

DIOCESE OF OXFORD ANNUAL REVIEW 2023

MAY 2023



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

A MOMENTOUS YEAR



It has been a momentous twelve months. The platinum jubilee, a record-breaking heatwave, the death of Queen Elizabeth II, political upheaval, the cost-of-living crisis and the Coronation of King Charles have all been moments of additional load on our parish churches, chaplaincies and schools.

Together we have offered warm spaces, debt advice and food banks, comfort and consolation. We've brought communities together to celebrate and to reflect. It has meant a great deal of additional work for everyone in every place. We've been reminded once again of the centrality of the Church to the life of our communities.

The role of the Church worldwide came into sharp focus in August. Around 650 Anglican bishops from 165 countries gathered for the Lambeth Conference. The atmosphere throughout was warm and positive with many good and moving conversations. Bishops returned from the Conference with minds and hearts stretched.

The Census results were published in November and attracted the inevitable headlines. The figures were expected, we're becoming more diverse as a society, but are a timely reminder of the challenges we face and something of a call to action.

A focus on numbers can often tip the Church into conversations about scarcity and spirals of decline instead of leading to a focus on Christ and on the good news. Post pandemic, as God's life flows back into the vine, we see signs of hope and life across the diocese. Do look at the research available at oxford.anglican.org/insight and consider what it might mean for your community.

The resources are there to support you as you discern God's call for your church. The Development Fund has now reached the £3m mark, with more than 160 local church and community projects across the Thames Valley awarded grants. Could your project be next?

The pages that follow highlight some of the achievements of our Church House and area office staff, committees, and councils. They work for every congregation, church, church school, parish and benefice. All of us working together for the sake of God's world.

May God bless you in your Christian service for the year ahead.

The Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford

Canon Mark Humphriss, Diocesan Secretary

OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

May

We host a unique Cathedral service to remember and repent historic anti-Jewish church laws.



Photo: Tom Pilston

June

A £10m investment is made in clergy housing to improve our carbon footprint and we host a three-day clergy conference.



Photo: Emma Thompson

July

32 new deacons are ordained at Christ Church Cathedral and Oxford achieves Bronze Eco Diocese status from A Rocha UK.



Photo: Madeleine Hayden

August

Our bishops attend the Lambeth Conference and we launch the new diocesan website.



Photo: Neil Turner

September

We become an accredited Living Wage Employer and launch a Rural Church programme.



Photo: Emma Thompson

October

We launch and curate a clergy Black History Month exhibition.



Photo: Emma Thompson



November

We raise over £7.8k for friends in the church in the DR Congo, and hold a licensing and commissioning service for LLMs at Christ Church Cathedral.



Photo: Ed Nix

December

£550k of energy hardship grants are awarded to churches to help with rising energy costs and £20k for church warm hubs.



Photo: Shutterstock

January

We welcome Abigail Lloyd as the new Chair of the Diocesan Advisory Committee.



Photo: Steven Buckley

February

We mark a year since the invasion of Ukraine and of housing over 230 Ukrainians. The third year of *Come and See* begins.



Photo: Tanya Sazonova

March

Collation of the Revd Canon David Tyler as the new Archdeacon of Dorchester.



Photo: Madeleine Hayden

April

Blessing of Oils service at Christ Church Cathedral and launch of the *Space Makers for Families* resource.



Photo: Steven Buckley

BISHOP'S COUNCIL

Bishop's Council is responsible for considering matters of policy, advising the diocesan bishop and determining how matters should be taken forward to the Diocesan Synod. It is the standing committee of the Diocesan Synod and the board of directors of the Diocesan Board of Finance. It is made up of lay and clerical members of parishes, elected by archdeaconry, plus ex-officio members.

Strategic

Bishop's Council reviewed and welcomed progress against the diocese's five areas of strategic focus within our common vision. An environment policy and the allocation of £10m towards work for our vicarages to achieve net zero was approved in 2022 and endorsed by Diocesan Synod.

The role of full-time Associate Archdeacon for the three larger archdeaconries was affirmed as crucial to mission and ministry in the diocese and is now a core part of our structure and budgets.

Bishop's Council approved a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. Good progress is being made on significant goals relating to racial justice, and we have increased UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) representation on Bishop's Council. Our part-time data analyst enabled Bishop's Council to review key missional data, including the recovery of churches as we emerge from the pandemic, reporting encouraging figures that Easter church attendance was back to 75% of pre-pandemic levels.

In 2022, a large amount of material was assembled for the planned independent review into past events at Christ Church. Alternative arrangements are being made and developments closely monitored as the Independent Safeguarding Board is no longer able to carry out the review. A Bishop's Council sub-group was established to oversee the diocese's submission to the Governance Review covering the future role of the Cathedral and Dean, and significant time was given to this by Diocesan Synod.

Operational

Bishop's Council agreed annual workplans for Church House departments and received reports from each of the archdeaconries. The outcome of a staff pay review was approved and updates on the diocese's safeguarding work, communications and interfaith work considered.

Staffing arrangements were agreed for the Property Department, previously known as Glebe and Buildings, to allow capacity for the net zero programme.

Financial

- The draft and final budgets and financial statements were approved by Bishop's Council in 2023.
- A review of parish share was undertaken in 2022 and the resulting report was approved by Diocesan Synod in June. Recognising that it is a challenging task to arrive at the fairest and most appropriate system, a commitment has been made to a light review annually.
- Decisions on the increase in clergy stipends have been difficult, with a desire to recognise the cost-of-living pressures on paid ministers and the affordability constraints for parish share. Exceptionally, an additional 1% was paid in September, making a total increase of 3% in 2022, and stipends increased by 4% in April 2023.
- Energy and hardship grants were distributed to over 120 clergy and £500k worth of energy grants to parishes to alleviate cost-of-living pressures was funded by the National Church.

MISSION AND MINISTRY

Our world is changing in unprecedented ways; we have a common vision to become the best Church we can be in this time: a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world. The Department of Mission and Ministry supports the diocese at every level in response to that vision.

Environmental action

**Achieved
Bronze Eco
Diocese status
in July**

Development of the diocesan Net Zero Carbon Action Plan began in 2022 as part of the National Routemap to Net Zero. We established a cross-functional Net Zero Working Group to implement action plan delivery across all areas of the diocese, schools, buildings and land.

- 56 churches joined the Eco Church scheme and 20 progressed to Bronze or Silver awards.
- Brand-new resource pack launched in the autumn, providing practical advice and guidance for churches to reduce energy use, save money and improve sustainability.
- 74 churches completed energy audits, with subsidy support from the diocese providing tailored energy efficiency advice and decarbonisation pathways.
- Recruited new Deanery Environmental Leads – there are now 12 volunteers across the diocese supporting their local churches with creation care.

