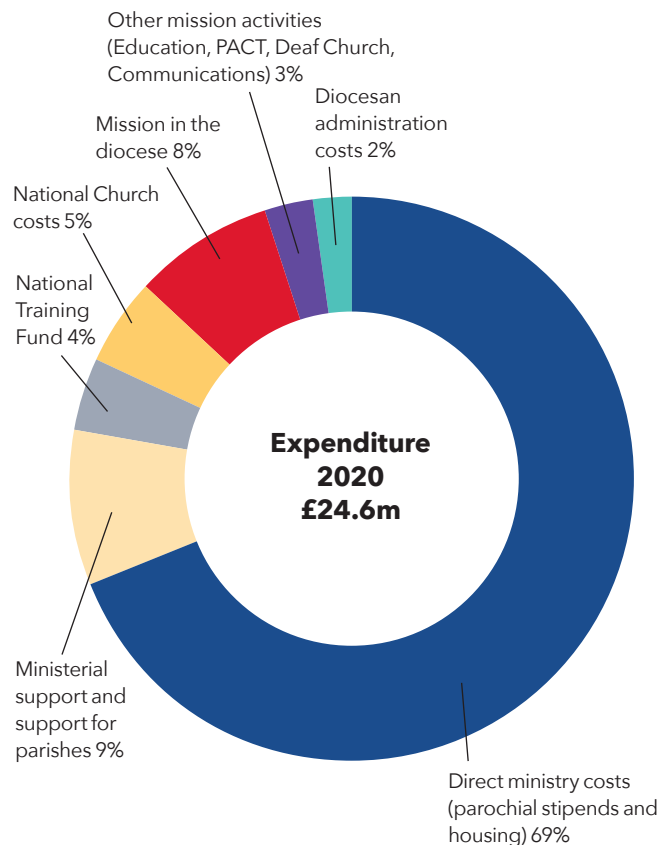
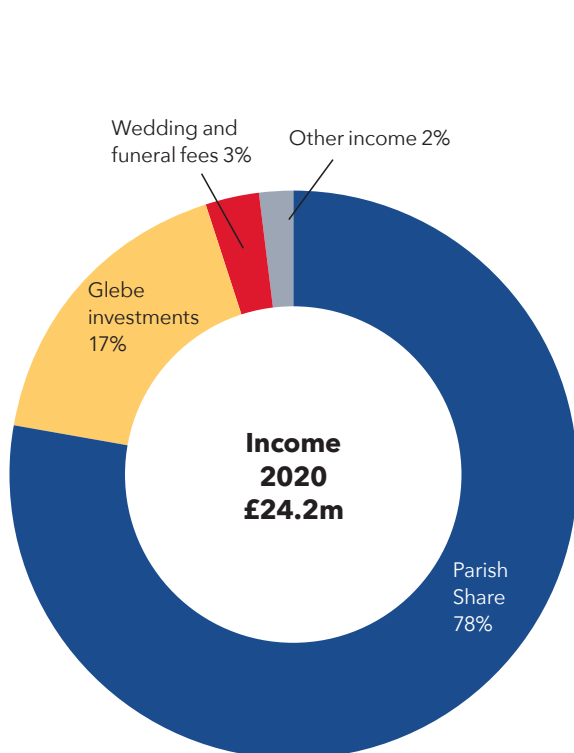
The team also faced internal pressures. New processes had to be established to ensure financial controls were maintained during lockdown, and we also bid farewell to two long-term members of staff. Alison Jestico, director of finance, retired in December and Becky Morris, financial controller, left her role in February 2021 after a decade in post.

The Finance team, now led by our new director of finance, John Orridge, is aware that the financial hardships faced by many will continue well into 2021 and beyond. A number of steps have been taken to protect the diocese’s financial position, including

bringing forward the time when curates look for incumbency roles, temporarily running vacancies for 12 months from when a stipend is paid to when a stipend is next paid and offering support to deaneries who are expecting a shortfall in Parish Share.

