

VISION 2026 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (2021 – 2024)

The Diocese of Blackburn

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Executive Summary

Vision 2026 is an agenda for growth and change to see ‘Healthy Churches Transforming Communities’ across the Diocese of Blackburn in our centenary year of 2026. The Vision was launched in 2015 when the Diocese of Blackburn made a bold strategic decision to change and to grow through the priorities of:

- Making Disciples of Jesus Christ
- Being Witnesses to Jesus Christ
- Growing Leaders for Jesus Christ
- Prioritising Work Among Children, Young People and Schools¹

Over the course of 2020 the Diocese engaged in a ‘Vision Update’ through which we sought to identify what is going well and where the challenges are as we seek to realise our Vision of seeing Healthy Churches Transforming Communities in 2026. The conversations naturally included consideration of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has had such a major bearing on the life of the Church in recent times. This Vision Implementation Plan (2021 – 2024) is the result of the Vision Update exercise.

The Plan opens by explaining the Vision of ‘Healthy Church Transforming Communities’ in more detail through providing:

- A clearly articulated and theologically grounded Vision of a Transformed Lancashire drawing on Isaiah 65
- A completely refreshed ‘Marks of Healthy Church’ using the image of a healthy tree
- An exposition of the Foundations on which Vision 2026 rests, acknowledging that the most important thing is that we pray faithfully, repent, seek God’s face and ask that He would pour out His Spirit across the Diocese of Blackburn.

It then describes the four major building blocks of the Vision and activities planned against each:

- **Making Disciples** of which selected highlights are:
 - The forthcoming launch of a Rule of Life
 - Creating a Centre for Christian Discipleship and Prayer at Whalley Abbey with a resident praying community
 - Enabling spiritual direction to be available to all, lay and ordained, across the diocese
 - Production of diocesan seasonal daily devotional resources
- **Being Witnesses** of which selected highlights are:
 - Coaching, networking and training as we press ahead to our goal of seeing 200 New Local Congregations by 2026

¹ ‘Prioritising Work Among Children, Young People and Schools’ was formally added as a priority of the Vision a little after the original launch. It is being re-named ‘Inspiring Children and Young People’ through the Vision Update.

- Internal and external investment to realise the vision of 10 Strategic Church Plants by 2026
- Encouraging the regular hosting of enquirers courses by providing training and networks of support.
- A suite of activities to enable human flourishing through social action
- Caring for God’s creation with the aim to become an Eco-diocese by 2023

- **Growing Leaders** of which selected highlights are:
 - Establishment of the Lay Majority Ministry Framework which includes new ‘Authorised Lay Ministers’ and ‘Licensed Lay Ministers’
 - Continued development of a diocesan-wide culture of vocational discernment so that all may hear God’s call and use their gifts in the service of the Gospel
 - Generating a pipeline of highly motivated deacons and priests in order to enable the Diocese’s clergy deployment strategy

- **Inspiring Children and Young People** of which selected highlights are:
 - Pursuing a step change in work with those aged 11-18 supported by a new Youth Resourcing Church and diocesan-wide new learning communities
 - Facilitating effective partnerships between churches and local schools
 - Nurturing children and young people in their faith and supporting them as disciples of Jesus Christ
 - Supporting the creation of new or renewed toddler groups that share the gospel

The Plan then moves on to outline other important aspects of the delivery of Vision 2026:

- Articulating two contexts where the diocese will intervene to establish or maintain a Christian presence: Urban Estates and Presence & Engagement parishes
- The vital roles played by the wider diocesan family including the role of Blackburn Cathedral, Whalley Abbey and Chaplaincies
- Defining the visionary role of those teams and activities that ‘Enable’ Vision 2026 including vision support, finance, communications, property and recruitment
- Committing to various initiatives to support both clergy wellbeing eg a Blackburn Wellbeing Toolkit, and also clergy development eg refresh and re-launch of both MDR and CME

Detailed Aspirations in relation to Vision 2026 including measurable outcomes are provided as an annex.

The Plan concludes with the Diocesan Vision 2026 Prayer:

“Heavenly Father, we embrace Your call for us to make disciples, to be witnesses, to grow leaders and to inspire children and young people. Give us eyes to see Your vision, ears to hear the prompting of Your Spirit and courage to follow in the footsteps of your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen”

Vision 2026 Implementation Plan

2021 - 2024

1 Introduction

Vision 2026 is an agenda for growth and change to see ‘Healthy Churches Transforming Communities’ across the Diocese of Blackburn in our centenary year of 2026. The Vision was launched in 2015 when the Diocese of Blackburn made a bold strategic decision to change and to grow through the priorities of:

- Making Disciples for Jesus Christ
- Being Witnesses for Jesus Christ
- Growing Leaders for Jesus Christ
- Prioritising Work Among Children, Young People and Schools²

All that we do as a diocese is focussed on the delivery of Vision 2026. We long to see a fresh outpouring of God’s Spirit across Lancashire, to see communities and lives transformed.

Over the course of 2020 the Diocese engaged in a ‘Vision Update’ through which we sought to identify what is going well and where the challenges are as we seek to realise our Vision of seeing Healthy Churches Transforming Communities. This Update has encompassed extensive feedback from parishes and representative groups including Deanery Synods, Areas Deans and Bishop’s Council in order that future plans focus on what will really make a difference to realising our Vision. Annex A provides a summary of the outcomes of the feedback gained through the Vision Update in the form of a question. This document, the Vision 2026 Implementation Plan (2021 – 2024), seeks to answer the question posed.

What we could not have anticipated in the course of those conversations is the COVID-19 pandemic which has had such a huge impact on our national life and so on the Church. Our Diocese serves parts of the country which have seen some of the highest levels of infection, especially East Lancashire where high population density, long-term poverty, a culture of low pay and multi-generational living have proved an ideal breeding ground for the virus. The enforced closure of facilities has meant an unprecedented break in our patterns of public worship with subsequent impacts on both faith and finance. The DBF faces significant financial hurdles and what the ‘new normal’ might look like remains unclear. With many unknowns, this makes for a challenging time to be writing strategy documents. Yet we trust in an unchanging God and the need for Healthy Churches that Transform their Communities remains as vital as ever.

Since the launch of Vision 2026, a culture of faith, hope and growth has taken root across our diocese. We are so thankful to God for what we have already witnessed. It has been exciting to see a remarkable increase in the number of people exploring lay and ordained vocations. The new local congregations that have been started across the diocese have been inspirational not just in terms of

² ‘Prioritising Work Among Children, Young People and Schools’ was formally added as a priority of the Vision a little after the original launch. It is being re-named ‘Inspiring Children and Young People’ through this Vision Update.

their number but in the creativity that has been embraced by parishes to reach out to different groups of people at new times and in a variety of locations. Funding from the Church Commissioners has enabled us to strategically invest in pioneering church in our urban estates and in raising up new urban leaders, as well as planting a new Resourcing Church into Preston with ambitions to plant out across the diocese. Demand for the 'Knowing the Scriptures Better' booklet produced by the Making Disciples team highlighted the hunger to know God's Word and encouraging attendance levels at Pathways to Prayer events illustrated a desire to pray to God with greater depth and urgency. The diocesan conference in 2018 was a highlight for Vision 2026, bringing together the whole diocese in learning and sharing, united by our common Vision.

And even in pandemic, the agility and Gospel passion of so many of our leaders and congregations has been demonstrated. Parishes adapted to lockdown with remarkable imagination, finding new ways to broadcast worship, to meet human need, to teach their people to pray and to care for the lonely and the isolated. When lockdown measures have eased, churches in Blackburn Diocese have been at the forefront of moves to re-open churches safely.

All of the above changes are a real encouragement as we press on towards the goal of seeing communities transformed in 2026 yet there is much more to do. Parish feedback from the Vision 2026 survey was helpful in identifying the challenges being faced with respondents reporting that ageing congregations, engagement with youth, financial constraints, maintaining heritage buildings and juggling competing priorities are among the most significant. Indeed, our diocese faces a real challenge to encourage and sustain the faith of the children we minister to as they enter their teenage years and to reach out to new young people; ageing congregations make the need to identify and grow new leaders all the more pressing and levels of giving are not yet enough to sustain present parish ministry levels without the support of diocesan reserves.

The Vision Update began prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which has presented additional challenges whilst also opening up new opportunities which are factored into this document.

This Vision 2026 Implementation Plan summarises what we intend to do between 2021 and 2024 to build on the encouragements and address the challenges in order to enable and realise our diocesan vision. It recognises the seismic shift that has occurred as a result of the pandemic, seeking to unite us as we move forward in discerning how to be Healthy Churches that Transform their Communities amidst new circumstances and uncertainty.

The most important thing is that we pray faithfully, repent, seek God's face and ask that He would pour out His Spirit across the Diocese of Blackburn. Accordingly one of the opening sections of this document relates to the 'Foundations' of Vision 2026 recognising that all our plans and activities will be futile if we lose sight of Jesus whom we are serving and that it is He who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine.

It is also important to note that healthy churches will be nurtured within parishes and accordingly parish leadership teams will discern how to develop in a way that is right for their context and community. Indeed, groups such as the Rural Focus Group exist to enable parishes in similar contexts to share ideas and support each other. This document seeks to set out how the diocese intends to support and enable all parishes in their planning and activities.

In relation to working with our ecumenical partners, the Diocese of Blackburn actively participates in Churches Together in Lancashire and upholds the vision of Churches Together to create space in

which fruitful collaboration and mutual understanding can grow so that churches work more closely together in our great task of sharing in God’s mission and making the gospel of Christ known in our nation³. We also want to work with new and growing churches who share our vision, especially in relation to church planting across the diocese.

The document is structured as follows:

- An inspiring summary of what we mean by ‘Healthy Churches Transforming Communities’ with a refreshed approach to the ‘Marks of a Healthy Church’
- An exposition of the Foundations on which Vision 2026 rests
- An outline of the overall goals and activities within each of the Building Blocks of Vision 2026 – Making Disciples, Being Witnesses, Growing Leaders and Inspiring Children and Young People
- Articulating two aspects of the context of our diocese, Urban Estates and Presence and Engagement
- Highlighting the vital roles played by the wider diocesan family including Blackburn Cathedral; Whalley Abbey and Chaplaincies
- Explaining the role of those teams and activities that ‘Enable’ Vision 2026 including Vision Support, Finance, Parish Renewal Programme, Communications, Safeguarding, Property, Recruitment and Clergy Wellbeing
- Detailing our Aspirations in relation to Vision 2026 including measurable outcomes
- Our Diocesan Vision 2026 Prayer

A summary of Vision 2026 and its priorities between 2021 and 2024 can be found at Annex B.

2. Our Vision: ‘Healthy Churches Transforming Communities’

2.21 A Vision of a Transformed Lancashire

The strapline of our vision makes a bold and ambitious claim for the purpose of the Church of England across our Diocese. Our task is much more than keeping the show on the road or maintaining the institutional church as we know it now. Our task is transformation – of communities, of a county, of a nation.

But what is a transformed Lancashire? This becomes an especially pressing question as we consider how our communities may change in the light of the trauma of the COVID pandemic. Before we plot how we believe we are called to play our part, we need first to ask: What is God’s plan for his creation?

³ This fruitful collaboration and understanding often happens on an informal basis in rural areas where the opportunities for formal ecumenical groups can be fewer.

A Vision of Human Flourishing

Right in the very heart of God there is a profound longing for right relationship with the people he made and longs to call back home. The salvation He offers in Jesus is about participation in the very life of the triune God. It is to discover the true riches and dignity of our humanity, for human life finds its fullest purpose only in relationship with him. The God we find in Jesus conceals nothing of himself. Jesus Christ, God's living Word, was made Flesh, lived, died and rose again so that we can be forgiven and set free to share in every aspect of his divine life. 'For freedom Christ has set you free.' (*Galatians 5, 1*)

The Bible has many images of what this transformed life in God constitutes, one of the richest being Isaiah's vision of the new creation (*Isaiah 65, 17-25*):

Isaiah 65:17-25, New Heavens and a New Earth

¹⁷ "See, I will create
new heavens and a new earth.
The former things will not be remembered,
nor will they come to mind.
¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I will create,
for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight
and its people a joy.
¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem
and take delight in my people;
the sound of weeping and of crying
will be heard in it no more.

