



Renewing Pilgrimage

Our Diocesan Priorities, 2021-26
An introduction for the Diocese of Durham



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Bishop Paul

Introducing the Diocesan priorities:

A note from Bishop Paul

Back in October 2019 we gathered for **The Waymark Conference**. Representatives from each of our parishes, chaplaincies and church schools came together to reflect on our mission as a Diocese and ask *what next?* Through prayer, conversation and sharing our stories we began to discern four important areas of mission which we sensed **God** was calling our attention to as we asked *how shall we focus our energies, prayers and resources in the coming years?*

In the months that followed the Waymark process explored how we might practically respond to God's call to **Challenge Poverty, Energise Growth, Care for God's Creation and Engage with Children, Youth and Young Adults**. The resulting strategy identified three ways we can begin to do this in each area –

- by **raising awareness**;
- by **responding practically**; and
- by working together to **reform** the wider context of each of these four issues in order to bring fuller blessing and transformation in Jesus' name.

Together we describe this as our 2026 vision for **Renewing Pilgrimage**. It is not the sum of all that we will, or should, do, but does draw together some of the particular things we believe God is emphasising.

As you read through this you'll discover more of the aspirations we have for each area. The four priorities are not prescriptive; rather they are intended to inspire and focus our service and mission together.

This guide is an **introduction** to shape our prayers and support discussion and exploration at home, in church and in our communities, as we consider how we might respond locally. Our churches are not expected to address all of these things by themselves, rather, the invitation is for us to consider how we might participate and what we might achieve **together**.

In the coming months we'll be producing more detailed resources and sharing stories. **Our prayer** is that we support, encourage and pray for one another in this so that we will experience and be part of **Christ's** transforming work, as we walk, serve and work together with Him and with the people of this region.

The **Waymark prayer** sums this up:

Loving God, guiding the people of Durham Diocese faithfully through the years:

We thank you for saints who have marked our path, young and old, known and unknown, from all places and in all walks of life.

Help us to find your way in our generation: transformed by your truth, sharing your life, blessing our communities.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen

In Christ,
+Paul.

Our Priorities, 2021-2026

Our mission together as the Church of England in the Diocese of Durham is to **'Bless our communities in Jesus' name for the transformation of us all'**. Following prayer and shared reflection we have sensed God's call to do this over the coming five years by working together as a family of churches to bring transformation by...





Challenging Poverty by:

Working together to address **Child & Youth Poverty**;

Responding to isolation, particularly among the Elderly;

Reaching out and responding to the **needs and gifts of Asylum Seekers & Refugees**.

Energising Growth by:

Growing in reach and influence, transforming our communities through the transformation of our churches;

Growing in depth: strengthening **discipleship**, serving Jesus by using our gifts in his mission in every part of life;

Growing in breadth and number, growing the number of people identifying as Christian.



Caring for God's creation by:

Cultivating a **shared Christian vision** for God's creation and our call to steward, nurture and protect it, in Jesus' name, for the good of everyone, everywhere;

Promoting responsible consumption, choices & behaviour as individuals and churches;

Working together to **challenge wider environmental indifference and injustice**.

Engaging with children, youth & 18-25s by:

Developing pathways for more children to become lifelong disciples of Jesus;

Resourcing youth for mission (and extending our engagement with them);

Extending the engagement of 18-25s.





Energising Growth

We will pray, support one another, plan and work together in order to foster growth in all our contexts, in order to:

- 1. Grow in reach and influence** – working for the transformation of our communities through the transformation of our churches;
- 2. Grow in depth – strengthening discipleship**, being transformed by the renewing of our minds and choosing to reflect and serve Jesus by using our gifts to join in with his mission in every part of life;
- 3. Grow in breadth – growth in the number of people identifying as Christian** and fully participating in the life and mission of a local church family.





'Again, Jesus said 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I am sending you'. And with that he breathed on them and said 'Receive the Holy Spirit'

John 20:21



Throughout the gospels, Jesus presents growth as a normal and expected characteristic of the life that is deeply rooted in Him, open to his purposes and filled with his empowering presence.

His teaching about the growth and multiplication of vines, mustard seeds and talents all speak of this and of the effect, importance and beauty of God's work within and through us, as His kingdom is established, transforming the world around it.