**‘Thanks must be extended to all those who have continued to work so hard in these unprecedented times; we are deeply appreciative of all that our staff, clergy and congregations (especially deanery and parish treasurers) have done – they have sustained the finances of parishes and the diocese during some of the bleakest economic conditions we have ever faced.’**

John Tattersall, ODBF Chair



Charts based on Management Accounts

# HR AND SAFEGUARDING

- Developed and communicated advice on 25 pandemic-related policies, procedures, support guides and factsheets
- Responded to 85 HR queries
- Advised on 30 draft bids to support our common vision
- Gave advice on wellbeing and supported related processes for 17 clergy and 18 employees

The COVID-19 pandemic required fast-paced action and agility on the part of the HR team to develop and adapt HR policies and procedures as well as provide management guidance and other practical tools in line with the Government's emergency legislation. This was predominantly in the areas of home working and furloughing staff. HR managed and supported 18 ODBF employees and 15 ODBE employees through furlough. Thirty staff, including all heads of department, voluntarily took a salary sacrifice in 2020 in view of the financial pressures brought by the pandemic. We offer our sincere thanks to them.

Work began on a new *Dignity in Ministry and at Work* policy relating to clergy and staff, which was approved by Bishop's Council in October and offers an

essential resource to the diocese in ensuring that we treat one another appropriately. A month later [Flourishing Together](#) was launched to support the wellbeing of all postholders in our churches and promote good working practices.

There were three departmental restructures to address the changing needs of the diocese, affecting the Glebe and Buildings, Communications and Mission teams. Recruitment was paused in the spring but by the end of 2020 we took action to fill key roles, including appointments for the new Bishop of Dorchester and Director of Finance.

The HR team has continued to provide support to parishes and schools, as well as assisting applicants with their Development Fund bids.

- Managed 163 new safeguarding concerns whilst continuing to manage 42 existing cases and referring 8 cases to statutory authorities
- Supported 22 volunteer safeguarding trainers
- Provided guidance for 407 safeguarding officers
- Worked with 7 authorised listeners
- Set up and managed the diocese's PCR2, ensuring the creation of a PCR2 Reference Group
- Completed 2 Safeguarding Independent Reviews

Safeguarding activity did not abate during the lockdowns, with the number of referrals on the increase. To address capacity issues within the team, a consultant was engaged on a part-time basis and roles have been reorganised to cover priority areas of work and to achieve more resilience for the future. As well as this, two self-employed individuals formed the Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) independent reviewer team. This area of work is on schedule for completion this summer.

The team have been proactive in introducing new ways of engaging with parishes to improve culture and practice. Work includes the introduction of Area Meetings with parish safeguarding officers, incumbents and churchwardens, and direct learning for PSOs through the sharing independent safeguarding reviews. Four Area Meetings were held in 2020 and PSOs received copies of the Tim Davis and Stowe independent reviews.



# BUILDINGS AND THE DAC

Furlough, a team restructure and retirements have seen a leaner, but no less efficient, team emerge, and their work carries on at pace, working tirelessly to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions at the same time as supporting the demanding list of work that comes with a portfolio the size of ours.

**1,060**

DAC APPLICATIONS AND ENQUIRIES IN 2020

**3**

BELLS TUNED  
ST MARY'S, LONG  
WITTENHAM

**9**

PROPERTIES SOLD  
AND 2 GLEBE  
TRANSACTIONS RESULTING  
IN CAPITAL RECEIPTS  
C.£10M

**1**

TEAM  
RESTRUCTURE

**'We have had a tremendous response from our church community and village residents on seeing the work... I understand that the last time the church was painted was 33 years ago.'**

Rev'd Rickey Simpson-Gray, Team Vicar, the Claydons and Swan Benefice.

**3**

LOCKDOWNS

TOTAL RENTAL  
INCOME GENERATED  
DURING 2020 NEARLY  
EQUAL TO 2019  
FIGURE OF  
C.£800,000

2/3 OF QUINQUENNIAL  
INSPECTIONS ON  
VICARAGES COMPLETED  
BY THE END OF 2020

# COMMUNICATIONS

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Our busy communications department works with every team and area office to deliver professional and highly engaging resources for use across the diocese. They're also there to support parishes and Church House teams when things go wrong. Despite a challenging year thanks to COVID-19 and several high-profile issues, much has been achieved.

## Key initiatives

Significant projects in the past year included *Come and See*, several *Disciples Together* resources, a high-quality film to support our New Congregations work, a school governor recruitment campaign and the online EcoHub.

Two bishop-led campaigns achieved an excellent response, reaching well beyond the diocese. Parishes appreciated Bishop Steven's Rule of Six resources and four short environment films from Bishop Olivia, suitable for home group study, were widely viewed.