²⁰ "Never again will there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not live out his years;
the one who dies at a hundred
will be thought a mere child;
the one who fails to reach a hundred
will be considered accursed.
²¹ They will build houses and dwell in them;
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
²² No longer will they build houses and others live in them,
or plant and others eat.
For as the days of a tree,
so will be the days of my people;
my chosen ones will long enjoy
the work of their hands.
²³ They will not labor in vain,
nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the LORD,
they and their descendants with them.
²⁴ Before they call I will answer;
while they are still speaking I will hear.

²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox,
and dust will be the serpent's food.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,"
says the LORD.

Isaiah's description is characterised by the following:

Mutual delight between God and his people. A relationship broken by sin is repaired and each can find rich joy in the other (vv18-19). God and his people are so close that he hears even before people call to him. (v 24)

Restored relationships. Isaiah describes the wolf and the lamb feeding together and a world in which no created thing need hurt another (v 25). It is a restored creation.

Healed lives. In this new creation, the dignity of every human life is acknowledged and no life is wasted. There is no weeping or crying for the dignity of all life is upheld. (vv 20-23)

A land of plenty. The banquet is a common description of a restored creation. Isaiah also speaks of a land of plenty where all can feast and all have enough. (v21-22)

This transformed creation is the future which God sets before us and which is achieved through the death and resurrection of his Son. God's work of transformation in our lives prepares us for our participation in his divine life and in his healed creation.

Living God's Future Now

Blake wrote of building 'Jerusalem on England's green and pleasant lands.' But the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world are different and it would be wrong to think we can build the New Jerusalem here and now through our own efforts. Only Jesus can do that when he returns in glory. The final work of transformation is his.

But a key aspect of the Christian life is that we seek to live God's future now. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25) the servants are expected to use their gifts for the furtherance of the master's project whilst he is absent. As we await Christ's return we do not do so passively or meekly. Rather we live now as if the future Kingdom had already come. We strive after a human society which reflects something of God's society as described in Isaiah 65. Of course we will not achieve that goal, but that doesn't stop us trying. For in the very act of striving we bear witness to Christ.

Our task of transformation is therefore to seek to build communities and a country that reflects something of God's future kingdom. This means we will prioritise:

- **Worship.** In worship we anticipate the new creation. The future comes breaking into the present as God takes delight in us and we delight to be with him. We feed on the Word, we share in the banquet of heaven and are sustained in the Christian life. Equipped by gathering to worship, our whole lives can become an offering of worship to the Saviour. Worship is our primary purpose and our greatest joy as the Church.

- **Conversion to Christ.** It is encounter with Christ, sincere repentance and conversion which makes new life in God available to us. A church which wishes to transform its community will prioritise the work of evangelism. It will see faithful reliance on the grace of Christ not as one option amongst many but as the only sure means of salvation. It will especially seek to inspire children and young people with the Good News of Jesus.
- **Incorporation into the Christian family.** Jesus built community. He called his followers to belong to each other as well as to him. So participation in the life of a church family is not an optional extra. The parish church is the school of discipleship where together we work out our salvation, inspired by the Holy Spirit, sustained by the Sacraments and fed on God's word. It is the place where gifts are discerned and developed and Christians are called into service.
- **A hunger for justice.** Jesus always ministered to the whole person. Salvation is about every part of our humanity. As we work for transformation, we must necessarily strive for communities in which every child has the best possible education, in which the hungry are fed, in which a voice is given to the poor, in which racism and prejudice are cast out, in which victims and the abused find redress and in which unjust structures of power are challenged and trampled down.
- **A humanity healed and made whole.** The challenge now laid before the church is to play a part in healing a nation after the profound trauma of a pandemic in which many lives have been lost, many have endured intense suffering of mind or body and many have endured the pain of grief. Our call as the Church is to exercise the healing ministry of Jesus Christ through our prayer, our liturgical life, our words and our deeds. In this work we point to the joy of a humanity healed and restored in God's kingdom.
- **Care for creation.** There is a physicality to the Biblical descriptions of heaven: the mountain or the redeemed city. There is right relationship between the people and the land, something which stands in marked contrast with our despoliation and exploitation of God's creation. Working for transformation means seeking a sustainable relationship between the human race and the earth that God made and of which we are just a part.
- **Partnerships with People of Good Will.** There are many who do not know Jesus and yet with whom we can work to build today the future Isaiah describes to us. Indeed without such partnerships we become insular and ineffective. Partnering with schools, community organisations, people of other faiths and policy makers not only enables us to build fruitful relationships but helps us to realise something of God's work of transformation.

It is God who transforms us and who will transform all of his creation. As those who receive his abundant mercy, we are called to share in that work of transformation as we live God's future now. This Vision 2026 Update outlines the way we plan to do that as the Diocese of Blackburn over the next few years.

2.22 Marks of a Healthy Church

Vision 2026 is about 'Healthy churches transforming communities'. The original Vision 2026 documents (2015) defined Six Marks of a Healthy Church: Worship, Vision, Leadership and Collaborative Ministry, Active Discipleship, Strong Sense of Community, and Outward-looking Focus.

Many churches have used these Marks, outlined in the original Vision Course, and found them to be a useful tool to use to measure how healthy they are and address areas of weakness. There is no single list of marks of a healthy church in Scripture (just as the Bible gives no definitive list of spiritual gifts), and various writers have helpfully explored this theme.⁴

In this Vision Update we want to offer a fresh way of looking at the health of a local church using an image familiar from Scripture.

What does a healthy church look like?

Health and growth are rich biblical images. In the New Testament the Greek word *soteria* embraces both health and salvation, and is used to describe both physical healing and the receiving of the Gospel. As churches are living organisms, a healthy church is a sign of God's healing and saving presence in the world.

Auxano (a strengthened form of *auxo*, to grow) is used 22 times in the New Testament to describe both the kingdom of God and the Christian Church. In the first three Gospels the picture is of the kingdom of God growing like a plant springing from the seed of the preaching of the Word, in the face of all opposition. God is the one who causes the seed to grow. In Paul's letters the same word is used to describe the growth of the Church despite factionalism and division – 'I sowed the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.' (1 Corinthians 3.6)

The kingdom of God is the reign or rule of God breaking into this world, and a healthy church gives us an exciting glimpse of the coming Day when all creation shall be restored in Christ. The Church is not (yet) the fullness of the kingdom of God, but the Church has a holy calling as 'sign, agent and foretaste, that is a sacrament, of the kingdom of God' (Avery Dulles). Another helpful definition of the kingdom of God is 'creation healed' (Hans Kung).

Jesus often used trees and plants to describe the growth of the kingdom of God. For example:

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. Matthew 13.31-2

A healthy tree bears good fruit, but a poor tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a poor tree cannot bear good fruit. And any tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire. Matthew 7.17-19

A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none...The gardener replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.' Luke 13.6,8-9

Ponder this picture of a tree, which happens to be a walnut tree, and its root system:

⁴ See for example, Robert Warren, *Developing Healthy Churches*, CHP, 2012

The image of a strong healthy tree can give us a picture of what makes a healthy church.

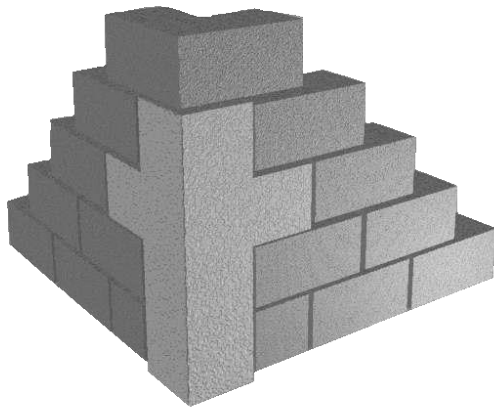
- **A healthy tree has deep roots** that spread as wide as its branches. How deep are the roots of our church? Do they go deep into God, who is the ground of our being, through inspiring worship, deep prayer, meditation on Scripture, the renewal of the Holy Spirit? Or are the roots of our church too shallow or stunted to sustain the great canopy of activity above? How could we give attention to deepening our spiritual roots?
- **A healthy tree is growing.** We read in Acts that 'day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.' Can we think of those who have joined our church in the last few years and what made them come? Who are the missing groups of people (age, culture, race) we need to reach if our church is to reflect the diversity of the parish it serves, and to be a foretaste of the multi-generational, multi-ethnic worship of heaven? What courses or small groups do we offer to help enquirers find out more about the Christian faith?
- **A healthy tree bears good fruit.** What kind of fruit is our church producing? Do outsiders see the fruit of the Holy Spirit revealed in love, joy peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control within our church family? Or do they see instead factions, envy, quarrels, strife and impurity, what St Paul describes as 'the works of the flesh'? (Galatians 5.19-25)
- **A healthy tree is good for its environment.** As environmentalists keep reminding us, trees are the lungs of the earth, absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen. In what way is our church having a transforming, life-giving effect on its wider community, breathing the breath of the Spirit over its parish? What are the areas of dis-ease in our community where the church could make a difference? Where is God calling us to speak out for justice for the oppressed, or to actively care for those in need?
- **A healthy fruit tree sometimes needs to be pruned,** in order for it to bear more fruit (John 15.1-6). Re-establishing church life after lockdown gives us the chance to ask some difficult questions, rather than simply trying to restart things which are no longer fruitful or healthy. What are the things that absorb a lot of time and effort in our church but do not help us to make disciples, be witnesses, grow leaders or inspire children and young people?
- **A healthy tree produces new saplings.** When was the last time our church started a new service or planted a new congregation? What might be the next opportunity to plant a new



local congregation within the life of our parish? If saplings enable the tree to reproduce itself for future generations, what sort of new service or congregation might help our church to reach the young or those outside? Which generations are missing, and how might we start to reach them?

3 Foundations

What are the foundations on which Vision 2026 rests?



Vision 2026 is centred on Christ - Christ is the cornerstone from which the whole Church fits together, the Saviour of the World through whom God has reconciled the whole world to himself.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3.9-12

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2.19-22

Vision 2026 is a response to the vision of God and of God's kingdom – Our God is always seeking to reveal himself, and God is glimpsed in inspiring worship, the sacraments, contemplative prayer, reflection on Scripture and in the face of the poor and suffering. It was when he was lost in worship that Isaiah saw a vision of God and heard his own call to mission.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!' Isaiah 6.8

Worship enables us to see God, and to see God's world from God's perspective. One of the good things to come out of lockdown in recent months has been a fresh season of prayer and the renewal of the daily office in the life of the church. Instead of saying morning or evening prayer alone or with just one or two others in church, clergy have been live-streaming their daily prayers and have often been amazed by the numbers who have joined in. For this Vision Update we have listened to church members across the diocese, who have shared what God has been saying to them in their worship, contemplation and service.

Vision 2026 rests on a solid theology of the mission of God – Too often we think of mission as something we do for God, yet mission is an attribute of God's character, rather than a human activity. Jesus shows us in the parable of the prodigal son how God's heart aches with a parent's deep love for those who have gone their own way. We are called to share in the *missio Dei*, the mission of God, to bring the prodigals home. Mission can be defined as 'God's work of reconciling

the whole of creation to himself, in which we are called to participate.’ It is not the church of God which has a mission, but rather the mission of God which has a church. Our motive in sharing in God’s mission is an overflow of gratitude for God’s grace, not a survival strategy for the diocese.

Mission that reflects the character of God includes both evangelisation, loving service and the care of God’s creation, as reflected in the Anglican Communion’s Five Marks of Mission⁵. It is for this reason that we are an outward-focused people, always looking to God’s action in the world. To this end, we as a diocese invest significant resources in our schools and colleges seeking to inspire and be inspired by our children and young people. We also have various contexts in which chaplains serve in our diocese, both in major institutions such as healthcare settings, prisons and places of learning, as well as in less formal contexts. In all these things we recall God’s love for the whole of Creation and are reminded that we serve all in our county with the good news of Christ.

Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died...Therefore if anyone is in Christ the new creation has come...God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5.14,17,19

The Five Marks of Mission give a helpful template by which to assess all the life and activities of a local church. A healthy church is one which engages in all five Marks:

- To proclaim the good news of the kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Vision 2026 involves active repentance - turning away from things which have harmed God’s mission and God’s creation, and marred God’s image in us. As a diocese we need to admit our failure to safeguard children and vulnerable adults in our care, our lack of urgency in proclaiming the Gospel of salvation, our failure to address the sins of racism and homophobia in the church, our neglect of creation and the issues of climate change, and our easy acceptance of consumerism and affluence when many children still go to bed hungry in Lancashire and elsewhere. In many places in Scripture fasting is a sign of repentance and a means of intercession. Members of the Bishop’s Leadership Team have begun to encourage one another in regular days of fasting. We have a God who is rich in mercy if we will only humble ourselves and seek his grace.

