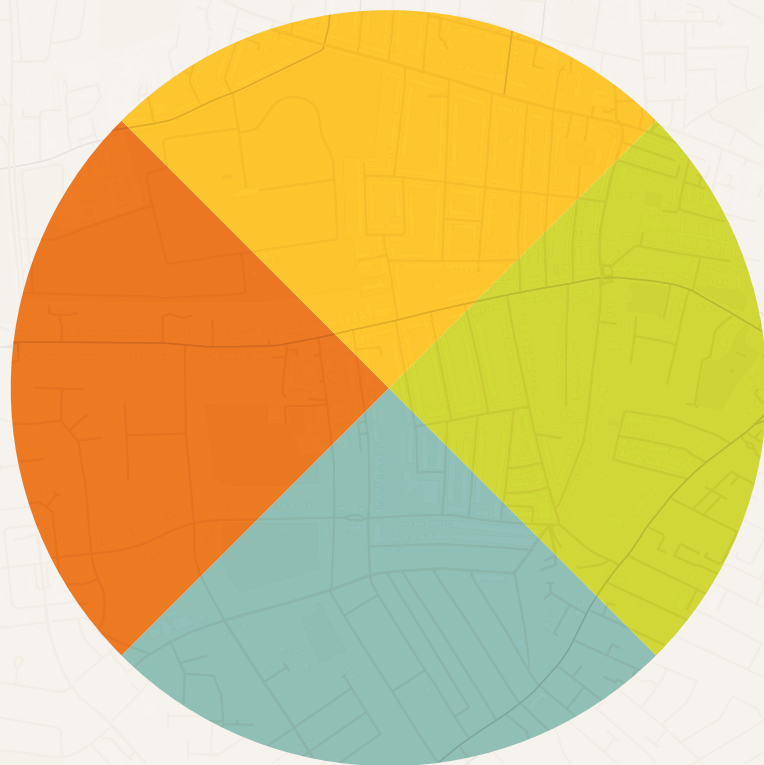


Transformed by Christ

Strategy Headlines and Overview
2026-2031





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We are on a journey together to create a long-term strategy that enables us to see our vision realised in Norfolk and Waveney.

This strategy proposal is rooted in the shared vision which has been so powerful over the last few years:

Transformed by Christ – Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic.

Being transformed by Christ means allowing God to live in us, penetrating the depths of our being, and transforming us into his image; to live as images of Christ. This is done, individually and corporately, when we embrace the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ, extend the love of God in Jesus to all whom we encounter, and allow the breath of the Holy Spirit to fill our sails each day.



The vision reflects our deep and heartfelt desire to draw individuals into a richer relationship with Jesus and to nurture Church communities into fullness of life. Through meeting Jesus and being transformed by him, we are called and invited to share the good news of Jesus Christ more widely and more generously in action and word.

The strategy recognises the considerable challenges facing us and all of the Church of England-declining attendance, stretched resources, and the need to do a much better job of engaging with younger and more diverse communities.

Yet it also builds on the signs of hope which are so evident across Norfolk and Waveney: faithful worship, generous service, and a longing for renewal, which has been so apparent in the way people from every background and context have engaged with the conversations behind the strategy, generously and in hope. This strategy outline is our collective response, shaped by prayer, consultation, and wide discernment across the whole Diocese, carried out in a range of ways and formats.

The heart of our strategy is that we long, through the transforming power of Jesus, to be a Diocese made up of local worshipping communities, with:



A Missional Vision and Culture

through inspiring disciples and church communities to witness boldly and live faithfully.



Hope-filled Clergy and Lay Leaders

who are empowered, supported and equipped to lead in mission with creativity and courage.



Communities of Disciples Forming Thriving Churches

who are enabled through partnership to be able to show active love and deep commitment in every context.



Growing congregations, Younger and more Diverse

through building energy with investment in specific places and encouraging church communities to try new things.