## COVID-19

Parishes appreciated COVID-19 summaries, which provided a simple map to the many pages of guidance churches had to consume. Area Deans and Lay Chairs noted the quality of communications during the pandemic, reporting that they feel 'cared for and part of something bigger'.

## Church online

As church buildings closed and parishes began to adapt to the new normal, Communications colleagues launched [Church at Home](#), accessed by thousands of people each week; produced 21 podcast episodes from Bishop Steven, aimed at supporting the church during lockdown; and live streamed any number of ordination services, schools worship, licensing and welcome services.

The department helped the Church House staff to work in new and transformed ways and supported parishes to live stream with a dedicated online support group, online sermons and digital content, technical help sheets and a live-streaming kit guide for churches. Working closely with the Secretariat, they also ensured the smooth online running of Diocesan Synod and other key meetings.

## When things go wrong

The work to support the diocese and Church with several high-profile stories continued apace. Of particular note this year were the ongoing challenges at the cathedral and the launch of two major lessons learned reports. Despite the significant draw on capacity, Communications colleagues have worked hard to ensure efforts in this area have not been at the cost of other initiatives.

## New faces

A review of the department was completed successfully, on schedule and with no increase to annual expenditure. Two new communications officers, Emma Thompson and Sarah Bowie, joined in November. They're already contributing a great deal, despite little opportunity to meet colleagues face to face.

## Sharing good news

One of the communications review goals was an uptick in parish stories on the website and in local media. Alongside our own channels, we've seen a significant rise in regional, faith and national media coverage in recent months.

Two editions of [Pathways magazine](#) were published prior to the pandemic halting distribution. Email, already a very effective communications channel, became even more important. This led to the introduction of *Church House Quarterly*, and regular thematic newsletters as well as a refreshed look and feel for diocesan eNews.

A considerable amount of work on the website has also taken place as part of the preparatory work to move to a new platform later in 2021. Other digital initiatives include work to build an Instagram audience and improved use of LinkedIn for employer brand.





**June 2020** Bishop Olivia speaks to assembled media on news of a terrorist attack in Reading.

**September 2020** *A guide to being a churchwarden* is one of many resources for parishes published during the year.



**December 2020** Bishop Steven reminds children it's good to laugh and smile and look forward to better times ahead.

**March 2021** A high-tech service at the cathedral rounds off a year of getting to grips with live streaming.



# SECRETARIAT

Governance is the means of demonstrating sound management, generating support, trust and confidence, welcoming accountability and delivering positive change. The Secretariat team worked hard throughout 2020 to ensure that governance and advice for both parishes and diocesan staff has been readily available.

Bishop's Council approved a Governance Review, looking afresh at how we organise ourselves at diocesan level. Due to new Church Representation Rules coming into force in

January 2020 and the significant impact of COVID-19 on annual meetings, the diocese acted promptly to update advice to parishes throughout the year.

- 7 pastoral reorganisation schemes were completed, with 5 formal consultations with interested parties and 4 public consultations
- Investigated 4 data breaches, with none being significant enough to require reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office
- Responded to specific data protection queries from 19 parishes
- Church House Quarterly, a newsletter round-up of key information and advice, was launched and circulated to approx. 2,000 churchwardens, PCC secretaries and treasurers
- In 2020 the Development Fund awarded 36 grants to different parishes/deaneries amounting to £1.134m, nudging the total awarded to nearly £1.5m across 73 parishes

## The Development Fund

[The Development Fund](#) was launched in 2019 to enable missional creativity and to help churches with practical ways to become more Christ-like. Since its launch, it has donated more than £1.5million to over 70 local church projects in the diocese. It is open to all our parishes/benefices, but it is likely to be most helpful to those that have limited financial resources to invest in missional activity.

## PCC Secretaries

Over 150 PCC secretaries attended training (more than double the number that attended when we first ran the workshop). PCC secretaries have a key role in ensuring good governance at parish level. Procedural matters were covered as well as some of the really positive developments at diocesan and parish level.

**ST MARK'S MEALS** is a scheme that supports families in Milton Keynes struggling with food poverty. St Mark's set up the project two years ago when they realised that many families were struggling to provide a nutritious meal for their children. Meal boxes are stored in 63 schools, children's centres and community hubs. The grant from the Development Fund has allowed St Mark's to buy a new van, allowing them to reach those in need effectively, as well as adding new schools to their portfolio.