When Solomon finished the house of the Lord...the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: ‘I have heard your prayer and chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.’ 2 Chronicles 7.11-15

Vision 2026 depends on the generosity of heart of God’s people – The Parable of the Sower gives a picture of the reckless generosity of God as the Sower who sows the seed of the Word freely even on the most unpromising ground, knowing that where it does bear fruit it will be out of all

⁵ Anglican Consultative Council, 1984 and 1990

proportion to the seed sown. In a culture where many actively reject the Christian faith, it is easy to imagine that those outside the church are not interested, but in so doing we fail to give people the chance to hear and respond. When we have God's heart and sow liberally we will find a harvest, often in the unexpected places.

Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown. Luke 8.8

In a world hit by the economic legacy of Covid-19 we need to trust and pray that God will raise up many Barnabases, individuals with a deep generosity of heart, and parishes who see the parish share as a sacramental sign of what it means to be the body of Christ, in which resources are shared and all are cared for. The economic crisis has hit poor and BAME communities especially hard, but the Church of England has a bold calling to maintain a Christian presence in every local community. A generous response to parish share will enable us to fulfil that calling.

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means 'son of encouragement') sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet. Acts 4.36-37

At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little." 2 Corinthians 8.14-15

Vision 2026 requires the wind and breath of the Holy Spirit – The danger of any diocesan strategy is that we give the impression that the growth and renewal of the church is something that can be brought about by human effort, yet the Spirit of God blows where He wills. The renewal of the church in our generation will only happen when God the Holy Spirit breathes new life into people and breaks down every spiritual barrier in the heavenly realm. This will mean being inspired to tell our story of faith and being prepared to share what we know of God's love for us. It has probably never been more important for Christians to be prepared what they know of the confident hope for the world which God reveals in Jesus. God chooses to respond to the prayers of his people, and so every part of Vision 2026 needs to be rooted in prayer, as we seek God's power to be released and seek the breaking in of his kingdom, transforming every community within the diocese. As Archbishop Justin has often reminded us, 'There is no occasion of renewal in the life of the Church which has not been preceded by a renewal of prayer and the religious life.'

An encouraging new feature of the church's year has been Thy Kingdom Come, when churches in the diocese have joined with those of all denominations to keep the novena (nine days) of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost to pray for non-Christian friends to find Christ. In 2021 the Bishop and the Cathedral will launch a new Rule of Life, equipping every church member to pray and to work for the coming of God's kingdom, and Whalley Abbey will re-open as a Centre for Christian Discipleship and Prayer. These two ancient Christian places of prayer, the Cathedral and the Abbey, are now linked by a new pilgrimage walk, and will continue to lay before us the challenge to pray daily for a fresh vision of God, who will transform lives and communities by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3.20-21

4 Vision 2026 Building Blocks

a. Making Disciples

Mature disciples are scripturally knowledgeable, spend regular quality time in prayer, are active members of their worshipping community (in small groups as well as the wider congregation) and are actively discipling others. They are equipped to live out their Christian faith wherever their own 'frontline' is, whether in their work, leisure, family or local community and give willingly of their time, talents and money to further the kingdom of God being fed on God's word and sustained by the sacraments.

The Making Disciples team is presently being re-shaped, which will help people to move on in their spiritual formation through:

A) Knowing the Scriptures Better and Equipping Confident Christian Disciples

- Producing seasonal daily devotional resources, using writers from around the diocese, in print and online, for Advent and Lent.
- Creating a Centre for Discipleship at Whalley Abbey, with regular retreats, quiet days and courses (some of them online) aimed at equipping people to engage with the Bible and apply it to daily life.
- Launching a series of regular podcasts on discipleship, with guest contributors exploring such themes as 'Biblical Understandings of Discipleship' and 'Making Disciples in Different Traditions and Local Contexts'.
- Developing a dedicated part of the diocesan website focused on helping churches to access online discipleship tools and resources, designed to help every Christian to live out their faith confidently in daily life.
- Providing a diocesan discipleship programme (Currently Routes of Faith), as part of the ministry of Whalley Abbey.
- Promoting 'Everyday Faith', the Church of England's discipleship campaign offering reflections, prayers and stories to help people live out their baptismal faith confidently in everyday life. Everyday Faith resources will be made available to parishes via Parish Update and the diocesan website.



B) Praying with greater Depth and Urgency for the Kingdom of God to come

- Launching a Rule of Life for individual church members across the diocese, in partnership with the Cathedral and the Bishop of Blackburn.

- Forming a praying community at Whalley Abbey, both residential and dispersed, sustaining a daily rhythm of prayer and the eucharist, offered for the diocese and the world.
- Encouraging all clergy to take an annual individually-guided retreat as part of their own wellbeing, either at Whalley Abbey or a retreat centre nearer to them, such as Hynning Hall.

Developing and promoting a 'Rule of Life' will be a key aspect of the next phase of Vision 2026 – encouraging us all to adopt rhythms and patterns in our lives that draw us closer to Jesus.

- Developing the *Pathways to Prayer* team, to be available to teach about different ways to pray, and to lead prayer workshops/days in parishes and deaneries, two taster events to be held each year at a diocesan level.
- Continuing to provide and promote Blackburn Daily Prayers, via email, Facebook and print, to undergird every aspect of the diocese in prayer.
- Encouraging parishes and individuals to visit Whalley Abbey, Blackburn Cathedral and other places of pilgrimage and prayer inside and outside the diocese.

C) Offering Worship in Spirit and Truth through the Ministry of Word and Sacrament

In John chapter 4, we have recorded for us a conversation between Jesus and a Samaritan woman. During their wide-ranging conversation, the woman raises a question about the right place to worship God. Jesus responds by telling her that worship will no longer be about a physical place, but about a state of heart: "A time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24).

Worshipping God in spirit and in truth means to love him with heart, soul, mind and strength – the heart is engaged and the mind is informed. This will be encouraged by:

- Hosting a series of webinars featuring people from around the diocese to share good practice.
- Offering support in developing online worship and liturgy in partnership with the Online Resourcing Group.
- Offering training and support in preaching for clergy and lay leaders.
- Encouraging the practice of sacramental confession.
- Providing practical resources via the diocesan website.

D) Giving Generously of our Time, Talents and Money to the Cause of Christ

- Adopting the national Parish Giving Scheme (www.parishgiving.org.uk) to support parishes in promoting and administering tax-efficient online giving.
- Building on the progress made in providing advice and training on the effective use of Contactless Giving and Online Giving.
- Developing and teaching about the role of legacies in stewardship, and equipping churches to run a legacy campaign.
- In response to requests from parishes for more resources that explore giving and stewardship, to explore a new approach to inspiring generous giving, in line with the Church of England's national giving strategy.
- The Diocesan Stewardship Resourcing Officer will continue to support parishes directly on a one-to-one basis and also communicate with treasurers through 'Money Matters' along with training for Treasurers and Gift Aid Secretaries.
- Producing a series of short videos on the connection between stewardship and discipleship, and a possible new Lent course on generosity and discipleship.



In further support of Making Disciples and the key sub-headings above the Making Disciples team will also be:

1. Offering Discipleship Consultancy, Tools and Training

- Developing a network of organisations that encourage and resource discipleship across the diocese eg Cursillo, Jesus Shaped People, LICC etc.
- Drawing on the gifts and skills of local churches to respond to parish requests for bespoke training and support.

2. Enabling Spiritual Direction and Mentoring to be available to all, lay and ordained, across the diocese

- Promoting the ministry of the new Warden of Spiritual Directors⁶, based at Whalley Abbey, and raising awareness that members of the Spiritual Directors' team are available to more than just clergy.

⁶ Spiritual Direction is an age-old tradition within the Church also known as Faith Accompaniment or Soul Friend. It is available to anyone, lay or ordained, in the diocese. Spiritual Directors are available to listen confidentially to you and to God trying to help you to glimpse His light in your life journey.

- Offering and promoting the Exploring Faith Accompaniment course, to enable more people to train and be equipped for the ministry of spiritual direction⁷.
- Exploring a diocesan wide approach to encourage mentoring as a tool for discipleship. This would provide opportunities for anyone who would like to connect with a trained mentor to explore what deepening faith and discipleship means to them in their everyday life.

b. Being Witnesses

Authentic witnesses are men, women, teenagers and children on fire for Jesus. They spend time in prayer in the secret place seeking the heart of God, so in turn their hearts burn with the agony in His heart for his missing/lost sons and daughters. They naturally share their faith in word and actions in their spheres of influence which reach every dimension of society: church, family, schools/universities, economy, government & law, media, celebration (arts & sports). They are motivated to build communities around the risen Jesus, which offer a foretaste of His heavenly banquet in word and sacrament, enabling people to hear about the wonders of God in their own language.

The Being Witnesses team will encourage authentic witnesses in the following ways:

A) Sharing the Gospel of Salvation with Confidence

- Organising short term missions and missional opportunities in deaneries, schools and chaplaincies using creative arts, sports etc and with internal (eg the Board of Education, M:Power) and external partners (eg TElS, Ambassadors Football, Sports Chaplaincy UK, Spring North, MHCLG, Lancashire Active, Local Councils).
- Enriching and supporting parish engagement with occasional offices (Baptisms, weddings, funerals) eg by bringing together best practice from within the diocese as well as the national church, paying particular attention to the potential of good baptism preparation.
- Helping parishes to make the most of confirmations as opportunities for evangelism by collaborating with the Board of Education's confirmation proposal.
- Encouraging the regular hosting of enquirers' courses by providing training and networks of support.

In 2020, the Diocese of Blackburn was named as one of 7 dioceses to take part in a pilot project to include sport and wellbeing into their mission. We have our own well-resourced 'Ministry of Sport' in the diocese, on hand to help with any aspects of sports ministry.

⁷ This course offers the opportunity to Explore Christian Traditions of Spiritual Accompaniment; Develop discerning listening; Explore key themes in this ministry. It is particularly suitable for those who find themselves drawn to listen to other peoples' faith journeys; sense a call to this ministry; simply want to continue to deepen their own prayer and faith journey and grow further in ability to listen to God and is also suitable for those who would like to deepen their own prayer and listening skills.

- Providing support to parishes in how to make the most of online opportunities for witness through the Online Resourcing Group and sharing good practice from within the diocese.
- Providing support to churches in how to make the most of Life Events, ‘stranger to friend’ welcome and faith journeys with reference to resources from the Church of England.
- Engaging with the Church of England Sport and Wellbeing project to: plan strategically by setting up a diocesan steering group; consult with national leaders four times a year; cooperate in a learning community; model good practice to be multiplied across the diocese; identify leaders to undertake training at Ridley Hall.
- Training and mentoring programme
 - Sharing the diocesan vision for encouraging Christians to be authentic witnesses through different means: #Home Grown conference; deanery vision sharing events; webinars; clergy study days; and across communication platforms.

“Utterly amazed...we hear them declaring the wonders of God in their own languages.”
 (Acts 2 v11).

In the 7th century, there was an incredible flowering of mission in the North. St Hilda is well known – she was abbess of a mixed monastery in Whitby that sent out bishops, evangelists all across Britain. Caedmon is far less well known. He was a cattle herder, who looked after the animals in the monastery. He was shy & tongue tied: he found it very difficult to make himself understood. But one night he had dream that he can sing a heavenly song about the creation of the world. When he woke up he can remember the song – in fact he can still sing it. He told his boss and his boss told Hilda who invites Caedmon to sing at the feast. This was the start of an incredible ministry – Caedmon would sing the gospel in the local Anglo-Saxon language in words that the ordinary people could understand.

There are modern day Caedmon’s everywhere. Often in hiding, tongue-tied, unable to get their words out, but it seems the Spirit of God releases them to speak the wonders of God in their own language. It is beautiful to behold.

- Identifying and nurturing people with the ability to share their faith in ways that can be understood in local contexts. Calling out ‘Caedmon’s’ (see above) to speak their language.
- Identifying and training coaches to enable Christians to share their faith authentically by organising conferences, study days, networking and deanery events that share the vision, #BeaconCourse. Creating a database detailing: people; places; skill sets and training needs; feeding into the Authorised Lay Ministry (ALM) course.
- Arranging ways for world mission partners to inspire congregations in prayer and witness.
- Signposting, disseminating and networking
 - Reviewing and revising our social media platforms: website and YouTube so that they are more effective means of communication.