Photo: Gill Taylor



All Saints, Marlow, a Silver Eco Church, is committed to creation care. Tending of the churchyard is an important part of this action: a mowing regime ensures that a section of the churchyard is left uncut allowing wildflowers to grow, and the

church works with a qualified arboriculturist to ensure appropriate tree maintenance and planting. In partnership with the local Wild Marlow conservation group, churchyard surveys have recorded a rich variety of flora through the year, and a camera and nesting platform on the spire monitor a young pair of peregrine falcons.

Social justice

The invasion of Ukraine, in February 2022, brought an unexpected addition to social justice work. In a strategic partnership with Citizens UK, we launched the Homes for Ukraine initiative in March, matching Ukrainians with hosts in the diocese and recruiting over 350 volunteers to support the newly arrived guests.

**230+
Ukrainians
housed**

“Thank you to everyone who took part in the fate of our family. I am very grateful to my host and his family for inviting me, my 87-year-old mother and my children. We felt great support from our host family.”

Nataliia, Ukrainian guest

- Responding to the cost-of-living crisis, we developed a suite of resources to aid parishes in their own cost-of-living management and to help support people in their communities.
- A partnership with SOFEA and Getting Oxfordshire Online commenced a project helping to tackle digital poverty through the donation of old digital devices.
- Our annual grant of £30,000 p.a. to Citizens UK has enabled the launch of three, regional civil-society alliances, including the Thames Valley Citizens group.



At Christ Church, Flackwell Heath, 25 free slow cookers and recipe books were given to local households struggling

with the cost-of-living crisis and the difficult choice of heating their homes or eating. The church also hosts a weekday morning Coffee Stop, acting as a warm space for the community in the cold winter months, and the Community Pantry provides food to support those in need in the village.

Photo: James Dwyer



Ordinands and clergy training

Our Vocations team is supported by a network of volunteers from across the diocese. Together, they supported 66 candidates, exploring what God is calling them to and what type of ministry is right for their unique gifts. 21 were put forward for national selection for ordained ministry and they're accompanied every step of the way by the team.

- 32 deacons and 32 priests ordained.
- 119 curates in training.
- 55 curate training days.

Over 30 UKME people expressed an interest in exploring vocations.

Seven vocations events offered the opportunity for people from all parts of the Church in the diocese to explore lay and ordained ministry. These included events with a specific focus on reaching underrepresented groups – UKME, and disability and neurodivergent.

Embedding the significant new National Shared Discernment Process (SDP) into the vocations work of the diocese was completed in 2022. Attention is now focussed on a new Vocations strategy for 2023, seeking to develop the vocation of the whole people of God and raise the number of vocations to lay and ordained ministries to pre-Covid levels.

The Diocese of Oxford Clergy Dyslexia Forum, the first in the Church of England, was formed in 2022 to support clergy with dyslexia and advocate for the better use of the gifts of dyslexic people in the Church.

Lay ministry

A new Director of Formation for Ministry was appointed, and a new role of Lay Ministry Enabler was created as part of the renewed vision for lay ministry and will bring expertise in digital learning. The Director of Formation for Ministry will lead the development of a holistic vision and strategy for ministry to enable the flourishing of lay and ordained ministers across the diocese. Planning for our new, online digital lay learning hub accelerated in 2022, with a primary purpose of delivering more accessible, diverse and intuitive lay training and learning opportunities. It includes a re-shaped one-year programme aimed at significantly increasing the number of lay people from all backgrounds engaging in going deeper in their faith.

- 20 authorised ministers trained.
- 17 Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs), curates and ordinands completed Durham University awards.
- 11 full modules and 10 day-courses delivered for ordinands and LLMs.
- Four new LLMs licensed in November.

“You provide an excellent education for your students which is the equal of any other provider of theological education.”

The Revd Jeremy Law, External Examiner on our Local Ministry Programme

Resourcing parish ministry

200 free copies of the book *How Village Churches Thrive: A Practical Guide* were distributed to rural parishes in 2022, as part of a drive to support, resource and grow rural ministry. 25 benefices joined the six online sessions, exploring the book's themes – with the help of specialists – from engaging with children and families to using buildings creatively. Participants valued the opportunity to share their experience of the joys and challenges of rural church life.

A new, short course programme, based on *Flourishing Together in Church Leadership* was piloted with six benefices. The work explores how church leaders can work better together in the areas of communications, boundaries and what makes us and others flourish in our different ministries and lives.



Growing new congregations

We want to nurture and grow new worshipping communities wherever we can – of every type, tradition, shape and size. This area of work is part-funded by a £2m Strategic Development Fund grant from the National Church. We have seven Resourcing Hubs and an ever-growing number of deanery 'Greenhouses'; each there to help lay and ordained leaders try out new initiatives and think afresh about mission in their local context.

The National Census results, published in November, confirmed what we knew: that for the first time, less than half the UK identify as Christian. It serves as a timely reminder of the missional challenges we face over the next decade and the imperative of the call 'to proclaim afresh the gospel to every generation'.

Each of our seven Resourcing Hubs are seeing evidence of growth in missional capacity, through the appointment of additional associate ministers and local project managers. Resourcing Hubs are developing expertise in particular aspects of mission and increasingly seeking to resource churches locally and across the diocese, such as intercultural mission, church planting in areas of new housing, market towns and community organising.

The New Congregations team has provided advice and support to 33 parish applications for grant support with a new-congregations focus. This has led to awards totaling £495k for this work.

- North Aylesbury Resource Network in Aylesbury (NARNiA) – launch of Greenhouse for Aylesbury Town with 20 teams, many drawn from a deprived part of Aylesbury.
- Milton Keynes – revitalisation of Whaddon Way from St Mary's Bletchley.
- St Paul's, Slough – becoming a model of intercultural best practice being shared with 12 other churches, working with the Diocesan UKME Development Adviser.
- Greyfriars, Reading – planted into Reading Gateway in 2020 – the growth of which is already leading to exploration of a new location for planting.
- St Andrews, High Wycombe – working on behalf of the deanery to convene local discussions, with a view to supporting and enabling development of a church revitalisation.

Six Greenhouses launched in 2022



Trinity Church, Earley, in Reading, saw its congregation grow from 120 people to more than 450, in just 10 months, through a partnership with the local Hong Kong community. Evangelism outreach events and the growth in numbers – around 250 adults and 100 children and youth – led to the launch of a new Hong Kong congregation plant, in January 2023, at the nearby St Mary's Church, Winnersh.