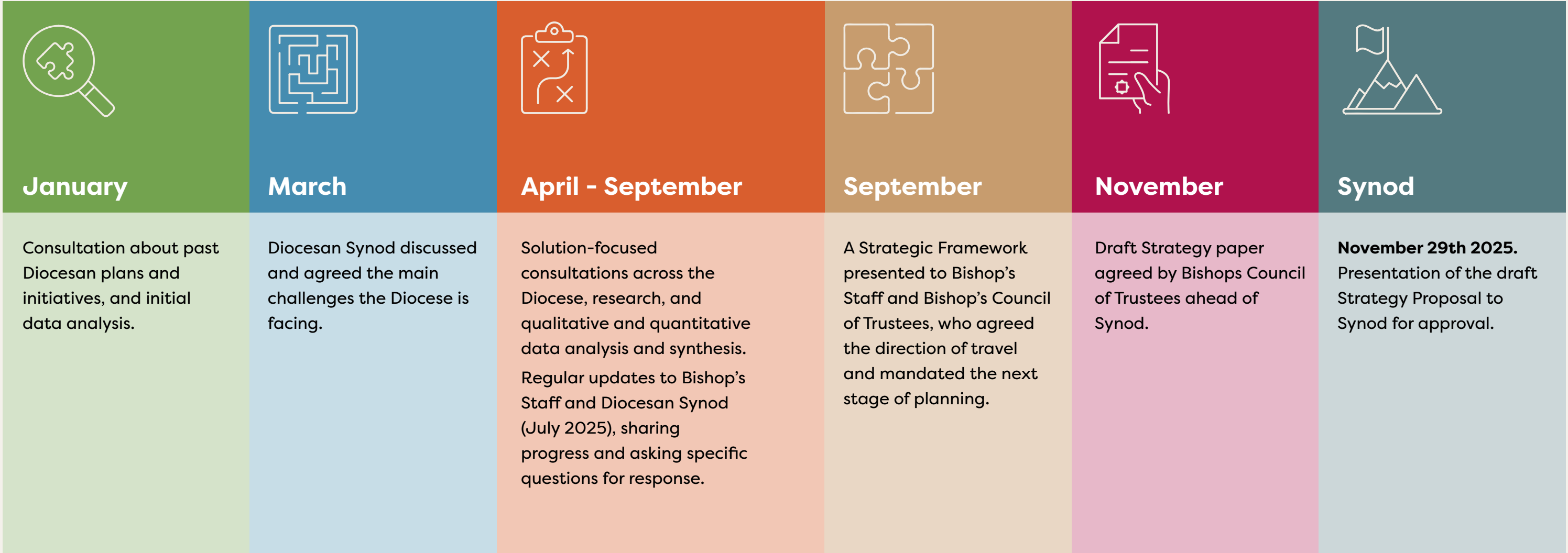
We are building on the foundations of previous work, listening to the Holy Spirit, and responding to the needs of our communities. People will be inspired in faith and mission, particularly through a new campaign of stories and resources. Church communities will be offered a missional 'Stream' (Reforesting, Flourishing, Regenerating, Germinating, Fallow) through which they will be supported in their mission.

The strategy will be delivered through practical commitments to each context of ministry and mission through investing in leadership, missional resources, training and planning. We will make small grants to local churches to support new ways of connecting with people and work with them as they engage with the buildings entrusted to them. We will seek to reduce the burden of administration which falls especially heavily on rural Multi Parish Benefices. We will ensure that quality safeguarding is part of every church community and everything we do.

This strategy is not a fixed plan but a living framework - one that invites every church community, every leader, and every disciple to participate in God's mission.

It is a call to hope, to action, and to transformation as we strive to become more like Jesus - Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic.

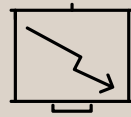
+Graham Norvic:



The case for change across our Diocese



Attendance has dropped by nearly 1/3 in ten years.



Attendance among young people has dropped by 25% since 2019 and over 40% since 2009.



Ten years ago, the number of under 18s in our worshipping community was 1 in 7, but now it is only 1 in 10.



58% of young people attend 6% of churches.



1 in 5 parishes have no Churchwarden.



Over 70s are the backbone of church communities, PCCs, volunteers and income.



Over 15% of Incumbents in our diocese are over the age of 65. 41% are over 60.

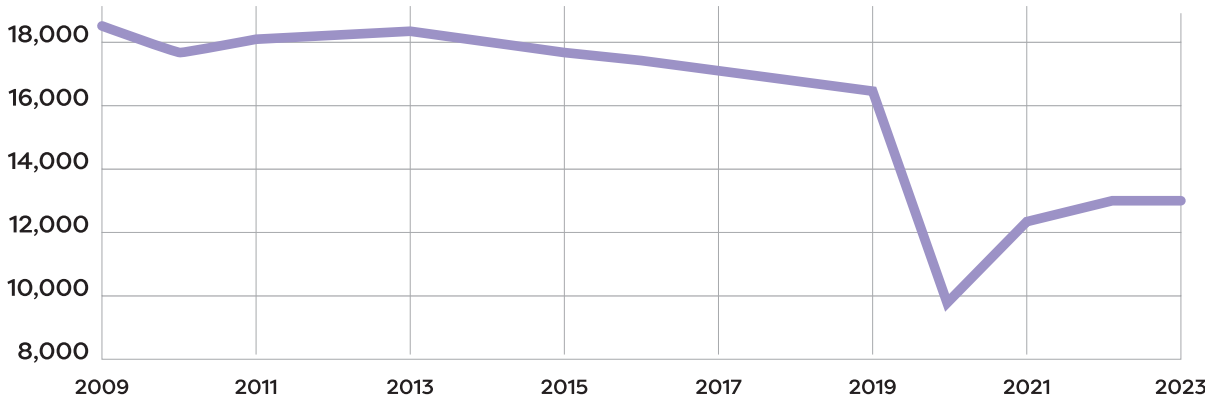


Average Weekly Gift is £13.04 compared to £16.90 nationally.

