



Wycombe
Deanery

Wycombe Deanery Plan

2021 – 2025

Revised 2023

Serving our Fellowships

Shaping our Future

Spurring on our Friends

Sharing the Fire

Wycombe Deanery Plan

Deanery Verse

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess,
for he who promised is faithful.
And let us consider how we may spur one another on
toward love and good deeds,
not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing,
but encouraging one another—
and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)

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For the latest information about Wycombe Deanery
and previous Deanery Plans visit
www.wycombedeanery.com

What is a Deanery?

A Deanery is the geographical subdivision between a Diocese and a Parish. In a Deanery, parishes are grouped together so they can work together to see God's kingdom come. The Deanery is the servant of the parishes.

A Deanery is not:

- a big parish: it does not aim to have a worshipping or missional life outside the churches it serves and it takes care to enhance not displace the life of local churches.
- a small Diocese: it does not have its own resources of money or staff to deploy – its only resources are those freely given by the local churches.

We aim to...

be largely invisible to the public
enable growth
provide structures that help
increase faith in what God is doing

...so our churches can

be more visible in their communities
grow and flourish as God intends
be free to do the work of the kingdom
be encouraged to play their unique part

Our Mission

To play our part in the Great Commission

Our Vision

To see the churches of Wycombe Deanery flourishing individually, working effectively together and contributing to the renewal of the wider church.

The Great Commission

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.

Matthew 28:19-20

Our Four Deanery Values

† **Serving our Fellowships**

† **Shaping our Future**

† **Spurring on our Friends**

† **Sharing the Fire**

1. Serving our Fellowships

The Deanery exists not to be served but to serve. Our success or failure is bound up in the flourishing of our 35 churches.

Serving our Fellowships means:

- Always seeking the good of each parish
- Focussing on people and right relationships, not buildings or structures
- Acting in a collaborative and mutually supportive way

We therefore aim to:

- Listen before speaking
- Value and nurture the identity of each church, seeking unity in diversity
- Identify ways to support each church
 - Individually – e.g. during vacancy or other need
 - Together – e.g. by sharing best practice

We will prioritise:

- Supporting the leaders of each parish: clergy, licensed lay ministers, wardens and treasurers, bringing prayer, encouragement and challenge as needed
- Acting as an effective link between Diocese and Parish
- Identifying practical means of support and offering them to churches as a gift

2. Shaping our Future

We believe that – under God – the future of our churches lies in our hands. We do not expect our Diocesan or National church leaders to turn around the fortunes of our churches or to bail us out with historic financial resources.

Shaping our Future means:

- Taking responsibility for the future of our Deanery
- Pro-active long-term planning for growth
- Bold and realistic plans for short / medium-term sustainability

We therefore aim to:

Produce a Deanery Plan that will:

- Achieve sustainable clergy deployment
- Create an environment that makes it easier for churches to flourish
- Pursue a Spirit-led strategy for church planting, renewal and revitalisation of our communities

We will prioritise:

- Creating and following a Deanery Plan that will help to enable the flourishing of our churches
- Proactively considering the long-term future and responding with Spirit-led strategies that will bless our churches and their communities

3. Spurring on our Friends

We are not competitors. We are family. We celebrate when others flourish and we mourn together when one church suffers pain or loss.

Spurring on our Friends means:

- Exploring new ways to grow in love and in our calling
- Learning from each other and identifying fruitful partnerships
- Supporting, unifying and inspiring each other

We will therefore aim to:

- Make Chapter and Synod places where we spur one another on as friends
- Support the wellbeing of all leaders especially clergy, licensed lay ministers, churchwardens and treasurers
- Excel in Deanery communication
- Work with parishes in vacancy to help them continue to flourish and to discover the new leader God is sending to them
- Serve other Deaneries where possible, giving away what God has given us

We will prioritise:

- Leading a change of culture across the Deanery, starting in Chapter & Synod
- Bringing a greater sense of unity, wellbeing and hope and establishing the Deanery as a place in which to be inspired by learning from others
- Continuous improvement of our communication
- Providing outstanding support to parishes in vacancy

4. Sharing the Fire

We sense God is doing something new in our Deanery and across the nation. Over the past few years a new generation of church leaders has arrived in our Deanery and brought fresh vision and a willingness to work together. We believe this is a work of the Holy Spirit and want to embrace it wholeheartedly.