Children, young people and families

The staff team of three Discipleship Enablers supports engagement between children, young people and families within our churches, communities and local schools, with a range of resources and training.

48 parishes were supported to develop strategies for engaging with children and young people, as churches reimagine and try new things post-Covid-19. Focus on nurturing intergenerational communities, providing advice for our large network of paid workers and supporting parishes in vacancy, is being found increasingly as valuable by those churches.

A growing challenge for churches has emerged around the employment of children's and youth workers. There is an increased desire to employ into these roles, but lack of a vocational pathway, for many years, has resulted in a significant decrease in trained and experienced ministers and therefore role applications. Responding to this leadership-pipeline challenge remains a priority for the team in 2023.

The Space Makers contemplative toolkit continues to have a positive impact on the wellbeing of children. Working with colleagues in the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE), the team have supported the training of 120 participants from churches and schools.

July saw the return of the Yellow Braces annual weekend for young people, following a three-year break due to Covid-19. At a new venue, enjoying the great facilities provided by Adventure Plus in their an 80-acre site in Clanfield, 31 young people from across the diocese gathered for community, fun and to grow in discipleship.

"I took my usual weekly Collective Worship at the primary school with Key Stage 2 and led the Stilling exercise... Both the headteacher and I were blown away by how well it was received by the children. I was a bit reticent as there are over 100 children, but you could have heard a pin drop, the only sound was of the children all breathing in and out in unison. The children all said how much it left them feeling calm and ready for the afternoon."

Wyckwood Benefice



A brand-new resource, *Space Makers for Families*, was launched in May for families to explore contemplative practices at home. It equips parents, caregivers, grandparents and godparents – amid the busyness of family life – with tools to nurture their own everyday faith and spiritual journey, alongside their children and family members. Its purpose is to support families to live more deeply and form everyday faith habits.



Everyday faith

We now have more than 500 people trained to offer Personal Discipleship Plans. Personal Discipleship Plans are helping Christians to step into something new, rediscover a forgotten joy or talent and to share faith through word and witness. The focus, in 2023, is on supporting people and churches to embed the learning into their parish life.

“Refreshing and invigorating... I really got a lot out of it. I particularly appreciated the way you encouraged me to think about myself and my qualities.”

Personal Discipleship Plan participant, Bray

The *Come and See* Lent programme had a successful third year in 2023, with more than 2,400 people sent the daily reflections across churches, schools and children’s and youth groups.

Generous giving

Generous Giving support helps churches to nurture a culture of giving and generosity. The practical support on offer ranges from advice on fundraising asks to administering contactless devices and the Parish Giving Scheme.

65 free contactless devices were given to parishes in 2022, thanks to funding from the National Church.

3,700 donations, totalling £48.5k, were received in the first six months through contactless devices. This included 950 donations, totalling £11.5k, in December alone. Contactless technology has provided a new source of income for the parishes involved, supporting the

maintenance of church buildings and enabling churches to be there for their local communities. More than 800 new givers during the year brought in an additional £650k in donations, including Gift Aid, for member churches, through the success of the Parish Giving Scheme.

More than 60 attendees from 37 churches in the diocese joined the A – Z of Fundraising event hosted in May, engaging with professional fundraisers and some of the biggest funders in the UK, such as the National Churches Trust and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Clergy conference

The Clergy Conference, *Wonderfully Made*, saw over 280 clergy, from every deanery, gather at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, in June, with a much-needed focus on providing a space for reconnecting, retreat and healing, growing friendship, and learning together. Teaching from Bishop Steven, alongside keynote speeches from Lord Boateng, the Revd Isabelle Hamley and Bishop Graham Tomlin, offered deep reflection and learning. Small group sessions presented time for creativity and deepening relationships.

“Thank you for a transformational conference. I arrived feeling weary and heavy laden and left having been ministered to by the Spirit, encouraged, inspired, and renewed. It has made a huge difference to my personal wellbeing, ability to frame the demands of ministry, and has given me a realistic vision for the time ahead.”

Clergy conference participant, 2022

FINANCE

We spent £28.2m in 2022. This was funded by donations from the church community and income from other sources. We're committed to making sure our income is used efficiently, effectively and responsibly so that we make every pound count.

We remain extremely grateful for the work of our parishes in achieving their Parish Share allocations. Support was maintained for parishes by holding a 0% increase in Share for 2022, and we received 95.2% of the amount requested, which is remarkable in the economic circumstances.

The parish share raised by our church congregations accounts for 70% of the money the diocese spends from the core budget in 2023. It's thanks to the generosity of our predecessors (realised today as the income we generate from our assets) that parish share allocations today are a lot lower than they would otherwise have to be.

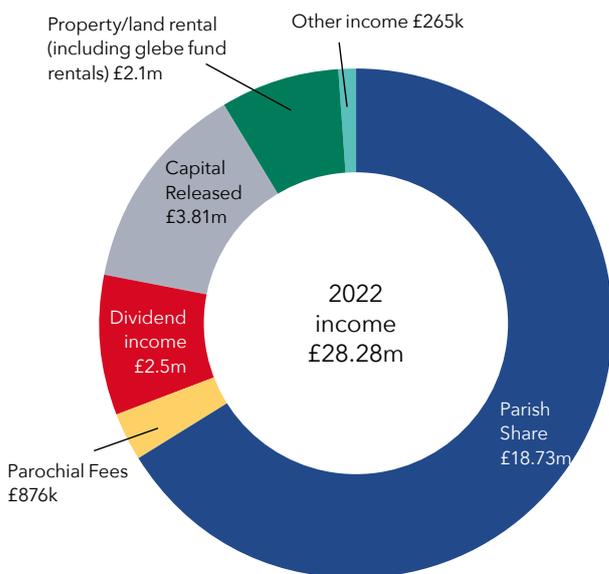
Significant savings were made in the national Clergy Pension Scheme, as contribution rates relating to deficit reduction payments were materially reduced. Savings were also identified in finance and IT staffing.

We were able to accommodate a large increase in repair and maintenance spend in our vicarages, as the Property Team caught up on planned work deferred during the pandemic. We achieved this in part by setting aside a designated fund of £550k to assist the increase in work, without impacting Parish Share.