Average Weekly Attendance (includes estimates)

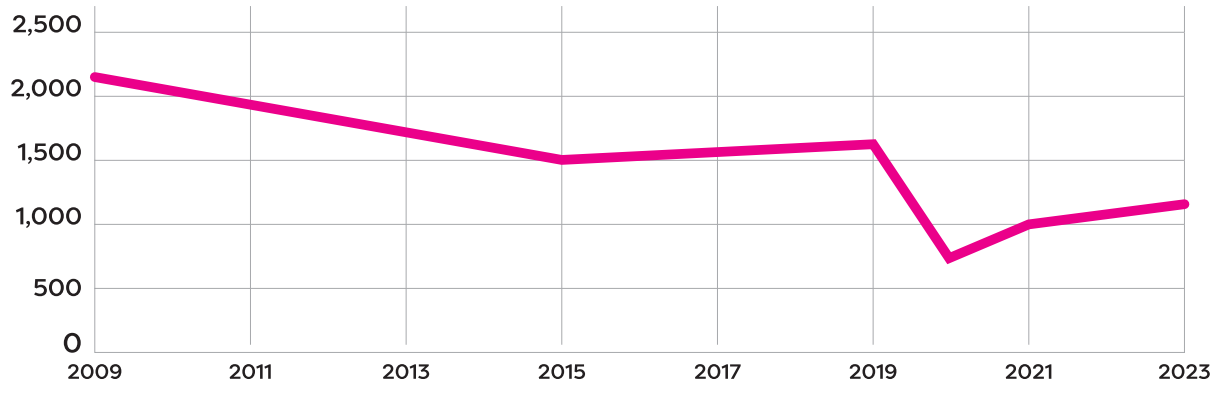
Statistics for Mission 2024 figures TBC

All-age



Under 18s

Sources: Statistics for Mission (2024) and Ministry Statistics (2025)



How do our demographics compare to the 2021 census?

By 2034 it is predicted we will have a population of 1,000,000 (Norfolk Insight). Just maintaining attendance at 1.4% per head of population, means we need net growth of 1,000 over ten years. This equates to an average weekly attendance of about 14,000 people, from 13,100 (2023).

The two dials on the facing page compare the figures and details for church attendance with their context.

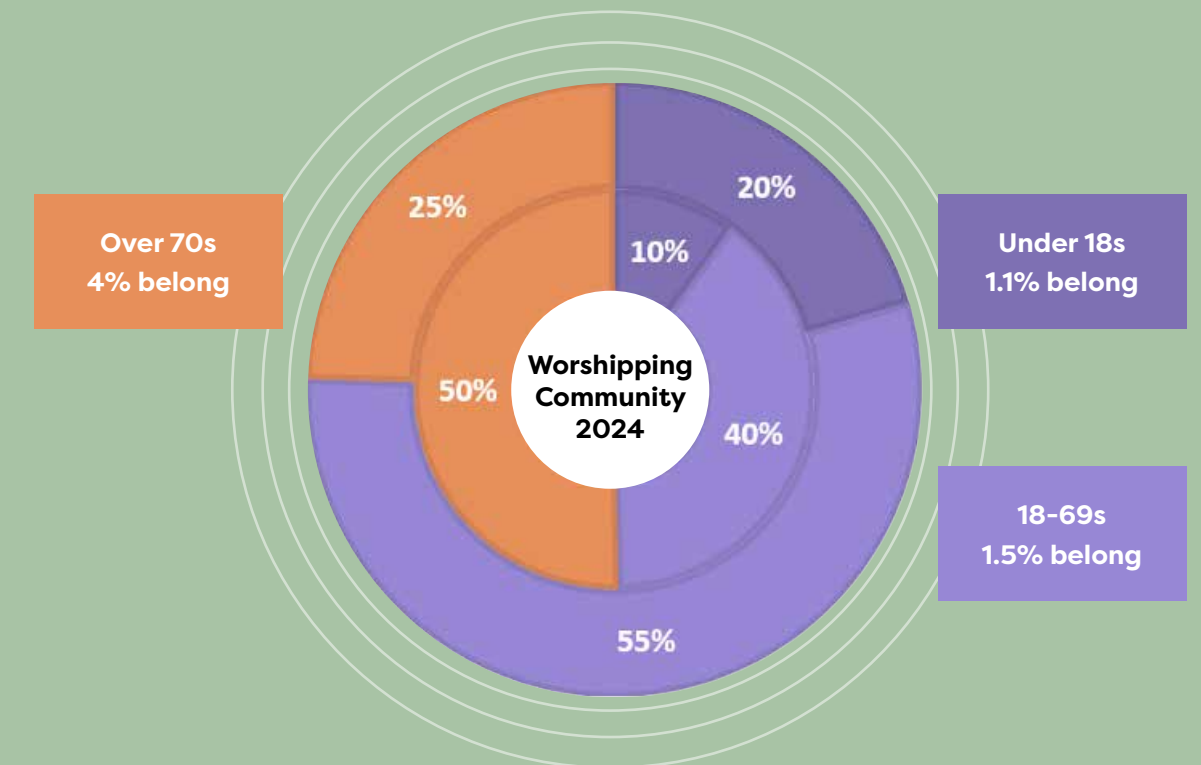
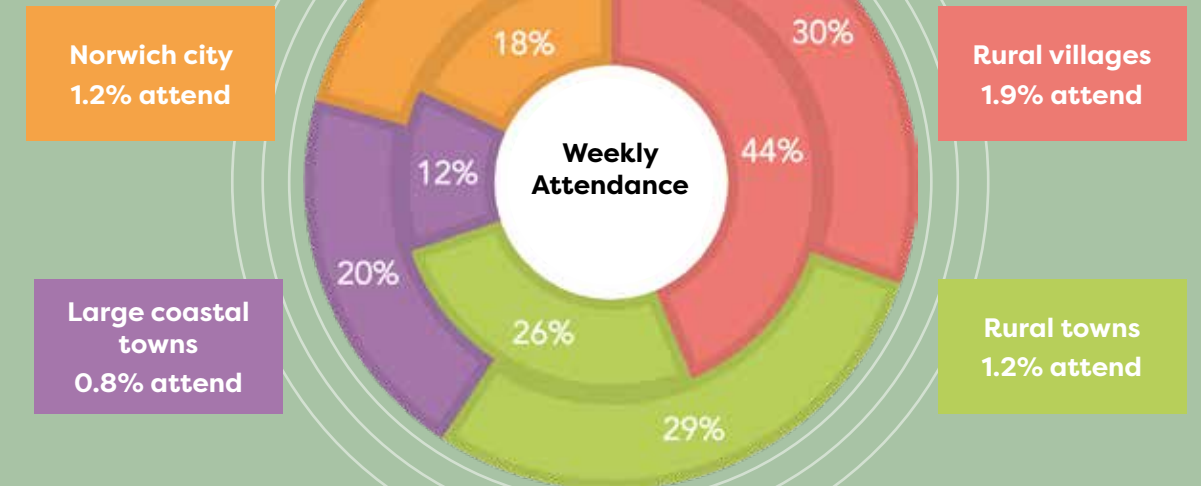
The top dial has (on the outside) how many people live in each context of ministry compared to (on the inside) church attendance - so:

