

Growing in God

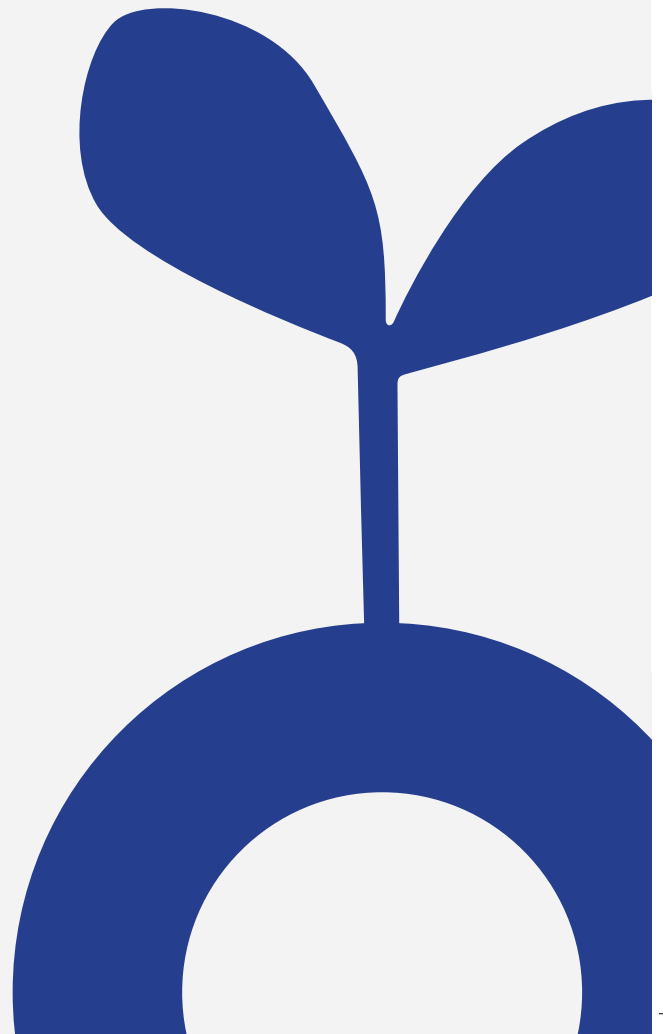
Celebrating | Reflecting | Planning

How are you planning for growth?

Realising the Diocesan
vision for growth in
parishes and benefices



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich



Welcome

The Gospel invites us to celebrate the good news of God's saving love. That's what lies behind our shared diocesan vision for Growing in God: God wants us to grow as his beloved children, he wants us to grow as loving communities, he wants us to grow in sharing his love beyond ourselves in both our words and actions.

Our mission statement says that we intend to become "flourishing congregations, making a difference".

This is what lies behind our four priorities ▼

Growing in Depth

to deepen our desire to respond to the call of Christ in every part of life

Growing in Influence

to reach beyond ourselves by growing our presence, engagement and service in the wider world

Growing in Number

to grow the numbers of those who attend worship and/or Fresh Expressions of church and belong to our electoral roll

Growing Younger

to grow congregations and/or Fresh Expressions of church that match the age profile of the local population



"We cannot determine the fruit of growing in number or growing younger. We cannot compel people to have a faith – though we can do many simple things to make that growth possible – planting and watering – clearing the weeds and brambles – sowing seeds – not being fatalistic and believing in God's providence. But we can determine what we do in seeking to grow in depth, attending to deepening our own faith and Christian practice, and engaging in actions that helps us to grow in influence"

Bishop Martin
Diocesan Synod,
February 2018.

How to use this booklet

This booklet aims to help you develop a growth plan which celebrates current good practice and reflects on the mission situation in order to strengthen, identify and plan realistic practical actions needed to grow further in each of our four priorities.

You can use these ideas in many ways: ▼

short exercises at a series of PCC meetings

a working group as the basis of a wider consultation

to inform ongoing discernment processes in a ministry team

You are encouraged to involve everyone in the process of working on your plan. You may also want to include the Fresh Expressions of Church as they may already have growth plans. If possible, you could include a younger representative from your congregation and someone who is relatively new to the church.