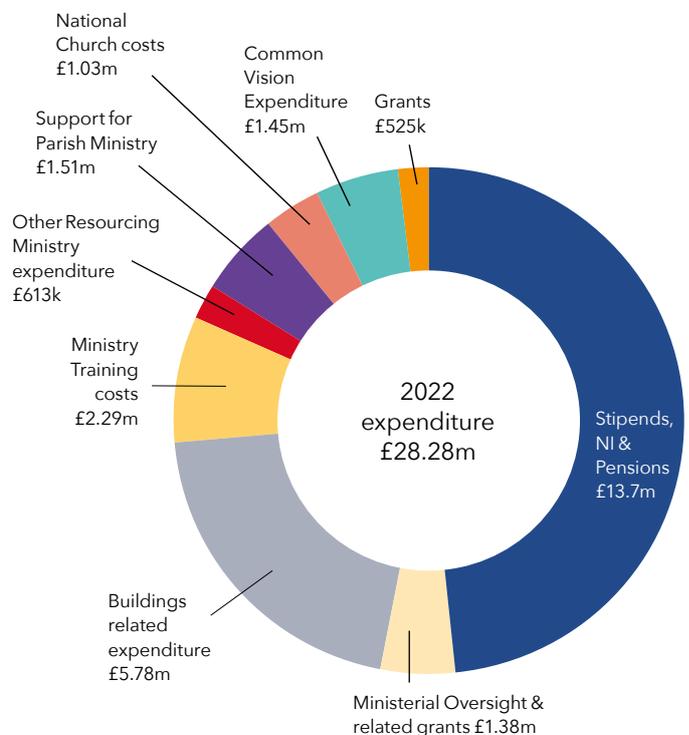
The national Church supplied grant funding to dioceses across the Church of England to assist with the cost-of-living crisis. We were able to distribute over £550k to ministers and parishes to mitigate rising utility costs.

We have been able to hold Share increases to 0% in 2023, whilst awarding a stipend increase for our clergy of 4%. All the actions taken ensure we can continue to minimise any increases in Parish Share, as we remain all too aware of the impact on Parish reserves of the current high inflationary circumstances.

Income



Expenditure



Apportioned into the above are the following support costs: Secretariat (£203k), Finance (£411k), Human Resources (£277k), Governance (£154k), IT (£325k), Church House (£330k).

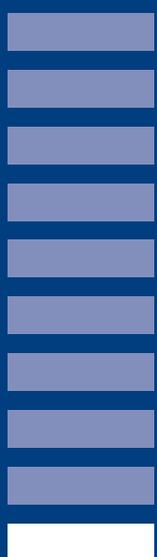
Charts based on Management Accounts

DID YOU KNOW...

90 pence in every pound comes back to our parishes in:

- 
- **Clergy** - stipends, pension contributions, housing and ongoing training
 - **Curates** - selection, training, stipends, pension contributions and some housing
 - **Support for parish ministry** - mission, church buildings, safeguarding, etc.
 - **Development Fund** - grants to parishes for missional projects.

10 pence in every pound goes to:

- 
- **National Church costs**, including support to churches in poorer parts of the country
 - Our contribution towards the funding of **initial ordination training** at a national level
 - Other diocesan **support and administration** costs.

Find out more at [oxford.anglican.org/on-the-money](https://www.oxford.anglican.org/on-the-money)

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SAFEGUARDING

HR enables our common vision through agile, lean and effective organisational structures and creative deployment of staff.

It promotes an environment of fairness, accountability, trust and mutual respect. The team leads on equality, diversity and inclusion and supports development fund bids. HR manages payroll for clergy and staff and oversees the Ministerial Development Review scheme, Authorised Listener programme and conflict-transformation resources.

HR continues to work in a business partnership model to ensure people-related matters remain top of the employer's priorities and that compliant, safe and fair human resource management strategies and systems are deployed. In 2022, the team:

- supported Heads of Department in four departmental restructures to address the evolving landscape of the diocese
- delivered 23 recruitment campaigns in response to changing staffing needs, some generated by our common vision workstreams
- responded to 89 enquiries from parishes, staff and schools
- supported 21 employee and 39 clergy wellbeing matters
- advised on 39 draft Development Fund bids
- supported 10 volunteer Authorised Listeners
- advised on 34 employee contractual matters and processed 48 clergy HR enquiries
- completed building accessibility audits for places of work at Church House and Theale
- safely recruited and inducted 11 new Ministerial Development Reviewers.

Safeguarding is part of the mission of the church; children, young people and vulnerable adults must be able to worship and grow in Christ safely.

The team lead on preventative and reactive safeguarding work, and in 2022 we provided guidance on 512 safeguarding enquiries and received 139 safeguarding referrals, some of which resulted in live cases requiring involvement of statutory authorities.

We formed a working group for the 431 Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs), so that we can effectively meet the needs of these key volunteers and help

create safer cultures in our churches. 200 PSOs attended our monthly area drop-in sessions, and safeguarding training for church officers continues to receive consistent positive feedback. Participants on the leadership training module, for those who hold a bishop's licence or have influence over safeguarding culture within a church, report that they have experienced shifts in their understanding around the need for culture change.

We reviewed all safeguarding operations and are building a strong team with a focus on continuous improvement and embedding good practice.

Our safeguarding practice is quality assured by an independently chaired diocesan safeguarding panel sub-group and the National Church, as part of a pilot project responding to the IICSA 1 and 8 recommendations.

Diversity and inclusion

We celebrate the inclusion, contribution and ministry of disabled people, those from UKME backgrounds and the LGBTQIA+ community.

- Launched our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy in January.
- Marked Black History Month with a portrait and video exhibition featuring black clergy of African and Caribbean descent sharing their powerful stories, and over 150 people attended the Creative Expressions of Faith event in Milton Keynes.
- Doubled attendance at UKME Chapter meetings to over 20 clergy and LLMs.
- Hosted an Area Deans and Lay Chairs conference focussing on UKME and racial justice issues.
- Provided vital pastoral support through our LGBTQIA+ chaplains to people across the diocese.
- Hosted a Clergy Women's Day in October.
- Established a new diocesan disability oversight group.
- Developed resources to raise awareness of disability issues and support parishes with improving church buildings accessibility.

COMMUNICATIONS

The department supports all that we say and do. The work ranges from handling media enquiries to producing *Pathways*, our website, data analysis and finding new ways to share the good news. The team is on hand with help and advice for parishes every day of the week.

Key moments

It was a busy Eastertide preparing for the Clergy Conference. The team produced conference materials, livestreamed keynote sessions and worship, and provided event-support throughout.

In September, the diocesan website was one of the first in the country to be updated, following news of the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. In the days that followed, the team ensured a regular flow of information to parishes and a central point of coordination for questions and advice.