Photo: St Mark's, Milton Keynes

# EDUCATION

There are 283 Church of England schools and academies in the diocese, with approximately 60,000 pupils. These are some of the best schools in the UK, with 93% of them judged 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

ODBE supported schools and academies throughout these challenging times and ensured that the staff could provide timely advice for headteachers and governing bodies.

This, coupled with the amazing resilience of staff and students, meant that all ODBE schools were able to remain partially open to vulnerable and key-worker children. There were attendance rates between 20% and 40% from January to March 2021. This represents a significant increase on the first lockdown of spring 2020.

As different restrictions were enforced and eased, ODBE continued to publish guidance for schools detailing how they would be supported throughout

lockdown periods. Work included guidance for schools on providing collective worship in a safe and socially distanced way, 'first contact' meetings transitioned online, and interactive assemblies were developed. Website materials continued to be enhanced and refined (with a particular focus on dealing with bereavement), and this will continue to be the case as the transition to a new ODBE website is completed in 2021.

The majority of ODBE staff were furloughed for three-week periods during the first lockdown but ODBE did not take up the Government's assistance in any of the subsequent lockdowns.

- Three secondary schools will be taking part in an action research project on the relationship between the teaching of RE and science at Key Stage 2
- In a partnership with USPG, 10 primary schools twinned with schools in southern India to help promote learning and practical steps to tackle the climate emergency
- January 2021 – preparations to address the shortfall in church school foundation governors. A promotional campaign to attract people from all backgrounds began this Spring.

## Support to a school in special measures

At the end of 2019 an unannounced Section 8 Ofsted inspection at The Oxford Academy resulted in the school being placed into Special Measures. A range of actions through the year proved effective. In September Nora Ward replaced interim Dave Terry (pictured left) as Headteacher, and the academy transferred to The River Learning Trust in November 2020. ODBE continues to support TOA to be an effective church school.



January 2020: School turnaround task force appointed.

Photo: Ed Nix



# AREA OFFICES

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The area teams supported local communities and were moved by their quiet courage and faith. We are deeply indebted to them all, and to the courageous and hard-working lay folk whose generosity and kindness has made a significant difference.

## Dorchester

- Welcomed Gavin Collins as the next Bishop of Dorchester
- Greenhouse project in Cogges extended to other parishes (see page 8)
- Yvonne Morris took up her role as Discipleship Enabler, supporting Dorchester in its work with children, young people and families
- 17 projects awarded Development Fund grants

## Buckingham

- Strategic Development Fund grants awarded to churches in High Wycombe, Milton Keynes and Slough to fund Resourcing Hubs (see page 8)
- 16 churches awarded Development Fund grants covering a variety of projects, including support for technology and environmental projects, with the most significant grants being for church planting and youth ministry/mission
- Scheme to create a new rural benefice which allows the parish of Buckingham to focus its mission on the needs of a fast-growing town and facilitate cross-resourcing of worship and mission across the deanery
- The Deanery of Newport has continued local consultation, which will lead towards a similarly comprehensive local plan of reorganisation for mission
- Continued to use interim ministry both in parishes undergoing periods of change and in parishes in need of a period of pastoral healing. Seven clergy served as interim clergy in Bucks in 2020, with tenures ranging from three months to three years

## Oxford

- Welcomed Jonathan Chaffey as new Archdeacon of Oxford
- The bishop and archdeacon committed to visiting all parishes in the archdeaconry, either in person or online – around half took place in 2020 and the rest will happen in 2021
- 7 projects awarded Development Fund grants
- The Bishops' Mission Order (BMO) was completed for Cutteslowe Church in March 2020 and in early 2021 for Grace Church in Cowley
- BMOs for the Anglican Asian Living Church and HOME in progress

## Berkshire

- 2020 marked Bishop Olivia's first full year as Bishop of Reading, Stephen Pullin was collated as Archdeacon of Berkshire in February and Liz Jackson became Berkshire's first Associate Archdeacon in September
- Greyfriars Reading was established as an SDF-funded church planting hub. The first minister was recruited (Oct) and will lead a grafting team in 2021
- The murder of three people in Forbury Gardens, Reading, caused great distress across the town and for the LGBTI+ community in particular. Town centre churches were involved in extensive pastoral work
- Missional diversity was expressed in the development of conservative church plants and the commencement of regular Open Table gatherings
- 7 projects awarded Development Fund grants



