

Update to Diocesan Synod on the Diocesan Strategy Process: March 2026

**Main Contents: Beginnings p1/ Comments and ideas p2/
People Plan and administration p4/ Streams p6/
Mission Multipliers *which used to be called enablers* p7/
Streams Communities p8/ Finance and Conclusion p10**

The Diocesan Strategy Development Group (SDG) and the Mission Team have made good progress in developing the ideas shared with and approved by Synod in late November 2025. (Please see the papers presented to that meeting to recall the journey we have been on so far as a Diocese and the main actions we are developing:

[Mission Strategy - Diocese of Norwich](#))

At the heart of the Strategy is a focused and determined drive for us to become more and more a church which is being Transformed by Christ: Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic. The whole Strategy serves the Diocesan Vision and seeks to realise it in every context of ministry, in every part of the local church and across Norfolk and Waveney. Different aspects of the Strategy will connect with different people and benefices, at different times and in different ways, but the Strategy is wholly focused on our call to be Transformed by Christ, as individuals, as communities, as churches, as schools and as New Worshipping Communities (NWCs).

We are completely aligned with the priorities and bold outcomes agreed by the Archbishop's Council, particularly to revitalise the parish system for mission so that churches can reach and serve everyone in their community, and to grow younger and more diverse. All that we are doing should be read alongside that call.

The two words at the heart of the whole Strategy, and which flow through the cycle of transformation, are Discipleship and Leadership.

We are called to be **disciples of Jesus**, who know and are responding to Christ's invitation to be transformed. A disciple knows the love Jesus has for them, knows their need of God's grace and mercy and longs, in the power of the Spirit, to know more and more of who Jesus is. A disciple is someone who loves Jesus and loves the ways of Jesus, walking with him and confident that he walks with us. A disciple is an apprentice, a learner, a pilgrim, someone who is coming to see- and learning to serve- the world more and more as Jesus did. It is to become more Prayerful, more Pastoral and more Prophetic.

Leadership is a key word in the Strategy because Christ's church has always had and needed leaders. We want to do everything we can to put our leaders, lay and ordained, in a position to be the clergy and lay leaders that God is calling them to be. That involves thinking through the roles we ask people to fulfil and ensuring that they are properly supported and equipped to serve in those roles. It involves considering the clergy we will need in the years to come and the roles we will ask them to undertake in mission and ministry. It involves identifying and training new leaders in local communities. It involves developing a culture of possibility in which people are inspired to listen more deeply to the call of the Holy Spirit and feel that they have the support and permission to try new things even if some of those new things will not take root. Leadership is offered both within the church and in the wider community.

Christian leadership is about using the gifts we have been given to fulfil our vocation and bring delight to the heart of God. The mission and ministry of the church needs leaders who are hope-filled and who are committed to working together to serve and deliver God's mission in their community. We believe that God has called and is calling the leaders we need.

Some comments and questions from Synod since the November meeting

Synod gave the Mission Team a large and varied number of comments. We read all of them, grouped them to spot commonalities and have kept reflecting on them over the last few months as we worked. Among the many things that were said, and which we are responding to, were:

- Questions around how Streams will work for a Multi Parish Benefice and the role of the Deanery in Streams,
- That Diocesan Synod needs to be given more time to debate and discuss the Strategy (which is being responded to in the extra session in March and the way the conversation will be shaped at the March Synod),
- How to enthuse local churches around Streams,
- Consult clergy and lay leaders on the question of administration,
- Be aware that not everyone is comfortable using the internet,
- As well as a large number of very positive comments around how much Synod members like the feel and style of the Strategy, and that there is something there for the whole Diocese, and that it is invitational and not obligatory, and that it meets people where they are, that it allows churches to do the work they feel called to in new ways.

The SDG have also received feedback from the Bishop's Council of Trustees (BCT) which included questions about the way in which the Strategy will support rural and Multi Parish Benefices, its impact on current leaders and the need to recognise present capacity. Some members also felt that there was too much complexity in the Strategy. The SDG have responded to that feedback in what follows, and in our March 2026 presentation to Synod, and will continue to bear it in mind as work progresses.

Developing the Strategy

Five key areas of work were approved by Synod and those have been the main points of focus for the Mission Team and the SDG since that meeting. They are things which either form the heart of the Strategy or are enablers of the main Strategy. (We have obviously been working on some other things as well but the majority of our effort has been spent on these five priorities).