A benefice with many smaller parishes may find it helpful to work together on a Benefice growth plan. This could include input from each of the parishes or each parish could make its own growth plan, which could be bought together in a Benefice growth plan reflecting the things you do together and separately.

If you completed these tasks in Growing in God Phase I, this is an opportunity to evaluate your plans from three years ago, reviewing your current situation and to refresh your plans for the next two years.

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Consider prayerfully which areas of ministry and mission God is calling you to and make plans to take you forward

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Resources to be used as the basis of individual and group study and to inform preaching and teaching

Celebrating

As a parish or benefice, you may wish to use the resources in the Appendices as part of your regular worship or to hold a dedicated Growing in God service. You will see the Growing in God process as part of your response to the generosity and hospitality of God. This is an opportunity to give thanks to God for his faithfulness at the outset and you will be building on the faithful witness of many saints over the years.

During the service you could give the Vision & Strategy leaflets and new prayer bookmarks to your congregation.

If you completed Growing in God three years ago this is a great opportunity to remind them of the previous action points and illustrate how you have since progressed since.

Use your service to celebrate all the best things you do – some of which you may take for granted. Ask your congregation to share the good things in the life of your parish or benefice based on our four priorities.

**Growing in Depth
Growing in Influence
Growing in Number
Growing Younger**



"I discussed the Growing in God mission initiative with all seven parishes and – despite an initial outlook of "we can't do anything to grow in number or younger" - we achieved growth by expanding and developing existing activities in a positive way. We started by prayerfully considering the Growing in God materials and realised that some of our activities already fitted under the Growing in God umbrella. Over time we have gained confidence in pursuing new ideas and have realised the goal to grow.

A few examples include: a tiny parish offering an Easter egg hunt developed this into an Easter

garden which was supported by over 20 children and has led to more new children's activities. In another parish, their traditional 4-part choir has broadened their repertoire to attract new members. Also, two parishes have recently opened their church doors during the day, providing their communities with a space for prayer.

I would recommend perseverance with the Growing in God initiative: start small and it will gather momentum. Be prepared to do things differently and you will see areas of growth within each parish".

– The Revd Chris Childs

Reflecting

Reflection involves the discipline of "missional listening" which includes:

- Listening to God
- Listening to ourselves
- Listening to your community
- Listening to the church
- Listening to those who may partner with you in your mission

Holding a reflection meeting

If you are seeking to complete this process in a single meeting, you may need to make sure that those who come along have had the opportunity to do some preparation in advance to share ideas.

You could ask participants to:

- Read the local paper
- Notice patterns and places where people meet
- Notice how and about what people communicate
- Read your parishes' extracts from the Church of England's Parish Spotlights which will give you some useful data about the population which you serve.

Consider the partners you currently work with and list those who you could work alongside in the future

Review any past actions points (particularly if you set them three years ago)

This booklet includes four useful worksheets to help you reflect on what your church is doing

Each worksheet includes:

A starter – to express what you are doing in each of the priority areas, looking at the strengths and weaknesses of your church

Statements – these ask you to think about different features of church life and what you might want to develop. The lists are not intended to be exhaustive

Actions – an opportunity to decide on one or two actions that you believe your church should carry out

Your reflection process could be completed in a single two-hour meeting or conducted over a series of smaller meetings each covering a different priority.

Growing in Depth

We aim to deepen our desire to respond to the call of Christ in every part of life

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your church or benefice (the higher the score, the more you agree)

Starter		☹			☺
	We enable people of all backgrounds and ages to become more confident and mature in Christian faith, more prayerful throughout their lives and more willing to discover and develop their gifts in the service of God's kingdom	1	2	3	4
Statements					
①	We provide regular opportunities for people at all stages of life and belief who want to explore the Christian faith and grow in prayer	1	2	3	4
②	We help children and young people to grow in and express their faith	1	2	3	4
③	We use the opportunities around baptism and confirmation to help people to explore Christian faith for themselves	1	2	3	4
④	We encourage people to set aside regular time for prayer and Bible study, as individuals and in small groups	1	2	3	4
⑤	The teaching and learning ministry of our church challenges and encourages us in our discipleship	1	2	3	4
⑥	Daily prayers are said in church, and are open to all	1	2	3	4
⑦	There are opportunities for people to pray together and for others (e.g. prayer groups, parish prayer diary)	1	2	3	4
⑧	We develop the life of prayer through regular quiet days, prayer workshops, spiritual direction, retreats	1	2	3	4
⑨	We emphasise the importance of God's call in everyday life, and inform Christian discipleship in the wider world	1	2	3	4
⑩	We encourage people to identify and develop their gifts, and use them to serve God in the church and the rest of life	1	2	3	4
Action					
	These are the main changes we could make over the next 18 months to enable our church members to become more confident in their faith and gifts, and more prayerful:				
①					
②					