In 2020 we said farewell to Bishop Colin and welcomed his successor, Bishop Gavin, in 2021



# WORLD MISSION

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2020 brought both unprecedented challenges and considerable opportunities for a council dedicated to helping our diocese share in prayer, reflection and action with global partners. Several plans for joint work, including Lambeth Conference hosting, a curate's course and pilgrimage with Vaxjo, a summit with Kimberley and Kuruman, and an exchange visit to Nandyal, had to be postponed. Digital communications, however, allowed us to share – and promote sharing – in new ways with our extant links and mission agencies and to form new collaborations.

Link partners contributed to Church at Home services and parishes' online worship, planned pandemic relief projects (Kimberley and Kuruman), and reflected, via an online conference, on the pandemic experience and the church (Vaxjo). A new Zoom group for churches with Kimberley and Kuruman links created closer relationships; a Partnership in World Mission Council-appointed group completed a review of the Nandyal link.

In addition, we were able to convene a gathering of mission agencies and to collaborate on projects such as raising awareness with the Mother's Union of

gender-based violence. We also began to re-engage with parishes that have a range of world links. Some of these, including a partner from Nepal, participated in an online 'residential'.

We broadened our links across the Anglican Communion. Our 'residential' included a panel of leaders from five of the dioceses we will host for Lambeth 2022, sharing joys and challenges, the impacts of the pandemic, and their response to the climate crisis. We continue building those connections. We also share news and prayer requests via social media with partners locally and globally.

# BOARD OF PATRONAGE

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The board met online twice in 2020 to discuss and progress vacancies of which they hold the patronage.

Members of the board were involved in 12 vacancy processes in 2020, seeing the successful appointment of six incumbents/clergy, with six other vacancies ongoing at the end of 2020.

The board also responded to a proposal concerning a possible re-ordering of a benefice.

Membership of the board changed, with Patricia Michael stepping down and the Revd Hannah Hobday, the Revd Martin Davy and Nigel Edward-Few all duly elected to ensure a full complement of board members for this season.

# DT(O)L

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Diocesan Trustees (Oxford) Ltd [DT(O)L] is the Diocesan Authority which acts as custodian trustee to hold property on behalf of PCCs and other ecclesiastical charities. The management of all trusts lies with parish trustees. During 2020 DT(O)L assisted parish managing trustees with their plans for mission by handling over 120 property transactions, such as the sale of property and the grant of leases that provide capital or income to support church work. Parish managing trustees have also been assisted with the release of permanent endowment that has been applied to support outreach.

DT(O)L is the sole trustee of the Oxford Diocesan Church Schools Uniform Statutory Trust. The trust monies arise from the sale proceeds or rent of closed schools and schoolhouses in the diocese. In 2020, grants totalling £581K were given to promote the work of ODBE, enabling advice and support to be given to school and academy personnel who contribute to outreach and mission across the diocese. DT(O)L regularly reviews the investments of this trust in line with its Statement of Investment Principles.

We said farewell to Caroline Dyer, Trusts Administrator, who retired after more than 20 years faithful service to the diocese.

Sadly, the serving chair, His Honour Charles Elly, passed away in March 2021. The diocese acknowledges the substantial contribution he has made over many years of faithful service.

## COUNCIL FOR THE DEAF

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This was a year of reorganisation and planning for the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Bishop Steven appointed His Honour Christopher Tyrer DL to be chair, and he took over in September 2020. Since then there have been a number of appointments to the council. Julie Dziegiel is the new vice-chair and treasurer.

There are still some vacancies in appointments under the constitution, and we are looking to fill those posts as soon as possible.

We are creating a new Mission Statement setting out our vision and purpose; we are updating our job description for our administrator and looking at all our policies and procedures to make sure that they are fit for purpose.

The most exciting move is to appoint a full-time chaplain for the deaf and hard of hearing. At present, we are collecting information about the costs and

other necessary practicalities, as well as drafting a job description, before advertising the post. We are hugely indebted to the Revd Katie Tupling, who combined the role of chaplain among deaf people with that of disability adviser for the diocese. She resigned from the council in September 2020 to concentrate on her role as disability chaplain.