- **30%** of people live in the Rural context but **44%** of weekly attendance is in those contexts.
- **20%** of our population live in our three Large Coastal Towns but they make up **12%** of our weekly attendance etc.

The dial below works in the same way and is a comparison of attendance by age:

- **20%** of our population is under 18 but under 18s make up only **10%** of our weekly attendance.
- Over 70s are **25%** of population but **50%** of our weekly attendance.

The local population
2021 census



THE MAIN CHALLENGES AS IDENTIFIED WITH DIOCESAN SYNOD

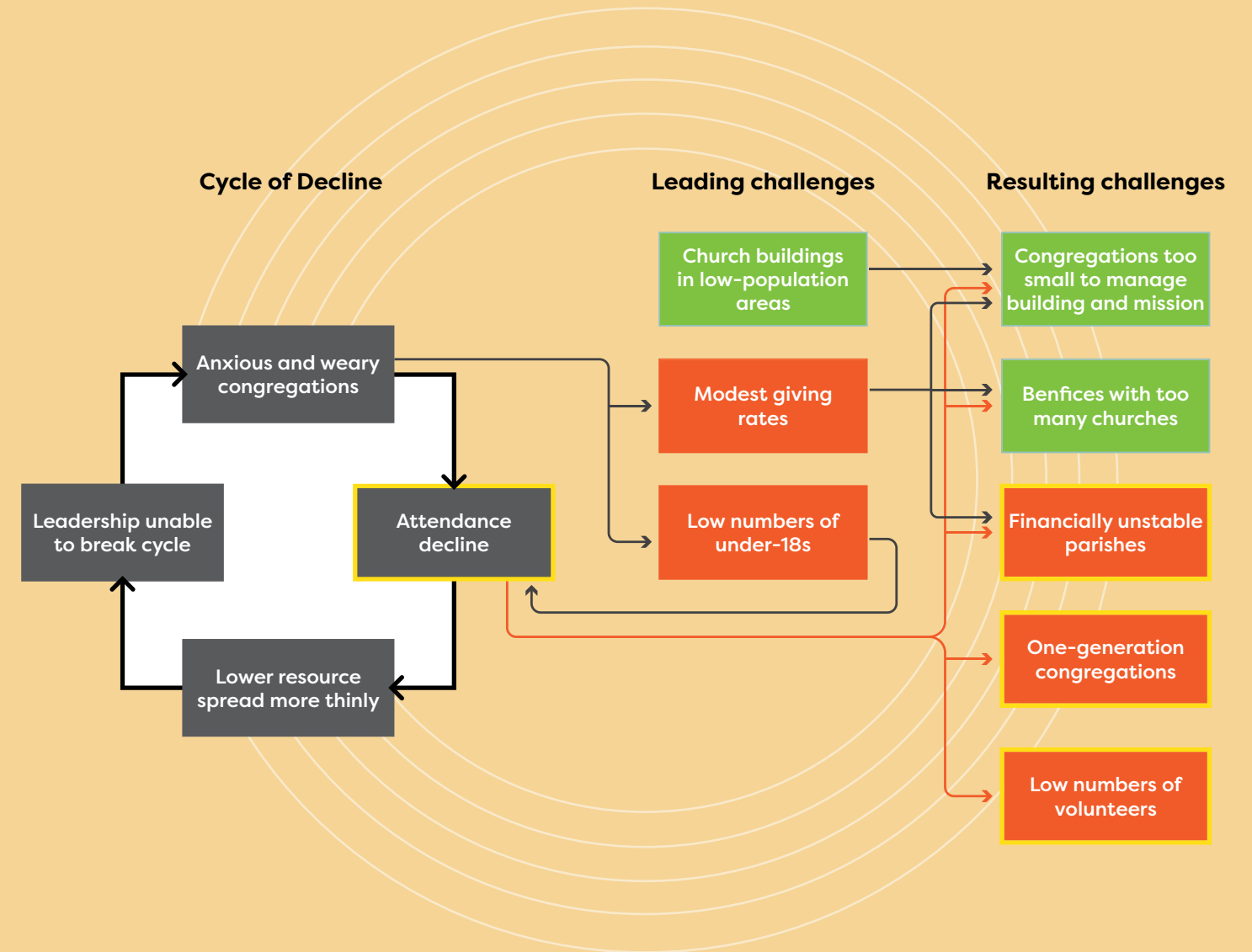
At the Diocesan Synod in March 2025, it was recognised that a cycle of decline is at play that creates a downward spiral. Over many decades across the Church of England, and in this Diocese, we have seen:

