

2018 DIOCESE OF BRISTOL report

Across the Diocese of Bristol in 2018, there was significant and varied development and change. There was growth in ministry, vocations, discipleship, evangelism and service. This was supported by an increase in investment from within the Diocese and the national Church of England.

Leadership and vision

Amidst this activity, the Diocese welcomed the appointment and arrival of a new Bishop of Bristol, Rt Revd Vivienne Faull, formerly Dean of York. On her appointment, Bishop Viv expressed her excitement at being “at the heart of this great, multicultural diocese” and her desire to “lead a diocese that continues its pioneering courage and shows the love of God of everybody, whoever they are”.

Parishes, chaplaincies and schools, continued to work out the diocesan vision of Creating connections – with God, each other and our communities, and focusing on the priorities of making disciples, growing leaders and engaging younger generations.

Ministry and mission

This work was supported by the ministry funded and the support provided through the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance, the central body that serves the Diocese as a whole.

In total, 201 clergy were licensed across the Diocese’s 200 churches and various chaplaincies and institutions, an increase of 10%. There was a 4% increase in incumbent (vicar equivalent) posts. 180 people were in post as Licensed Lay Ministers.

Supported by the Making disciples in your parish resources, parishes built on a foundation of prayer, and saw increases in developing a culture of invitation, attendees at evangelistic courses, people who were part of small groups and in helping people identify, develop and use their gifts.

Churches continued to run 200 social action projects and are involved in a further 300.

Numbers going forward for ordination continued to increase. 14 candidates were sponsored for ordination, greater than the 50% increase aimed for, and the cohort were younger and more diverse.

The Diocese launched two Resourcing churches – St Nicholas, Bristol and the Pattern Church, Swindon – with £3m grant funding over six years from the Church of England’s Strategic Development Fund. Resourcing churches exist to reach new people and resource beyond their own congregations and locations by growing and giving away disciples and leaders, planting and strengthening other churches and providing financial and other resources for mission.

Education and support

The Diocese’s family of 70 church schools continued to develop, offering an authentically Christian education to 17,000 children. The Deanery CE Academy (secondary) in Swindon began to be built and will open in September 2019.

The Diocesan Support Services team sought to express vision, strengthen relationships, empower people, maximise resources and develop structures as they served parishes,

ministers and schools. 4,600 people received training, a 7.5% increase on average rating it 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ out of 10.

Giving and finance

The Diocesan Board of Finance increased significantly its investment in ministry and support, from £8.6m to £9m. This was in accordance with the Financial Plan approved by the Board of Directors and endorsed by the Diocesan Synod. It largely related to increases in ordinands, curates and ministers and was supported by increased grant income. However, Parish Share reduced slightly and, despite overall increases in parish income remains a challenge if the Diocese is to continue to invest in new ministries. Ultimately, the DBF sustained an operating deficit of £291,000.

The year ahead

In 2019, the Diocese looks forward to welcoming new Archdeacons of Malmesbury (Christopher Bryan) and of Bristol and a new Director of Ministry Development. Liz Townend has taken up the post of Diocesan Director of Education. The Diocese will continue to work to its Creating connections vision, priorities and 2016-20 Strategic Plan. At the same time, it will review implementation of the plan and start to develop the next Strategic Plan (2021-5), and work to find ways to resource this vision and the plans that support it.

2018 DIOCESAN SYNOD report

In 2018, the Diocesan Synod met for two full day meetings in June and November.

The June meeting in Bradley Stoke was the last of the last three year term.

- Bishop Ric Thorpe gave an inspiring presentation about the potential of church planting and the range of opportunities for fresh expressions. The distinctive purpose of resourcing churches was discussed and Revd Toby Flint, leader of St Nicholas, Bristol, was interviewed.
- The different ways churches can serve individuals and help transform communities through social and community action were shared, including a range of examples from the floor and the front.
- Exploring further the themes in the Setting God's People Free report, the Dean and David Lawrence from LICC provoked reflection and action in thinking theologically and practically about our common vocation to follow Christ and what it means to be an everyday disciple on the frontline.

The November meeting in Swindon was the first of a new three year term and had been preceded by an introductory session in September.

- The excitement about the growth and diversity of new vocations to ministry being discerned was outlined by Revd Chris North, Adviser for Ministerial Vocations, leading to constructive discussions about taking this forward.
- Revd Canon Mat Ineson and Revd Malcolm Strange shared the partnership work and mission opportunities beginning to bear fruit in Mission Areas.

The Diocesan Synod's role in approving the financial plans of the Diocesan Board of Finance was part of both the June and November meetings. The 2017-2020 Financial Plan

that supports the Diocese's Strategic Plan was presented, discussed, noted and adopted in June.

In November, considerable time was given to debating the 2019 budget. This represented a significant increase in expenditure to support an increase in ministry. This investment is primarily in increasing the numbers of ordinands and curates with external funding increasing ministerial deployment in projects like the Mission Areas and resourcing Churches. The Synod approved the expenditure on the basis of the mission and ministry that had been shared earlier that day. This came with the challenge to increase Parish Share to enable this investment.

Finally, the Diocesan Synod received a new President in 2018 as Rt Revd Vivienne Faull took up her post. In June, Bishop Lee thanked the wider diocese for their contribution during the Vacancy in See and, in November, Bishop Viv used her first address to encourage us all to "get out more" as witnesses in the world.