The Energising Growth priority seeks to encourage this in all of our contexts. Over the course of the next five years we will work together to energise and resource growth in three important ways:

- **Growing in reach** and influence – effecting the transformation of our communities through the transformation of our churches;
- **Growing in depth** – strengthening **discipleship**, being transformed by the renewing of our minds and choosing to reflect and serve Jesus by using our gifts to join in with his mission in every part of life;
- **Growing in breadth** – growth in the number of people newly identifying as Christian and committed to and participating in a local church family (Heb 10:25).

Investing in this will produce fruit and change in our personal lives, in our churches and in the wider community as we join in with God's work, responding to his call to mission by taking new steps of faith.

As a Diocese we will resource this by:

- Introducing new, more accessible routes for local leadership development;
- Developing training and resources to support church planting through **'Cultivate'** and the **'Healthy Church' initiative**;
- **Supporting deaneries and churches to plant or revitalise churches and congregations**;
- Appointing a Diocesan evangelism & discipleship enabler;
- Extending and supporting the development of chaplaincy to grow our reach in schools, prisons and other contexts;
- **Enabling more diverse forms of leadership** and welcoming Children, Youth & 18-25s more fully as partners in the life and mission of our churches;
- Supporting churches to engage more people, more fully in **prayer** and mission initiatives;
- Supporting every church member to influence the world around them by promoting and resourcing **Everyday Faith**.

Stepping towards this, through developing locally relevant plans for mission, collaborating as churches together, engaging in opportunities for support and learning, as well sharing our insights, experiments, successes and godly failures are all important ways that we can each join in and become part of the transforming work of growth that God is calling us to.




Challenging Poverty

Together, as a Diocese, we will be responding to God's call to Challenge Poverty by:

1. Working together to address **Child & Youth Poverty**;
2. **Responding to isolation**, particularly among the elderly;
3. Reaching out and responding to the needs and gifts of **Asylum Seekers & Refugees**.





'Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter - when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Isaiah 58:6-8



The Diocese of Durham contains significant areas of deprivation – a third of our parishes are in the 10% most deprived communities nationally and face significant inequality of income, employment, health, wellbeing and opportunity.

Child poverty, isolation, and below average educational attainment are all elements of this. As local churches, chaplaincy teams and schools, we are uniquely placed to engage with this. And, **as God's people we are uniquely charged, and resourced, to be part of the response.**

The Waymark survey showed the majority of parishes responding to poverty in some way, ranging from food collections to foodbanks, summer holiday hunger and activity clubs, debt advice, advocacy and many other initiatives. Each of these are really valuable.

Over the next five years we want to build on this, making a special effort to strengthen our ministry in three key areas, taking action to Challenge Poverty by:

1. Working together to address **Child & Youth Poverty**;
2. **Responding to isolation**, particularly among the Elderly;
3. Reaching out and responding to the needs and gifts of **Asylum Seekers & Refugees**.

Working together, as churches, schools, deaneries and with others, we can all contribute to and participate in God's transforming work of bringing hope, healing and justice. Doing so will require that we raise awareness of Jesus's call to be with the last, the least and the lost; find ways to help our congregations respond practically (working with their community for the wellbeing of all) and that we act together as a Diocese in order to reform the underlying systems & problems.

In engaging with Child & Youth poverty, isolation and issues of asylum & refuge, finding ways to act collaboratively will often be important if we are to be really effective.

The Challenging Poverty priority includes:

- Work with Citizens UK to increase the number of people being paid the **real living wage** in the region;
- Work to become a **dementia friendly diocese**, developing support and capacity for 'hospitality' projects;
- Support to increase engagement with *Poverty Sunday, holiday hunger, holiday clubs* and other initiatives.

As a Diocese we are committed to:

- Audit local need/church engagement with and of refugees and asylum seekers, integrating this with our work on race and diversity;
- Promote a greater understanding of the asylum system and developing new support networks to resource churches engaged in serving refugee/asylum seeking communities;
- Developing **Community Sponsorship** in each Archdeaconry;
- Promoting the ministry of asylum seekers and refugees within the whole community,
- Supporting congregations to understand local poverty using the CUF look-up tool;
- Piloting work with toddler groups to **develop intentional approaches to improving life chances**;
- Multiplying **Places of welcome, Dementia Friendly church, CAP money** and other debt action projects.

We will encourage:

- Partnership to provide more debt advice centres;
- Churches to identify and share the ways in which they support older people, in order to extend this further and more widely;
- **'Poverty proofing'** of our parish activities, ensuring they are accessible to those living in poverty;
- Extension of online provision to improve accessibility and engagement among the immobile, housebound and isolated (including teenagers, parents/carers and the disabled etc.);
- Engagement with **Refugee week** as churches, schools and chaplaincies.