During the autumn, financial communications to explain diocesan finances and parish share were well received. Bishop Steven's essay, *Together in Love and Faith*, achieved unprecedented media coverage and strong interest across Church and wider society.¹

The content build for *Come and See 2023* took place during the winter. A new range of resources includes materials for schools and church families.

Online

During the summer, the website was upgraded to enable more effective key-moment management and introduce new functionality, such as the eco-hub resources and related news stories, alongside different sections of the site. We continue to refresh site-content on a regular basis, including a new cost-of-living resources section and multi-channel resources for the Rural Church programme.

Media activity

In addition to worldwide interest in Bishop Steven's essay, there was a notable uptick in positive media coverage during the year: *The Times* attended the Cathedral service marking the 1222 Synod of Oxford; Bishop Alan appeared on GB News to explain the Church's position on the refugee crisis; there was widespread media coverage of our £10m investment

in clergy housing and the bishops' addition to the liturgy of confirmation. The team also supported two documentaries on the environment.

Local media interest remains high. Projects included Refugee Week, an interview series with those to be ordained deacon, and weekly interviews with clergy and lay leaders. There was much interest in the Black History Month exhibition and disability awareness videos – two projects that were developed and executed by our very able communications officers.

As ever, the department was on hand for parishes experiencing difficulties, including unexpected deaths, high profile funerals, clergy experiencing intrusive press interest and a handful of criminal trials involving church volunteers. Meanwhile, there was a steady flow of positive stories showing the breadth and depth of church life across the diocese. See oxford.anglican.org/news for a full listing.

Data analysis

A new steering group is in place to assist with quality assurance and workplan prioritisation. A refreshed approach to Articles of Enquiry, begun at the start of 2023, will form the backbone of data requests in future years and we have improved the process for the annual Statistics for Mission returns. Of particular note was the analysis of church attendance for October 2022, which had important new findings for parishes as the Church continues its long recovery after Covid-19.

“Thank you so much for producing ‘On the Money’. It needs to be made available to everyone in the congregation of each church. It is excellent.”

St. Luke's, Stoke Hammond

¹ Note: the costs of communications support for the Bishop of Oxford are met by the Church Commissioners.

PROPERTY

Our Property team oversees the repair and maintenance of over 470 vicarages and other properties. Together with rental costs, housing allowances, council tax, water rates, buildings insurance and other bills, gross costs in this area are around £4m each year. Staffing and administration costs account for 9.5% of expenditure. The team generated fee income of £100k, in 2022, from school surveys and projects.

The Property team worked tirelessly to support clergy by catching up on 96% of quinquennial surveys deferred due to Covid-19 restrictions, in addition to those due this year.

We saw another record year for rents from vacant vicarages and other properties, with a 10% rise in rental income, exceeding £1.1m and without which Parish Share would be 5% higher. The longer vacancy period seen during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic has returned to normal levels, making the rental income

received all the more remarkable, with thanks to the many parishes who helped facilitate this.

Planning permission was secured for two of our smaller glebe sites and we made a strategic asset purchase during the year generating £400k income.

20 refurbishment and improvement projects to vicarages were completed, with care for the environment consciously incorporated.



5 locations identified for work with Local Authorities on potential social housing, including part of a masterplan for 75 homes at Waddesdon.



We approved £10m expenditure on environmental works to improve the carbon footprint of vicarages and better care for our clergy. The first trial retrofit works began in spring 2023.

DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Development Fund reached the £3m mark in 2022, with more than 160 local church and community projects across the Thames Valley region awarded grants. 38 grants, amounting to £556k, supported parishes and deaneries with a range of missionally creative initiatives in 2022.

Photo: Sarah Bourne



Arts ministry

Funding for a Chaplain for the Arts at St Mary's Church, Banbury, supported the St Mary's Festival 200 with 50 community arts and faith events, celebrating 200 years of the church.

Parish nursing

The first Parish Nurse in the diocese, working in Reading Gateway parish, supports the health and wellbeing of the parish community, providing spiritual care and helping reduce the pressure on hospitals by treating residents in their homes.

"The service is a great practical way to share God's love to our community and make a real difference to the lives of our neighbours."

The Revd Nick Hill, Rector of Reading Gateway Church

School chaplaincy

The Revd Kay Blackwell, Chaplain at the Oxford Academy, Littlemore, supports the mental and spiritual wellbeing of students and teachers through the Space Makers reflective practices, LGBTQI+ support groups and interfaith relations.

"Parents are engaging with the 'thought for the week' on offer through Facebook... and students are learning how to respond to their inner struggles better, through reflective practices."

The Revd Kay Blackwell

Rebuilding

Opened in September 2022, the new St Andrew's Church building has full sustainability credentials, disabled access, and is a space for the whole community to use and enjoy.

Counselling for the homeless

A grant has enabled the Gatehouse at St Giles, Oxford, to expand their counselling provision to provide long-term therapy for homeless and vulnerably housed clients.

"Counselling is a crucial part of the support offered at the Gatehouse and it makes a significant difference to the lives of our clients. We see them consistently engaging with therapy and working hard to better their mental health."

Katrina Horne, CEO of the Gatehouse

Broughton narrowboat



A grant from the Development Fund supported Broughton Church to provide free narrowboat journeys and open the boat as a warm hub for local households in need, during the cost-of-living crisis.

Photo: Roger and Jo Gilbert

SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat handles pastoral reorganisation and the administrative affairs of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance, ensuring good governance across all diocesan boards and councils. It oversees data protection and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Development Fund. Changes to the makeup of the Secretariat were made in early 2023, with the addition of the Church Buildings team, formerly in what was then known as the Glebe and Buildings department.

Recommendations, from the review of our governance in 2020, have continued to be embedded, ensuring diocesan governance is as effective as possible in supporting its mission. Improved transparency and accountability of committee activities, plus diversity of committee memberships, has remained a priority. Supporting this, the newly established Appointments Committee made 32 appointments in 2022.

- Supported over 100 parishes through pastoral reorganisations solutions, individually tailored to improve their local mission and ministry.
- 10 meetings of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee and its five subcommittees considered deanery-led proposals for changes to pastoral arrangements and clergy provision.
- Three proposals for new Bishop Mission Orders (BMOs) and one BMO renewal.
- Guided work to translate legal structures and processes to better reflect parish-level needs, and to explore wider options to enable church buildings to remain open and sustainable through BMOs, Joint Councils and Church Futures.

Church buildings

A new name for the team highlights the wide-ranging support the team provides to parishes in caring for and using their church buildings.