Sharing the Fire means:

- Exercising the gift of discernment to identify where the Holy Spirit's fire is burning
- Drawing attention to where the Spirit is at work, and encouraging it to spread
- Going with the flow of what God is doing, rather than trying to spread resources and attention according to our own agenda.
- Shifting focus away from our own internal church needs to move outwards in mission
- Laying down our desires to protect and provide for ourselves, and generously Sharing the Fire – whatever it costs us

We will therefore aim to:

- Identify and celebrate the Fire of the Spirit – wherever we see it
- Give ourselves to joining in with what God is already doing, not trying to create momentum through human effort
- Add fuel to the Fire and then share it as the primary mean of growth, rather than trying to coax smouldering embers back into life

We will prioritise:

- Focussing when we gather on what God is doing around the Deanery
- Organising inspiring and encouraging events that embody “Sharing the Fire” to follow on from our inaugural event in October 2019
- “Sharing the Fire” with our wider communities

Our Diocese

A more Christ-like Church - contemplative, compassionate and courageous for the sake of God's world.

Common Vision

Oxford Diocese has a "Common Vision" for life together. This is the framework within which we dwell and which connects us to the wider church in this nation and worldwide.

Our world is changing in new and unprecedented ways; we must think afresh about inequality, our communities, and what it means to be human. We need to be the best Church we can be in such a time as this: a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world.

We are not the society for the preservation of old buildings (important though our heritage assets are). We believe that a church is the community of God's people, not the building. We believe that becoming more Christ-like is about who we are called to be, not what we're called to do.

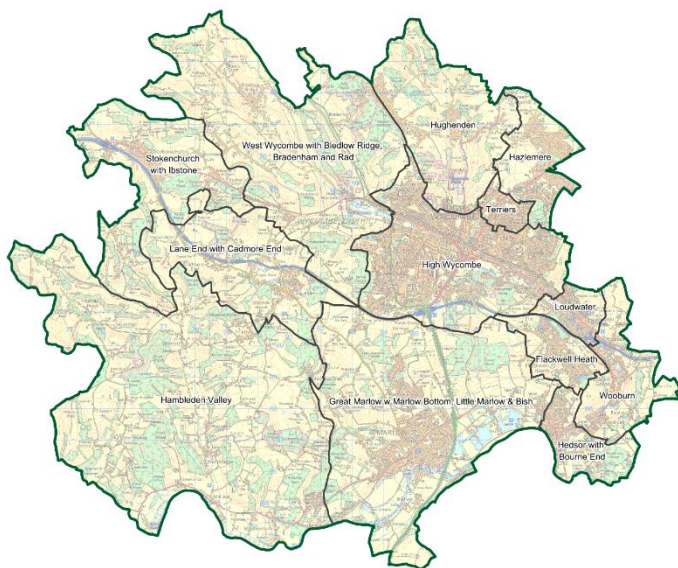
This is our common vision for every Christian in every church and every school across this Diocese. We want to discern what God is already doing in our communities and figure out how best we can join in.

The call to become more Christ-like, to sit at the feet of the Lord, is not the preliminary work we need to do before a new corporate strategy and a five-year plan. This is our vision and this is our strategy. It is the response we are called to make. We are continually adapting and reshaping our common vision as, together, we discern God's will.

How Diocese & Deanery work together

Oxford has 29 Deaneries and – compared to other Dioceses – delegates a great deal of freedom to the Deanery leadership. For example, we are free to deploy Parish Share and clergy posts as we think best serves the Deanery. We are also given a great deal of encouragement and support to experiment and try new things. Our Area Bishop and Archdeacon create an encouraging and permissive environment for which we are very grateful. We aspire to be a blessing to them also.

How does the Deanery work?



Wycombe Deanery comprises 35 churches in 26 parishes.

Who leads the Deanery and how does it work?

The Deanery is led by 4 main groups.