We are excited about the prospects for the future as we plan for the next stage of development.



# BOARD OF MISSION

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The board provided important contributions to the emerging strategies and priorities for two of our common vision focal areas. This included the draft of *Disciples Together* (ministry with children, young people and families) and engagement with the initial strategy for growing 750 new congregations across the diocese over the next ten years.

A number of departmental posts were vacated during 2020. With the growing impact of COVID-19, board members particularly scrutinised the decision to re-appoint to the deputy director and head of IME2 (Initial Ministerial Education for curates) roles in the summer.

The review of the Mission department provided the primary focus for the work of the board in the second half of 2020. The board contributed to clarifying and focussing the purpose, terms of reference and process of the review. Their aim was to shape the department so as to support the diocese at every level in pursuing

our common vision for 2020-2030. Board members participated in the review process itself, together with other key stakeholders.

In October the board engaged critically with, and then endorsed, the substantial review proposals. Along with changes to roles, structures and working practices, a major proposal was that the board be dissolved at the end of the current triennium. All the review recommendations were subsequently approved by Bishop's Council.

The work of the board includes oversight of sub-committees delivering formation for ministry through the Local Ministry Pathway (LMP) and IME2 programme. In response to the pandemic, members particularly expressed their thanks for the significant work required to transfer all of the learning programmes to online delivery.

# INTERFAITH RELATIONS

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So much of interfaith work is dependent on warm and mutually respectful relationships which are nurtured, chiefly, through hospitality and simply getting to know one another as colleagues and friends. Consequently, 2020 was a challenging year as pandemic restrictions significantly reduced opportunities for building interfaith relationships.

Despite those restrictions, it was a good year to review our work and to look ahead to a strategy to develop it, directly linked to our common vision. This has been especially timely because of a new interim chair. We made strategy a major agenda item at our meetings, and a sub-group met online as a think tank to refine the values and ideas which emerged.

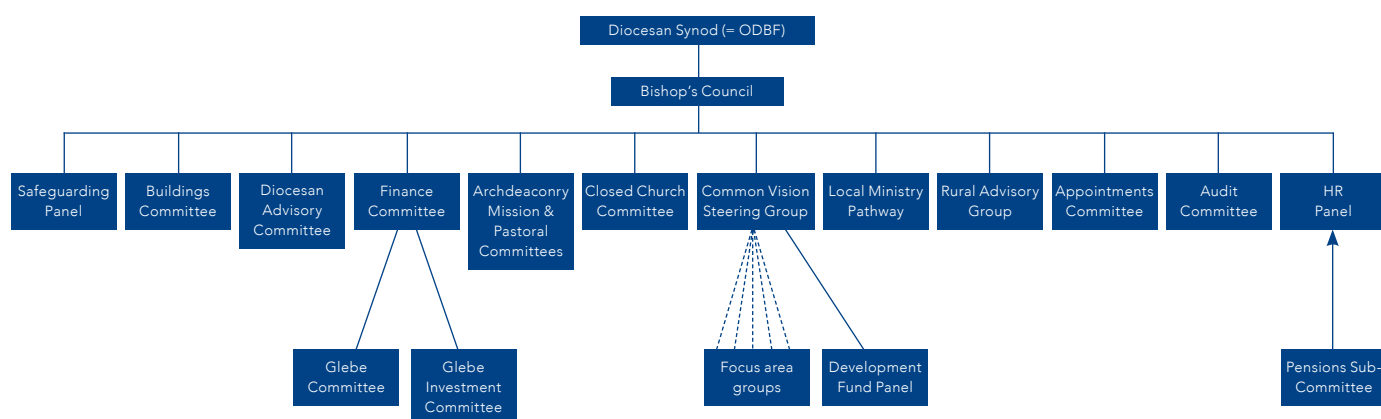
## Key aspects of the development strategy:

- Devolved work through area interfaith advisers who, in turn, are looking to develop local interfaith teams (including lay involvement) for increased engagement across all areas.
- In response to the pandemic, a Faith Reference Group for major incident planning, co-ordinated by the lead chaplain for Thames Valley Police.
- Working in partnership with the Department of Education to facilitate interfaith education and training.
- To embed interfaith work as a priority in our diocesan mission strategy. The committee urges that presence and engagement with people/communities of other faiths becomes an essential aspect of that strategy. Those engaged in such work also experience it as an aid to being contemplative, one of our key aims as a diocese.