- **Declining attendances**
- **Fewer resources being available**
- **Leadership unable to break this cycle**
- **Anxious and weary congregations**

As leaders across the Diocese, and across the wider Church of England, we have so far struggled to break this cycle in most places.

While there is still a large amount of prayerful worship, faithful commitment, generous giving and active engagement, many congregations have become more anxious and weary, leading to further decline in attendance and a growing struggle to attract younger generations.

And so, the spiral has deepened with resulting challenges as shown on the image opposite.



TOWARDS SOLUTIONS: WHAT THE CONSULTATIONS TOLD US

Having identified the challenges, we ran a series of consultations (online, through surveys and in person) that were focused on suggestions and solutions.

We met with a wide-range of people from the four different contexts of ministry we are working with (Rural, Small Towns, Large Coastal Towns and the City of Norwich) including meeting with:

- Bishop's Council of Trustees
- Bishop's Staff
- Deanery Synods and Chapters
- Rural Deans
- Deanery Synods and/or Chapters in 15 Deaneries
- Deanery Lay Chairs
- 20 key missional incumbents
- The Parish Support Team,
- Other small groups and with individuals

Over 700 ideas were proposed from across the Diocese to help us address these challenges.



"I believe everyone in a congregation has the ability – whether theologically trained or not – to showcase the love of God and the presence of the Kingdom and its hope through the Holy Spirit. They just need the confidence boost to do it through everyday words and – just as important – deeds. As an LLM, that alone would bolster my morale and hope. Surely there are hints at how to have natural conversations about faith and hope that could be shared."

"Clergy are bogged down in admin and not able to inspire mission. They operate over too wide an area in combined benefices. We need to support leaders in prioritising mission, with inspiring training, tools such as suitable courses with resources provided."

"Could every Benefice be enabled to have some sort of Mission Action Plan which is created through local consultation. Not a uniformed approach but some way in which individual parish vision can be expressed in a way that fits their tradition and context."

"Church services take up a lot of time on a Sunday... I had a young family. Sunday was the only family day... so I attended an 8am service. I'm not suggesting this for all, but could we think about offering shorter acts of worship, maybe with breakfast?"

"How to inspire congregations to roll up their sleeves and pitch in with the mission initiatives, sharing experiences and practice with each other might be helpful too. Having the opportunity to see other successful projects might help inspire leaders. It's one thing to be told about a successful project but another to be invited to go and see it first hand."

THE VALUES SHAPING THE STRATEGY

1. That it needs to be an expression of, and built upon, the Diocesan vision:
Transformed by Christ, Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic.
2. That we are discerning a deep call to build and inhabit a Church which is founded on a **shared missional culture and vision**, a fundamental instinct for partnership, leaders who are drawn by daily and audacious hope and communities of disciples who are filled with and inspired by Christian joy. We believe that God will honour these longings and instincts because they are his gift implanted in us, separately and together.
3. That it needs to offer a **hopeful picture of a possible and achievable future** which is rooted in the goodness, engagement and provision of God.
4. That the strategy will have **an impact for good in every place**. We recognise that with resource limitations we will need to start in some places and learn as we go, to be effective. There will therefore be focused resource for greater impact in areas where opportunity and local leadership and a clear vision cohere. In making decisions about where to start and where to invest, we will be transparent and open. However, the hope and ambition of the strategy is that every benefice and church community in the Diocese will be affected for good by some aspect of the strategy.
5. That it needs to build on **best mission practice** we have locally as well as nationally- we need to build on what is already working and be able and ready to share that DNA with other benefices in a similar space.
6. That it needs to be big enough in scope to take in the whole Diocese while also being local and specific enough to ensure that everybody can see what it would look like in their location and the difference that they can make individually to help the Kingdom come - **the Power of One person to be a witness, a welcomer, a visible disciple.**



SOME VALUES SHAPING THE STRATEGY

7. That it needs to be a **practical, direct response to our challenges** which goes with the grain of the Diocese- the sweep of the strategy will be built on realism and data while also imagining possible solutions through the lens of the historic and inherited Church of England, including a commitment to the local Church, to ordained ministry, to encouraging lay ministry, to the need for the Church of God to be present and visible in every community.
8. That the Strategy needs partly to lead into workstreams which are part of the normal life of the Diocese while also **preparing the ground for a Diocesan Investment Programme bid** in 2026 and for funding for specific pieces of work from the Diocesan Synod through the money set aside for that purpose, as well as the possibility of finding other partners to work with.
9. That we need always to be creating church communities which **enable all to flourish as God would have us be**, including being a safe place for all.
10. That we still need to understand more of what is happening locally, because the actual solutions will be different because each benefice is different, and so is each disciple, and so is each community. **We need to be open to the new things God is doing all around us.**
11. That we need to find a way to **include big ideas and issues** in the strategy which do not easily slot in- e.g. the gift and burden of historic buildings, the current crisis in Parish Share income, the need to engage fully and everywhere with climate change.
12. And all of this, not for our own glory but that the hungry and hurting world we are part of, **might catch a glimpse of God's love**, and find the same welcome, acceptance and love that we are exploring in our response to Jesus as disciples.