- Disseminating best practice from the local and national church on social media: Online Resourcing Group.
- Sharing testimonies and stories on social media: Facebook; Twitter; website; YouTube.
- Signposting and resourcing our Deliverance, Healing and “Spiritual Hoovering” teams.

B) Enabling Human Flourishing through Social Action

Approximately a third (80) of parishes in the Diocese of Blackburn are in the bottom 20% for income deprivation and over half of the population of the diocese live in these parishes. In relation to health, Lancashire’s health profiles are worse in all areas: life expectancy from birth (male and female); under 75 mortality rates from all causes, all cardiovascular diseases, cancer and suicide rates. COVID-19 continues to have a devastating impact on some of the vulnerable in our communities with rising unemployment and food poverty.

Within this context, enabling action that has a transformative impact on those struggling in our communities is a key priority under Vision 2026.

Many parishes are undertaking exemplary work to support those in their communities through foodbanks, ‘Places of Welcome’, breakfast provision, ‘#Love Your Neighbour’ food parcels, support to the homeless to name just a few. As a diocese, we want to enable more of this vital work as well as pioneering new forms of support that can make a real difference to people’s lives.

Up until 2020, support for parishes in relation to social action was provided by Together Lancashire. However, due to funding challenges, Together Lancashire will not be continuing to operate beyond 2020. During 2021, the strategy in this area will be re-developed enabling social enterprise and other partnerships to relieve poverty in all its forms. We will encourage entrepreneurs to be equipped to grow social enterprises through developing partnerships with *Resurgo* and the Spear Programme - <https://resurgo.org.uk/spear-programme/the-spear-programme/> Our priorities will be to meet human need in the following areas: Food Poverty, Health and Wellbeing, Addressing Isolation, Social Cohesion whilst acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly:

- Food Poverty
 - Encouraging greater collaboration locally with other churches and organisations that are addressing food poverty: Foodbanks; Love your Neighbour; FareShare; councils; education authorities; schools.
 - Partnering with Food Poverty initiatives such as: End Child Poverty and End Hunger UK.
 - Sharing good practice across the diocese through networks and training events.
 - Signposting people to volunteering opportunities in the diocese.
 - Promoting the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Just Finance Foundation and Christians Against Poverty (CAP).

- Health and Wellbeing
 - As a county with significant health issues, promoting healing – spiritual, emotional and physical through collaboration with people within the diocese with expertise in praying for healing and deliverance.
 - Collaborating with the Board of Education, Whalley Abbey and Blackburn Cathedral on mental health and wellbeing events.
 - Creating a strategy, with support from the National Sports’ Project on promoting good mental health and wellbeing for children and young people.
 - Sharing good practice across the diocese through networks and training events.
- Addressing Isolation
 - Promoting Lyrics and Lunch, Purple Praise and the planting of new churches in care homes as well as approaches to address isolation in rural areas.
 - Supporting churches with the church planting process so that a Christian presence is visible in every community prioritising the estates (urban, rural and semi-rural) where there is no Christian presence.
 - Strengthening the provision of local and diocesan online provision so that isolated people gain connection with a local Christian community.
- Social cohesion
 - Building on research undertaken on social cohesion by think tanks such as Theos: encouraging churches to see social action as primary sites of invitation and to be expectant of the relationships that can grow through it; to equip churches to think about social action, discipleship and church growth in an integrated way; to collaborate with the Church of England if the proposal for a national volunteering service comes to fruition.
 - Identifying and sharing good practice on social cohesion within the diocese through the work of Communications and the Online Resourcing group.
 - To be aware of where there are barriers (race, class, gender) and actively work to break the dividing walls by sharing good practice from within the diocese, through Presence and Engagement (see p30) and from other agencies such as *Through the Roof* and the Church of England Disability Advisor’s Network.
 - To build partnerships with external agencies, for example: the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the proposed appointment of a Faiths Commission; the Alliance of the Voluntary, Community Faith and Social Enterprise Sector.

C) Planting 10 Strategic Church Plants (SCPs) and 200 New Local Congregations (NLCs) by 2026

A key objective under Vision 2026 is to normalise the planting of 'New Local Congregations' as a key mechanism for evangelism and church growth, across contexts and traditions. These congregations

could be at different times, in different locations, in different styles - reaching out to new groups of people in different ways.

Strategic Church Plants are those where significant investment from the diocese and/or national church is leveraged to catalyse a step change in the life of the local church or in a brand new location. The aim is that following initial support, each SCP will pay full parish share within 5 years.

- 10 Strategic Church Plants (SCPs) – where are we up to and what is planned?
 - 5 SCPs have been created so far: the part SDF-funded Preston Resourcing Parish (which incorporates The Minster St George’s Church and also St John’s Church in different Anglican traditions); the part-SDF funded Mereside Freedom Church (Blackpool); the part SDF-funded Grange Park Centre of Mission in partnership with Church Army (Blackpool); St John’s Ellel (plant from St Thomas’s Lancaster); pioneer Minister deployment to Stoops Estate (Burnley).
 - 2 SCPs are at an advanced stage of planning and are dependent on significant SDF funding being secured from the national church in Spring 2021. The plan is to plant a Youth Resourcing Church into St Luke’s Blackburn (planting from Preston Minster) and to plant a further Resourcing Church into Blackpool at St John’s. These two new Resourcing Churches will significantly contribute to:
 - i. Enabling a pipeline of church planters equipped to minister in urban deprived contexts, particularly in the East Lancashire Valley and along the Fylde coast.
 - ii. Innovating and modelling ministry in urban deprived contexts based on friendship and practical support.
 - iii. Leveraging a step change in retaining and reaching teenagers and young people across the Diocese of Blackburn.
 - 3 remaining SCPs are to be decided. Future SCPs will be from the new Resourcing Churches but also from other flourishing churches with the capacity to plant.
- 200 New Local Congregations (NLCs) – where are we up to and what is planned?
 - The Vision 2026 Survey in early 2020 highlighted the considerable number of NLCs that have been started since 2015 when Vision 2026 was launched. 48 were highlighted leaving a further 152 to meet our target.
 - At least 20% of new NLCs going forward are hoped to have a youth focus - aimed primarily at teenagers, inspiring them to be disciples, be witnesses and to grow into leaders; congregations of local parish churches but drawing on the para-church resourcing network of the proposed new Youth Resourcing Church at Blackburn. Further, the intention is that a NLC will be planted onto every significant Urban Estate without an ecumenical presence by 2026 to support our commitment to the national target of a worshipping community on every significant social housing estate.

- A key focus for the Being Witnesses team will be to support the growth of further NLCs through coaching, networking and training, specifically to:
 - Normalise church planting by effective communication, networking and sharing practice
 - Trial “#The Beacon Course” to inspire the starting of NLCs with different cohorts (rural, urban estates, university, coastal)
 - Create a database of NLCs
 - Encourage people to attend national conferences on church planting
 - Draw out best practice from churches within the diocese as well as *Church Army Centres of Mission* in Blackpool and nationally
 - Organise a local conference on church planting
 - Organise monthly networking events

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house” (Matthew 5, 13-14)

Lancashire has been a place of many beacon sites across the hills. This offers compelling imagery of beacons being symbols of hope. Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will kindle fires in the hearts of men, women and children across Lancashire which will shine hope into the communities where they live, work and study, so that no one will be without an authentic witness.

D) Caring for God’s Creation

As custodians of God’s creation, we behold the wonder of our beautifully created world and the generosity of our creator. Alongside this, everyday reminders of plastic pollution, melting icecaps, floods, wildfires and other natural disasters, identify the poor stewardship of all that God has given us. As a result, ‘We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.’ Romans 8:22

To be witnesses to our responsibility for our common home, we will:

- Promote a ‘Vision of Creation’ – the Diocesan Environment Policy
- Collaborate with the dioceses in the North West and the national church through promoting conferences, webinars and Padlet Postings
- Promote churches to sign up to Eco-Church and Eco-Diocese
- Promote the General Synod motion to be net zero carbon by 2030 by working together with all partners including the DBF and DBE
- Encourage and support all parishes to use the Energy Efficiency Tool and the parish buying energy audit programme

- Work with the Archdeacons' Visitations and Quinquennial Inspections
- Encourage partnership with local authorities and councils in environmental initiatives.

To celebrate God's creative generosity, we will:

- Deepen our understanding of stewardship of God's earth through prayer, worship and teaching through the promotion of quality materials produced by organisations such as A Rocha and the Arthur Rank Centre
- Mark special times of thanksgiving, for example, Harvest; Green Communion; Creation Time and other special times of the year drawing in particularly on the existing creativity of our rural churches in this area.
- Show how churches are demonstrating creation care by becoming 'Environmental Champions;' Share good news stories and awards granted by the Eco Church scheme.
- Work with the Diocesan Board of Education and schools on deepening worship and strengthening advocacy through different initiatives such as the Bishop's Harvest Appeal.
- Collaborate with the discipleship team in developing a Rule of Life that includes stewardship, celebration and generosity.

To bear witness to our brothers and sisters, we will:

- Collaborate with others to mark the International Earth Day and the UN World Environment Day
- Work with statutory agencies and voluntary bodies including the Friendship Foundation and the Clewer Institute to enable others to flourish through supporting sustainable farming, rural welfare, fair food distribution, hunger relief and working to stop slavery and exploitation of workers
- Support international aid agencies through the Bishop's Harvest Appeal

c. Growing Leaders

Jesus told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field".

Effective leaders, both lay and ordained, demonstrate passion for what they are doing. They collaborate with, and involve others in planning, delivering and evaluating the impact of the activities for which they are responsible. Identifying, growing and mentoring their team and successors comes as second nature. Such lay and ordained workers/leaders are essential to the mission and ministry of any healthy church that transforms its community.

The Diocese is committed to participating in the national 'Setting God's People Free' initiative which highlights the need for clergy and laypeople to be 'equal partners in mission.' The Growing Leaders Team is committed to facilitating the supply of an abundance of theologically literate lay and

ordained leaders who, with a ministry rooted in prayer and a deep love of the Lord Jesus, can support the growth of healthy churches and transform communities. The team will do this by:

A) Developing a diocesan-wide culture of vocational discernment so that all may hear God's call and use their gifts in the service of the Gospel

- Continuing to implement a clear, integrated approach to the discernment of ordained and lay vocations in which the initial stages are the same for potential licensed lay and ordained vocations.
- Supporting and advising clergy and lay leaders in pro-actively fostering vocations including to the roles of Warden, PCC Secretary and Treasurer.
- Prioritising appropriate pastoral care for candidates throughout the process whilst also bringing challenge and formation through the discernment journey.
- Episcopal engagement in the process with candidates having an initial meeting with the Sponsoring Bishop at the beginning of the process and those going to the Bishop's Assessment Panel having a final sponsorship interview.
- Increasing the profile of exploring licensed and ordained vocations through events and social media.

B) Discerning and forming theologically literate lay and ordained leaders, rooted in prayer and with a deep love of the Lord Jesus

- Providing diocesan-wide programmes for informal lay and Authorised Lay Ministry training (see below). We will equip and support a team of 25 volunteer trainers who will facilitate diocesan training.
- Working with the new Emmanuel Theological College to provide access to outstanding training for Licensed Lay Ministry, Ordinands and others.
- Continuing to invest in and equip new urban leaders through the M:Power training programme in Blackburn and Blackpool linking in with our goal to have a Christian presence on every urban estate and wider diocesan church planting plans.
- Supporting parishes to provide their own programmes, especially for informal lay ministry.

C) Nurturing healthy partnerships between clergy and laity by fully implementing the Lay Majority Ministry Framework

The Diocese of Blackburn has committed to a renewed framework for the ministry of the lay majority in the diocese, the implementation of which began in 2020. Alongside parish officers such as Church Wardens, this framework envisages four distinct but complementary forms of lay ministry, each of which is highlighted below with associated goals:

Diocese of Blackburn Lay Majority Ministry Framework

- *Informal Lay Ministry*: This is the kind of specific ministry that members of our churches can exercise with minimal training with training typically lasting no more than six evenings or two weekends and is unassessed. We will expand the portfolio of informal lay ministry training opportunities.
- *Authorised Lay Ministry*: Authorised Lay Ministers (ALMs) focus on a specific area of ministry and will have a higher level of formation, training, a mentor and be recognized at a diocesan level. ALMs will be commissioned for a period of 3 years. We will identify and equip 250 Authorised Lay Ministers (ALMs) by 2024, including 100 M:Power 'Urban Mission ALMs'.
- *Licensed Lay Ministry*: Licensed Lay Minister (LLM) is the new name for Readers and is a national recognized lay ministry in which the individuals are both license and office holders. We will continue to renew the ministry of Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs), including sending 25 new LLMs into training by 2024.
- *Church Army Evangelists*: Church Army Evangelists (CAE) is the other national recognized lay ministry. Our M:Power training programme is already producing potential Church Army vocations and CAEs are likely to play a significant part in the future of our diocese, especially in connection with those on the margins and in the development of new congregations. We will invest in lay evangelists, including sending 4 Church Army Evangelists or equivalent into training by 2024.

