

STROUD DEANERY STRATEGIC PLAN

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1. DEANERY STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR VISION

The Deanery seeks to inspire, resource and support renewal; to set a higher bar in holiness and service; to release and enable worshipping communities to be what God has called them to be.

To do this:

- **We will encourage a narrative of abundance rather than scarcity**
- **We will seek to have mutually flourishing and sustainable worshipping communities**
- **We seek to have our clergy and laity resourced and released for ministry**
- **We need buildings and spaces that inspire and serve our ministry and mission**

We recognise that our mission, as local expressions of the Church, is to advance the Kingdom of God across the Deanery, and all that we do will be underpinned by the prayer of all our parishes and communities. Our vision will flourish through engagement and consultation with the people in the pews so that it is owned by all, and all actions will be locally generated or locally informed.

What can be done together to help achieve the vision?

1. A narrative of abundance rather than scarcity

- Start the conversations being hopeful and trusting, rather than pessimistic and negative
- Small incremental changes can have a long term effects
- Notice what God is already doing
- Vision Sharing' time at Chapter
- Share positive stories on the website and on social media of successful things already happening around the Deanery
- Celebrate our different riches
- Some Sundays – all churches to focus on one particular theme – collectively working together, aligned with shared actions
- Dedicated Prayer time – encourage our worshipping communities to actually seek God

2. Mutual flourishing and sustainable worshipping communities

- Chapter to lead on thinking through what that looks like, encouraging and supporting one another
- Re-introduce 'Green Shoots' item at Deanery Synod in some form that links to the vision
- Sharing accountability for resolving the Parish Share deficit

- Deanery financial champions' group – develop collegiate responsibility and shared solutions through quarterly or six monthly meetings supported by Area Dean, Lay Chair and Finance Lead Asst Area Dean
- Engaging with Stewardship/ Parish Giving Scheme; sharing good practice; helpful ideas
- Talk about money

3. Clergy and laity resourced and released for ministry

- Consider more joint functions at Deanery level or groups of benefices e.g. hall bookings, funerals, weddings
- Possible Deanery Funeral Project from one central point within the next 5 years
- Joint contracts on general church maintenance, trades people, gutter cleaning etc or at least sharing information about good sources.
- More Deanery events such as confirmation preparation, Day of Prayer, Lent course, Stewardship course and/or sharing of resources for courses.
- Consider where and how to deploy clergy, rethinking the way stipendiary clergy are supported and resourced
- Share tasks so clergy and laity all do what they are called to do, and are trained in those shared roles
- Think about function rather than place
- Diversity within the leadership team

4. Buildings that serve our ministry and mission

- Develop a Deanery Vision for our physical buildings that thinks creatively about how we get our buildings to serve our purposes for mission and ministry
- Set out the options for all our buildings in discussion with the local communities which might include
 - Continuing in current pattern of use
 - Identifying additional uses
 - Identifying alternative uses where current pattern can't be sustained
 - Building closure
- Consider identifying a Deanery Buildings Advisor (voluntary)
- There needs to be a Diocesan Corporate Strategy to support delivery of this approach.

2. IMPLEMENTATION PROPOSALS

1. We now have a vision of the preferred future

- a. We will encourage a narrative of abundance rather than scarcity
- b. We will seek to have mutually flourishing and viable worshipping communities
- c. We seek to have our clergy resourced and released for ministry
- d. We need buildings that serve our ministry and mission

2. We are starting to prioritise activities to realise the vision

- a. Drawing on the work already done draft clear activities that are measurable about what they seek to achieve
- b. Review the deanery map in the context of the vision now agreed, including structure of benefices and teams and deployment of clergy and paid lay workers

3. Moving into implementation of the vision and allocation of roles and responsibilities

- a. Confirm make up of **Deanery Leadership Team**, its role re the Strategic Plan and its pattern of meetings
- b. Confirm which responsibilities will be held by **Chapter**
- c. **Deanery Synod** will be a forum holding each other to account for delivery of the vision - *sharing good news and challenges, maintaining links with youth work, Sportily and the Grace Network, and finding ways to report back better to PCCs.*

4. New groups to be developed to enable implementation

- a. Establish a finance sub-group to support mutual financial accountability - *the vision should be for the deanery to pay its full Parish Share within 5 years. We may need to reconsider the current share distribution between benefices and teams.*
- b. Establish a buildings sub-group of a few lay volunteer building professionals to support and advise parishes on maintenance and works. Aim for one of these to be named Deanery Buildings Advisor.