Do you need help to **Grow Deeper**? If so email ruth.dennigan@cofesuffolk.org

Growing in Number

We aim to grow the numbers of those who attend worship and/or Fresh Expressions of church and belong to our electoral roll

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your church or benefice (the higher the score, the more you agree)

Starter		☒			☺
	Our church/benefice builds relationships with the contacts we have, drawing them into the life of God's kingdom	1	2	3	4
Statements					
①	It is easy for those outside the life of the church to know of our existence and character	1	2	3	4
②	Congregation members regularly invite and welcome others to our services and events	1	2	3	4
③	Our church buildings are welcoming and open during the day, with accessible materials that help people to engage with the Christian faith	1	2	3	4
④	Congregation members are actively involved in mission projects in the local community to draw people into the life of the church	1	2	3	4
⑤	Our church services and teaching are accessible, inspiring and relevant to those new to church	1	2	3	4
⑥	There are regular informal opportunities in the life of the parish/benefice for congregation members to build relationships with new people	1	2	3	4
⑦	We provide opportunities for those relatively new to the church to serve in its ministries, within the church and in the wider community	1	2	3	4
⑧	We offer opportunities to explore faith and experience Christian community for people who have little or no church background, including our baptism, wedding and funeral contacts	1	2	3	4
⑨	We are planning to form a new congregation meeting at another time and/or place, reflecting a different culture yet linked to the rest of the parish/benefice	1	2	3	4
⑩	We use our festival, civic and special services to build bridges to individuals and the wider community.	1	2	3	4
Action					
	These are the main changes we could make over the next 18 months to develop relationships with our contacts:				
①					
②					

Do you need help to **Grow in Number**? If so contact dave.gardner@cofesuffolk.org

Growing in Influence

We aim to reach beyond ourselves by growing our presence, engagement and service in the wider world

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your church or benefice (the higher the score, the more you agree)

Starter		☹			☺
	In our parish/benefice, we seek to serve the wider community by promoting inclusion, reconciliation and stewardship of the environment	1	2	3	4
Statements					
①	We are developing our ministry of pastoral care in our parish/benefice so that it reaches beyond our congregations	1	2	3	4
②	We have a strong presence and established connections with our wider community, whom we serve in the name of Christ	1	2	3	4
③	We care for God's created world by treasuring and conserving our environment, working with others to model this aspect of discipleship	1	2	3	4
④	We are willing to set up projects and work in partnership with other groups locally (e.g. parish/town councils, community groups) to address needs	1	2	3	4
⑤	We rejoice in working together in ecumenical projects	1	2	3	4
⑥	Our ministry and mission embraces people from marginalised and disempowered groups	1	2	3	4
⑦	We look beyond our immediate locality, to the county, the nation and the world church, in our search for God's justice and peace	1	2	3	4
⑧	We know and pray for the chaplains in our area who minister in specific institutions, e.g. prisons, health care, businesses, agriculture, education	1	2	3	4
⑨	We support fellow Christians to live out their discipleship in their workplace or local community	1	2	3	4
⑩	Our intercessions in church services, homegroups and personal devotions, embrace our ministry of presence engagement and service	1	2	3	4
Action					
	These are the main changes we could make over the next 18 months to grow our presence and engagement in the wider world:				
①					
②					

Do you need help to **Grow in Influence**? If so contact: carol.mansell@btinternet.com

Growing Younger

We aim to grow congregations and/or fresh expressions of church that match the age profile of the local population

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your church or benefice (the higher the score, the more you agree)