# GOVERNANCE

The majority of diocesan boards and committees report to Bishop's Council, which also acts as the Standing Committee of the Diocesan Synod, the Board of Directors of the ODBF and the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee. All these committees have specific responsibilities from Diocesan Synod or Bishop's Council to discharge certain duties on their behalf. To ensure the diocese's governance best supports its mission, a governance review was undertaken in 2020, with consideration being paid to the applicable statutes that govern many of the committees' activities, as well as the Charity Governance Code and the Nolan Principles of Public Life.

A number of recommendations were made in the review, which have now been approved by Bishop's Council and are being implemented during 2021. The main changes to be made are aimed at improving transparency and accountability of the committees' activities. Reporting lines will be clearer and shorter, as set out below. There will be a greater diversity of committee members, assisted by the establishment of an appointments committee. Diversity will also be promoted by increasing the understanding and awareness of the committees' work, internally as well as externally, via such measures as standardised terms of reference and enhanced reporting to Bishop's Council. This will in turn enable this report to reflect the whole spread of diocesan activity.



The Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE), Diocesan Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODCD) and DT(O)L are separate legal entities with an accountability to Diocesan Synod.

Partnership in World Mission and the Interfaith Committee have an accountability to Diocesan Synod but will also have engagement with both Bishop's Council and the Senior Management Group.



# TABLE OF COMMITTEES

| Committee/Company                | Chair  | Secretary                 |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Audit                            | Mr David Stephenson  | Mr John Orridge           |
| Bishop's Council                 | Bishop of Oxford<br>and Revd John Tattersall                             | Diocesan Secretary        |
| Board of Mission                 | Bishop of Oxford   | Mr Andrew Anderson-Gear   |
| Board of Patronage               | Revd Dan Heyward   | Revd Prof Brian Griffiths |
| Buildings                        | Mrs Sue Scane  | Mr David Mason            |
| Closed Churches                  | Mr Basil Eastwood  | Mrs Maggie Metaliaj       |
| DAC                              | Revd Derek Wittchell   | Ms Liz Kitch              |
| DMPC                             | Bishop of Oxford   | Diocesan Secretary        |
| DT(O)L                           | HH Charles Elly (until Mar 2021)   | Diocesan Secretary        |
| Glebe                            | Mrs Sue Scane  | Mr David Mason            |
| Glebe Investment                 | Mr Adrian Hopkinson<br>(until November 2020),<br>then Mr Richard Horlick | Mr John Orridge           |
| HR Panel                         | Mr John Sykes  | Mrs Poli Shajko           |
| Interfaith                       | Ven Jonathan Chaffey   | Mrs Claire Barratt        |
| Local Ministry Pathway           | Rt Revd Colin Fletcher until Oct<br>2020, then Bishop of Oxford          | Revd Dr Phil Cooke        |
| New Congregations                | Ven Jonathan Chaffey   | Revd Will Donaldson       |
| ODBE                             | Bishop of Buckingham   | Mr Tony Wilson            |
| ODCD                             | HH Christopher Tyrer   | Mrs Fiona McNally         |
| PBSC                             | Revd John Tattersall   | Mr John Orridge           |
| Partnership in World Mission     | Bishop of Reading  | Mrs Rosemary Pearce       |
| Rural Advisory & Reference Group | Revd David Tyler   | Revd Charles Chadwick     |
| Safeguarding Panel               | Mr Peter Hay   | Mrs Poli Shajko           |

## ACRONYMS

BAP Bishops' Advisory Panel  
 BMO Bishops' Mission Order  
 DAC Diocesan Advisory Committee  
 DMPC Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee  
 DT(O)L Diocesan Trustees (Oxford) Ltd  
 IME2 Initial Ministerial Education for curates  
 LLM Licensed Lay Minister  
 LMP Local Ministry Pathway  
 ODBE Oxford Diocesan Board of Education