5. Implications for resources – people and finances – arising from all this

- a. Strategy for deployment of clergy and any changes envisaged
- b. New deanery posts/roles needed – *e.g. shared roles for hall bookings, occasional offices etc*
- c. Specific notes on provision for ministry to large areas of new housing
- d. Any grant funding to be sought

6. Plan for any further consultation and roll out

- a. Deanery Synod
- b. Benefices/PCCs/ congregations

WHERE DID THE PLAN COME FROM?

1. The Story so Far

Progress has been positive, through three full days of facilitated and structured discussion, which included putting our thinking in the context of the Life Vision. Deanery Synod had the opportunity to feed in to the process at its February meeting and the draft Strategy was discussed at 11th May meeting. This has produced further reactions and comments for us to consider.

Attendance was by members of the Standing Committee with the addition of clergy from benefices/teams not otherwise represented and the Deanery Youth Connector. A representative of the Grace Network attended the last meeting. There was a strong positive outlook on each occasion with everyone committed to try and find a constructive way forward. However, there was also a variety of views expressed in debate and a shared concern about what it would mean to take the proposals forward.

There were two **problems**: one benefice was not represented because of the long-term sickness of the incumbent; our options for pastoral reorganisation are somewhat constrained by the five valley geography of a large section of the deanery.

2. Core Content

Over the course of the three meetings we arrived at the following statement that expresses our **common ground and shared identity** *“The Deanery of Stroud seeks to inspire, resource and support renewal; to set a high bar in holiness and service; to release and enable worshipping communities to be what God has called them to be.”*

Looking at **what is happening in our world**, we found plenty of good news in a range of initiatives across the deanery, and we have built on some of those in the planned actions outline below. We also found several significant difficulties:

- a heavy deanery deficit on Parish Share;
- a number of smaller parishes struggling to find volunteers for key governance roles (e.g. churchwarden, treasurer, PCC);
- the time pressures from administrative tasks;
- serious questions about church buildings – including location, costly repairs falling on small communities and the general pressures of maintenance

The picture if we do nothing reflects these difficulties and positives. In five years' time:

- Our larger congregations might be stable in some cases, but not all, and loss of key people would be having an impact on governance. Current small and ageing congregations in small rural parishes probably wouldn't be there at all. It is not clear where the ministry resources to respond to significant planned housing developments will come from.
- The financial position would not have improved markedly as good stewardship activity would likely be outweighed by declining numbers, loss of major donors and the fact that, even where there are new congregation members, they don't fill the financial gap quickly.

- Fragile church buildings would only have got worse; others may be stable because of local giving to fabric; others again may be struggling to keep on top of repairs as they can't build up the funds for them. Other buildings linked to the churches would probably be OK.
- Work with children, school and young people could be very positive if we build on the various current initiatives underway. Willingness of schools to engage will be a key factor, as will recruitment of Foundation Governors.
- Discipleship and Evangelism would both need attention if they was to be necessary development
- A mixed picture emerged about potential people resources both lay and clergy.

All of these ambitions have to be viewed in the context of trying to correct our Parish Share deficit.

3. What we plan to do

We have expressed **where we want to go** under the following four vision statements (a sample of proposed actions only). They all have to be viewed in the context of trying to correct our Parish Share deficit.

We will encourage a narrative of abundance rather than scarcity

- Notice what God is already doing and start our conversations being hopeful and trusting rather than pessimistic and negative
- Share positive stories in a range of ways and emphasise how small, incremental steps build longer term change;
- celebrate and draw on the different riches in different communities
- "vision sharing" time at chapter

We will seek to have mutually flourishing and viable worshipping communities

- Encourage much more shared activity across parishes and/or benefices so that people feel part of something bigger and potentially more viable
- Chapter to take the lead on thinking this through, encouraging and supporting each other
- Create a Deanery financial champions group to develop collegiate responsibility for Parish Share; talk about money
- Use Deanery Synod to pursue and develop all these approaches to shared activity, sharing ideas and developing deanery-wide resources where possible