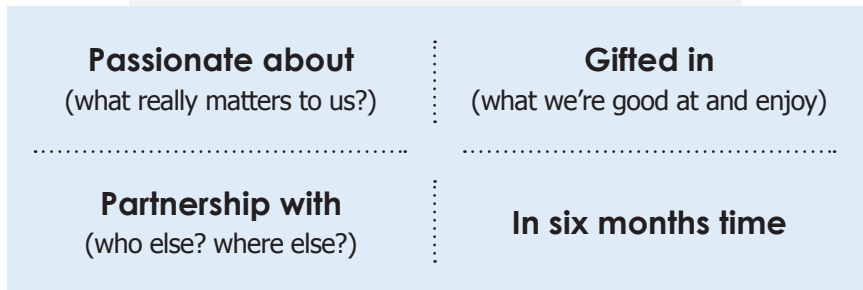
Starter		☹			☺
	People attend our services and activities from across the age range of the area we serve	1	2	3	4
Statements					
①	The predominant age range in our congregations reflects that of the local population	1	2	3	4
②	We have dedicated activities for the age range between 25 and 65	1	2	3	4
③	We have a specific focus on under-fives, including our baptism families	1	2	3	4
④	We have effective partnerships with our catchment primary school(s)	1	2	3	4
⑤	We offer the children and families with whom we have contact life-enhancing encounters with Jesus Christ	1	2	3	4
⑥	We have effective partnerships with our catchment secondary school(s)	1	2	3	4
⑦	We offer each young person and their family life-enhancing encounters with Jesus Christ	1	2	3	4
⑧	Our services are places of hospitality, creativity and celebration for under-18s	1	2	3	4
⑨	We seek to engage with young adults (18-25s)	1	2	3	4
⑩	People under 40 are represented on our decision-making bodies	1	2	3	4
Action					
	These are the main changes we could make over the next 18 months to ensure that the age profile of those who attend our services and activities more nearly reflects the population we serve:				
①					
②					

Do you need help to **Grow Younger**? If so contact: phil.bailie@cofesuffolk.org

Planning

Having completed the Celebrating and Reflecting stages you should have enough information to be able to discuss what it might take to develop these actions.

Methods to help you generate a discussion ▼



In the planning stage, the maximum of eight actions (two from each priority area) will be prayerfully reduced to three. One of these should be something you can readily achieve within six months, leaving two more substantial actions that will require more significant time and resources

You could hold an open evening for your congregation and electoral roll members to look at the actions you are proposing:

Start with a short act of worship

Explain the aim of the evening – to identify three ways in which your church can be Growing in God over the next two years

Present the findings of your reflection meeting(s), with up to eight suggestions, two for each of our priorities

Display the suggestions on large pieces of card or flip-chart paper around the room

Discuss these in four small groups, each discussing a different priority and then ask someone from each group to feed back its main points to the whole meeting.

Give everyone three post-it notes. Ask each person to choose which suggestions they believe it is appropriate for your church to develop, each person should choose one suggestion that could be started within six months. If they wish to be involved in one or more of the suggestions, they should write their name on the post-it.

Keep a record of the meeting:

- a photograph of flip chart sheets
- copies of the post-it notes
- notes from the small group discussions

Summarise the results to the whole meeting and draw some conclusions.

Use the evidence to establish:

- What do they feel passionate about, and why?
- What do they feel your church is gifted with?
- Identify possible people or partners to work with from other churches or the wider community, to engage in the suggested areas of growth
- Agree three goals that can be achieved in six months





Conclude by informing the meeting of the next step and praying together.

Record your goals on your growth plan and pray for them. If the plan is initially filled in at a meeting other than the PCC, discuss with all the relevant PCC agendas as soon as possible to put your plan into action. Ensure that the three actions are included on future PCC agendas as a priority.

Complete the plan summary form which is included on the final page of this booklet (page 16). Instructions will be shared by the Archdeacon.

Remember: your Archdeacon would love to hear you talk about your plans if you have a pastoral visitation.

Next Steps:

Agree your three key goals

.....

Authorise those who will undertake them

.....

Allocate resources

.....

Clarify what you may need to stop doing, to enable these actions to take place

.....

Note any training needs

.....

Communicate your findings to the wider congregation

.....

