



The year is 2015. In communities across Swindon, North Wiltshire, South Gloucestershire and Bristol, people have been sensing a change.

They are noticing friends, family members or colleagues living differently – in their integrity and generosity, compassion and service. The marginalised and poorer members of their community are being cared for. Faith and community groups are working together with other organisations to address problems in our society. There is a renewed concern for the wider world, the environment and social injustice. And churches are not only attracting new members but gaining a reputation of meaning and purpose where all ages and kinds of people can come to know Jesus Christ as Lord.

These are some of the signs of the Kingdom of God being revealed in our local communities and culture today. This is what happens when the seeds of the Kingdom that God has sown in the world flourish and grow. The churches, church schools and faith communities that make up the Diocese of Bristol are full of these seeds. Over the next few years, this is the kind of impact they can have on their communities. It is time for the seeds to burst into growth – for the energy to be released.

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This is what the Diocese of Bristol's Strategy for 2010-2015 is all about: releasing the energy that God has given to His Church to see His Kingdom come where we live and serve. That may look different from one place to another but will accord with our purpose as a Diocese of “creating communities of wholeness with Christ at the centre”. And it will be marked by the four components of the Diocesan Growth Programme: growing in commitment, partnership, influence and numbers.

If, as St Paul suggests, it is God who gives growth (1 Corinthians 3:6), what part do we have to play? In our communities, it is our mutual responsibility to create the conditions for spiritual growth in our own and each other's lives. But across the Diocese as a whole, a Diocesan Strategy helps create the conditions – the right kind of climate, structural context and direction – for the growth of the communities that make it up.

Releasing the energy, the Diocesan Strategy for 2010-2015, focuses on four primary ways of creating the conditions for releasing the energy of the Kingdom of God:

1. **Growth Programme**
2. **Leadership Development**
3. **Structures of oversight and support**
4. **Income generation**

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1. Growth Programme

The Growth Programme continues to provide the *direction* for the life of the Diocese and the communities that make it up. It is also the lens through which we can assess our progress as a Diocese in fulfilling our aims.

The Growth Programme takes a holistic approach to growth, thinking in terms of growth in *commitment* to God, growth in *partnership* with others within and beyond the Church, growth in *influence* on the wider community and growth in *numbers*.

Since 2005, parishes have been encouraged to develop their own, locally shaped plans for growth. The Diocesan Strategy continues to support local communities as they engage with the Growth Programme and develop and implement their plans. Deaneries will be the context where the Growth Programme is encouraged and Growth Advisers will be made available to support parishes in this process.

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See related documents >>

Bristol Diocesan Growth Programme
Delivering the Diocesan Strategy

2. Leadership development

Leadership development will *energise* the Diocesan Strategy. The most effective role that the central organisation of the Diocese can play in encouraging growth in the churches that make it up is by developing their leaders. Leaders empower other people by serving them. Developing leaders in the Church releases therefore not only their energy but also that of the whole people of God.

By focusing on leadership development, the Diocesan Strategy aims to release a greater level of indigenous, voluntary and collaborative ministry leadership in the Diocese. This will lead to ministry leadership teams of lay and ordained people, authorised to share “the cure of souls” with the Bishop and lead the church into mission and growth. Decisions around deployment of licensed ministers will be a Deanery responsibility.

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The Diocesan Strategy aims both to further the development of existing leaders and to identify and equip new leaders locally for lay and ordained roles.

Vacancy leadership development will be directed at benefices during a vacancy because vacancies have proved to be a fruitful context for developmental work and change. Vacancy Leadership Advisers will work alongside those in parishes to identify and develop potential local leaders. Vacancy work is a strategic use of leadership advisers' time and skills.

RELEASE, a leadership development programme created and run by the Diocese of Bristol, will equip people to lead from a spiritual foundation. It will be equally appropriate for church leaders and those leading in the community or other work environments.

RELEASE will help people to discover the unique direction of their leadership borne out of their own experience, passions and gifts and exercise it more effectively in their own context. It will be available to those from Diocese of Bristol churches at member rates and the Diocese will invest in sending both clergy and lay leaders on RELEASE.

“RELEASE will equip people lead from a spiritual foundation.”

See related documents >>

Vacancy Leadership Development
RELEASE
Deployment guidelines

3. Structures of oversight and support

The Diocesan structures of oversight and support will focus on *delivering* the Diocesan Strategy.

For the Strategy to succeed and contribute to the growth of the Church and Kingdom of God, it must be properly resourced and effectively supported. The Strategy will not succeed if it is primarily introduced and supported through the current structures where decisions are made at a distance from local communities.

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Instead, a dedicated team will devote its attention to clearing the way for the Strategy. The Strategy can then be shaped and implemented by decisions made by those in deanery leadership so that they are taken “closer to the ground”.

To achieve this, a Strategy Delivery Team will be formed, drawn from members of the Bishop’s Staff, to ensure the Strategy takes hold and is delivered. Deanery Leadership Teams will take further responsibility for the Strategy locally and decision-making at that level. And small teams of diocesan advisers will be available to deliver strategy support services direct to parishes.

In addition, the governance structures of the Diocese (boards, committees etc) will be reviewed in line with the new support structures to provide more effective decision-making. The Diocese will look at bringing all Diocesan Board of Finance employees in the Bristol area into one office to enable better interdepartmental communication and potential cost savings.

See related documents >>

Delivering the Diocesan Strategy

4. Income generation

Any strategy must take account of the financial resources available to help *fuel* what it aims to achieve. But a Diocesan Strategy should ensure not only that the books are balanced but also that the balance is right between what the parishes give to support the Diocese's overall mission (through the provision of stipendiary ministers, support services and oversight) and what they retain to help implement their plans for growth. When the balance is right, then local churches feel released and equipped for ministry and mission that makes sense in their own context, and the structures of the Diocese can be better geared to support them in their work.

In the light of this, the Diocesan Strategy seeks to reduce the proportion of parochial income as a whole that is given in Share to the Diocese. Achieving this aim in the context of ongoing, steep rises in the costs of stipendiary ministers requires a number of complementary approaches.

First, supporting parishes as they encourage giving and generosity – both within the Church and beyond it – as part of spiritual growth and commitment to God. This will not only lead to a more spiritually vital Church, but also impact parochial income.

Second, asking parishes to make a prayerful decision about how much of their income they give to support the overall mission of the Diocese and creating a greater sense of partnership and interdependence by managing this at deanery level.

Third, generating more income from beyond the parishes, through trust and major donor fundraising, making better use of diocesan assets and forming a trading subsidiary of the Diocesan Board of Finance which will donate its profits to the Diocese. These streams will add to the 25% of diocesan income that already comes from non-parochial sources.

Fourth, ensuring that costs are well controlled in the Diocese both in terms of best use of stipendiary ministers and the streamlining of central support services.

See related documents >>
[Share Review](#)

To find out more about the background thinking to the Diocesan Strategy and the process that formed it, see >>
[Behind the Strategy](#)

If you would like to engage further with any aspect of the Diocesan Strategy, please contact the Area Dean in your deanery.

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