D) Generating a pipeline of highly motivated deacons and priests in order to enable the Diocese's clergy deployment strategy

Any strategy requires a cohort of ordained leaders who are confident in teaching the Scriptures, joyful in celebrating the Sacraments and equipped to lead healthy churches. We want the approach we take in the Diocese of Blackburn to be relational, paying attention to strong and effective networks of pastoral care. Ordinands can be confident that the title posts they are offered are carefully and prayerfully discerned and clergy feel known and valued from the moment of Ordination. We also want it to be mutually accountable so that effective ministry is celebrated and under-performance addressed. IME2 is of particular importance and through it we will seek to deliver excellent training in a context where strong relationships can be formed.

In order to deliver on this commitment we will:

- Revise and update the Diocesan Deployment and Leadership Strategy

- Send 10 stipendiary and 2 SSM ordinands into training each year
- Ordain 10 stipendiary and 2 SSM curates per year
- Encourage vocations from BAME, young adults, working class and other under-represented constituencies
- Reimagine the curacy to provide greater leadership opportunities earlier for incumbent level curates
- Invest in locally deployable SSM clergy vocations
- Retain at least 90% of ordinands into their curacy
- Retain at least 80% of curates into their first incumbency
- Provide mentoring and support to first incumbents
- Develop a coherent strategy for Continuing Ministerial Education by Summer 2021
- Review and rewrite the MDR policy by Summer 2021

d. Inspiring Children and Young People

This fourth strand of Vision 2026 is led by the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) and seeks to both inspire children and young people to be avid followers of Christ and to be inspired by them as they develop as disciples, witnesses and leaders. The work of the DBE includes engaging with church schools, children's and young people's work in churches and in chaplaincy at schools and universities.

Our Vision is to see children and young people transforming the world through the love of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our Mission is to help build worshipping, discipling and prayerful children and young people that love Jesus and want to follow Him, and who live out their faith in communities, in friendships and in families.

The DBE will enable and support parishes to inspire children and young people by:

A) Nurturing Children and Young People in their Faith and Supporting them as Disciples of Jesus Christ

- Working with the Diocesan Bishop and Suffragan Bishops to improve preparation and follow up for confirmation, retaining young people in the worshipping community.
- Equipping parishes to set up more youth groups that develop faith, including through drawing on 'Leading your Church into Youth Work' material.
- Providing and signposting events and experiences that develop children and young people in their faith such as the annual young people's 'Weekender', and the Walsingham Pilgrimage.
- Continually developing fresh and engaging digital content for children and young people, using a variety of platforms to develop and train leaders and to promote church events.
- Encouraging established and new opportunities for young people to come together in community and experience faith and a sense of belonging, for example as a member of a choir or servers team or a multi-generational church project which involves serving the local community.

- Supporting the creation of new or renewed toddler groups that share the Gospel through the development of a training and equipping programme alongside a day conference in order to see a 50% increase in the number of toddler groups that share the gospel.
- Promote ministry appealing to boys to include providing a specific stream in all training on this and working with others to engage more men in church and church leadership.

B) Holding Regular Worship that is Accessible and Appealing to Children, Young People and their Families.

- Working with parish leaders and through diocesan events to enable more Sunday services to evolve to be child/youth friendly in a multigenerational context.
- Advising and equipping parishes to plant local congregations which reach out to families and young people including those that can be held in local schools.
- With the Being Witnesses Team, supporting the creation of new sports/active ministry activities that meet regularly.

C) Enabling Growth in the Numbers of Leaders of Children and Young People

- Encouraging and equipping young people to be ‘leaders’ in their worshipping community and supporting parishes to do the same.
- Developing varied training programmes for those new to this work or in need of refreshment which among others will include:
 - Annual Children's Ministry Conference
 - The Inspire 4 week Training Course for those involved in work with children
 - Foundations Training to equip children’s and youth leaders
 - Leading your Church into Youth Work Conference
 - All Age Worship Conference
 - Youthscape Launchpad Training
- Developing more in-depth training as part of lay leadership development which will include the creation of the modules for Children’s and Youth Work to form part of the new Authorised Lay Ministry programme.
- Implementing commissioning and celebration services for those who lead the young in the diocese.

D) Pursuing a Step Change in work with those aged 11-16

This is a key strategic priority under Vision 2026. Strikingly, in the Vision 2026 survey of early 2020, 63% of parishes reported that their work to reach out to children was going ‘well or very well’ yet only 21% could say the same about reaching out to teenagers. Conversely, 57% reported they were either not reaching out to teenagers at all or not doing very well at it, whereas only 17% reported the same for reaching out to children. Diocesan worshipping community data illustrates the challenge with a third as many 11 to 17 year olds in worshipping communities across the diocese as there are 0 to 10 year olds indicating a significant drop off in attendance.

Particular emphasis will be placed and investment given to activities that leverage a step change in work with those aged 11-17.

This will include:

- The development of learning communities focused on enhancing work with young people.
- The work of the Youth Team in supporting parishes.
- Supporting the creation of church plants and new local congregations with a clear youth evangelism and discipleship focus including and supported by a major new Strategic Church Plant into Blackburn.
- Working with the Diocesan Bishop and Suffragan Bishops to improve preparation and follow up for confirmation. The Diocese of Blackburn has the fourth highest number confirmations in the country. In 2018, 775 confirmations took place (fewer only than London, Oxford and Manchester dioceses) – yet many of these young people do not continue to attend church following their confirmation.
- Training packages and resources to assist churches in working with young people, including work with Youthscape and other partner organisations.

E) Facilitating Effective Partnerships between Churches and Local Schools

26% of primary school aged children in Lancashire are taught in a diocesan school and 33,250 of them experience a Christian act of worship each day.

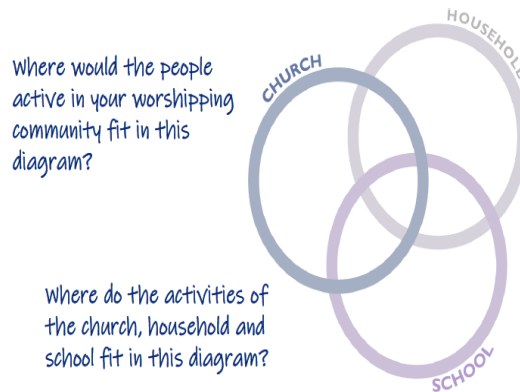
10,000 children attend Church of England High Schools.

These figures present a significant opportunity for parish churches to partner with local schools, to build relationships with families and help local people of all ages on their journey of faith.

A key strategic priority is to help facilitate effective partnerships between churches and schools that are mindful of one another's differing roles in the wider mission of the church. Indeed, one of the key actions for schools in the 'Vision for Schools' which follows overleaf is to 'Seek to work in collaboration with churches in delivering Vision 2026'.

There are also significant opportunities for parish churches to grow relationships with non-church local schools and support and advice will be available to enable such partnerships to be initiated and to flourish.

‘Growing Faith’: The Diocese of Blackburn is committed to the national movement on Growing Faith which seeks to explore the opportunities for Christian discipleship and witness at the intersections of where church, school and home meet.



- Church of England Primary and Secondary Schools

Our Church of England Primary and Secondary Schools play a vital role in Inspiring Children and Young People across the Diocese of Blackburn. The Diocese has 180 Church of England Primary schools of which 149 are voluntary aided which means that the local church often has substantial influence in the running of the school. There are also 10 Church of England High Schools.

Our vision for schools is that they are salt and light in an educational landscape. We want to see schools that are distinctively Christian and confident to be so, knowing the positive richness that such a Christian education brings. Our schools will enable children and young people to live out a life based on gospel values and explore what it means to follow Christ for themselves.

Philippians 1:27

“...live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that...I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit.”

Key Objectives

- To ensure distinctively Christian Schools where a Christian vision permeates the life of school.
- To ensure Christian worships and high quality RE enrich the educational experience in our schools.
- To ensure our schools live out their Christian mission to the world.

Key Actions

To enable our schools to:

- Be built around the key Christian values and qualities of love, hope, grace and service and a Vision rooted in the Bible.
- Embody a vision shaped by the personal faith and commitment of their leaders.
- Enable and encourage a praying and worshipping community where distinctly Christian celebrations are integral to the learning experiences of all within the school community.
- Ensure Religious Education is at the heart of the curriculum and is a core subject.
- Recognise the presence of God in the uniqueness of each individual and in each person's specific talents and gifts.
- Develop a broad community open to the world in which we live, which seeks to change it for the better.
- Support their alumni in finding ways to continue their faith journey, and to provide a pathway or signpost for those alumni looking to re-engage with faith.
- Be strong and sustainable presences in their community with a structure that best serves the needs of the children and young people.
- Seek to work in collaboration with churches in delivering Vision 2026.

5 Areas of Intervention

Blackburn Diocese is contextually rich encompassing urban, rural and coastal parishes. Across these contexts, we are committed to either initiating or maintaining a Church of England worship centre on all significant social housing estates without an obvious ecumenical presence. We are also committed to maintaining a Christian presence in areas where the local population is predominantly of other faiths and to engaging with our multi-faith neighbours.

a. Urban Estates

Approximately a third of parishes in the Diocese of Blackburn are in the bottom 20% nationally for income deprivation. Over half of those parishes have over 500 social housing homes (and are classed by the national Estates Evangelism Task Group as 'Estate Parishes').

At the February 2019 General Synod, the national Estates Evangelism Task Group's aim to have a loving, serving, worshipping Christian Community on every significant social housing estate in the country was endorsed which the Diocese of Blackburn fully supports.

In the Diocese of Blackburn there is 1 parish with over 1000 social homes and 22 parishes with between 500 – 1000 social housing homes where there is no Church of England worship centre nor obvious ecumenical presence located among the social housing homes – creating a worshipping community on these estates is a priority for the Diocese of Blackburn.

Ongoing Work Includes:

- The SDF 'Outer Estates Leadership' project with 6 years funding Jan 2018 – Jan 2024:
 - **Blackpool Centre of Mission** in partnership with the Church Army. Focussed on the Grange Park Estate where the church was closed. Hope Community Church has been established on the estate by the Lead Evangelist. The Pioneer Youth Evangelist aims to bring Christian input with the Eden/Message Tribe to secular high schools in the town.
 - **Blackpool Freedom Church** was established in 2016 on the Mereside Estate where the church had been boarded up years before. The church hall re-opened for public worship in autumn 2020 though still requires significant investment to complete the plans for use as a multi-purpose community centre.
 - **Blackpool Ministry Experience** provides three young people aged 18-30 an opportunity to live on the Mereside estate and serve parishes in Blackpool whilst discerning their future vocation.
 - **Blackburn:** Two Urban Evangelists based in Over and Lower Darwen are establishing new worshipping communities whilst also providing input to the M:Power urban lay leader development which has been based in Blackburn though the 2021 cohort will be based in Burnley. M:Power on the Fylde has been established to offer the same opportunities to those from deprived coastal parishes.
- The Morecambe Ministry Experience due to be established with a Traditional Catholic ethos across two parishes.
- A Pioneer Curate working on the Stoops estate in South-West Burnley from 2019-2021.
- Many churches meeting the practical needs of those living on Urban Estates through foodbanks and through other practical support eg Preston Minster's 'Love thy Neighbour' project has fed thousands during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Future Priorities Include:

- Meeting the increased need for practical help related to poverty and health post-Covid on Urban Estates (linking with the Being Witnesses team).
- Providing ministry on more urban estates through church planting and exploring new models of lay leadership with priestly oversight.
- Maintaining buildings used by Anglican Christian communities on urban estates across the diocese where outstanding maintenance costs can be high whilst income low.
- Considering how to have more representation from urban deprived parishes on key diocesan decision making bodies.
- Planning the sustainability of the Urban Estates Leadership projects when the SDF funding ends in 2024.

b. Presence and Engagement

Lancashire is a place where people of many faiths dwell. In the 2011 census approximately 7% of the population of Lancashire stated that they were Muslim. This community makes up a significant proportion of the East Lancashire deaneries – Blackburn with Darwen (27%); Accrington (10%); Burnley (10%); and Pendle (17%) – and also Preston (10%). There are significant Buddhist and Hindu populations especially in the Preston area. Whilst numerically smaller, the Jewish population has for many years contributed significantly to Lancashire life.