Extensive new guidance was produced to assist church teams with arranging and securing good value for money from their quinquennial inspections.

Changes to the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules, in July, saw the team collaborating with the Environment team to assist churches in reducing their energy consumption, as part of the diocesan commitment to reach net zero by 2035.

The viability of new products and technologies for heating churches was explored to best support parishes needing to replace their heating system or boiler.



The team oversaw large projects demonstrating the care and commitment of Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) to their churches. This included extensive conservation

work at St Mary the Virgin, Oxford, and works to repair and regild wall paintings and update church lighting at St Mary Magdalene, Latimer.

Photo: Helen Cockle

700+ applications for permission for works in 2022

44 applications for major reordering or new facilities

66 site visits in 2022

393 early-stage new project enquiries

EDUCATION

The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education now serves 285 schools across the Diocese, following the opening of St Cecilia's Primary School in The Keys Academy Trust, Wokingham, in January 2023. The schools continue to be some of the best in the country, with 93% judged 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

Four schools converted to academies in 2022, increasing the total to 104 academies, 102 voluntary controlled schools and 79 voluntary aided schools. Interest in academy conversion has increased and this will feed through over the coming year.

ODBE continued to help local trustees to register school sites at the Land Registry, securing long-term ownership and demonstrating good trustee responsibility. The number of admissions appeals to schools has increased again, together with those involving refugees, supported by dedicated volunteer panels members.

In September, the Headteacher Induction Programme

launched, supporting new headteachers in developing their strategic work and considering how emotional intelligence enhances leadership. The new Governance+ offer has been well received – delegates from 48 schools signed up to governor training at no further cost.

The first headteachers' conference since the Covid-19 pandemic, held in June, heard keynote speakers, the Revd Polly Falconer; Andy Wolfe, the Church of England's Education Office's Executive Director of Education; and the Revd Richard Coles, offering leaders challenge and encouragement as they seek to develop courageous advocacy in their schools.



Photo: Penny Bingham

The Annual Service for Headteachers and Governors returned to Christ Church Cathedral in November. This was a wonderful occasion with uplifting contributions from ODBE primary and secondary schools.

125+ schools are engaged with Space Makers. As children and young people struggle with mental health post-pandemic, the need for stillness, spiritual connection and prayer is ever more important.

Capital projects at voluntary aided schools and multi-academy trusts had an annual value of c.£5m, including new boilers, roof replacements and disability access work. ODBE plans to increase funding to strive to achieve net zero carbon in all designated schools by 2035. The DfE has recently provided a £15k grant per school for energy efficient measures.

New chaplaincies developed in both primary and secondary schools, in a range of settings, shapes, and sizes – part time, full time, paid and voluntary. Four further education colleges began pioneering chaplaincy work with ODBE.

AREA OFFICES

Buckingham

- The population of Buckinghamshire continued to grow in 2022 and is expected to reach 1 million in 2023. Significant areas of new housing development around Milton Keynes, Buckingham, Aylesbury and High Wycombe led to a greater focus on Church Planting hubs, including in Bletchley and Water Eaton, North Aylesbury and Slough.
- A programme to support the introduction of roof alarms across the archdeaconry has proven successful, with a significant decline in the occurrence of lead thefts compared to high levels in 2018/19.
- Vocations ministry among UK minority ethnic church members and rural parishes have been a priority for the area team and have seen positive growth.

Dorchester

- Following Judy French's retirement as Archdeacon of Dorchester, in September, the Revd Helen Kendrick and the Revd Canon Toby Wright were appointed as Acting Assistant Archdeacons to work with the Revd Canon David Tyler who became Archdeacon in February 2023. The Revd Preb Jane Haslam will join the team, as Associate Archdeacon, in July.
- In January, Dorchester Abbey welcomed the Revd Jane Willis as the new Team Rector of Dorchester.
- Encouraging numbers of new projects and congregations focused on children, young people and families are emerging from Greenhouses. Several churches have joined the diocesan Intergenerational Greenhouse, focused on learning from and resourcing church-communities seeking to become increasingly intergenerational.

Oxford

- Archdeacon Jonathan took on the role of Interim Subdean at the Cathedral, and the Revd Canon Dr Peter Groves has taken on more responsibilities as Assistant Archdeacon.
- An Oxford and Cowley working group was established to discern community needs within the two deaneries, identifying existing resources and gaps.
- Help for parishes with leaders and preachers, pastoral support, spiritual direction and practical support with IT, maintenance and music, through the local Ministry Storehouse network, has proved useful.
- A new Anglican Chaplain was appointed to Oxford Brookes University and further University College Chaplain appointments were also made.

Berkshire

- The Theale Area Office was formally opened by Bishop Olivia in September. It has proved to be a great asset, with better-integrated working across the archdeaconry.
- The first Strategic Development Funded plant, in one of Berkshire's most deprived communities, is growing well. A second plant, in the Reading area, is being explored.
- Hard-to-fund posts remain a challenge, leading to difficult missional and structural choices. Two missional initiatives are seeking a Bishop's Mission Order.
- 42% of Berkshire churches completed energy audits by the end of 2022, supported by the archdeacon's grant.



Al Jazeera English faith and climate documentary



Black History Month exhibition



Bishop Steven visits Sherington CE School in Newport Deanery

WORLD MISSION

We share in God's mission with partners from a range of countries, including link dioceses in South Africa, South India and Sweden, and a further six dioceses we are linked with through the Mothers Union (MU) Wave of Prayer. We spend £53,000 each year on activities that strengthen our fellowship in Christ and help our partners to enable mission and ministry in their contexts.

In August, bishops from around the Anglican Communion gathered for the Lambeth Conference to discern how the Communion can be 'God's church for God's world'. We hosted the bishops of Kimberley and Kuruman (K and K), South Africa; Nandyal, India; and our MU-link diocese of Kinshasa, DRC, offering time to reflect and share with people in our diocese.

Six clergy from our link dioceses joined our diocesan clergy conference in June; five of our clergy received training in Växjö, Sweden; Bishop Olivia preached at the Cathedral and the Chair of our K and K committee led a clergy school in Kimberley, South Africa. Other visits enabled diocesan and parish representatives to share in our partners' key events and explore and sustain our joint work.

Virtual technology enables us to hold meetings online, such as the Oxford and K and K environmental groups. We funded two internet hubs and K and K's internal communications to facilitate the meetings. In addition, a £10,000 grant funded clergy training, diocesan gatherings and essential building work in K and K.