Two enablers of the Strategy- a People Plan and administration

We are moving forward with a **People Plan** which will be wide-ranging and as comprehensive as possible. It will build on the good things that are already happening and which we rightly celebrate, e.g. the encouraging signs of growth in the number of people exploring ordination in the diocese with our team of ADDOs led by our DDO and IME2 Officer.

It will address the clergy and lay-leaders whom we anticipate we will need for the health and flourishing of the Diocese. It will include a strategy to increase our number of vocations to ordination and to be an LLM, an AWA or an APA while also considering other roles which we need to encourage as we help our local churches to flourish. (This growth will be a key part of our planning for the future because the number of people being ordained across the country is forecast to fall). Well-being has to be an essential part of everything we do. The Plan will also explore how we support, equip and value the leaders we already have in these roles, as well as PSOs, PCC Treasurers, Churchwardens and PCC Members.

Inevitably these considerations go very wide and quickly involve a lot of people and a lot of situations. The chief aims of a People Plan are to plan ahead in terms of clergy, to value and encourage lay ministries in their own right, and to ensure that everyone is equipped and valued. We hope to have more to share at the next BCT and then at the July Synod.

Much the same is true of the work around reducing the **administration** required of the local church. Our main points of focus are

- What is the main reason for such a sense of overwhelm in some of our benefices, especially in the rural church?
- How can the Parish Support Team provide the best possible support for parishes, especially in the way we ask for information and work alongside people as they respond?
- What further training and support can we offer people and benefices, especially when people come into post for the first time?

- Where there is administration that we cannot remove, can we find ways of making it easier for people to fill it in or complete, e.g. Safeguarding, Statistics for Mission?

A working group will build on the research which was previously led by Archdeacon Steven, and on the comments we have received over the last 12 months, to make recommendations in time for the next Synod meeting, in July.

The main content of the Strategy

Streams is where our longing to create a new culture of missional possibility and living faith in every community, our desire to strengthen and inspire leaders and our call to be disciples, comes together. The overarching concept is that Streams will be the main way in which we offer engagement, resources and inspiration, experiment in specific places and build learning communities across the Diocese of Norwich.

Streams has now got bigger than was presented in November and includes more things because we don't want to separate out inspirational stories and focused investment in a few places from the main life of Streams communities.

The **theology of Streams** arises from the biblical vision of God as the source of life whose presence flows like living water through creation, covenant, and the community of disciples. Scripture begins with a river flowing from Eden to water the earth (Genesis 2:10), revealing that God's life moves outward to sustain creation. The Psalms and prophets deepen this image: the righteous are like trees planted by streams of water (Psalm 1:1–3; Jeremiah 17:7–8), while God promises to pour water on thirsty land and His Spirit on His people (Isaiah 44:3), making streams in the wilderness and life in barren places (Isaiah 43:19; 35:6–7). Prophetic visions foresee rivers flowing from God's dwelling to bring healing to the nations (Ezekiel 47:1–12).

Jesus fulfils this promise by offering living water that becomes a spring of eternal life (John 4:10–14) and declaring that rivers of living water – the Holy Spirit – will flow from those who believe (John 7:37–39), calling disciples to abide in Him and bear fruit (John 15:1–8). The early Church embodied this life through communities devoted to teaching,

fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42–47), trusting that while disciples plant and water, God gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–9). **STREAMS therefore names the Church’s participation in this divine movement**, a people rooted in Christ, nourished by the Spirit, and flowing outward in mission until the biblical vision is fulfilled in the river of the water of life bringing healing to the nations (Revelation 22:1–2).

by the Rev’d Dr Dave Lloyd, Diocesan Mission Officer



Overall, Streams has three parts:

- A website and resources which will help us kindle a missional vision and culture,
- Mission Multipliers- specific and targeted investment in a few strategic locations across our four ministerial contexts to pilot new approaches (rural, market town, large coastal town and the City of Norwich),
- Streams Communities (previously called Streams) which are cohorts of people travelling and learning and being pilgrims together. This is the main way people will access and be fed by the Strategy.

We have made considerable progress in all of these areas, not least in bringing them into one place as Streams.

We have gone out to tender for the design and delivery of the **Streams website and resources**, which will be a laboratory and showroom of storytelling, adventure and invitation. We are calling this section **Be Inspired**. We have received three quotations and are ready to sign a contract with one of those options in order to get the design work started. The website will follow the kind of design that you have seen in the Synod paper and short Streams videos.



A lot of work has been done in the Mission Team to think about:

- how we communicate with a range of people,
- the use of a website alongside social media,
- how we use other means of communication to reach as many people as possible, mindful that many of our congregations are located in areas of poor internet access and do not particularly use online resources,
- how we tell stories of God at work in people's lives, God at work in the local church, and God at work in new ideas and new adventures in a way which is engaging, relevant and reflective of the breadth of our Diocese,
- providing resources to people who are either waiting to join a Streams community or are part of one.



Mission Multipliers will be a major part of our application for funding from the Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP) application to the Strategic Mission and Ministry Board (SMMIB). There is a limited range of things we can use the money for and DIP seems increasingly interested in things which have worked before in other places. We are having a series of meetings with our

SMMIB liaison person and her colleagues to establish which parts of our Strategy they would be interested in supporting.

Some Multipliers would be supported in Phase 1 of the DIP funding and some would come into effect in Phase 2, i.e. in the third year after the application for funding is approved. We are being advised not to try to do too much in the first year and to take the time to develop the missional design in only a few places, which will allow us to innovate and learn and apply what we have discovered. Our current thinking is that:

- there will be one Mission Multiplier in each of the four ministerial contexts we have been working with- rural, market town, large coastal town and the City of Norwich,
- they will be places of particular and very clear new possibility, or places which already have an exceptional track-record with the capacity for further growth and development,

- there will be a focus in all of the Multipliers on growing in every aspect of the life of the church (with a focus on reaching new people who are not currently disciples and growing younger and more diverse) within the benefice,
- they will then be a further gift and blessing to other benefices nearby in a way which is intentional and focused,
- the work will have to be sustainable with a clear focus on how things can continue in both the original and any subsequent benefice once the DIP funding comes to an end,
- the SDG will work with other groups which are not geographically located- for example Garden Church, Team Chaplaincy in schools building on the model in South Norfolk with St Benet's Trust Schools, and a young adults initiative to develop part-time youth workers.

Streams Communities are the centre of everything in the Strategy- an invitation to every benefice to identify where they are in their journey, to engage in courses and conversations which meet them where they are and support their thinking, to be inspired as leaders and disciples to try new things in hope and faith and to be part of an ongoing learning community of discernment and support. Streams Communities will be a safe and inspiring mix of training and learning, community and support.



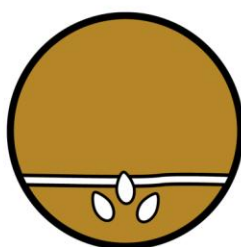
As a Diocese we will be committed to Streams over many years- the number of benefices being part of a Streams Community will grow and build over time. The whole work of Streams is intended to support the local church. As part of revitalising the parish system, and as part of our commitment to the local church. Streams will invite individuals and benefices to reflect on where they are and what they hold in their hands, and to join in with what God is doing in new ways.

We have reduced the number of Streams from five to four because, as a result of listening to Synod's feedback, we agreed that two of them were too close together to be easily distinguished.

The input and teaching in each of the four Streams will be a mix of things produced within the Diocesan Mission Team and brought in from other organisations, for example, Leading Your Church Into Growth (LYCIG) and Plant (from CCX). Where we use external courses like that we will ground them in our own local experience.

Each Streams Community is intended to run for two years- the first year being a year of input, reflection and learning and the second being more about building confidence and energy, trying new things and supporting each other along the way. During and towards the end of the Streams Community benefices will be invited to apply for a grant to support the missional ideas they have discerned through the Streams Community and want to pursue. We hope that many of them might build on our call to grow younger and more diverse.

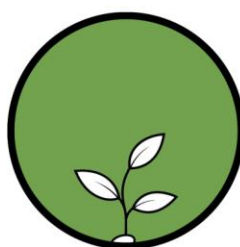
Overview of the four Stream Communities: Revitalisation of the Parish System



Fallow

Restore hope, rebuild vocation, and discern what God is already doing beneath the surface.

NWCs (Festival, Garden),
Missionary Disciples,
Mixed Ecology



Cultivating

Shape culture, discipleship, relationships, and systems so that new life can grow.

Younger and more diverse,
NWCs, Mixed Ecology



Regenerating

Strengthen discipleship culture, leadership teams, systems, and sustainability.

Leadership pipelines
Younger and more diverse,
NWCs, Mixed Ecology,



Reforesting

Equip and support parishes to plant, revitalise, and multiply worshipping communities.

13

Hubs of formation, Planting,
NWCs, Missionary Disciples,
Mixed Ecology

Reflect the diversity of communities

Some of **the outcomes of Streams Communities** will lead to revitalising and developing what is already taking place and some will be about starting something new, like a New Worshipping Community. NWCs are broadly defined and normally rooted in the parish, where a PCC or a small group of people or an incumbent see an opportunity to set something up which is new, and worshipping and a community. They are already very much part of parish life in the Diocese of Norwich- the Stats for Mission returns say that at least 21 NWCs started in the Diocese in 2025. They are not

alien to the parish or Diocese but absolutely part of it, emerging from within their life, such as a new midweek Meditation Group, a new Messy Church or a new family-friendly service on a Sunday afternoon.

A NWC normally appeals to a group of people who are not regularly coming to church. It complements the other things a benefice already offers, giving express permission and provision for new creativity to flourish within the church. We hope that many more of them will start, through Mission Multipliers and Streams communities, serving to support the parish system, revitalising it for mission, reaching people who are not currently going to church and making new disciples.

An Update on Finance

As noted in the paper to Synod in November, the Strategy lands in a financially challenging period. This is because the costs of mission and ministry are greater than the money received in parish share and other Diocesan Board of Finance income (returns on glebe and other investment assets etc). The welcome reduction in the number of clergy vacancies through a concentrated focus on recruitment has put further pressure on budgets.

We are committed to doing what we can with whatever resources we have but we're aware that if this Strategy is to make a significant impact, additional resources are required. To support this, further work has been undertaken since November to increase the funds available for investment in the Strategy. This has included:

- further exploration of funds held by the Norfolk Community Foundation in a Community First Endowment Fund to ensure it can be released for investment in local parish mission through social engagement,
- releasing further funds from NDBF assets to enable a pipeline of funding for stipendiary ministry costs using an approach called Unapplied Total Return,
- further discussions with national church colleagues about the shape of a Diocesan Investment Programme application for funding to support the strategy,
- a Parish Share explainer film has been shared to increase understanding of what it funds to support local parish mission and ministry,
- exploring the availability of additional funding sources that could support our plans.

It is hoped that this missional partnership working will strengthen a sense of shared financial responsibility for the good of God's mission across the whole diocese, leading to an increase in parish share that will enable greater resources to be released to support local mission and ministry.

As plans develop over the coming months and financial costs become clearer, the Bishop's Council of Trustees will oversee the wise usage of these funds alongside the resources already available to us.

What it might feel like in your context

Obviously, that depends on your role and location and level of engagement! We are deliberately developing a Strategy which is invitational rather than required and which seeks to inspire everyone rather than just a few.

The aim and hope of the Strategy is that you will feel:

- more supported in your role as clergy or a lay leader, and more equipped to live the Diocesan vision,
- part of a Diocese which is more hope-filled and more deliberate in its life of discipleship,
- delighted when new people decide to follow the way of Jesus and be part of the life of our churches, making their unique and personal contribution to the body of Christ,
- that you have some more time to try new things and follow the call of the Spirit.

Most people will encounter the Strategy through the work of Streams, especially the resources, videos and encouragements which are part of the website and social media campaign (and will also be available in other ways), and the Streams Communities (for more details, see above).

Summary of our Diocesan Strategy

Our Strategy is focused on revitalising parishes for mission. We will do this by:

1. inspiring people in the Diocese to engage in mission so that they and others might be transformed by Christ - prayerful, pastoral and prophetic,
2. facilitating every Benefice to mission plan and supporting them with some seed funding,
3. modelling and replicating revitalisation, contextually suited to our four geographical/local contexts,
4. creating an environment which enables mission.

Bishop Graham wrote this in his Introduction to the document which went to Diocesan Synod in November 2025: *“The Strategy will be delivered through practical commitments to each context of ministry and mission through investing in leadership, missional resources, training and planning. We will make small grants to local churches to support new ways of connecting with people and work with them as they engage with the buildings entrusted to them. We will seek to reduce the burden of administration which falls especially heavily on rural Multi Parish Benefices. We will ensure that quality safeguarding is part of every church community and everything we do. This Strategy is not a fixed plan but a living framework - one that invites every church community, every leader, and every disciple to participate in God’s mission.”*

The motion before Diocesan Synod

That this Synod notes the progress made and approves the continuing work towards revitalising our parishes for mission in fulfilment of our Vision.

From the Strategy Development Group: March the 5th 2026