Lancashire is also home to a high number of Christians of Asian heritage, especially in the Pendle and Preston areas. The richness of faith and ability to bridge linguistic and cultural divides make for an especially precious part of Christian life in the county.

Church of England schools across the Diocese have a commitment to offering the best quality education to the whole breadth of the community. This means that in some areas of the Diocese, especially Blackburn, Burnley, Pendle and Preston, schools have a significant proportion of Muslim pupils.

As a diocese we are committed to engaging with our multi-faith neighbours and to maintaining a Christian presence in areas where the local population is predominantly of other faiths. Our call is to minister to the whole county and so this is a responsibility for all our parishes and not just for those which serve Presence and Engagement Areas.

The Presence and Engagement Working Group understands Presence and Engagement as:

- Being clear about the uniqueness of the divine nature of Jesus and his saving grace through his death and resurrection.
- Reaching out to build intentional relationships with people of other faiths, based on trust and respect.
- Seeking the common good and working in collaboration with other faiths to strengthen community life.
- Being salt and light to our communities and sharing our faith boldly.
- Supporting and empowering Christians whose origins are from across the world and working with others in the county to enable this to happen.

The Bishop's Leadership Team and the Presence and Engagement Working Group seek to foster this by:

- Engagement and Prayer
 - Senior clergy meet regularly with the leaders of other faiths
 - Close co-operation is encouraged with groups that enable dialogue and encounter such as the Lancashire Forum of Faiths, Buildings Bridges groups and the Anglican-Muslim Forum
 - It is our Christian duty to actively engage for the common good with our multi-faith neighbours.
 - As a Diocese we will pray for our multi-faith neighbours and for those serving in Presence and Engagement parishes

- **Ordained and Lay Training**
 - The Presence and Engagement Working Group will offer training and support to clergy coming into the Diocese whether or not they are in a Presence and Engagement parish
 - Presence and Engagement will remain a key component of IME2 training
 - The Cathedral will offer training in Presence and Engagement in its School of Mission
 - Awareness of and engagement with our neighbours of other faiths will be included in the new Authorised Lay Ministry scheme

- **Schools**
 - The Bishop's Inter-faith Adviser offers advice and support to schools and can engage speakers from various faiths
 - The DBE offers focussed support to schools in Presence and Engagement parishes where there are particular challenges to fostering a Christian ethos

- **Recruitment and Deployment**
 - The Diocese remains strongly committed to supporting Presence and Engagement parishes, especially in those areas where the percentage of those from other faiths is high and congregations are small
 - Networks of support and closer co-operation between such parishes will be encouraged

- **Multi-lingual Resources and Congregations**
 - Parishes will be supported to ensure that literature and resources are available in a range of languages used locally in the parish
 - A monthly multi-lingual online service will continue to be offered

6 The Wider Diocesan Family

a. Blackburn Cathedral

As the seat of the Bishop of Blackburn, Blackburn Cathedral works in partnership with the Bishop and Diocese in the delivery of Vision 2026. The Cathedral has seen considerable developments in recent years with the re-development of the buildings and space that make up 'Cathedral Court', changes to governance structures and staffing, welcoming many new faces to Sunday and mid-week worship, the launch of 'Checks and Greys' café and catering and the nurturing of partnerships with organisations across the borough and county.

Looking to the future, Blackburn Cathedral will continue playing a vital role in the delivery of Vision 2026 through:

Foundations:

- Offering daily prayer and worship for the Bishop of Blackburn and the wider diocese.
- Welcoming local Christian business people to morning and evening prayer and specific faith & work events.

Making Disciples:

- Making the most of the Cathedral as a place of pilgrimage in order to encourage and support people on their journey of faith.
- Working in partnership with the Diocese to develop and embrace a Rule of Life.
- Establishing a programme of events and courses for those who wish to develop their Christian faith.

Being Witnesses:

- Exploring the development of a 'Mission School' to resource the wider church in applied missional thinking and practice.
- Supporting parishes in their Christian mission through parish weekends away, parish development and accompaniment programmes and mission engagement weekends
- Implementing a mobile 'Cathedral on Tour' to strengthen relationships across the diocese and to promote the Cathedral's mission.
- Setting up a 'Community Forum' to equip the Cathedral worshipping community to engage more fully with issues of social justice, world mission and Christian discipleship.
- Establishing a programme of events and courses for those who wish to explore the Christian faith.

Growing Leaders:

- Being a centre of excellence for preaching, liturgy and music and working with the diocese to train and equip new leaders where opportunities arise to do so.
- Developing further our support and welcome to ordinands and curates on placement.

Inspiring Children and Young People:

With four of its various choirs including children and young people, the young make up a significant number of the worshipping community at Blackburn Cathedral.

- The Music team will continue to develop and expand their reach into schools across the Diocese helping to build community cohesion and arts appreciation
- The Cathedral Education Team will develop further engagement with schools through inspiring programmes of faith education, pupil conferences, stimulating exhibitions and partnerships with the Board of Education
- A cohesive programme for engaging young people with the Christian faith and the life of the Cathedral community will be developed and implemented.

The Cathedral is also situated in the centre of Blackburn, surrounded by areas of predominant Muslim population. It also therefore plays an important role in relation to the 'Presence and Engagement' aspect of Vision 2026.

b. Whalley Abbey

The Revd Adam Thomas was licensed by the Bishop of Blackburn as the Director of Whalley Abbey on 2 March 2021. The Abbey will begin to take some bookings from Easter 2021, Covid regulations permitting, with the plan to be fully re-open by September 2021.

The vision is for Whalley Abbey to be a Centre for Christian Discipleship and Prayer, restoring the Abbey to its heritage by building a community which combines the ancient practices of contemplation, prayer and mission rooted in the Apostolic confession “Jesus is Lord.”

Its Core Values will be:

Community: A welcoming community where all are valued – lay and ordained, paid staff and volunteers, friends, tenants.

Discipleship: A place apart where people come to be trained as Christian disciples and sent out in mission.

Prayer: A real spiritual powerhouse, where prayer is offered (both gathered, dispersed and online) for the diocese and the world, and where the eucharist is central.

Learning: A place of learning where leaders can grow and be refreshed.

Hospitality: A welcoming place offering generous hospitality to all, including those in need.

Encounter: A place of encounter, where seekers and tourists can encounter Jesus Christ.

Sustainability: living within our means financially, and modelling what it means to live more gently with God’s creation and reduce our carbon footprint.

Visiting the Abbey in a couple of years we would expect see a building and grounds in which Christian discipleship and prayer are central, with a variety of activities going on such as:

- A rhythm of daily prayer for the diocese and the world, and a regular eucharist led by the small resident community in a renewed chapel, which will be heartbeat of the house, open for prayer at all times.
- Regular opportunities for studying and teaching the message of the Scriptures.
- Individuals, lay and ordained, booking in for self-guided retreats, sharing in the community’s daily prayers and using a revamped library for private study.
- Guided prayer walks, nature/conservation walks, and stations of the cross around the grounds.
- A discipleship and retreat programme that attracts people from far and wide.
- Many more parish visits for weekends, vision days, quiet days and Alpha weekends.

- Joint events with the cathedral, including pilgrimage walks, Holy Week and events for the dispersed praying community around the diocese bound together under a common Rule of Life.
- Children and young people and schools' groups coming to engage in outdoor learning about sacred history and the environment.
- Ordination retreats and residential courses for curates and ministry discernment panels.
- Individuals in need or distress coming for respite and refreshment, referred from the parishes.

c. Healthcare Chaplains

There are eight healthcare chaplains serving in the diocese across:

- East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust
- Morecambe Bay NHS Trust
- Wrightington Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust
- Blackpool Trinity The Hospice in the Fylde
- Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS

The Bishop of Lancaster offers episcopal oversight to the healthcare chaplains.

Healthcare Chaplains play a vital role at the heart of their communities. They support individuals, families and healthcare staff often at their time of greatest need and give the Christian faith a voice in healthcare institutional structures.

The Chaplains seek to respond to Vision 2026 through:

Making Disciples: Enabling culturally-relevant opportunities for worship, pastoral care for patients, families and staff

Being Witnesses: Encouraging natural sharing of faith within the secular institution; sharing ideas and best practice within termly meetings

Growing Leaders: Encouraging vocations to and training for healthcare chaplaincy as a significant strand of lay and ordained ministry; building good links with parishes and local deaneries not just for mutual encouragement but also mutual service; considering opportunities for investing in MA in Chaplaincy to develop significant leadership support; encouraging spiritual flourishing and deepening of faith

Inspiring Children and Young People: Building two-way links with local school communities (eg through assemblies, children's input into key service celebrations)

Between 2021 and 2024 there is a particular focus on improving communication between healthcare chaplains and the parishes they serve, ensuring they are known to local churches and that they are integrated into and supported by deanery and diocesan groupings such as Chapter and Synod.

d. Prison Chaplains

There are five prisons in the Diocese of Blackburn:

- Preston: which has two part-time Anglican Chaplains
- Garth: which has a full-time Anglican chaplain
- Wymott: which has a full-time Anglican chaplain who is also managing chaplain
- Kirkham: which has a half-time Anglican Chaplain
- Lancaster Farms: which has a full-time Anglican chaplain

Chaplains operate as part of a multi-faith team and are employed and fully funded by the Prison Service who set terms and conditions and oversee their management and support structure. Most draw on volunteers to enhance and expand their ministry. They are licensed by the Bishop of Blackburn but the Diocese carries no financial responsibility for them.

The Bishop of Burnley offers episcopal oversight to the prison chaplains and works with the prison service on appointments.

The Chaplains seek to respond to Vision 2026 by:

Making Disciples: Offering pastoral care to the prisoners and staff; offering Sunday worship in Chapel; and running Bible Study groups or offering discipleship activities.

Being Witnesses: Bearing witness to the Christian faith within the prison through pastoral care, preaching and teaching; providing active opportunities for prisoners to come to faith through discussion and nurture groups and by offering Baptism and Confirmation

Growing leaders: Offering Christian leadership within the tough context of the prison; seeking to form leadership skills within the prisoners they serve: through providing activities such as choirs and through the use of Chaplaincy helpers; growing leaders in the wider church by offering placement and volunteering opportunities (especially for curates).

e. School and University Chaplains

The Diocese of Blackburn has a named Chaplain in six of the ten Church of England High Schools as well as a network of local clergy serving as Chaplains, 'School-based Spirituality Lead / Chaplaincy Coordinator' and 'Worship Coordinators'. The Diocese has three University Chaplains under the

oversight of the Archdeacon of Lancaster.

Our Vision for school and university chaplaincies is that they play a pivotal role in enabling children and young people to transform the world through the love of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our Mission is to help build worshipping, discipling and prayerful children and young people that love Jesus and want to follow Him and who live out their faith in communities, in friendships and in families.

Key objectives

To enable:

- Young people to accept the salvation offered through Jesus' death on the cross and embark on a lifelong journey as a disciple.
- Students in our universities to be disciplined, nurtured and challenged in their faith, encouraged to share their faith, and develop to lead others in discipleship, witness and service.
- The people of God in these institutions to live out the Christian life and witness to the presence of Jesus in these places.
- Young people to transition from a school place of worship to engagement in a Church of England multigenerational worshipping community that is accessible to the young.

Key actions

- Build positive relationships with universities through engagement with senior staff teams and management groups.
- Work with University/School staff senior teams to secure the place of Christian Chaplaincy in our universities and schools.
- Appoint chaplains in universities for a long-term role of 5-8 years (3-year placement does not allow work to develop and flourish.)
- To integrate education chaplaincy into the life of the diocese and raise awareness of this work across other diocesan areas of work including links with chapters and deanery synods.
- To provide training and support for chaplains in all education institutions.
- To enable chaplains to create positive links with local churches allowing students to be disciplined in a church context.
- Encourage local churches to pray for the work done in schools and universities.
- Equip churches to actively engage in being places accessible to young people and young adults.
- Enable and facilitate connections between chaplains and vocations teams within the diocese.

7 Enablers

a. Vision Support

i. Vision Champions

At the launch of Vision 2026, parishes were invited to appoint a 'Vision Champion'. Vision Champions literally 'champion' everything related to Vision 2026 within their parish, being an encouraging lay voice working with their clergy, other lay leaders, PCC and congregation to take new opportunities for mission and growth. They are appointed for a term of 3 years and commissioned by the Bishop of Blackburn.