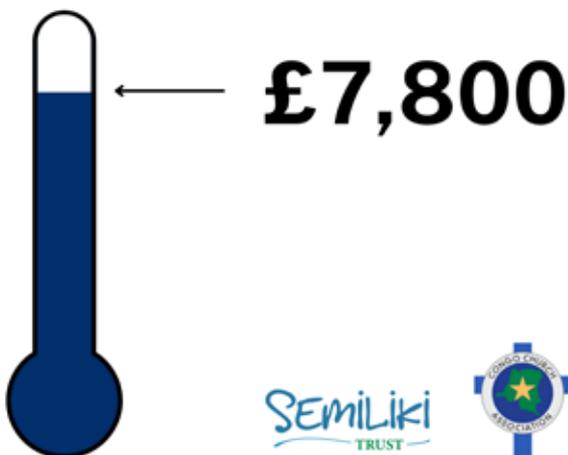
DR Congo

Visitors from Kinshasa provided powerful reminders of the DR Congo's ongoing trauma and the lack of international aid. Working with the Semiliki Trust and the Congo Church Association, a diocesan appeal raised more than £7.8K to support the Congolese Church's work in relieving poverty, supporting displaced peoples, improving education and healthcare, and spreading the good news of Christ.



Photo: Matthew Greysdon

Your generous donations raised



"This money enables us to give more resources to our six medical coordination teams to buy a stock of drugs for treating chronic disease like high blood pressure and diabetes. This makes a life-saving difference to the lives of hundreds of people."

Nigel Pearson, Semiliki Trust

INTERFAITH RELATIONS

Interfaith work has continued to develop, with key events and relationship building among local faith communities that have demonstrated the effectiveness of synergy and interfaith partnerships. Archdeacon Jonathan stood back as chair, due to additional Cathedral responsibilities and the Revd Dr Paul Smith (co-chair) has been supported by the Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones.

Synod of Oxford commemoration

The diocese hosted a national service of repentance and commemoration for the Synod of Oxford at Christ Church Cathedral, in May 2022, organised by the Diocesan Committee for Interfaith Relations in association with the Oxford Jewish Congregation and the Council of Christians and Jews. More than 250 people, civic dignitaries and local representatives of different faith communities, gathered to mark 800 years since anti-Jewish laws were introduced by the medieval church at the 1222 Synod of Oxford. Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis spoke at a reception after the service, and music and recitals were led by the local Jewish community.

The symbolic event offered an important opportunity to apologise for the shameful historic actions of the Church, which saw English Jews ostracised and led to a mass expulsion in 1290. It also recognised the positive reframing of Jewish-Christian relations since this time and reinforced the Archbishop of Canterbury's call, in the 2019 Church of England report *God's Unfailing Word*, that "only by looking back and recognising our failures as Christians can we begin to move forward with authenticity".

One Earth, Many Faiths

40 participants and contributors of different faiths joined the first Diocesan Interfaith Eco Conference, led in partnership with Hope4Creation in January. With a keynote speech from the Bishop of Reading, and reflections from local representatives from the Muslim, Jewish and Sikh communities, the conference was a key moment in diocesan interfaith relations work, highlighting the shared concern for the environment and value of creation among different faiths. There are plans in place to launch a series of interfaith eco programmes across the diocese to expand interfaith partnerships.

"An amazing show of humanity, with people of several different faiths openly discussing sacred works from each faith and how they each relate to the care for our creation."

Participant at the Diocesan interfaith Eco Conference



Photo: Tom Pliston

COUNCIL FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

The Oxford Diocesan Council for the Deaf (ODCD) works with deaf and hard-of-hearing people in the diocese to meet their spiritual, social and general needs, and to give them a voice and full participation in church and society. The council is supported by an annual grant of £7k.

The Revd Hannah Lewis was appointed as Chaplain for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in 2022 and her work over the past year has granted the charity greater capacity to carry out its objectives, filling gaps in its ability to serve as fully as in the past.

Church services for the deaf and hearing impaired have been recommenced post-Covid-19 and former links have been re-energised, with Deaf Church groups in Slough, Reading and Newbury restarted.

New opportunities to hold services at Cathedral, parish and other levels have been taken successfully. Two new Deaf Churches were established in 2022 at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, and St Michael's Convent, Gerrards Cross, creating new opportunities for deaf people to worship regularly in British Sign Language (BSL). Bereaved families have been supported with

access to funerals with interpreters and BSL.

The availability of the Lead Chaplain, and the opportunities for engagement, profile raising and awareness, has increased knowledge of the role and participation in diocesan work.

Plans are in place for the trustees to celebrate the 125-year anniversary of the originating charity, Oxford Diocesan Church Mission to the Deaf and Dumb, which went on to become the ODCD, and to come together for a vision-planning day to map out the future direction of the charity.

The process of modernising and bringing the systems of the ODCD up to date, as well as the successful recruiting of new trustees to fill vacancies, have resulted in improved governance.

DT(O)L

Diocesan Trustees (Oxford) Ltd is the diocesan authority that acts as custodian trustee to hold property on behalf of PCCs and other ecclesiastical charities. The management of all trusts lies with parish trustees.

In 2022, DT(O)L assisted parish-managing trustees with their plans for mission, including handling 32 property transactions for the sale of property and the grant of leases providing capital or income to support church mission and ministry. In addition, they gave support to parish-managing trustees with new tenancies, renewals and leases.

DT(O)L is the sole trustee of the Oxford Diocesan Church Schools Uniform Statutory Trust (CSUST). The trust monies arise from the sale proceeds or rent of closed schools and schoolhouses in the diocese. In 2022, grants totalling £462k were given to promote the work of ODBE, enabling advice and support for school and academy personnel who contribute to outreach and mission. DT(O)L regularly reviews the investments of the trust in line with its Statement of Investment Principles. The future of the trusteeship of the CSUST is under review by DT(O)L, with plans expected to be formalised in summer 2023.

GOVERNANCE



There are a wide range of boards, councils and committees that promote and oversee aspects of activity in the life of the diocese, such as buildings, appointments and safeguarding. Each committee has specific responsibilities from Diocesan Synod or Bishop's Council to discharge duties on their behalf.

The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education, Oxford Diocesan Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Diocesan Trustees (Oxford) Ltd 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 Bishop's senior staff.

BOARD OF PATRONAGE

The Oxford Diocese Board of Patronage (ODBP) met twice in 2022 to discuss and progress vacancies for which they hold the patronage. Members of the board were involved in 11 vacancy processes, seeing the successful appointment of five incumbents/clergy, with six other vacancies still live at the end of the year.