Engaging with children, youth & 18–25s

Together, we will use our resources, gifts, time and prayers in order to engage more fully with children, youth & 18–25s by:

- 1.** Developing pathways for more children and youth to **become lifelong disciples of Jesus**;
- 2. Resourcing children and youth for mission** (and extending the reach and depth of our engagement with them);
- 3. Extending the engagement of 18–25s** in the life and mission of our churches.





*'May our sons in
their youth be like
plants full grown, ..our
daughters like corner
pillars cut for the
building of a palace.'*

Psalm 144:12



Throughout the scriptures, young people feature strongly in God's purposes. The early church was quick to point to the prophet Joel's affirmation that God intends to pour out his Spirit on all people, every age group and every generation, in expectation that we all participate in the task of proclamation, worship and mission (Acts 2:39).

The Psalmist also has a really positive vision for young people – not sidelined or left out but notable for their maturity and fruitfulness ('like plants full grown') and centrally positioned in the life of his church ('like corner pillars..'). When we create this sort of space for young people, they grow, the church is strengthened and the gospel is demonstrated and declared more fully and fruitfully. And whilst we have much to be thankful for in terms of the extension of our work with children over recent years, there remains much to do and much potential to fulfil.

The **Engaging with Children, Youth and 18-25s** priority focusses on the cultivation of lifelong followers of Jesus, inviting them to become active partners in our mission by:

1. **Developing pathways** from infancy to adulthood so that more children and youth become lifelong **disciples of Jesus**;
2. **Resourcing youth for mission** (and extending our engagement with them);
3. **Extending the engagement of 18-25s**

As we target these areas we are praying that this will lead to more children around the region engaging with the message of Jesus and continuing their discipleship journey from Messy Church or Open the Book into their teenage years and beyond, becoming lifelong witnesses and disciple makers themselves, in their churches, schools, homes and communities and seeing a substantial increase in the number of children, youth and 18-25s following Jesus and making Him known.

To do this we will:

- Develop resources to support parents/carers to develop discipleship at home;
- Share resources and best practice to help churches develop more child-friendly approaches;
- Continue to support and engage with **Growing Faith**;
- Continue to collaborate and find ways to support and partner with our schools and the Joint Education Team;
- Work with Training Providers to strengthen training for mission to children, youth & 18-25s;
- Generate opportunities for youth to participate in or contribute to decision making more consistently in every area of our life as a Diocese;
- Find ways to extend Schools Chaplaincy and our involvement with colleges of FE through developing Chaplaincy relationships;
- Develop strategies for engaging with and releasing the missional energy of 18-25s.

We will encourage:

- All our churches (individually, as deaneries and in collaboration with others) to develop pathways to extend a child's discipleship into adulthood;
- Further church planting in school buildings;
- The ministry of young people and their engagement as leaders in our churches and in mission;
- Local ecumenical collaboration to support engagement with and outreach to young people;
- Opportunities for 'encounters with Jesus' within our schools and other contexts;
- All of our deaneries to develop local networking, contact and vision for 18-25s.



Caring for God's creation

Together, as individuals, parishes and a Diocese we will Care for God's Creation, taking action and using our resources, gifts, time and prayers to..

- 1. Cultivating a shared Christian vision** for God's creation and our call to steward, nurture and protect it, in Jesus' name, for the good of everyone, everywhere;
- 2. Promote responsible consumption & behaviour** as individuals and churches;
- 3. Work together to challenge environmental indifference and injustice.**





'As people of faith, we don't just state our beliefs - we live them out. One belief is that we find purpose and joy in loving our neighbours. Another is that we are charged by our creator with taking good care of his creation... Reducing the causes of climate change is essential to the life of faith. It is a way to love our neighbour and to steward the gift of creation.'

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury



A new area of work, the Caring for God's Creation priority emphasises growing our understanding, taking action and, raising our voice to address environmental exploitation, and reflects the biblical call to be people of faith and action (James 2:18).

We describe these three elements of mission **as raising awareness, responding** through changing behaviour and action and **reforming** by encouraging wider change. Together they shape the vision of our work to **Care for God's Creation**, which we will begin to do by:

- 1. Cultivating a shared Christian vision** for God's creation and our call to steward, nurture and protect it, in Jesus' name, for the good of everyone, everywhere;
- 2. Promoting responsible consumption** and behaviour as **individuals and churches**; and
- 3. Working together to challenge environmental indifference and injustice.**

Shaped by the reflections & prayers of our Diocese through the Waymark process, the five marks of mission and the vision of the national church to become carbon net zero by 2030, the **Caring for God's Creation** initiative will involve learning together, personal and organisational change, and collaborating together and with other stakeholders to generate wider, positive changes in policy and behaviour.