1. Deanery Synod

Synod is like the PCC for the Deanery. Its members are:

- All the clergy who are licensed by the bishop to serve in the Deanery.
- About 60 representatives elected from the parishes every 3 years (the number from each parish is proportional to the number on the electoral roll).

Synod is led by the Lay Chair and Area Dean. It meets 4 times each year in order to:

- pray for the life of the Deanery churches
- encourage one another by hearing about what God is doing in our churches
- consider the challenges of mission and how we might respond to them
(these first 3 items take up a minimum of 50% of Synod meetings)
- consider plans for working together between parishes
- communicate well with Diocese, parishes and other organisations such as charities
- agree and oversee our financial plans

2. Deanery Chapter

Chapter is the gathering of clergy who serve in the Deanery. It includes chaplains, curates, retired clergy, associate clergy and incumbents. We gather together 4 times per year over lunchtime and once per year for a day-long retreat.

We model our meetings on the Upper Room in the book of Acts. We build relationship with one another, we pray together and for each other, we discuss where we think the Lord is leading us. It is a very supportive group and is led by the Area Dean.

Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) play a valued role in leading our worship. LLMs have a separate support network that is led by Sue Simpson from Christ Church Flackwell Heath, contactable at llm@ccfh.org.uk. Names of Deanery clergy and LLMs can be found at www.wycombedeanery.com/churches

3. Standing Committee

The Standing Committee meets 4 times per year. It is responsible for:

- Planning our Synod meetings
- Keeping watch over our finances
- Organising the 3 yearly Church Inspections, ensuring every church receives a regular visit to check on the church, its contents and – most importantly – its people!

Members

Nick Gallant	Associate Lay Chair (chair)
Caroline Sants	Lay Chair
Nigel Peach	Deanery Treasurer
Dave Bull	Area Dean
Keith Johnson	Associate Area Dean
Simon Dust	Associate Area Dean
Debbie Leach	Deanery Administrator (secretary)

4. Mission & Pastoral Team

This is the main leadership team for the Deanery. It is responsible for our long-term strategy, the Deanery Plan and the management of clergy vacancies.

Members

Dave Bull	Area Dean (chair)
Caroline Sants	Lay Chair
Nick Gallant	Associate Lay Chair
Keith Johnson	Associate Area Dean
Simon Dust	Associate Area Dean
Debbie Leach	Deanery Administrator (secretary)
Mark Meardon	Holy Trinity Hazlemere
Graham Watts	The Lantern, Marlow Bottom
Alison Rimmer	St Paul's West Wycombe

+ a Curate representative

Purpose of the Deanery Plan

To bring into being our vision to see the churches of Wycombe Deanery flourishing individually, working effectively together and contributing to the renewal of the wider church.

Looking back – the last 5 years

The main goals of the 2016-20 Deanery Plan were to:

1. Achieve sustainable clergy deployment
2. Respond to the needs revealed in Parish Plans
3. Invest in what grows and then spread it

To achieve these goals, we identified 6 priorities:

- a. Growing a healthy culture of right relationships and a common spirit
- b. Freely sharing knowledge and experience
- c. Making good plans and communicating them clearly
- d. Forming mission focussed partnerships
- e. Deploying our resources effectively and sustainably to achieve these plans
- f. Ensuring that Synod (and its two subcommittees), Chapter, Parish Inspections, Chaplaincy and Church School partnerships and Vacancy planning are all aligned with these objectives and ways of working.

Key events during this period included:

- Recruitment of 11 new clergy through vacancies.
- Realignment of parishes & finances so that in most parishes the Share is now more sustainable. Parish Share has been paid at 100% in all five years.
- A reinvigoration of Chapter and Synod, both of which have seen significant increases in attendance and engagement
- The setting up of a Deanery Discipleship Training Centre based in Marlow, a Resource Church at St Andrew's High Wycombe and a Rural Review project involving 15 of our village churches.
- The "Sharing the Fire" event in October 2019, attended by 475 people from across the Deanery.
- Improvement of processes around Church Inspections, Clergy Vacancies and Communications.

The 2021-26 Deanery Plan was published in the middle of the pandemic. This 2023 revised version takes into account the huge changes we have lived through and is also a mid-point revision of the 5 year plan.