Over 85% of parishes in the Diocese of Blackburn now have a Vision Champion and they have been key to developing momentum behind Vision 2026 at every level.

The Diocese will continue to encourage all parishes to appoint a Vision Champion and to provide resource to support, enable and equip them to network and serve in their role.

ii. Vision Companions

Healthy churches have a clear sense of purpose and direction, a current Mission Action Plan (or similar), clear priorities and seek to build God's Kingdom in its local community. For parishes looking to develop their parish vision or looking at Vision Action Planning, the diocese has a team of 'Vision Companions' who can help by:

- Supporting and guiding the Vision / Mission Action Planning process
- Facilitating PCC Awaydays
- Helping parishes with strategic decisions where external facilitation and support is helpful
- Training on any of the above
- Providing support to parishes to unlock from social distancing measures in a way which is focused on becoming a healthy church that transforms its community

iii. Parish Vision Fund

The Diocesan Parish Vision Fund is available to provide funding to parishes seeking financial assistance for one of the four building blocks of Vision 2026: Making Disciples, Being Witnesses, Growing Leaders and Inspiring Children and Young People.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, applications are limited to £2,000 however it is hoped that over time it may be possible to once again permit applications up to the usual limit of £20,000.

b. Finance

Jesus commanded and promised:

'Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow' Matthew 6:33-34

Finances follow vision and faith. Articulating a clear vision for the diocese, building firm foundations as articulated in pages 6-9 and seeking to establish God's Kingdom in Lancashire are vital elements of releasing generosity and wise stewardship of resources such that the financial costs of delivering healthy churches that transform communities can be met. This is especially important in Blackburn Diocese where we are not blessed with large historic reserves and look and plan for the future in faith.

With the above in mind, this section provides an overview of diocesan finance, the impact of COVID-19 and the steps being taken to realise the aspiration that annually parish share receipts wholly cover ministry costs without the need for the use of diocesan reserves.

i) Overview of Diocesan Finance

The finances of the Diocese of Blackburn are driven by the belief that the key to unlocking flourishing and healthy churches that transform our communities remains at parish level with the retention of maximum resources in our parishes, in particular full-time clergy. We are also committed to investing in the training and deployment of curates so that we have a new generation of clergy who are enthusiastic about making Jesus Christ more widely known and loved in Lancashire.

Whilst some support from the national church is received to support ministry levels, parish share is the primary source of income that then pays for clergy stipends and housing. Indeed, 70% of the parish share budget relates to clergy stipends, housing and associated costs with a further 10% reflecting the LICF grant from the national church which goes specifically to Lower Income Communities. There is little scope for large reductions in other areas if we wish to continue with levels of training for ordinands, curates and lay leadership, provide the ongoing support to parishes (eg Safeguarding Training and Support) and meet Charity Commission regulations regarding governance.

The Diocese had free reserves of £5.8 million at the end of 2019 and regularly reviews its property and investment portfolio to ensure that the balance between future investment income and meeting cash needs is at an optimum balance.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenge being faced was that annual diocesan income was not matching annual expenditure due primarily to under contribution of parish share. At the 2019 October Diocesan Synod, a financial plan was agreed to invest £3 million from diocesan reserves over three years (2020 – 2022) in order to help parishes reach full payment of their parish share by 2023 without support from DBF reserves. In other words, diocesan reserves would be used on a time-limited basis to cover an annual deficit of £1 million with concurrent activity to help to put the diocese on a sustainable footing.

ii) 2020: The Impact of COVID-19

The Coronavirus pandemic has impacted parish and diocesan finance, however, the generosity of individuals and parishes throughout the Diocese of Blackburn has been inspiring. With churches closed and individual finance affected by uncertainty and loss of access to usual income streams and support networks, it was reasonable to think that by the end of 2020 the accounts would be a bleak picture. Yet the year ended with parish share receipts at 89% net budget and an increase on

diocesan investments which, coupled with a generous Sustainability Grant from the Church Commissioners resulted in a small surplus⁸ for the year.

The levels of prayer, challenges and sacrifices necessary in reaching this outcome were substantial. Some parishes had to dip into local reserves in order to pay parish share and local costs; others had to encourage additional giving from those already giving much; the diocese-wide 'Call to Prayer' in November was an important aspect of us seeking first His Kingdom and trusting in God's provision; and at a diocesan level staff were furloughed, Whalley Abbey temporarily closed, property budgets frozen, all centrally based posts reviewed again, clergy vacancies reviewed on a case-by-case basis and all expenditure lines scrutinised.

One of the consequences of the financial result of 2020 is that the original plan to use £1 million diocesan reserves per year over three years from 2020 - 2022 can now be adjusted to 2021 – 2023, providing an additional year in which to work towards a balanced parish share budget.

iii) 2021 – 2024: Looking Ahead

The future remains uncertain, the pandemic is still with us and there is no room for complacency. Yet we begin 2021 and this Implementation Plan with faith and hope, thankful for God's provision, retaining our aspiration to maintain frontline clergy numbers.

As outlined in the opening line of this section, the delivery of this whole Plan is vital to releasing the finance to deliver Healthy Churches that Transform Communities. However, within it there are certain activities which are particularly focussed on ensuring future missional and financial sustainability which are as follows:

- A coordinated exercise to consult with deaneries to develop the Church Planting Plan (p22), new Parish Renewal Programme (p43) and Leadership and Deployment Plan (p26), prayerfully and collaboratively discerning how and where to invest to reflect the changing demography of Lancashire.
- Introduction of a new Parish Renewal Programme (p43), supported by external funding, to focus on renewal in those parishes that are struggling the most both missionally and financially, considering pastoral schemes where local consultation discerns that to be appropriate.
- Enhanced support to parishes in relation to the development of their buildings and how to access grants in relation to capital works through the appointment of a Church Buildings Advisor / DAC Secretary (p46).

A new small externally funded team is proposed to enable the above work to be resourced and delivered on an accelerated basis to enable the change needed to deliver Vision 2026 and the missional and financial flourishing of the Diocese of Blackburn.

- Encouragement and support in relation to Stewardship as outlined in the Making Disciples section (p17).
- Introduction of the Parish Giving Scheme (p17).

⁸ This surplus will go to topping up the Parish Vision Fund so that it can re-open for applications from parishes for loans and grants to enable work and projects related to Vision 2026 at a local level.

Recognising that Finance follows vision and faith, the delivery of this whole Implementation Plan including the above activities will by God's grace result in the finance to enable Healthy Churches Transforming Communities.

c. Parish Renewal Programme

Exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19, a number of parishes in the diocese are facing declining financial health and/or missional strength with related entrenched challenges. These parishes will be considered for inclusion in a new Parish Renewal Programme which is an initiative to provide targeted non-financial assistance to selected parishes. Such assistance and planning will be linked with plans relating to church planting, clergy/pioneer deployment and wider planning for the missional and financial flourishing of the Diocese of Blackburn.

d. Communications

In the past few years there has been a step-change in the way our Diocese communicates, internally and externally. Communications have shifted from a mainly reactive stance to a proactive 'story-telling' one, seeking to glorify God always and taking our inspiration from Jesus who was *the* great communicator.

Vision 2026 has given clarity to diocesan communications and all the key communications issued by the diocese – from press releases to our ebulletins – are driven and underpinned by the importance of 'Making Disciples, Being Witnesses, Growing Leaders and Inspiring Children and Young People'.

Our diocesan vision has galvanised the whole Diocese and there is a huge amount of activity taking place at every level. In response, the Communications function seeks to tell stories about our collective work together while simultaneously reflecting the aims of Vision 2026. Indeed, story-telling is at the heart of our communications – presenting real stories and real people to the world. Stories can help us reflect on our own faith journeys as well as maximising impact across all channels, including on social media and in the local, regional and national mainstream media. Going forward, there should also be a necessary and ever-increasing emphasis placed on telling those stories, incorporating digital/online methods of communication as resources allow; this approach having been spurred on more recently by the huge growth in digital engagement in our churches as a result of the pandemic.

Story telling is at the heart of our communications – presenting real stories and real people to the world.

The Communications function also seeks to support parishes through providing the timely up-to-date information they need. Further, all the teams in the Diocesan offices are supported in promoting their latest initiatives, events and news through the provision of several well-managed communications channels.

Recent enhancements to Communications:

From our regular stream of good news stories to the media, with high levels of engagement, to the recent 'refresh' of our suite of parish ebulletins in 2019, including the new and successful 'Parish

Update' ebulletin every two weeks, all our communications channels have been enhanced over the years to ensure we reflect and promote as much activity as possible; and thereby increasing awareness of our work and of the Gospel message.

Plans for the future:

We may continue to face uncertainty for the foreseeable future due to the pandemic, but we know there is an even greater hunger by many to know Jesus at this time. That's why the importance of the work we do at every level of the Diocese *and proactively telling people across the County about Jesus and our work to serve Him as people of God*, has never been greater.

Looking ahead, our communications work will include:

- Continuing to 'tell stories' about our work across the Diocese at every level. These stories should be enhanced with digital material where possible, such as videos and other online content; including content that has been generated locally in parishes as well as centrally. (Post-pandemic there will be an increased need to provide digital material to support our stories as traditional media, such as local and regional printed newspapers, continues to decline and more content appears online instead.)
- Working together to encourage each other and promote best practice, including via the convening of webinars, Zoom discussions and other online gatherings.
- Seeking to ensure all the above work and other digital work, including material generated and posted to our social media channels, is supported and enhanced as effectively as possible by drawing on talents from across the Diocese. A model for this approach is the newly-created 'Digital Resource Group', convened in the wake of lockdown.
- The continuation of Parish Update and our other e-bulletins.
- Continuing to review and enhance the advice and training provided to parishes to help them communicate effectively; more generally but also in their engagement with local media outlets. This support could include webinars as well as the return of face to face events like 'Get Your Church Noticed'; further presentations to Deanery chapters and other training as requested.
- Comprehensively reviewing content on the entire website to coincide with the refreshed Vision 2026; ensuring all pages are current and up to date.
- Launching a Plain English Guide to support Diocesan staff in the provision of clear and easy to understand communications at all times – from stories submitted for Parish Update or material written for the website to letters and emails to parishes.
- Continuing to provide effective media support and advice to clergy and their parishes as requested, particularly in relation to any difficult media issues as they arise.

e. Safeguarding

The safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults is integral to Vision 2026. Indeed, ensuring that churches and communities are safe for all is a primary requirement in the growth of

healthy churches that transform communities.

The diocesan website always contains up-to-date information in relation to safeguarding policies and should be the main reference point. Key high level aspects of those policies for the Diocese of Blackburn over the course of this Implementation Plan are outlined below:

- ***Bringing past cases to light and listening to survivors: Past Cases Review 2***

An initial 'past case review' in the Church of England took place around a decade ago to identify any ongoing risks to children and young people. All dioceses, including our own, were asked to extend the review to include vulnerable adults as well as children and young people. This process is known as Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2). The Diocese has now completed this review and as this Vision Implementation Plan goes to press, the final PCR2 report is in the process of being compiled. Once this is completed the recommendations within it will be discussed.

- ***Safeguarding Policies and Procedures***

It is essential that all parishes:

- Create/maintain a safeguarding culture which can be helped by using the Parish Safeguarding Toolkit available on the diocesan website
- Adhere to the House of Bishops Safeguarding Practice Guidance (available via the links on the Safeguarding pages of the diocesan website).
- Comply with Safer Recruitment Procedures including undertaking associated DBS checks on eligible candidates
- Make their local safeguarding arrangements clearly accessible via the home pages of their parish website by having an obvious link to further information, including contact details.

- ***Safeguarding Training***

From April 2021 a new national framework for training will be rolled out in line with House of Bishops Training Practice and Guidance. The new Programme has a number of revisions, including new courses and who is eligible for which course. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic the National Safeguarding Training team have developed a virtual leadership course which is being delivered to those who require it for re-licensing.

f. Property

In the Vision 2026 Survey undertaken in early 2020, 37% of parishes reported that their buildings and its facilities were 'a challenge' or 'a very big challenge'. Ageing buildings with maintenance challenges can consume time, energy and finance constraining the growth of healthy churches. Conversely, beautiful and iconic church buildings are valued by local communities and inspire worship.