As a Diocese we will be investing in resources to provide models, advice and training, in order to resource and create space for local initiative and change. 2021-2026 is intended to be the beginning of a new phase whereby we learn and act together, and join together with others in order to produce change.

In order to get Care for God's Creation off the ground we will..

- Develop new **online resources** to envision, share stories and offer models to our churches, schools and households;
- Embed Care for Creation in **deanery plans** and the parish prioritisation process;
- **Facilitate debate**, learning and conversation among our churches and the wider community;
- Model best practice by moving Cuthbert House towards being Carbon Net;
- Become an **Eco Diocese**, supporting as many churches as we can to become **Eco Churches**;
- Create training and networking opportunities to catalyse local change and provide staffing to support churches to engage in Care for God's Creation and find ways to generate local change.

We will also:

- Engage with the **Archbishops Commission** to explore opportunities for sustainable development and look for ways to collaborate with other denominations and local community partners to influence policy positively.
- Work to become more conscious of how we use resources, acting together as Deaneries, keeping sight of the international implications (particularly for the world's poorest) renewing our commitment to **fairtrade** and finding ways to make this relevant to all our communities locally will all be important elements of this.

As new work this represents an exciting and, to some degree, unknown opportunity which will require lots of prayer, honesty, listening and faith as well as providing significant opportunities for everyone to be involved as we engage with our communities in an issue that matters to all of us, and that reflects **God's concern** for our world and his creation.

What's next...

Some questions to consider:

1. As Deanery

What can you (and what should you) do together... as a group of parish churches or with other local churches or organisations? **Reflect on the four priorities** (Energising Growth, Challenging Poverty, Engaging with Children, youth & 18-25s and Care for God's Creation) - what are the obvious local gaps or needs? And what are the obvious opportunities for collaboration? Is there anything going on in the other churches of your deanery that you could learn from, share in or adopt? What commitment could you make now to ensure you develop a local response?

2. As Schools or Chaplaincies

Which of the priorities feel particularly relevant to the needs, passions or giftings of your context? What are you already doing that you could multiply or adapt? Try to research what other schools/chaplaincies/etc are doing that you could adopt or try and ask yourself, *'What is the one thing we could do this year to generate some interest or get some experience? What big goal could we set ourselves to work towards over the next 4 or 5 years?'*

3. As Churches

Try to get really clear on the one thing you should prioritise above all else. What do you sense as you pray and reflect on your sense of mission, local need or local passion? What stories could you share which could help your congregation develop vision or begin to get ready for doing something? What should you stop or dial down in order to make space for the priorities?

Remember, as we step out with others, trying something new, God will not only do a new thing in the community around us, but often uses our steps of faith as the means to change us and draw us nearer to Jesus.

5 steps towards getting something going...



1

Purpose & Principles:

What do you sense **God** is calling you to address, do or engage with? What principles would matter most were we to engage? Keep it simple. Getting this really clear will help you identify your aims and understand which principles matter most to you. Keeping sight of these things helps us to avoid drifting over time.

A dark grey footprint with the number 5 inside, pointing towards the top right.

5

Identify some practical steps.

What do you need and who do you need to consult or get on board?

What are the **teaching, time, team and telling** (i.e. communication) elements that you need to get in place?


Committing to something simple helps us make a start. And committing to something **bold** will get us praying, and will help us develop a longer term commitment.

Agree on what to do next, and over the months to come. Putting some key events in our diary helps us to turn today's enthusiasm into something concrete that others can gather around.

A mustard yellow footprint with the number 4 inside, pointing towards the top right.

4

Map out the possibilities:

A green footprint with the number 3 inside, pointing towards the top right.

3

Get some people together to 'brainstorm' some different ideas about the ways in which you could work towards your goal (eg of Challenging Poverty) locally. Pray for wisdom; talk, exploring which ideas fit with your sense of God's call. Try to keep it simple but sufficiently bold so that we are reliant on God!

A purple footprint with the number 2 inside, pointing towards the top right.

2

Envisioning picture:

What would success look like? How would it change things in the short and longer term? Thinking this through as a group and being able to describe this clearly for others is the basis of developing a vision. Having a clear vision will help you motivate others to volunteer, contribute, support, give and pray.

