

Growing in God

Flourishing Congregations Making a Difference



Our Diocesan Vision & Strategy



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich

From Bishop Martin

I am delighted to present this Vision and Strategic Plan for the Diocese which will be the road map for how we live out God's call to us for the next five years.

Much of this is not new, but represents the drawing together of proposals and plans produced in the Diocese over the last few years. The core of it is 'Growing in God' which has been taken on board by many parishes and benefices across

the Diocese and has a momentum we want to sustain. You could say Growing in God represents the "what" and this document directs us to the "how".



These plans are never complete, never fixed, but they do give us a clear direction of travel. For me the evidence that we have engaged hopefully and faithfully in this will be the reversal across the Diocese in the numerical decline in church attendance. That is certainly achievable, because many of our congregations show that it is. It is also a real challenge, because so much in our society militates against faith. But I believe in my heart that is what God longs to give the Church so that we can more clearly live and proclaim God's love revealed in Jesus Christ to everyone.

May being hopeful and faithful in our calling bring blessing to all the people of Suffolk.

Handwritten signature of Martin Seeley with a cross symbol above it.

The Rt Revd Martin Seeley
Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Our Vision



Our Plan

In order to have flourishing congregations making a difference, parishes and benefices will continue to concentrate on our four priorities of depth, number, influence and younger.

Growing in

depth

Growing in

number

Growing in

influence

Growing

younger

Growing in God



Our Promises

We will centre our lives on the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist which send us to love and serve the communities and networks to which we belong.

We will seek to live in deepening awareness of 'God with us', discerning through prayer and vibrant worship how we are called to engage in God's loving involvement in the world.

We will become catalysts for change in our communities, networks, workplaces and schools, particularly Church schools, as by the gift of the Holy Spirit we seek to live more and more as citizens of God's coming kingdom.

We will discern the particular gifting of each congregation, irrespective of size or setting, and work in partnership with other congregations, denominations and people of good will to express this gifting.

We will honour and learn from one another as members of the one body of Christ, each congregation emphasising different aspects of the character of Christ.

How we will do it

We have highlighted four 'building blocks' which will be the tools we use to achieve our vision. They are Faith & Discipleship, Vocation & Ministry, Relationships & Structures and Resources & Buildings.





How we will do it

Faith & Discipleship

Through enhancing the quality of our worship, building up our fellowship and extending our witness, we will develop flourishing and outward-looking congregations making a difference for our communities.



Vocation & Ministry

We will build up the numbers of those in lay and ordained ministries including pioneers, evangelists and children's and youth ministries. Our training will be accessible, flexible and integrated. It will place as much emphasis on continuing development as it does on initial training.



Relationships & Structures

We will develop partnerships and networks for mutual learning and support and sharing good practice; working with ecumenical partners, schools and people of good will. We will align all our structures to serve the flourishing of our congregations.



Resources & Buildings

We will manage our resources and buildings as gifts for mission. We will develop resources and operations to support congregations for growth. We will be innovative and work together to identify the best use of our buildings for mission.



How we will look in 2022

Growing in depth

Responding to the call of Christ we continue to deepen our desire to respond to the call of Christ in every part of our lives. In 2022 we will have...

- significant sustained increases in the number of infants, children and adults coming to baptism and candidates for confirmation
- a greater confidence of existing and new congregation members in daily prayer, Bible study, undertaking a role in the church, serving in the community and being aware of God's presence in every aspect of life
- increased the level of average giving per electoral roll member and increased the number of those who engage in planned giving by 5%
- increased the number of candidates for ordination by at least 50% (in line with the national target)

Growing in number

Drawing the contacts we have into the life of God's kingdom, we will plant and water for God's growth of the numbers of those attending worship and fresh expressions and belonging to our electoral roll by 2022. In 2022 we will have...

- seen the reversal of the fall into growth in our average weekly attendances
- seen the reversal of the fall in our electoral rolls
- seen the creation of at least 20 'fresh expressions of church'
- created appropriate Christian communities with ecumenical partners in areas of new housing
- developed and commissioned at least 20 pioneers and 20 evangelists

Growing in influence

Reaching beyond ourselves in our impact on the wider world, we aim to increase our engagement and service with the wider community. In 2022 we will have...

- developed 20 new local community projects focussed on those in greatest need
- increased support for the work of our existing church schools in enabling all pupils to achieve their full potential
- a more prominent voice in challenging injustice in our county
- developed new partnerships with chaplains serving in our county

Growing younger

Building churches whose age ranges reflect our communities; lower the average age of our congregations to match the average age of the population. In 2022 we will have...

- a significant decrease in the average age of our congregations
- a significant growth in the number of under 18s engaged in worship on Sundays, mid week and fresh expressions of church
- five pilot projects that develop effective partnerships between churches and local schools including church schools
- to offer each child and their family the opportunity of a life enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ
- developed children's and youth workers commissioning - at least 10 of each



I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth

1 Corinthians 3:6

"We commend wholeheartedly this vision and strategy of Growing in God and look forward to working with you to see flourishing congregations making a difference in every part of our diocese."

+ *Anastasi* + *Mike*



To read the content of the full report visit
www.cofesuffolk.org/growingingod

To find out more about Growing in God and how your church can be a part of it contact the Revd Canon Dave Gardner via
dave.gardner@cofesuffolk.org



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