The Board is constituted under the provisions of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986. It has provision for five lay and three clerical members, each elected for six years. The present Board took office in January 2019. The secretary is separately nominated by the Bishop of Oxford.

TABLE OF COMMITTEES

| Committee/Company | Chair | Secretary |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Audit | Mr Simon Richards | Mr John Orridge |
| Appointments Committee | Bishop of Oxford | Diocesan Secretary |
| Bishop's Council | Bishop of Oxford and Sir Hector Sants | Diocesan Secretary |
| Board of Patronage | Revd Dan Heyward | Revd Prof Brian Griffiths |
| Buildings | Mrs Sue Scane | Mr David Mason |
| Closed Churches | The Ven Stephen Pullin | Mrs Maggie Metaliaj |
| Common Vision Steering Group | Bishop of Oxford | Ms Janet Rogers |
| DAC | Mrs Abigail LLOYD | Ms Liz Kitch |
| Development Fund Panel | Mr John Sykes | Ms Janet Rogers |
| DMPC | Bishop of Oxford | Diocesan Secretary |
| DT(O)L | Revd Canon John Tattersall | Diocesan Secretary |
| Glebe | Mrs Sue Scane | Mr David Mason |
| HR Panel | Mr John Sykes | Mrs Poli Shajko |
| Interfaith | Revd Paul Smith and Revd Simon Jones | Mrs Claire Barratt |
| Investment | Mr Richard Horlick | Mr John Orridge |
| Local Ministry Pathway | Bishop of Dorchester | Revd Dr Phil Cooke |
| ODBE | Bishop of Buckingham | Mr Tony Wilson |
| ODCD | HH Christopher Tyrer | Mrs Fiona McNally |
| Finance | Sir Hector Sants | Mr John Orridge |
| Partnership in World Mission | Bishop of Reading | Bishop Henry Scriven |
| Rural Advisory & Reference Group | Bishop of Dorchester | Revd Charles Chadwick |
| Safeguarding Panel | Mr Peter Hay | Dr Louise Whitehead |
| UKME Oversight Group | Bishop of Oxford | Revd Polly Falconer |
| Disability Oversight Group | Bishop of Buckingham | Revd Katie Tupling |

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
 IICSA Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
 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
 ODCD Oxford Diocesan Council for the Deaf and Hard
 of Hearing
 UKME United Kingdom Minority Ethnic

The habits



COME
AND
SEE

The promise



COME
AND
SEE

The medicine



COME
AND
SEE

The portrait



COME
AND
SEE

The mirror



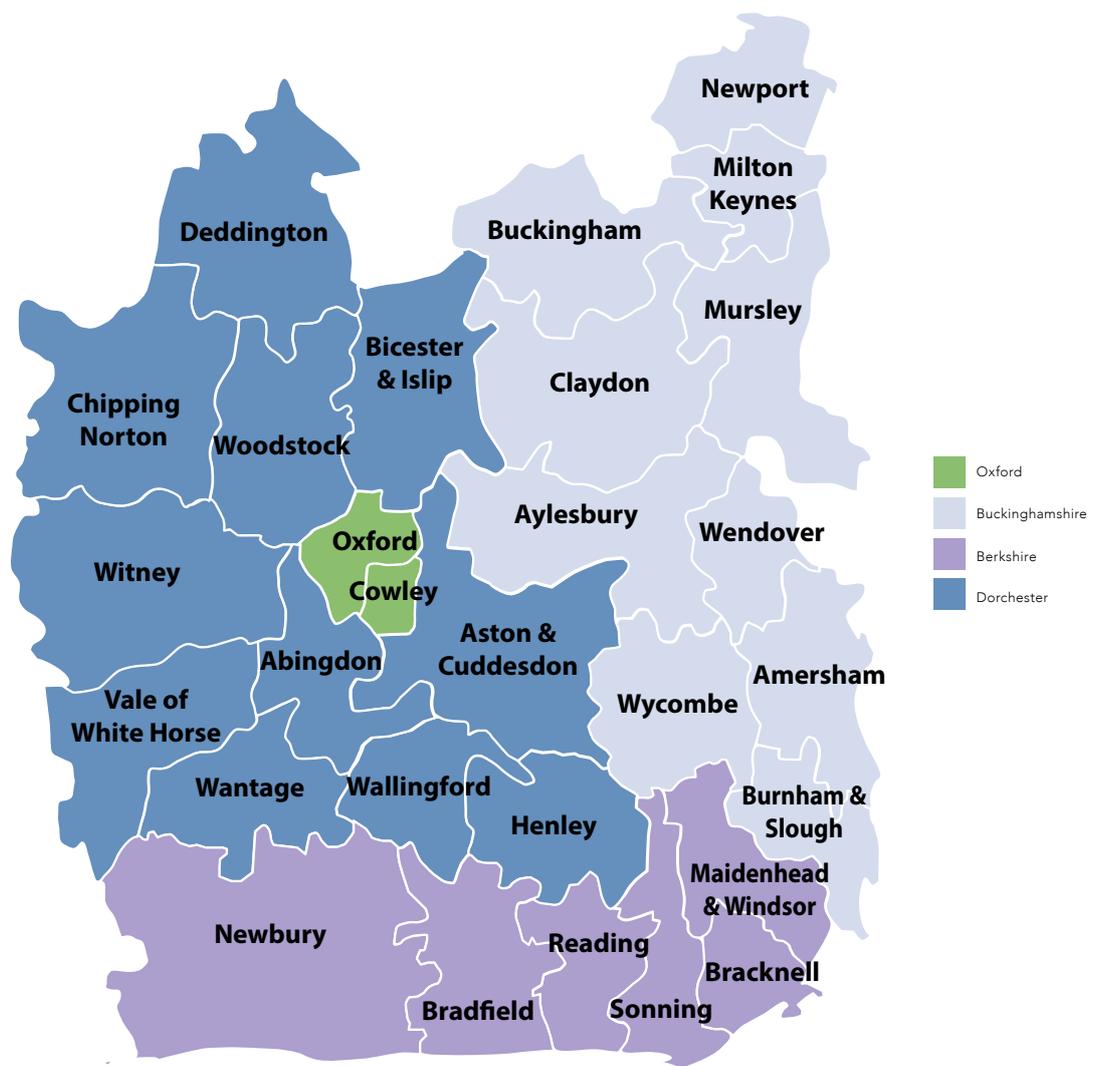
COME
AND
SEE

The vision



COME
AND
SEE

**"I thought the Beatitudes were things for other people.
This year, for the first time, I realise they are for me."**



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

There are 808 churches in 29 deaneries serving a population of 2.5m people and 285 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.