Use this planning booklet to prepare and engage in the Deanery Planning Process during 2019

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Appendix 1 | Liturgical resources

Opening acclamation response

Let us give thanks
to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
**who has blessed us in Christ
with every spiritual blessing.**

There is one body, one Spirit, one hope in
God's call,
one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

There is one God, Father of all, over all and
in all,
to whom Christ ascended on high.

And through his Spirit he gives us gifts:
**some are apostles, some are his
prophets.**

Evangelists, pastors and teachers he gives
us,
**so we can minister together
to build up his body,
to be mature in the fullness of Christ.**

To Father, Son and Holy Spirit
**give praise and dominion, honour
and might, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Penitence

We confess to you our selfishness
and lack of love:
fill us with your Spirit.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

We confess to you our fear and failure
in sharing our faith:
fill us with your Spirit.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

We confess to you our lack of trust in you:
fill us with your Spirit.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

May God who loved the world so much
that he sent his Son to be our Saviour
forgive us our sins
and make us holy to serve him in the world,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Peace

We are all one in Christ Jesus.
We belong to him through faith,
heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace.

Eucharistic Preface

And now we give you thanks
because by the Holy Spirit
you lead us into all truth,
and give us power
to proclaim your gospel to the nations
and to serve you as a royal priesthood.

Introduction to The Lord's Prayer

Seeking the salvation of the world, let us
pray with confidence as Jesus taught us:

Post Communion or Closing Prayer

Eternal God, giver of love and power,
your Son Jesus Christ
has sent us into all the world
to preach the gospel of his kingdom:
confirm us in this mission,
and help us
to live the good news we proclaim;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessing

Now may the blessing of God the Father,
who made from one
every nation that occupies the earth;
of God the Son who bought us for God
from every tribe and language
and people and nation;
and of God the Spirit
who brings us together in unity,
be with us and remain with us always.
Amen.

Sending out

Glory to God,
**whose power, at work among us,
can do infinitely more
than all we can ask or conceive;
to him be glory in the Church
and in Christ Jesus,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Further resources www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/newpatterns.aspx

Appendix 2 | Discerning prayer

You may find it helpful to use one or more approach from each section in a time of prayer. Prepare beforehand so that you have what you need, e.g. candle, music, Bibles, newspapers, a 'prayer tree' and 'leaves', or cards and a bowl etc.

In a group, welcome everyone. Explain how the thoughts and insights from your prayers will fit into the Growing in God reflection process.

Arrive in the present

- Take a deep breath ... maybe several deep breaths ...
- Light a candle as a sign that you are in God's presence.
- Prepare in informal or formal words: e.g.
 - O God, make speed to save us;
 - O Lord, make haste to help us.
 - Lead your people to freedom, O God
 - And banish all darkness from our hearts and minds.
- Play or sing a song or hymn.
- Attend to one another, e.g. briefly share with a neighbour a moment from your day.

Reflect

- With **Scripture**: e.g. John 15.1-11; Mark 4:26-32; 1 Corinthians 3.5-9
 - You may like to read a passage through slowly. If any word or phrase stands out for you, sit with it for as long as it speaks to you.
 - Or you may like to explore the text itself, reading its context and looking up cross-references.
- On **life in our parish / benefice / deanery**
 - Use local newspapers to remind you of life locally. Looking at a particular story, how do you feel? What do you think? What would you like to do?
 - Or reflect on the parish spotlight summary. What stands out for you? How do you feel? What would you like to do?
- In **silence**
 - Quietly sit or kneel in God's presence.

Respond

- Hold on to what you thought / felt / understood in the reflection time. In response to that, what is God's call to me, and to us?
- Share whatever you are willing to – perhaps a verse, or thought, or picture, or plan. You may want to write or draw on paper leaves and fix them onto a prayer tree (a tree shape or a small branch); or write or draw on cards and put them in a bowl or box. In a small group, you may also want to share your thoughts aloud.

Offer

- Offer yourselves and your efforts in thanksgiving and prayer – in formal or informal words, in song and / or in silence.

