

# North Cotswold Deanery Deanery Strategic LIFE Plan



## 1. The purpose of the Deanery:

The Deanery exists to enable the churches, parishes and benefices to flourish. Together, working in partnership, we seek to support one another as we share the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ, so that people may know life in all its fullness.

As a Deanery, we recognise that we are at our best when we work together and support one another to:

- do together that which we could not do alone
- promote fruitfulness
- enable greater sustainability, and
- release time and energy for those things that bring life to us as individuals, churches and parishes.

## 2. Our aspirations

Following our initial consultation period for this Strategic Plan, with Chapter and Synod discussions, questionnaires and small group input, these shared aspirations have been identified, which seek to describe who we want to be, who we want to serve and what we want to do.

### Who we want to be – our ethos

- we believe in the transforming power of the gospel, as we are shaped by and centred on Jesus Christ
- 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 – our mission

- 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

### What we want to do – our churches

- we value our church buildings, but we want to listen and imaginatively review how we share the responsibility and use of them with our communities
- we will work together flexibly across parish and benefice boundaries
- recognising that we need to explore fresh ways of using our buildings, we will explore alternative and supplementary possibilities which may include; community use, retreat or contemplation centres, business partnerships or festival churches
- we need our lay leaders and clergy to preach the good news, lead us in prayer and support us in discipleship so that we are released to share our faith in Jesus Christ with others

This emerging plan fits within and alongside the Diocesan LIFE Vision: which is rooted in Jesus' words "*I have come that they may have LIFE, and have it to the full*" (John 10: v10).

### **3. Our vision:**

- to see our churches flourish; in terms of service, discipleship and spirituality, meeting the needs of our communities and reflecting God's transforming good news
- to re-shape ourselves so that we look outwards more of the time, with less time spent on administration and maintenance
- to enable a culture of collaboration, so that no clergy person, no lay leader, no parish or benefice works entirely on their own. Enabling and encouraging cooperation and collaboration between parishes and benefices so the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ is shared joyfully
- to cherish the local. God loves and is present in each of our communities. Our churches and parishes are all unique but together we can help create structures that support and facilitate our diverse mission and ministry. Some parishes operate in the marketplace whilst others are in the lonely place. No one size fits all; nor should it. Society and communities are changing. Some parishes have and are changing because of significant new housing. Parishes must continue to evolve and adapt. Structures that release local energy should be actively explored and encouraged.

### **4. Supporting information**

Appendix A – Common issues the threats and opportunities they present and our response

Appendix B – Numbers behind our shared life in the North Cotswolds

Appendix C – A pictorial representation of the North Cotswolds Deanery

### **5. Implications for resources – people and finances**

In order to progress this vision for sustainability and fruitfulness, there are some key principles that need to be discussed:

- Losing a post across the Deanery will not promote sustainability nor enable fruitfulness. The current reality is that Clergy and Lay teams are already stretched and asking them to take on more buildings, PCCs or parishes will not enable growth or financial viability in the longer term. However, currently the churches across the North Cotswolds are not financially sustainable and so there is a need to be mindful of the churches' financial health. Parishes and benefices need to draw on the wisdom and experience of the Diocesan Finance and Stewardship teams.
- There is a need to work with the Diocesan Buildings team to explore the threats and opportunities around our buildings. The exploration of creative solutions to this issue is vital and this may involve a Building Officer for the North Cotswolds, the creation of a Buildings Team or regular buildings meeting or surgeries developing local networks and partnerships to share wisdom, experience and good practice.
- There may be a need for additional posts within the parishes and benefices of the North Cotswolds – they could be clergy or lay; they will certainly need to be pioneering. These might include a secondary school chaplain, a schools worker, a youth, children or families worker(s), a buildings officer, a grant enabler or administrative support. These roles should not be an additional drain on the Parish Share budget, but that they may come as a result of adjustments over time or from external sources of funding.
- Parishes are encouraged to explore working more closely with their neighbours, e.g., parishes working together with other parishes within existing benefices and also with other benefices when that allows for greater fruitfulness. These partnerships may, in time, lead to the re-imagining and re-shaping of ministry.
- Future clergy posts advertised for the North Cotswolds must be both 'do-able' and collaborative. If posts are not 'do-able' it will not lead to growth. The recruitment and discernment processes need to express our shared commitment to working with and supporting one another in effective and manageable benefices.