OUR STRATEGY AND OUR FOCUS AREAS

A key phrase from the National Church of England which has found an echo in the Diocese is “a parish system revitalised for mission so churches can reach and serve everyone in their community.” This ambition reflects a lot of what we have heard and underpins much of what we propose.

Having engaged with the data, listened deeply to the Diocese, considered national best practice, and prayed continually, four key Focus Areas have emerged which respond directly to the challenges we face and call us to fullness of life:



A Missional Vision and Culture

Through **inspiring** disciples and church communities to witness boldly and live faithfully.



Hope-filled Clergy and Lay Leaders

Who are **empowered**, supported and equipped to lead in mission with creativity and courage.



Communities of Disciples Forming Thriving Churches

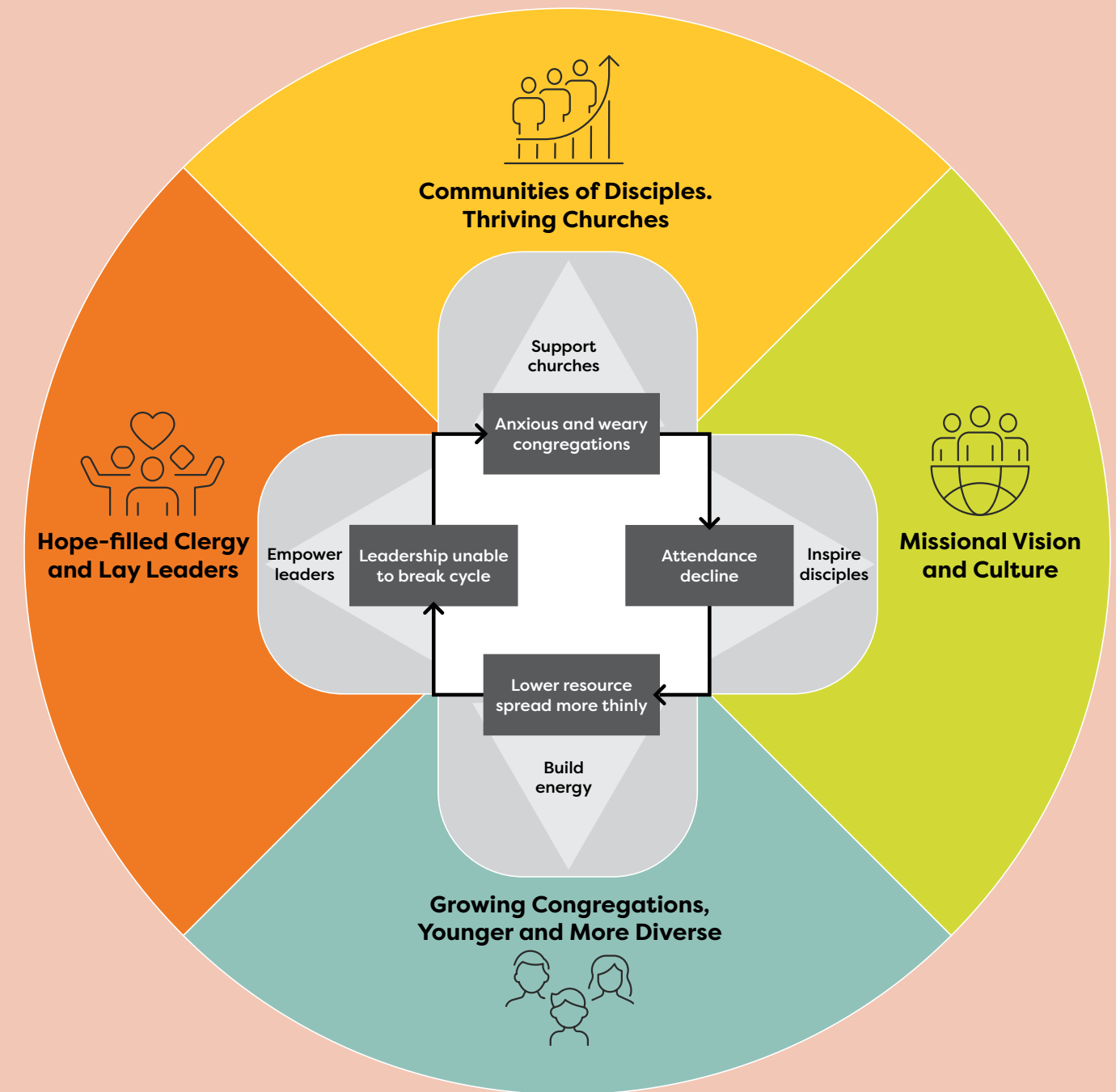
Who are **enabled** through partnership to be able to show active love and deep commitment in every context.



Growing Congregations, Younger and more Diverse

Through **building energy** with investment in specific places and encouraging church communities to try new things.