Deanery Plan: Priorities for 2021-5

We will pursue these 5 priorities over the next 5 years of the Deanery's life:

- ✝ Sharing the Fire
- ✝ Wellbeing
- ✝ Rural Forum
- ✝ Next Generation
- ✝ New Congregations

1. Sharing the Fire

We believe the Holy Spirit is blowing through our Deanery. The Spirit is fanning into flame churches where the fire has burned low for a while. In other places, the fire is burning strongly so that we can share it to start new fires.

We have seen evidence of this in special gatherings – we think especially of our ‘Sharing the Fire’ event in October 2019 (when 475 members of Deanery churches gathered in Wycombe) and ‘Fanning the Flames’ in April 2022 (when 130 members of our village churches gathered in Rackleys, Cadmore End). But we also think of dozens of smaller events and gatherings where “Sharing the Fire” has happened as we meet and work together.

The top priority for our Deanery is to continue to welcome and encourage this work of the Holy Spirit. What further actions could have a similar catalytic effect on the lives of our churches?

Among our current ideas are:

- Renewing the ‘Sharing the Fire’ vision with members of Synod
- Asking each church to focus on what they can give away to other churches
- Exploring what part worship has to play in our ‘Sharing the Fire’ vision
- A post-Lighthouse ‘Sharing the Fire’ at Adams Park
- Drawing in other Christians across the Deanery
- Keeping Chapter ‘on fire’ with the Spirit’s presence
- Involving other leadership groups

Project lead: Mission & Pastoral Team

2. Wellbeing

Ensuring the wellbeing of our lay and clergy leaders is critical to the flourishing of our churches. We are therefore committed to developing a network of supportive structures that make it as easy as possible for our leaders to find support and avoid burnout.

Furthermore we take it as a specific challenge to get better at noticing and acting on the early warning signs of difficulties arising in our parishes.

Our support structures include:

- Weekly Zoom Morning Prayer
- St Katharine's Retreat Centre in Parmoor
- Locum / Emergency support for clergy
- Chapter meetings
- Deanery 'buddy' system for clergy
- Access to Diocesan / National resources for wellbeing and healing, including spiritual direction, quiet days & retreats, coaching and ministry accompaniment

Priorities for 2021-6

For this 5 year plan we will focus particularly on:

- Support for Churchwardens
- Work / life balance and boundaries for clergy

Diversity

We take Diversity to be a central part of Wellbeing. To become a healthier Deanery our leadership needs to be more representative of those we serve, eliminating discrimination and unconscious bias wherever we become aware of it. We aim to become more accessible to under-represented groups, for example by using hybrid meetings and inviting observers to bring new voices into our conversations.

Project Leads: Keith Johnson, Jo Gallant, Sue Morton, James Dwyer

3. Rural Forum

We have been presented with a once in a generation opportunity to review village church life in our Deanery, opened up for us by the vacancies in our 3 rural church teams. During 2021 & 2022 we led a project (the “Rural Review”) to reimagine ministry for the 15 rural churches in the West Wycombe Team, the South Chilterns Team and the Hambleden Valley Group.

The Rural Review project

The goal of this project was to:

- enable an intentional focus on mission and evangelism
- free up the time and energy of lay people and clergy to focus on mission and ministry
- realise, nurture and equip the ministry of lay people

The project was ambitious in its scope and involved:

- a weekly prayer meeting since 2021 on zoom at 6pm on Monday – anyone wishing to pray for rural churches is welcome to join us!
- 18 meetings, including subgroups, and a concluding celebration lunch
- 35 representatives across each of the 15 churches
- an evening celebration of 130 people at Rackleys in Cadmore End, listening to presentations from the project teams

The work of the subgroups covered church services, community engagement, mission and evangelism, schools and young people, buildings and communications. From these discussions emerged new energy, new hope, new leaders and lots of new ideas.