Some things to bear in mind:

- By **working from the start with others**, more people will get involved, take ownership and grow in their sense of mission, their own gifting and being part of **the great commission** (Matthew 28:18-20) and the project will become more transformational than if the idea and plan only comes from the vicar, youth leader, headteacher or a single person.
- **You don't need to do everything.** Some parishes will have loads of ideas (which is great!) however you can't do them all. **Keep it simple** – you can always 'bank' those ideas for another time or even to include another group of people.
- **You are not on your own** – help is available from the other churches and from the wider diocese (see useful contacts). Reaching out to others will extend your pool of support, encouragement, prayer & ideas, as well as being a way for other people to learn from you!

Some useful resources...

Over the coming months we will be developing new resources, training and ideas (as well as sharing stories and experience from around the Diocese) to support us all to explore how we can engage with the new **Diocesan Priorities**. There are lots of great resources out there to help explore how we can get started, but here are a few links and ideas to help get you going.

National resources

- The **Gregory Centre for Church Growth & Multiplication** (<https://ccx.org.uk/>) is a **Church of England** initiative to support church planting, church growth and revitalisation, led by Bishop Ric Thorpe. The site has some great resources on estates ministry, church planting, growth and lots of encouraging stories.
- **Talking Jesus** is a fantastic online resource hub to help us all grow in confidence in talking about our faith in God and develop contact, conversations and contexts for our community and friends to explore the good news of Jesus in a way that is relevant, meaningful, life giving and that works! Check out the *Talking Jesus course* or search for ideas, resources or encouragement at <https://talkingjesus.org/>
- **Open the Book** is a brilliant way for churches to serve their schools and get young people enjoying discovering the good news of the Jesus through an exciting experience of bible stories. Teams are supported with brilliant materials, training etc. You can find out more from our Childrens Adviser or the Open the Book website <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book>
- **Faith at Home** is the brilliant campaign from the national church (developed from the Growing Faith & Everyday Faith initiatives) **to link school-church-home** to help children and families grow in their discipleship. The site has loads of brilliant resources for any family, household, church or school to help develop collective worship and discipleship. Find out more at <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/faith-home>
- The **Welcome Churches network** provide training, ideas, encouragement and resources for churches to develop contact with **refugees and asylum seekers** in their communities through **welcome boxes** and befriending schemes, supporting churches to do this appropriately, safely and effectively. A number of our parish churches already partner with Welcome Churches. Find out more at <https://welcomechurches.org/>
- **Eco Church** is the brilliant scheme for churches run by A Rocha UK, equipping churches to care for God's world through our worship & teaching, use of our buildings and land and to support us to work with our communities to raise awareness and bring change locally and globally. We are encouraging **all** of our churches to sign up as **Eco Churches** – to use the A Rocha church survey and to begin working towards Eco Church bronze award status. You can find resources, information about Climate Sunday and more at <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

Diocese of Durham resources

As a Diocese, our **Growth Team**, our **Resource Centre** staff, our **Mission, Discipleship & Ministry** team and **Communities Together Durham** team are available to help churches engage with the Priorities.

- **Cultivate** is the Diocese of Durham's programme to support churches to establish and grow new Christian Communities from missional communities to new congregations to new churches and revitalisations providing training, support, ideas and materials for our congregations, clergy, lay leaders and deaneries. Find out more at <https://www.cultivate100.co.uk/>
- The Diocesan **Growth Team** (based at Cuthbert House) support our churches to establish new Christian communities, **plant** and **revitalise** churches, or start a **Community of Hope** through providing support and training to parishes through the **Healthy Church programme** and the **Cultivate network**. You can contact the team through the Cultivate website <https://www.cultivate100.co.uk/contact>
- The Diocesan **Resources Centre** (based at Cuthbert House in Durham) is home to loads of resources for churches and schools to help them engage with the four priorities or learn more including books, films, interactive resources for assemblies, homegroups and collective worship alongside training materials to help us learn and raise awareness and bring transformation. Find out more at <https://www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk/>
- Our **Youth, Childrens work and Schools Chaplaincy development Advisers** (Andy Harris, Sharon Pritchard & Catherine Simpson), are available to support our churches to establish and grow their childrens, youth & schools work – to support you in developing programmes and training volunteers through advice, ideas, resources and running regular training events and networking opportunities. You can find the details of all our advisers at <https://durhamdiocese.org/team>

Ongoing updates to support engagement with each of the four priorities will be regularly posted on our Diocesan website <https://durhamdiocese.org/>



durhamdiocese.org

'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord'

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