TRANSFORMED BY CHRIST: PRAYERFUL, PASTORAL, PROPHETIC



THE CONTENT OF THE STRATEGY

To deliver our Strategy, we have a clear set of activities within each of the four Focus Areas. We still need to do more work to prioritise them, assess what resources they will require and apply for the necessary resources (see Funding and Finance section p30).

Having listened carefully to voices from all across the Diocese, here are the possible activities that could enable us to achieve our Vision, together, under God:



MISSIONAL VISION AND CULTURE

- 1. Missional Communications**
Define what we understand by being missional and create an inspiring mission communication strategy “Power of One” with resources on a new website, and mission on every agenda.
- 2. Missional Streams**
Develop “Streams” as our missional operating system, both in terms of its theory and practical application (supported with local mission enablers, training, mission planning, and grants).

Look to initiate church grafts/plants/initiatives in different contexts and locations across the Diocese.

Work to develop a mixed ecology of Church, building on Garden Church and other initiatives.
- 3. Missional Exemplars**
Take the opportunity with new vacancies to be strategic in the way we appoint clergy to encourage healthy parishes, deepen relationships and partnerships.



HOPE-FILLED CLERGY AND LAY LEADERS

1. Pathways, Training and Support

Develop and guarantee our offer to our licensed clergy including leadership training, support, pastoral supervision, and peer communities, as part of Streams.

Value, train and deploy lay leaders to take on more responsibility in their church and community.

Refresh our support of SSM and PTO clergy in their ongoing ministry and service, recognising the range of ideas and input they want to have.

Create a new vocations strategy to encourage and broaden the number of people coming forward into enhanced pathways e.g. Ministers working with Children and Young People, the Elizabeth Ordination Pathway, Chaplaincies.

2. Structure and Reorganisation

Research ways that benefice sizes can become more manageable.

Review the optimal number of Deaneries along with creating initiatives to strengthen their role and impact.

Trial new ways of supporting rural Deaneries including administration to pilot solutions to the challenges facing the rural church.



COMMUNITIES OF DISCIPLES: THRIVING CHURCHES

1. Being Disciples: Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic

Promote key tools and training on growing as a disciple, understanding one's gifts and calling. This will lead to conversations and action about what a healthy and welcoming Church is and does together.

2. Buildings, Finance, Admin, Creation Care, Safeguarding

Work with local congregations to explore the future of their building, and we will produce a successful bid with Norfolk Community Foundation to establish a Cultural and Heritage Partnership.

Support churches to increase the generosity of their church community

Reduce the burden of administration and increase support, working with Clergy, Church Wardens and PCCs.

Encourage mission through environmental initiatives and chaplaincies.

Offer safeguarding training, support and monitoring and build a positive safeguarding culture throughout the Diocese.



GROWING CONGREGATIONS YOUNGER AND MORE DIVERSE

1. Children, Youth and Young Adults

Expand Team Chaplaincy (St Benet's Academy Trust model) in alignment with the DBE strategy and develop of other chaplaincy areas/ideas to support younger generations.

Expand the bi-vocational youthwork model (youth workers who have other part-time work) and enhance support of existing youth and children's workers, including national training.

Support young adult's initiatives to encourage sense of community and vocation, including networking, internships, young vocations and pilgrimage.

2. Intergenerational and Diverse

Support the development of New Worshipping Communities (NWCs) with intentional multi/intergenerational focus including NWCs in schools, regional youth NWCs, and new NWCs in market Towns.

Work closely with the Racial Justice Action Group, people with disabilities, and those from deprived backgrounds to identify opportunities to grow more diverse.



STREAMS - OUR NEW STRATEGIC APPROACH TO MISSION AND MINISTRY



'Streams' is our unique operating system which values and supports every part of the Diocese in their mission by inviting benefices and leaders (lay and ordained) on a journey to develop and release their full missional potential. Churches will be grouped primarily by their own self-identification. Streams will not be compulsory, and they are not about central control or deployment. They will rejoice in the fact that God is at work in our churches, both large and small.

Many of the activities within the Focus Areas will be part of the Streams to help the local church:

- understand their church context, and where God is calling them.
- build communities of people from church communities in similar contexts and at similar stages.
- inspiring them to be hope-filled, creative and bold.
- resource and enable thriving mission and ministry.

We plan to start with pilots and then build a system from there, which will impact and connect with the widest possible number of church communities over the life of the strategy.

[Click the thumbnail below to view the introduction to Streams on the Diocese of Norwich website.](#)



As a Diocese, we invest millions of pounds each year in mission and ministry in Norfolk and Waveney and our strategy seeks to maximise the impact of that investment so we can make a bigger difference to those in our local communities.

Work on the strategy commences in a challenging financial context as mission and ministry costs outstrip the money received in parish share and normal contributions from the Diocesan Board of Finance such as returns on glebe and other investment assets. This gap in funding is currently being supported through the sale of properties that are not required for operational purposes, but this approach can only be short-term. We believe that a healthy and growing church is a more financially sustainable one, and this will result in more parishes and benefices and church communities covering more of their mission and ministry costs, enabling us to grow stronger together as a Diocese.