What next? The Rural Forum

Building on this work, we have established a “Rural Forum” – an ongoing place for stimulating growth in our village churches. The next step is to organise events and seminars that will help share the practical benefits of this project’s work, so that the Rural Forum becomes an embedded part of our Deanery’s life, sharing blessing and learning with all 35 churches. An example of this is the core group of leaders from across the villages who meet to pray together, inspire one another and share ideas and best practice across the Deanery.

Project Leads: Caroline Sants, Keith Johnson and Alison Rimmer

4. Next Generation

We believe Wycombe Deanery should be encouraging the next generation not only for its own churches but as a resource for the wider church. We aim to create a culture that identifies, nurtures and commissions young Christians and the next generation of Christian leaders to serve the whole of God's church. This culture will include a particular concern for those areas – especially creation care and social justice that especially concern and impact on the next generation.

Particular areas of focus are:

- Creating a Youth & Children's workers forum, in partnership with James Wood, our Diocesan Enabler for Youth & Children
- Investigating whether there is a role for the Deanery to encourage existing gatherings for teenagers (or create a new one)
- Greenhouse – as part of the Resource Church, to provide leadership learning communities for emerging leaders and their mission and discipleship projects.
- Working with the Diocesan team to produce a more joined up approach to the placement of training curates
- Curacy succession – looking to nurture and deploy curates to their next posts, within and beyond the Deanery.
- Supporting those who are new in post
- Lay and ordained teamwork – we aim to create great teams of leaders who will model non-hierarchical leadership and keep a constant eye out for the leaders of the future.
- Fostering our churches' work on the environment via Mike Hill, our Environment Rep

Project Leads: Graham Watts, Dave Bull, Mike Hill

5. New Churches and Congregations

St Andrew's Hatters Lane has been designated as a Diocesan Resource Church and is receiving financial support to enable (among other things) two new church plants. We seek to enable these plants to launch and flourish within the supportive wider ecology of the Deanery. Besides church planting, we anticipate the Resource Church will bring many other benefits to the Deanery and beyond (such as Greenhouses, mentioned above).

Our approach will be to ask two questions (in this order):

- Where is the Lord calling us to plant?
- Is this a Resource Church plant or is it for someone else?

Bourne End

A particular focus is the relaunching of the church in Bourne End as a Deanery-led partnership between Bourne End and the surrounding parishes.

There is an opportunity to revitalise St Mark's church, bringing new life to the church and reaching out to the local community. With an ageing and small congregation, there is the recognition that something new is needed. We are looking to have a Deanery wide approach working with surrounding churches to start something new. Initially, we are looking to gather anyone who has a passion for the village to pray, listen and discern where God may be leading us. The aim will be to work towards a new vision for the church that might begin in 2024 drawing together the resources necessary to make this happen.

We will also prayerfully investigate other (probably smaller) opportunities for church planting or seeding of new growth, particularly around new housing developments.

Project leads: Simon Dust, Dave Bull

Further Information

Churches & leaders

An up-to-date list of our churches, clergy and licensed lay ministers can be found at www.wycombedeanery.com/churches

Chaplaincies

There are 9 Chaplaincies based in the Deanery:

- Bucks New University
- Marlow Town Chaplaincy Tony Peperell
- RAF Chaplaincy Andi Chapman
- Thames Valley Fire Service
- Thames Valley Police
- Wycombe Abbey School Penny Nash
- Wycombe Hospital
- Wycombe Town Chaplaincy Wendy Bull
- Wycombe Wanderers FC Benedict Musola

Schools

We have 12 Church of England schools in the Deanery. They are listed, together with links to websites, at www.wycombedeanery.com/schools

Partners

We have a large number of Christian charities and other organisations in the Deanery. They are listed, together with links to websites, at www.wycombedeanery.com/partners

Deanery Data

Parish Dashboards - Oxford Diocese maintains a dashboard for each parish with detailed information such as attendance, electoral roll, weddings, funerals and baptisms. This data can be accessed here: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/support-services/parish-support/parish-dashboards/>

Census data – The Church of England Research and Statistics department maintains an interactive map for every parish in the country holding national data such as census, deprivation, boundaries etc. This can be accessed here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/research-and-statistics>

Communications

For Deanery Communications, including social media, please contact Nick Gallant on nick.wycombedeanery@gmail.com