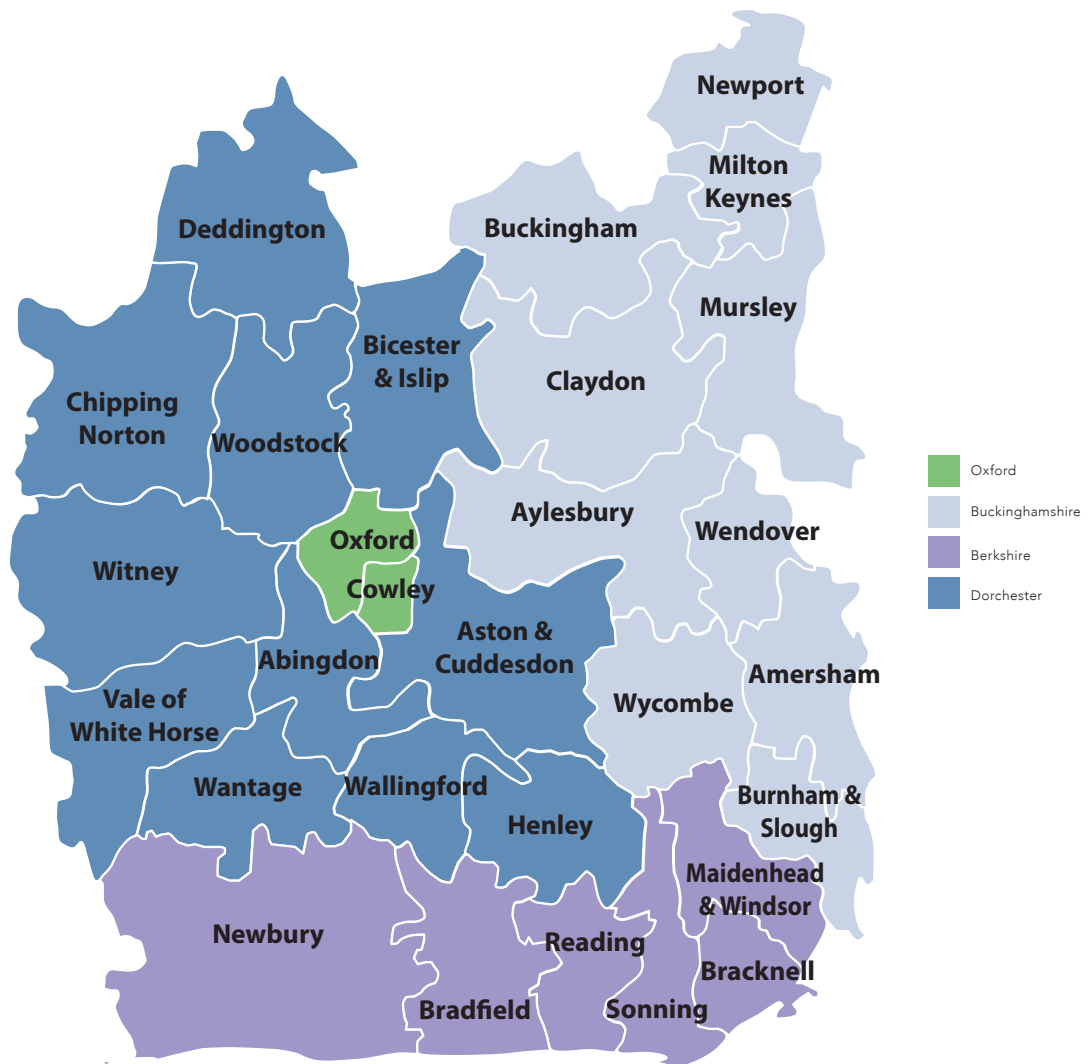
ODBF Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance  
 ODBST Oxford Diocesan Bucks School Trust  
 ODCIR Oxford Diocesan Committee  
 for Interfaith Relations  
 PBSC Planning and Budget Sub-Committee  
 PCR Past Cases Review  
 PSO Parish Safeguarding Officer  
 SDF Strategic Development Fund



Thousands of people tuned in to our online Church at Home services. With contributions from across the diocese, it demonstrated the breadth of worship, prayer and church tradition we are blessed with. Thanks be to God for everyone who participated.



# DIOCESE *of* OXFORD



We have more parishes and churches than any other diocese in the Church of England.

There are 812 churches in 29 deaneries serving a population of 2.4m people and 283 Church of England schools serving 60,000 pupils.

Together, we work with God and with others for the common good in every place in one of the great crossroads of the world.