



PRAY GROW SERVE 2035

Inspiring Faith in Devon

**A 10 year vision of transformation for the
Diocese of Exeter**





Imagine Devon in 2035

Churches soaked in prayer. Children and families of every generation growing in Jesus' way. Communities serving their neighbours with joy. That's the vision behind Pray, Grow, Serve 2035...**a bold, Spirit-led plan to renew the life of the Church of England in Devon and respond to Jesus' call to "go and make disciples."**



This is about every parish, every mission community, and every disciple being caught up in God's mission. **Together, by the grace of God, we can realise an evermore healthy, vibrant and joy-filled Church for the people of Devon.**

Mike Exon

*The Right Reverend Mike Harrison,
Bishop of Exeter*

A Vision Based on the Great Commission

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20



Our Five Strategic Priorities



Missional Leadership



Missional DNA



Vocations



Children & Young People



Mixed Ecology

Our Vision

Our vision is to Grow in Prayer, Make New Disciples and Serve the People of Devon with Joy. **We aim to do this through our five strategic missional priorities:**



Missional Leadership

We are in a new missional era where the previous assumptions of people versed in the Christian faith cannot be assumed and where church-going is far from the norm. Not only so, but culture is fast-changing and understanding the different sectors of society, their aspirations, longings and wounds seem ever more complex. In such a situation our Christian leaders need support and resourcing, if they are to be effective in mission and in leading the people of God. This priority addresses this whole area, with a focus on providing excellent continuing ministerial development and training opportunities for clergy and LLMs, including a new leadership development programme for all clergy. We will be looking to support clergy and lay leaders utilising the latest thinking and research.



Missional DNA

In a context which can be aggressively secular, there is every possibility of Christian communities becoming insular and inward-looking and this priority looks to encourage Churches to be outward-looking, invitational and engaged with their wider communities. This also recognises the importance for mission communities of developing inspiring and realistic Mission Action Plans. Utilising research such as *Anecdote to Evidence* and *Evidence to Action*, as well as courses such as 'Leading your Church into Growth' and 'Pioneering Parishes' this priority looks to equip Christian communities to be missional in their worship, outreach and communications.



Vocations

This includes establishing an intentional vocational culture, lay or ordained, through: expanding the number of leadership pathways (i.e. Exeter Ordination Pathway), developing the variety of vocational pathways through the new Commissioned Roles and expanded Foundations course, as well as partnering with other organisations, including CMS, the Bible Reading Fellowship and our theological colleges to offer specialist training, for example Anna Chaplaincy. We are also partnering with South West Youth Ministries to offer vocational training to young people, and exploring how to best offer vocational development opportunities to school leaders through our Education team.



Children, Young People and Families

Children and young people placed at the heart of our life together is what this priority is about. 75-85% of people come to faith before the age of 18, so reaching children and young people with the Gospel is vital. We are already developing children and youth workers in our churches (staff and volunteers) through the Catalyst course, the Launchpad course, commissioned roles and the Growing Faith Strategic Leaders Programme. Substantial funding for children and youthwork provision across the diocese is a key part of our Church of England Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) bid.



Mixed Ecology

Time-honoured Church is wonderful for part of our population, but experience-to-date shows that to reach the unreached parts of our wider community we need to provide different ways of doing and being Church. Our mustard seed grants aim to help fresh expressions of church get off the ground. The 95% as yet unengaged by the Christian faith are the focus of the mixed ecology priority. We want to expand our number of church plants and pioneer new worshipping communities, which connect with people not served by conventional church. Our Mission Shed days and online webinars are also showcasing different ways of being and doing church.



The first priority: Missional Leadership, is the driver of the other four and an area we are investing heavily in.

Why This Matters

There is amazing work happening on the ground across Devon and stories of lives and communities being transformed. We know how hard so many of our church members, lay and ordained leaders, and others are already working within communities for the good of the Kingdom. We know there are people faithfully praying for God's will to be done in Devon and we are seeing the fruit of God at work in many places. However, we still face some real challenges and to be good stewards we need to invest intentionally and missionally to ensure future growth and sustainability.

- **Growth in church attendance has stalled since the Pandemic, just +0.9% in 2024. Our 2035 aim is to grow by 50% in 10 years.**
- **Our age profile is fragile: nearly half of our worshippers are over 70, and most churches have very few children.**
- **By growing younger and stronger, we can also vastly improve our financial situation.**

There are green shoots of renewal and revival:

- **The number of children and young people attending church remains steady...a sign that investing in the next generation works.**
- **Our communities are open and ready to welcome: in Christmas 2024, 175,500 people came through our doors. The goodwill is there; we just need clear next steps for people to explore faith in a way that works for them.**
- **The 2024 Returns of Parish Finances show that PCC income is now back above pre-pandemic levels. Contributions to our Common Fund have been up year on year for most of 2025 and by the end of 2025 contributions were 1.35% higher than 2024.**



The Story So Far

Pray, Grow, Serve 2035 is a ten-year mission plan which builds on firm foundations.