Appendix 3 | Biblical resources

Growing in God God's Kingdom in the world

Read Mark 4:26-32 and
Luke 13:20-21

- As you read these passages, what do you notice?
What stands out for you? What questions arise?
- What do these pictures say to you about how God's kingdom grows and spreads? What do they say about your role – as individuals and as a church group – in this process?
- The context around each of these verses is one of controversy – in the preceding days Jesus has been criticised for healing on the Sabbath and has challenged people's perceptions of him and the kingdom in his provocative teachings. How does this understanding of context shape the way you understand these three images of the kingdom?
 - In what ways can you watch out for signs of the kingdom growing? What signs would you be looking for?
 - Based on these three images, of the growing seed, the mustard seed and the yeast, how might you be different in the coming month in your approach to growing God's kingdom?

The Kingdom of God

The gospels make it clear that Jesus came with a specific mission: to bring in God's kingdom (Mark 1:15, Matthew 4:17), known by Mark and Luke as the 'Kingdom of God' and by Matthew as the 'Kingdom of heaven'. This term isn't meant to refer to a geographical place, but to a way of being in which God rules and life is lived accordingly. The kingdom will not be fully realised until Jesus returns - until that point there is still struggle between God's kingdom and other ways of being - but Jesus' teaching, both verbal (in his stories and discourses) and practical (in his miracles and behaviour) gives tasters of what this kingdom looks like.

- John's Gospel has Jesus speaking of having come "that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). How do you understand life in all its fullness?
- What might it mean in practice for the kingdom to be both 'now' and 'not yet'?

Reading Jesus' Parables

Much of Jesus' teaching was delivered in parables – stories intended to produce a response in the hearers by speaking to them in ways they would understand, and challenging them. Stories were, and are, a commonly used teaching technique, not unique to Jesus. But whereas some were set in a fantasy world, Jesus' parables were set in the known world, drawing the readers in by their familiarity. Sometimes the meaning of the parables is obvious; on other occasions they are intriguing, even mystifying, and they invite further reflection. Some parables would have shocked their original hearers (for example, the Good Samaritan).

- Why are stories such a useful teaching technique? In what ways might it be useful to 'rewrite' the parables for today?

The kingdom parables give images of what God's kingdom looks like now and how it will be in the future, its importance and impact, how it grows and how it challenges people. See, for example: Matthew 9:16-17; Luke 7:41-43; Mark 12:1-11.

- What images of the kingdom are presented in each of these parables?

Picturing the Kingdom

These readings contain three pictures of the kingdom, likening it to a growing seed, a mustard seed and yeast. There are many other parables which provide different, but complementary, depictions.

- Consider each of these pictures:
 - the weeds among good plants (Mt 13:24-30)
 - the hidden treasure (Mt 13:44)
 - the valuable pearl (Mt 13:45-46)
 - the fishing net (Mt 13:47-50)
 - the unmerciful servant (Mt 18:21-35)
 - the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16)
 - the wedding banquet (Mt 22:2-14)
 - the wise and foolish virgins (Mt 25:1-13)

What do these images tell you about the characteristics of the kingdom – what it looks like, how it grows, its value, its boundaries...?

- How might the messages of these pictures be translated into images that make sense in today's world?

Further teaching on the Kingdom

As well as the parables, the gospels include a wide range of "tasters" of the kingdom, through examples and stories:

- Luke 4:31-37 - authority over evil spirits
- Mark 4:35-41 - authority over nature
- Matthew 15:21-28 - the importance of faith
- Mark 9:14-29 - the importance of prayer
- Matthew 5:43-48 – radical teaching

- How does each of these examples develop your understanding of what the Kingdom of God is like?
- What examples could you give of the kingdom breaking in to today's world?
- In what ways do your answers to these questions encourage, challenge or inspire you?

Growing in God

Further information on the Growing in God vision is available on our website www.cofesuffolk.org or detailed in our leaflet on 'Our Diocesan Vision and Strategy'.

Summary Plan

Celebrating | Reflecting | Planning

Growth Plan for the parish/benefice of

Incumbent

Deanery

Planning - What actions are we committed to begin or develop this year

(one should be achievable in six months)

1.

.....
.....

2.

.....
.....

3.

.....
.....

There is an electronic version of this form on our website www.cofesuffolk.org/growingingod

Or please print and post to: **David Pawson, Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, 4 Cutler Street, Ipswich, IP1 1UQ**