We seek to have our clergy resourced and released for ministry

- This requires recognising ministry of the laity as well so that tasks are shared more according to skills and callings and training provided accordingly
- More joint functions at Deanery level ranging from hall bookings through wedding and funeral arrangements and joint teaching/ preparation events to joint contracts for maintenance
- Think about function more than place

We need buildings and spaces that inspire and serve our ministry and mission

- There needs to be a Diocesan Corporate Strategy to support this
- Develop a Deanery Vision for our physical buildings that thinks creatively about how they serve our mission and ministry; consider finding a voluntary Deanery Buildings Advisor from among the skills in our congregations
- Set out options for all our buildings in discussion with local communities: continuing current use; identifying additional uses; identifying alternative uses; closure.

4. Practical arrangements to support the strategy

A number of these are identified in the section above, but there is more work to do on this.

5. Implementation/next steps

We need to get the draft strategy into a shape that has the broad endorsement of the Synod so that it can be taken to PCCs for discussion

APPENDIX 1

Stroud Deanery benefices/teams

	Usual Sunday Attendance 2019 (adults and children)	Electoral Roll
Bisley Benefice	130	202
Bisley	32	32
Bussage with Eastcombe	33	42
Chalford	10	14
France Lynch	33	62
Oakridge	22	52
Beacon Benefice	163	311
Cranham	32	32
Edge	14	39
Harescombe	8	42
Painswick	62	125
Pitchcombe	21	34
Sheepscombe	26	39
Stroud Team	215	410
Randwick	22	49
Uplands	49	101
Holy Trinity	53	75
St Laurence	20	37
Whiteshill	34	48
Cainscross	37	100
Minchinhampton+	185	230
Amberley	50	100
Minchinhampton	135	230

Stroudwater Team	234	460
Arlingham	10	17
Eastington	22	45
Frampton	17	70
Frocester	7	16
Haresfield	11	14
Moreton Valence	10	10
Saul	8	44
Framilode	15	20
Fretherne	10	29
Selsley	21	50
Standish	5	13
Stonehouse	39	40
Whitminster	4	10
Leonard Stanley	35	51
Kings Stanley	20	31
Rodborough +	118	148
Brimscombe	41	46
Rodborough	17	17
Woodchester	60	85
Nailsworth +	86	133
Horsley	13	33
Newington Bagpath with Kingscote	14	22
Nailsworth	59	78

APPENDIX 2

Benefice data

Benefice/team (worship buildings ie not halls etc.)	Clergy & other licensed ministers	Readers	Population (2018)	Sunday Attendance (USA 2019)	Non-Sunday Attendance	Occ. Offices Weddings (No. of)	Occ. Offices Funerals (No. of)	Parish Share (2022 request)	New Housing plans	Ecumenical links	Church Schools	Community Schools
Beacon (6)	1 plus 1 SSM	2	4063 (one over 1000 pop)	163		15	28	105,182			1	
Stroudwater (15)	3 (2 PTO)	5	18965 (5 over 1000 pop)	234		33 ('21) 47 ('19)	59 ('21) 52 ('19)	160,265	extensive	Meth, Bapt, Congr, Pente, R.C.	5	5
Nailsworth (3)	1		6784 (one over 1000 pop)	86				63,432			2	
Stroud (6)	3 plus 1 SSM plus 1 SSM part time curate	2	24134 (five over 1000 pop)	215				163,609			3	
Minchinhampton (3) (two more to be added)	1 plus part time HfD plus 1 half time curate	1	4322 (two over 1000 pop)	185				115,022			2	

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Woodchester (3)	1 plus HfD (vacant) plus 1 curate	3	8366 (all over 1000 pop)	118	Messy church (160 attendees) Wild worship (10-15 attendees) - started in 2020 Drama Church (15-20 attendees) - was running in 2019, restarting later in 23			84,222	Extensive (around Brimscombe parish)	URC (with whom we occasionally host joint services) + there are a R.C & Free Church in the benefice	2	2
Bisley (5)	1 plus HfD (vacant)	3	8759 (3 over 1000 pop)	130	fledgling			94,634	Some infill, not much expected	Local Baptist and meth individuals. Connect group	3	2 plus 1 Secondary

PARISH SHARE 2020 - 2023