To Grow in Prayer, Make New Disciples and Serve the People of Devon with Joy has been the Diocese of Exeter's vision since 2014.

In 2021 we developed the Next Steps programme as we emerged from the Pandemic. It drew on the Listening in Deaneries consultations carried out in 2021-2022 and the work of the Theological Reflections Group, a group of clergy and laity from across the Diocese.

In 2024, following the Vacancy in See Consultation across the Diocese, Bishop Mike introduced our five missional priorities to shape our vision going forward.

In 2025 strategic planning was done to put our five strategic priorities into practice in every aspect of diocesan life. One key area of work has been our Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMiB) funding proposal. In January 2026 we learned our application had been successful. The result will be up to £24m of targeted national funding for the diocese over six years.

Our Vision Journey



2003
Mission
Communities
introduced



2005
Exeter Network
Church planted



2014
New *Pray, Grow, Serve* vision
launched by Bishop Robert

Million for Mission fund
launched across the diocese



2018
Sherford Church
planted in second new
town

Plymouth Partnership in
Mission plants (SDF) in
three Plymouth estates



2017
Diocesan
Mission &
Growth Fund
launched



2016-2020
Mission Community
Development Team
supporting Mission
Action Planning



2016
St Matthias Plymouth - first SDF-
funded Devon resource church

SDF-funded Growing the Rural
Church project launched across
the Diocese

Cranbrook Church started in
new town



2018-2019
Diocesan-wide
Common Fund
consultation



2019
St Matt's Exeter
planted as second
resource church



2019-2020
Deployment plan
agreed to deliver
balanced budget



2020
St Basil's rural
church plant



2022
Diocesan Mission & Growth Fund second
phase: focusing on Children, Young People
& Families (CYPF) projects



2021-2022
'Next Steps'
post-Covid diocesan
wide consultation



2021
Bay Church (SDF)
planted in Torbay

Mission Community Healthcheck launched



2023-2024
Diocesan-wide
consultation as part of
the Vacancy in See
process



2024
Bishop Mike starts as
the Bishop of Exeter

Review of Church
in Plymouth



2025
Strategic investment
funding proposal
submitted



2026
Pray, Grow, Serve 2035
launches



Funding Pray, Grow, Serve 2035

We are grateful for every pound contributed annually to the Diocese Common Fund, which is designed to be for the common good of every parish. Every penny you give goes towards the mission and ministry of the Church of England in Devon. You can [see more details in our latest Common Fund booklet.](#)

We are delighted that we have been awarded £10m by the Church of England's Strategic Management and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB). This funding will be strategically targeted to achieve our vision for growth through our five missional priorities.

This major investment will make a big difference to what we can do, but it is only part of the story. It is vital that the majority of our day-to-day expenditure (for example clergy stipends and housing and support to parishes) continues to be funded by Common Fund contributions and other grant funding. Put simply, the National Church Investment funding does not replace the need or biblical imperative to put generosity at the heart of our Christian discipleship.



National Funding in More Detail

The funding, which is the largest grant the diocese has ever received, has been awarded by the Church of England's Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMiB).

The first phase is a grant of £10m missional investment followed by £2.5m implementation support from 2027 in phase 1. The Diocese will be able to apply for phase two funding of £10m plus £1.5m time limited support in 2028. The overall award is up to £24m.

The funding will enable us to deliver our five missional priorities through five key interventions. These are:

- **Energise and release clergy for mission**
- **Empower lay disciples for missional transformation**
- **Put children, young people and families at the heart of mission**
- **Enable growth by revitalising, planting and pioneering**
- **A bold reshaping of the Church in Plymouth for mission**

The funding delivery and implementation will be overseen by the Pray Grow Serve 2035 Programme Board, chaired by the Bishop of Plymouth, the Rt. Rev'd James Grier.

5 Interventions in More Detail

The National Church investment funding will enable us to deliver our five missional priorities through five key interventions. These are:



Energise and Release Clergy for Mission

Equip all licensed clergy through the Exeter Leadership Development Programme and ordain 100 new locally-rooted ministers via the Exeter Ordination Pathway.



Empower Lay Disciples for missional transformation

Create a Digital Learning Hub to enable everyone to access role-specific training, courses, information, forms and development opportunities, continue to offer high quality training for commissioned lay roles, provide expert support for parishes that feel stuck.



Put Children, Young People and Families at the heart of mission

Deploy Growing Faith Workers and partner with South West Youth Ministries (SWYM) to build sustainable mission across church, school, and home.



Enable Growth by Revitalising, Planting & Pioneering

Create 101 new worshipping communities and church plants, supported by Local Mission Enablers, the national Greenhouse project, and a Matthew 25 Fund (based on the Parable of the Talents) to kick-start grassroots initiatives.



A bold reshaping of the Church in Plymouth for mission

A nine-year plan to make 2,035 new disciples and revitalise the Church in our largest urban centre.

Our Hope-Filled Future

By 2035 we are aiming for...



**6,500+ new missionary disciples,
including 2,900+ children and
young people**



**101 new worshipping
communities and church plants**



**1,000+ new lay leaders equipped
and released**



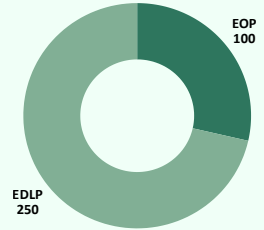
**A healthier diocese with fewer
struggling parishes and more
thriving communities.**

Anticipated Outcomes of the 5 Interventions in Detail

Ordained Leadership

 £4.5m invested in missional clergy appointments.

250 going through ELDP
100 going through EOP



Lay Leadership


 1,000 completed Foundations

 480 commissioned for lay roles

 180 Lay leaders of NWCs

 150 New Licensed Lay Ministers

Children, Family, Young People

 6,500 CYP in our churches (currently 2,570)

 Growing Faith workers

 300 commissioned lay leaders

Planting

 11 new plants

 18 revitalisation projects

 90 new worshipping communities

Plymouth 2035

 Faith-engaging contact with 20,350 people

 2,035 under 18's exploring faith

 2,035 adults exploring faith

 2,035 New Disciples

 35 new worshipping communities



How Pray Grow Serve 2035 Will Help You

There will be central investment to support all parishes, benefices and mission communities through:

- The Exeter Leadership Development Programme (ELDP) - delivered to all licensed clergy with two cohorts per year)
- The Exeter Ordination Pathway
- Lay vocations support and free training pathways (i.e. Lay Commissioned Roles)
- The support of local Mission Enablers in each archdeaconry
- The opportunity to apply for Matthew 25 Funding (through the ELDP)
- A new Digital Learning Hub enabling free access to courses for all

Some of the interventions will be offered to specific mission communities based on a set of missional growth metrics decided by the Pray Grow Serve 2035 programme board. These include:

- New growing faith workers
- Working with a Mission Community Development Minister
- There will be specific interventions for the inner city areas of Plymouth where investment is needed to reach groups of people in need of our support.



What Difference Will Pray Grow Serve 2035 Make?

- Pray, Grow, Serve 2035 is about reaching the 95% of people in Devon who have no connection with Christian faith.
- It will sustain our existing clergy numbers as we seek to grow.
- It invests in our lay and ordained leaders and provides vocational and developmental opportunities for all.
- It puts 'wind in the sails' of our mission communities as they seek to share the Good News and grow God's Kingdom where they are.
- It invests in the Growing Faith nexus of school, home and church.
- It will support creativity and new expressions of church.



How Can You Be a 5 Priorities Mission Community?

Every parish and mission community can join in:

- **Clergy:** Join a cohort of the new Exeter Leadership Development Programme.
- **People who feel called to ministry:** talk to your vicar and the Vocations Officer as there are many kinds of ministry and many kinds of training. How can we help you respond to God's call?
- **Everyone:** Access flexible, high-quality training on the Digital Learning Hub once it has been developed.
- **PCCs:** develop a new missional idea or start a new worshipping community and apply for seed funding from the Matthew 25 Fund.
- **Volunteers:** Funded training for **Lay Commissioned roles** like Anna Chaplaincy, Children and Youth and Families leadership, Lay Pioneer and Lay Evangelist, Lay Leader of Creation Care.
- **Children and young people:** We want children and young people to be Growing Faith leaders and participants in our mission plan, in our schools, churches and through our partnership with South West Youth Ministries.

Pray Grow Serve 2035 Call to Action



PRAY

for the churches and schools of our diocese, for our leaders, and our communities.



EXPLORE

visit the Pray Grow Serve 2035 pages on the Diocese of Exeter website and sign up for the Digital Learning Hub once it's launched.



DISCERN

Ask, "What is God calling me/us to now?"



DISCUSS

What it means to be a 'Five Priorities church' in terms of the five missional priorities, where are you?



EXPERIMENT

Try one new missional idea and apply for Matthew 25 Fund support.

Prayer

God of mission

Who alone brings growth to your Church

Send your Holy Spirit to give:

Vision to our planning,

Wisdom to our actions,

Power to our witness.

Help your Church here in Devon

To grow deeper in faith and prayer

To grow new disciples, to grow leaders,

To grow younger and to grow

in joyful service

to the communities of Devon.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen





Here to Serve You

If you have any questions, would like to find out more about our five priorities, or would like to find out in more detail how you can benefit from Pray Grow Serve 2035, please get in touch with one of our key contacts:

Missional Leadership: ian.bussell@exeter.anglican.org

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Children, Young People & Families: sharon.blyth@exeter.anglican.org

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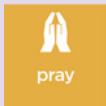
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