It's vital that our church buildings are safe, warm and comfortable for people to worship and gather in if they are to be healthy churches that transform communities. The Diocese of Blackburn is committed to providing helpful and prompt advice to parishes in relation to building and

maintenance opportunities and challenges. We will:

a) Refresh the membership of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC)

- Re-orient this group to ensure it is focussed on mission.
- Refresh the membership in order to enhance diversity within the group, particularly in relation to age, gender and church tradition.

b) Appoint a ‘Church Buildings Advisor’

This Officer will play a pivotal role in ensuring professional, prompt and helpful advice is available to parishes. Amongst other things, the Officer will:

- Be the first port of call for parishes contemplating a maintenance or building project.
- Provide support to parishes seeking advice for capital and/or heritage projects including facilitating the sharing of best practice.
- Advise parishes undertaking capital fundraising campaigns for building repairs and redevelopment projects. Provide guidance on developing a fundraising strategy, sourcing funding and applying for grants.
- Advocate and facilitate access to external support and partnership working, including sources of funding and local authority strategic plans eg Neighbourhood Plans.

Note: This role will not be an additional diocesan post in terms of funding. It will either be arranged through a re-alignment of roles and/or funded via externally sourced funding.

g. Recruitment

Healthy Churches are welcoming and equal to all. Diversity within the diocese, Board of Education and Board of Finance is welcomed and there is a commitment to equal opportunities for all.

This commitment is celebrated with a positive view of equal opportunities, embracing all people with a positive view of age, caring responsibilities, gender, disability, racial/ethnic origin and background for all its employees, volunteers and employees. This commitment is underpinned by its policies and procedures which have equal opportunities and diversity at their heart.

We actively encourage applications from groups that are under-represented in the diocese. Further, in 2020 the Bishop’s Leadership Team attended Unconscious Bias Training and we will look to offer this training more widely across the diocese for all involved in appointment processes.

As a diocese, we recognise that protracted vacancies can have a detrimental effect on attendance levels and the finances of a parish. We have worked hard and been successful at reducing vacancy times and will aim to keep these to an average of 8 months or under once normal recruitment resumes following the lifting of COVID-19 related restrictions.

h. Clergy Wellbeing, Training and Support

In February 2020, a new ‘Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing’ was carried at General Synod which included the following statement:

“In its formularies, the Church of England recognises that God calls men and women to serve as deacons, priests and bishops to build up and equip the whole People of God. Conscious that such a calling is both a privilege and a demand, we as the Church of England commit together to promote the welfare of our clergy and their households in terms expressed in the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing. We undertake to work together to seek to coordinate and improve our approach to clergy care and wellbeing that ordained ministers flourish in their service of the mission of God within and beyond the Church.”

The Diocese of Blackburn is committed to developing a culture in which our clergy are generously supported by senior staff and by our parishes. It is vital that our clergy are healthy and energised if they are to grow and nurture healthy churches that transform their communities.

We will:

1) Fully Engage with the national process in relation to the ‘Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing’

This will include:

- Implementing the ‘Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing’, having considered and adopted it at the October 2020 meeting of Diocesan Synod.
- Inviting PCCs and Deanery Synods to consider and adopt the Covenant themselves and to engage in the national ‘Big Conversation’ relating to it.
- Holding a Clergy Study Day on Care and Wellbeing.

It should be noted that the main thrust of the national work is that this is about mutual accountability and shared responsibility for one another’s wellbeing as fellow-disciples – ordained and lay. The wellbeing of clergy affects the wellbeing of lay people, and vice versa, and indeed of the whole of Christ’s community. That is why we need to engage with the national ‘Big Conversation’, make the Shared Commitments and act locally to make improvements that encourage healthy churches transforming communities.

2) Protect the Wellbeing of our Clergy and their Families

- Undertake an exercise to ascertain levels of clergy wellbeing in Blackburn Diocese
- Appoint a Clergy Wellbeing Supporter in each Archdeaconry to provide support to clergy and their families, complementing the support from our Bishops, Archdeacons, Area Deans, Spiritual Directors and Inter-Diocesan Counselling Service.
- Develop a Blackburn Wellbeing Toolkit

- This will give pointers for expectations on hours, Sabbaths, multiple days off on a regular basis, spiritual directors, mentoring, sabbaticals, support for spouses and families, networking with common interests and passions, opportunities to use one's gift across the deanery, diocese and nationally. The Toolkit will also be shared with Churchwardens and other lay leaders to encourage realistic expectations between in relation to workload, boundaries, time off, learning opportunities etc so that role descriptions and parish profiles are more realistic and so that worshipping communities commit to mutual support of their clergy.
- A steering group is being established to encourage and facilitate the above developments across the diocese, with informal groups to offer peer support etc.

3) Enable Purposeful, Valued and Equipped Ministry

- **Ministerial Development Review (MDR)**

- MDR will be revised and re-launched by June 2021.
- Where clergy find themselves needing to expand their competencies we will look to provide opportunities for them to do so.

- **3D Coaching**

Coaching will be made available via 3D Coaching to focus on development areas raised in the MDR.

- 30 coaches to be trained.
- Focus will be on first incumbents and those transitioning into new ministries.
- The DBF is budgeting £5000 for this in 2021.

- **Continuing Ministerial Education (CME)**

- A fresh strategy for CME to be developed by June 2021 by a representative group, chaired and convened by an experienced Parish Priest.
- Due to the financial impact of COVID-19, funding for CME has had to be suspended in 2021 but the aim is to restore this budget heading in 2022.
- There is much CME on offer however - Webinars, study days, retreats, preaching conference, clergy study mornings to name a few.
- A Diocesan Conference is planned for November 2022. 'That You May Have Faith' on St John's Gospel.

8 Aspirations

A summary of what we pray and aspire to see materialise over the course of this 2021 – 2024 Implementation Plan is summarised at Annex C.

9 The Vision 2026 Prayer

“Heavenly Father, we embrace Your call for us to make disciples, to be witnesses, to grow leaders and to inspire children and young people. Give us eyes to see Your vision, ears to hear the prompting of Your Spirit and courage to follow in the footsteps of your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen”

Annex A: How can the Diocese of Blackburn develop its strategy....:

....to Overcome:

- i) Ageing congregations and declining attendance
- ii) Particularly steep drop off of young people when they reach the age of 11+
- iii) Expensive historical buildings
- iv) High no. of parishes reporting slow progress in holding enquirers courses
- v) Pervasive 'church-focussed' culture in some parishes
- vi) Falling number of planned givers and parish share collection rate stuck at 93%
- vii) Increasing administrative burden faced by parish leaders and the challenge of increasing competing demands
- viii) Church of England national regulations which can make certain processes slow and difficult
- ix) Those parishes that do not buy into the goals of Vision 2026
- x) Likely retirement of a significant no. of our incumbents over the next 6 years
- xi) The sin of historical safeguarding offences
- xii) Damage done to perceptions of the Church of England through negative media coverage nationally
- xiii) Societal changes rapidly changing the culture in which we live
- xiv) The negative impact of Coronavirus on congregations, giving and loss of momentum in ministry

...and Make the Most of:

- i) The positive culture of change and innovation generated by Vision 2026
- ii) Strong and united episcopal leadership
- iii) Growth in discipleship across the diocese
- iv) Openness and creativity in relation to planting new congregations
- v) Increasing sense of Vocations for All
- vi) The many parish leaders who are embracing the goals of Vision 2026
- vii) Excellent CofE Primary and High Schools across the diocese with 26% of primary school aged children attending a diocesan school
- viii) Openness to church contact/occasional offices in traditional communities across Lancashire
- ix) Breadth of diocesan family incl. the Cathedral, Whalley Abbey and Chaplains
- x) Beautiful and iconic church buildings
- xi) New housing estates being built across Lancashire
- xii) Leading work in terms of planting onto urban estates
- xiii) Openness of Gen-Z to spirituality
- xiv) Strengthening links with ecumenical partners
- xv) People of all generations increasingly connecting online
- xvi) Opportunity for the diocese to be carbon neutral by 2030
- xvii) Opportunity to apply for further round of SDF funding.
- xviii) Those outcomes of social distancing required by the Coronavirus pandemic through which we are recognising new opportunity

... in order to see Healthy Churches Transforming Communities throughout the diocese in 2026?

Annex B: Summary of Vision 2026 (for 2021 – 2024)

Vision 2026: 'Healthy Churches Transforming Communities'

We will realise our vision through:

Making disciples of Jesus Christ

- Knowing the Scriptures better and equipping confident Christian disciples
- Praying with greater depth and urgency for the Kingdom of God to come
- Offering worship in spirit and truth through the ministry of word and sacrament
- Giving generously of our time, talents and money to the cause of Christ

Being witnesses to Jesus Christ

- Sharing the Gospel of salvation with confidence
- Enabling human flourishing through social action
- Planting 10 Strategic Church Plants and 200 New Local Congregations
- Caring for God's creation

Growing leaders for Jesus Christ

- Developing a diocesan-wide culture of vocational discernment for all God's people
- Forming theologically literate Christ-centred lay and ordained leaders
- Nurturing healthy partnerships between clergy and laity by fully implementing the Lay Majority Ministry framework
- Generating a pipeline of highly motivated deacons and priests to enable the Diocese's clergy deployment strategy

Inspiring Children and Young People for Jesus Christ

- Nurturing children and young people in their faith and supporting them as disciples of Jesus Christ
- Holding regular worship that is accessible and appealing to children, young people and their families
- Enabling growth in the numbers of leaders of children and young people
- Pursuing a step change in ministry with those aged 11-16
- Facilitating effective partnerships between churches and schools

Annex C: Aspirations - Vision Implementation Strategy 2021 – 2024

Setting detailed aspirations in the context of spiritual growth is a complex task all the more so in the context of a global pandemic. In 1 Corinthians 3 v6-7 we read, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters it is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” This verse underlines why the Foundations section of this Vision 2026 Implementation Plan is vital, highlighting that our diocesan Vision must be grounded in faithful prayer, repentance, seeking God’s face and calling out for Him to pour out His spirit across the Diocese of Blackburn. The aspirations detailed below are therefore provided to give a more detailed picture of our Vision to aspire to and to help us to monitor change over time.

Measure	Data Source	Baseline	Aspirations			
			2021	2022	2023	2024
Weekly Adult Attendance (16+)	Oct DBF RWA count	14,460 (Oct 2019)				15,000 (Oct 2024)
Weekly Child Attendance (<16)	Oct Stats for Mission	3,444 (Oct 2019)				5,000 (Oct 2024)
Worshipping Community (11-17)	Oct Stats for Mission	1,120 (Oct 2019)				2,150 <i>in 2026</i> (92% increase)
No. people committing to Rule of Life	Making Disciples Team	0				5000 cumulative (end 2024)
No. people attending Quiet Days at Whalley Abbey & Blackburn Cathedral	Whalley Abbey/Cathedral	150 (TBC)		350	400	500
% Parishes offering online Enquirers’ course	Being Witnesses Team	28%				50%
No. Strategic Church Plants	Being Witnesses Team	5 cumulative (end 2020)				8 cumulative (end 2024)
No. New Local Congregations	Being Witnesses Team	48 cumulative (end 2019)				160 cumulative (end 2024)
Diocese of Blackburn approved as an Eco-Diocese	Environmental Working Group	N/A			By 2023	

No. ALMs (incl. proportion urban ALMs)	Annual ALM Autumn Commissioning Service	0 (2020)				250 cumulative (as at Autumn 2024 Commissioning)
No. new LLMs into training	Annual LLM Licensing Service	0 (2020)				25 cumulative (as at 2024 Licensing)
No. Ordinands sent to training/year	Vocations Team Statistics	2 in 2019	10	10	10	10
No. Curates ordained/yr having been sponsored by Blackburn Diocese	Vocations Team Statistics	9	10	10	10	10
Weekly Child Attendance (0-10)	This is a new measurement that we will introduce	TBC				TBC
Weekly Youth Attendance (11-17)	This is a new measurement that we will introduce	TBC				TBC
No. missional toddler groups	Children's Team	TBC				50% more
Clergy Vacancy Appointment Rate	Bishop's Appointment Team	TBC	< 8 months	< 8 months	< 8 months	< 8 months
% parishes offering weekly online worship or reflection of some form	Communications/BW Team	67%				At least 80%
% parishes with at least one <i>active</i> social media feed	Communications/BW Team	TBC				At least 80%
Parishes either paying full parish share or engaging with the process by 2024	DBF Stats	2020 = TBC				100%
% Parishes Using the Parish Giving Scheme	DBF Stats	2020 = 0%				50%