So much of what we seek to achieve is about changing hearts and minds and we are excited to begin that work whatever level of resources we have at our disposal. However, we are aware that additional funding, over and above our usual costs, can help us to involve more people in our strategy, in more ways and more deeply. We are eager to see change and growth and so wish to maximise the funds that can be made available to enable and encourage this at a local level. We hope to receive additional funds from a combination of:

- The Mission Fund, which contains monies previously put aside for the 2021 mission strategy that was not utilised at the time.
- Diocese of Norwich Community First Endowment Fund - monies previously invested with Norfolk Community Foundation that can be used for community purposes.
- Money released from NDBF assets for stipendiary ministry costs using an approach called Unapplied Total Return.
- A Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP) bid to the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) in 2026 to secure investment in two phases for 5 years.

- An increase in the rate of parish share receipts, would allow us to achieve many of our strategic aims with more impact and effectiveness, deepening our sense of partnership across and throughout the Diocese.
- Exploration of other funding providers and partners.

We will commit, together, to use the new resources wisely. We will also commit to review the resources already available to us to explore what pieces of work can be agreed as priorities and taken into the usual life of the benefice, local church or NDBF and so not require further funding.



OUR SHARED VISION FULFILLED

The realisation of our vision – to be transformed by Christ – would see every member of the Church across our Diocese invited to deepen their life as a disciple and to work together to live out their calling as the body of Christ in the world every day. Through the Power of One work they would come to recognise their God-given and Spirit-led ability to impact the lives of others for good, through small and prayerful acts of faith, hope, and love. They would feel more empowered to share their faith naturally and easily – at home, at work, at school, and in their places of worship.

These small droplets of loving service, through the power of the Holy Spirit- being Prayerful, Pastoral and Prophetic- would create ripples of renewal, irrigating our villages, towns, and city with the refreshing presence of God's love. As this movement grows, our communities of faith will find fresh purpose – rekindled with purpose, joy, and spiritual vitality – while new communities of faith would spring up in unexpected places, bearing witness to the ever-unfolding work of God.

Through the collective journey of Streams, those immersed in local ministry and mission – clergy, lay leaders and teams alike – would be known, loved, and supported as they step into their calling and contribute to the transformation of this Diocese. Streams will cultivate a culture of simplicity, friendship, and hope, grounded in collaborative action, reflective learning, and mutual support.

The journey each disciple and each community take, will be as unique as they are- but the process, of transformed hearts, transforming hearts and transformed communities, transforming communities, will be one, as the God we love and respond to is one. Part of the excitement at the heart of the strategy is seeing what God will call us to join in with, in different places and contexts.

With patience and prayerful perseverance, we will witness and help to fulfil the renewal of all things in Norfolk and Waveney – as it is in heaven.



THE IMPACT WE ANTICIPATE AND BUILD TOWARDS

These statements relate directly to the challenges identified by Diocesan Synod in March 2025. They are indicative at the moment - but they are illustrative of the level of scrutiny and detail Synod will be expected to exercise, while some of the more detailed oversight and measurement will happen in other bodies, e.g. Bishop’s Council of Trustees, Board of Finance, Dept of Mission and Ministry.

- **Church communities engaging in mission through ‘Streams’ and investments in mission across each area and for mission exemplars.**
- **Growth in attendance.**
- **A percentage increase in average weekly giving to support the financial sustainability of Parishes, which contributes to a rise in the rate of Parish Share contributions to the Diocese.**
- **A reduction in the time to fill clergy vacancies, with evidence of increased job satisfaction.**
- **An increase in lay leaders in training and those approved to be AWAs and APAs, as well as volunteering for other roles.**
- **An increase in the numbers of young people who are part of a local Church or a New Worshipping Community.**
- **Our churches becoming more representative of their local communities in terms of diversity.**
- **Increased support from the National Church to address the opportunity and challenge that our church buildings present.**

TIMELINE

The timeline below recognises where we are at in the process in November 2025.

29th Nov 2025	Discussion of Strategy Proposal at Synod
Dec 2025 - Mar 2026	Work on detailed plans with priorities, budgets and a delivery timeframe
21st Mar 2026	Discussion of the implementation plan at Synod
24th May 2026	Launch at Pentecost of the Strategy across the Diocese

Note: We plan to prepare and submit a DIP submission to the SMMIB in 2026 to support the resourcing of the strategy.

A small number of areas will be prioritised for action in the first part of 2026. These are:

- **Streams** – developing programmes that benefices and leaders can engage with, to begin consider which Stream they fit into.
- **Reducing administration** – co-creating recommendations for future consideration.
- **Strategic People Plan** – developing plans to better value, support and equip our current leaders and a vocations strategy to encourage more leaders for the future.
- **Mission exemplars** - identifying particular areas of investment to bring growth as part of a DIP funding application in 2026.
- **Culture change** – developing approaches to share stories of where things are going well, offering resources, and encouraging congregations and individuals to deepen their faith as disciples.

THE PROPOSAL BEFORE SYNOD

That this Synod approve the Diocesan Strategy as set out in the report before Synod and endorse further work on development of detailed plans to present to Synod in March 2026.

This paper was agreed by the Strategy Development Group and Bishop’s Staff, and approved by Bishop’s Council of Trustees on November the 10th 2025. It was presented to Diocesan Synod on November the 29th 2025 and approved with sixty six in favour, six abstentions and one against.

**Transformed by Christ:
Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic**