DIOCESE OF CHICHESTER

KNOW LOVE FOLLOW JESUS

Statement of Needs

Web: www.chichester.anglican.org Socials: @ChichesterDio

Welcome

Lead us in knowing, following and loving Jesus in the Diocese of Chichester

We have written this Statement of Needs knowing that our new bishop will read our words. This has led us to ensure that this whole process has been undergirded by prayer, helping us to see our work as a discernment rather than a recruitment exercise. It has been frequently mentioned that 'God already knows who our next bishop will be' and we hope that this Statement of Needs speaks into the heart of your own discernment.

In the following pages, you will gain a rich insight into this diocese; her beautiful diversity of faith, geography, and demography across the four archdeaconries. You will be able to see our existing plans for growth, the serious challenges we face and the fervent hopes we hold. We bring this document to you with honesty, integrity and humility.

We want you to know how this diocese often surprises people when they spend time here. We have such a firm sense of being a diverse household of faith; the faith and commitment are to be found among our diocesan staff, our clergy, our schools, our parishes, our cathedral, and everyone who makes up the Body of Christ. We take seriously, joyfully and reverently our call to pray and serve, and we are praying for an inspirational bishop who will lead us into an even more confident and outward-looking expression of our shared faith.

We think it tells you much about our collective hope, that the five most important characteristics shared by the nearly 2,000 people who completed the diocesan survey were that our new bishop be prayerful, humble, approachable, compassionate and faithful. We sincerely hope that this encourages you, if the Lord is placing the invitation on your heart, to say yes.

The Revd Arwen Folkes,
Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee

The Revd Arwen Folkes

The Vacancy in See Committee

Our Vacancy Prayer

Almighty God, giver of every
good gift:
We thank you for the faithful
ministry of Bishop Martin.
As we seek a new bishop to serve
our household of faith,
send your Holy Spirit to deepen
our trust in you,
and to guide all those who will
discern the person you are calling;
that we may know, love, and
follow Jesus, today and always.
Amen.

The Diocese on a page

We are a distinctive and historically rooted diocese, balancing ancient Christian heritage with a forward-looking commitment to mission and collaboration across the household of faith.

Overview of the Diocese

681

The Diocese of Chichester traces its origins to 681, when it was founded as the Diocese of Selsey. Its early centre was Selsey Abbey until 1075, when the episcopal seat was moved to Chichester.

1108

This relocation led to the construction of Chichester Cathedral, which has remained the Mother Church of the diocese ever since.

2025

We celebrated our 950th Anniversary in 2025.

Watch our 950 Celebrations

We continue to prioritise placing as many clergy in parishes as we can and have sustained parochial ministry at around 18% higher than the Church of England at large.

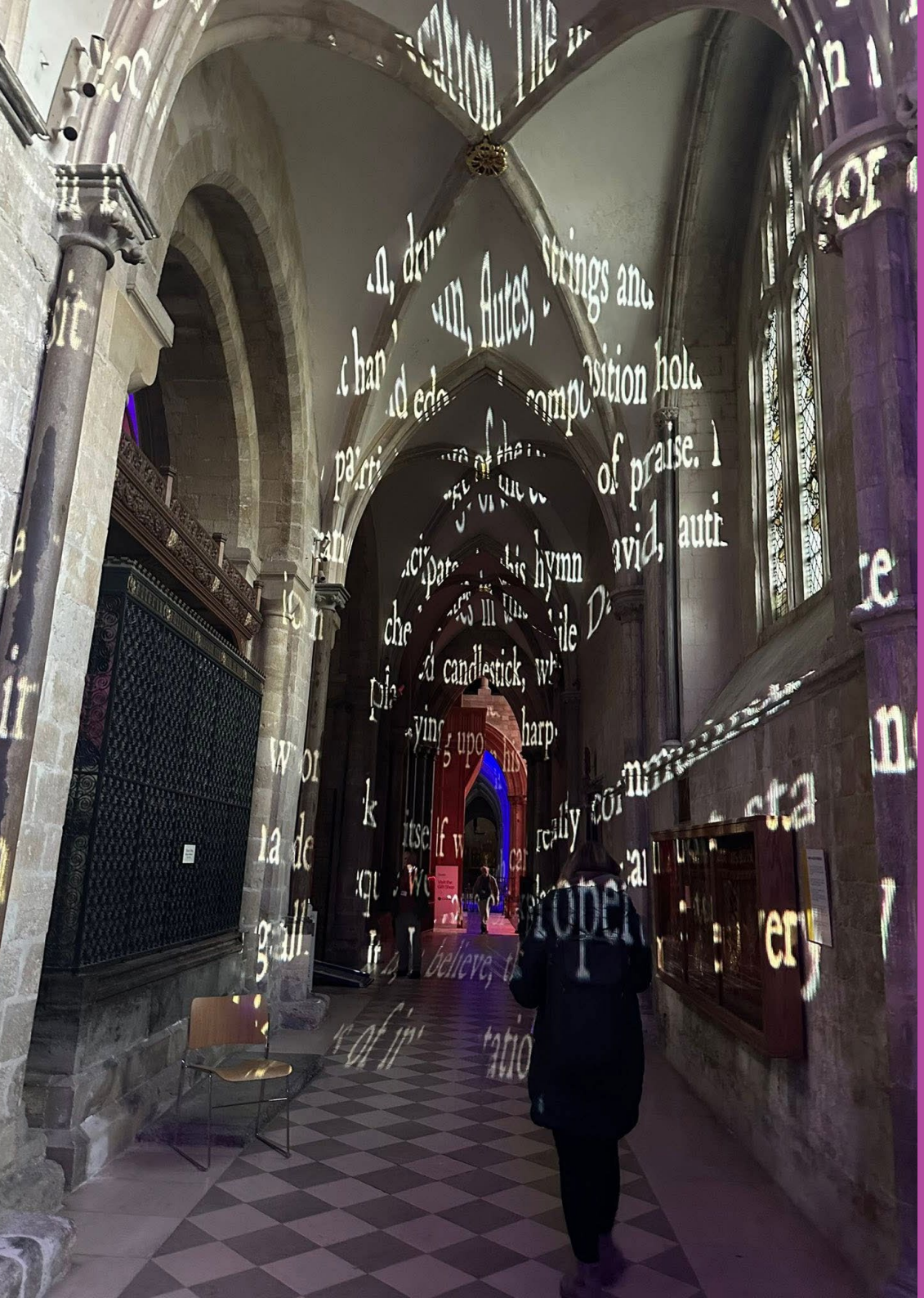
Across the four archdeaconries, 40,000 people form our worshipping community – engaging Sunday by Sunday through a rich variety of worship, with most Anglican traditions well represented. In terms of attendance, Chichester is the third-largest diocese in the Church of England.

Our Diocesan Growth Strategy, approved by Diocesan Synod in March 2025, has been successful in attracting around £11 million of national funding to resource it. We hope and pray that under God's grace, we might see a numerically larger diocese in 2032 than in 2023. It has been encouraging to see an increase in Confirmations in 2025 and 2026, as an indication of the growth we long for.

Spanning the rolling chalk hills of the South Downs, miles of varied coastline with harbours and marinas, and vibrant towns and cities, the diocese offers some of the most beautiful countryside in England. The South Downs National Park stretches across both counties, providing extensive walking routes, panoramic views and protected landscapes. We are fortunate to have an abundance of historic towns, picturesque villages, stately homes and gardens, as well as excellent art galleries, museums and heritage sites that reflect the long and fascinating history of Sussex as a whole.

Both East and West Sussex have inspired writers across the generations – including Rudyard Kipling, Henry James and AA Milne. The artistic heritage is equally strong, with figures such as JMW Turner, John Piper and Eric Ravilious capturing the landscape, alongside the Bloomsbury Group at Charleston Farmhouse. Composers such as Elgar and Vaughan Williams found inspiration here. Across both counties there is also a vibrant cultural scene, with numerous local music, art and literary festivals held throughout the year in towns and villages alike.

WINCHESTER
GUILDFORD
SOUTHWARK
ROCHESTER
CANTERBURY
PORTSMOUTH
CRAWLEY
EAST GRINSTEAD
HORSHAM
HORSHAM archdeaconry
HAYWARDS HEATH
CROWBOROUGH
SOUTH DOWNS National Park
MIDHURST
PETWORTH
CHICHESTER archdeaconry
ARUNDEL
PULBOROUGH
BURGESS HILL
HASTINGS archdeaconry
RYE
HASTINGS
CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL
BOSHAM
CHICHESTER
LITTLEHAMPTON
WORTHING
BRIGHTON & HOVE
LEWES
BRIGHTON & LEWES archdeaconry
King Charles III
England coast path
BEXHILL
EASTBOURNE
BOGNOR REGIS
SELSEY



Our hopes and prayers for our next bishop

Our hope and prayer is that our next bishop will be

Of deep faith:

prayerful, Spirit-filled, holy and Christ-centred. Someone who knows, loves and follows Jesus. Led by the Holy Spirit, known for preaching the gospel and teaching the Christian faith with clarity and joy, and able to speak of their own faith in a way which inspires others.

Of good and generous character:

approachable, humble, kind and compassionate. Visible, engaged, and able to model a life of godly wisdom and integrity; willing to be present in parish life across the geographical breadth of the diocese, and able to minister flexibly in different contexts and traditions.

A gifted pastor:

loving, nurturing, supportive and relational, with a priority to care for clergy and lay people across the diocese, yet willing to make and live with the consequences of difficult decisions and administer discipline where required. Someone who loves deeply and listens well to a whole range of voices, especially the marginalised.

An apostolic leader:

visionary, inspiring, evangelistic and empowering, committed to supporting and empowering our parishes to grow in breadth and depth, with a track record of leading a parish church in healthy church growth. Someone who promotes unity, partnership and confidence in the gospel, and is able to lead with courage, compassion and integrity where there is disagreement - helping us to live generously and faithfully with difference.

Who is called and ready for a role which:

1

requires theological depth, engaging thoughtfully with contemporary issues in the light of scripture, and communicating effectively in a variety of different settings to diverse audiences. Our new bishop should be equipped to offer leadership within and beyond the Church community.

2

is complex and often demanding. Our new bishop will need the capacity to hold and work with the considerable volume and variety of issues that naturally arise in a diocese of this size.

3

sustains and builds on the progress in safeguarding we have made as a diocese over the past 15 years. Our new bishop will have experience in this area with a record of fostering a culture of continuous improvement towards safeguarding excellence.

We seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and so have decided that the appointment should be open to candidates who have differing views on the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate, within the parameters set by the Five Guiding Principles.

Many parishes and people across Chichester Diocese affirm women's priestly and episcopal ministry. Ordained women are currently under-represented within our diocese compared with other dioceses. We welcome all suitably qualified candidates.

The Bishop's Chapel

Our Diocese

Our diocese of 345 parishes is essentially coterminous with the counties of East and West Sussex, with three parishes extending into Kent, Hampshire and Surrey. The diocese is divided into four archdeaconries.

Population, Geography and Economy

1.7 million people live in the diocese

345 parishes, 447 churches

46% of the diocesan population identify as Christian

Around 1.7 million people live in the diocese, based on 2021 Census results. Whilst most parishes are rural, the majority of the population live in the towns. Overall:

- The population is slightly skewed older (median age 42 compared with 40 for England), with 21.9% aged over 65 compared with 18.6% for England as a whole.
- Around 46% of the diocesan population identifies as Christian, in line with the average for the UK. However, this masks two opposite trends of very low identification in Brighton & Hove (22.6%) and higher 'cultural Christianity' in rural Sussex.
- Ethnic diversity across the diocese is below the national average (around 10% GMH compared with 18% for England) but it is above average in Brighton & Hove (26.1%).
- There are pockets of significant social deprivation, notably along the coastal strip in Hastings, Brighton & Hove and Littlehampton. 281,000 people live in the 46 of our parishes which are in the most deprived 20% of parishes nationally.

Sussex (comprising East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove) has a rich and varied landscape that combines coastal, rural and urban environments. At its heart are the South Downs, a distinctive range of rolling chalk hills stretching east to west across both counties, forming part of the 628 square miles of the South Downs National Park. To the north lies the Weald, a contrasting landscape of gently undulating hills, ancient woodland and fertile farmland, historically significant for agriculture and industry. Between the Downs and the coast is a mix of river valleys and low-lying plains, through which rivers such as the Arun, Adur, Ouse and Cuckmere flow into the English Channel.

The Sussex coastline is equally diverse, ranging from the dramatic white chalk cliffs of the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head in East Sussex to long shingle and sandy beaches, tidal estuaries and harbours such as Chichester and Shoreham in West Sussex.

The Sussex economy combines traditional rural industries with modern innovation, contributing to a resilient and balanced regional economy. Brighton & Hove is a major economic centre, known for its strong digital, creative and tourism sectors, alongside a vibrant hospitality industry. Across East and West Sussex, key industries include agriculture, viticulture, manufacturing, and professional services. Coastal towns benefit from tourism and maritime activity, while inland areas support farming and small enterprises. The economy of the Crawley area is significantly impacted by the presence of Gatwick Airport just beyond the northern edge of the diocese.

Local government in Sussex is currently undergoing a massive reorganisation as part of a national shift away from two-tier systems toward unitary authorities. As with many authorities, the 2026 local election results showed a marked departure from historic results. The 18 Sussex MPs show a spread of political parties: six Conservative, six Labour, five Lib Dem and one Green.

Family Support Work, our diocesan charity, supports 600 families a year across the Diocese. The team of qualified practitioners help with issues such as deprivation, educational needs, food and fuel poverty, mental and physical wellbeing.

The Archdeaconry of Brighton and Lewes

The archdeaconry of Brighton and Lewes is comprised of three deaneries and runs from Shoreham to Seaford along the coast and inland to the South Downs area surrounding Lewes. Its most densely populated area, Brighton & Hove is one of the most urban areas within the Diocese. It has closely situated parishes and a highly mobile population, shaped by significant numbers of students, private renters and tourists. It has a significant concentration of listed large church buildings, many Victorian.

408,000 population

70 parishes

86 churches

1,400 U18 (17% of Worshipping Community)

8,100 All Age Worshipping Community (2.0% of Population)

Hove Deanery straddles the boundary between West Sussex and the unitary authority of Brighton & Hove. The churches of Hove Deanery faithfully serve a variety of communities. Shoreham has history and character. Fishersgate and Portslade have docks and cement works, terraced housing and rapidly erected blocks of flats. Hove has cafés in abundance, Regency buildings the colour of custard creams and the seafront lawns. Working class neighbourhoods, entrepreneurial culture, and classic seaside suburbia are all present here. 11 benefices are served by 13 priests. Hove is home to three synagogues and three mosques and Islamic cultural centres. The Jewish community has felt under pressure in recent times, but interfaith relationships are supportive.

It is not easy to see where Hove gives way to Brighton, but east of Palmeira Square, as Western Road leads into the city centre, the atmosphere becomes more cosmopolitan: Shisha bars, Turkish barbers, and Middle Eastern grocery stores reflect Brighton's relatively high ethnic diversity within Sussex.

Brighton is alternative, culturally diverse, and politically active, represented by a Green MP. Events such as the Brighton Fringe, Brighton Pride, Brighton & Hove Albion, and the Royal Pavilion contribute to a strong sense of vibrancy. Support by many Churches for Pride and wider LGBTQ+ inclusivity is highly valued. The two universities add further energy. There is a more challenging side: rates of drug use and suicide are above the UK average, and in outer estates (such as Moulsecoomb and Whitehawk), some children have never visited the beach despite living nearby. Although sometimes described as 'godless' in the media, census data from 2011 and 2021 require more careful interpretation.

The city has long been a centre for Anglo-Catholic worship, shaped by Arthur Wagner's nineteenth-century vision and its Tractarian churches. Church life in Brighton has been strengthened in the past decade through an apostolic partnership, initially with the HTB network. Much missional activity across Brighton & Hove has relied on SDF funding, raising questions about medium-term sustainability.
Lewes, Sussex's historic county town, sits at the heart of the Deanery of Lewes & Seaford and has a strong tradition of independent thought emanating from 18th Century resident, Thomas Paine. Each year, Bonfire Night attracts thousands, commemorating the seventeen Protestant martyrs burned there in the 1550s.

Along the coast, deprivation is evident in the parishes of Peacehaven, Newhaven, and Denton, while inland, many—though not all—villages are more affluent. The deanery is also home to significant cultural venues, including Charleston Farmhouse, once home to the Bloomsbury Group, and the internationally renowned Glyndebourne Opera. There are 35 churches in the deanery, seventeen in villages with populations below 700. The energy and commitment needed to engage with this varied context—spanning post-war urban development and historic downland communities—are evident throughout the deanery.

Bishop Will with local navy cadets

The Archdeaconry of Chichester

The Archdeaconry of Chichester is a diverse and distinctive part of the Diocese, rich in history and encompassing the cathedral city; stretching across the South Downs and rural market towns; to the growing coastal communities of West Sussex. It comprises seven deaneries: Arundel & Bognor, Chichester, Midhurst, Petworth, Storrington, Westbourne and Worthing.

462,000 population

112 parishes

151 churches

2,100 U18 (2.4% of Worshipping Community)

11,100 All Age Worshipping Community (17% of Population)

More than 460,000 people live in the archdeaconry, across a wide range of contexts. They are served through 112 parishes and 151 churches. Many benefices consist of two or more churches, maintained by strong collaborative ministry including stipendiary, self-supporting and retired clergy, and licensed lay ministers, who all make an important contribution to the life of the Church in the area.

The archdeaconry contains a rich variety of churches, many of them historic buildings that continue to serve as centres of worship, Christian witness and community life. The breadth of Anglican worship is reflected across the archdeaconry, including catholic, evangelical, charismatic and central church traditions. This diversity of tradition is valued as a strength, enriching the mission, ministry and spiritual character of the archdeaconry.

The area encompasses areas of considerable affluence, including two resident dukes. Rolls Royce HQ and Goodwood are both big employers in the area. However, there are also significant economic and social challenges across the archdeaconry, with areas of deprivation in the coastal towns of Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Worthing particularly. Like many places, rural communities face the challenges of isolation, ageing populations, limited public transport, and access to services, as well as the sustainability of ministry across dispersed settlements.

The archdeaconry is well served culturally with Chichester hosting its own theatre and the Pallant art gallery, and several local sites of historical interest, including a Roman villa, outdoor museum and Arundel Castle. West Wittering and Selsey are popular but different seaside destinations, and Chichester Harbour is well known for abundant wildlife and sailing.

The area also includes the University of Chichester, five hospitals, three hospices and the Roman Catholic cathedral of Arundel. Church schools – comprising 42 at primary level plus two at secondary (Bishop Luffa School in Chichester and Davison High School in Worthing) - are deeply embedded within local communities and remain a significant part of the Church's mission and witness. There are many significant places for chaplaincy ministry, including Bishop Luffa School and Ford Prison.

The archdeaconry is experiencing significant housing growth, particularly along the coastal plain and around larger settlements, bringing both opportunities and challenges for mission, ministry and community engagement. Alongside this growth, the archdeaconry continues to value its rural heritage, historic market towns and villages, and the strong sense of community that characterises much of life within the South Downs National Park.

The archdeaconry seeks to build on its strong parish tradition, serving local communities faithfully whilst sharing the gospel afresh in a changing society.

The Archdeaconry of Hastings

Coastal towns, ancient villages and expanding communities combine to give this archdeaconry its distinctive character, stretching from the coastal towns of Eastbourne, Bexhill, Hastings and Rye to the rural communities of the High Weald and Ashdown Forest.

441,000 population

110 parishes

135 churches

1,200 U18 (13% of Worshipping Community)

9,500 All Age Worshipping Community (2.1% of Population)

Sea Baptism at Holy Trinity Hastings

Hastings, Rotherfield, Rye and Uckfield include significant contrasts of geography, economy and social context. There are some areas of affluence and commuter growth alongside communities experiencing profound deprivation, particularly in Hastings and parts of the coastal strip. Rural poverty and isolation, ageing populations, housing pressures, and changing patterns of employment are common challenges across the archdeaconry. Tourism, agriculture, fishing, education and service industries all play important roles in the local economy.

The many historic villages and market towns in the archdeaconry have deeply rooted and highly valued local identities. The area's history, famously depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry, will come into renewed prominence during 2026–27 when the tapestry is displayed at the British Museum. Meanwhile, new housing growth around places such as Hailsham, Uckfield and Crowborough is reshaping some communities.

Worshipping communities range across the breadth of Anglican tradition, from Conservative Evangelical to Liberal Catholic and Traditional Catholic expressions, with many churches occupying a broad middle ground. Many churches are found at the centre of the life of their communities through their schools' work, pastoral care, foodbanks, debt advice, youth ministry and children's work, support for older people and civic engagement. We are very proud of our church schools and chaplaincies.

The archdeaconry combines significant strengths with real challenges. Many congregations demonstrate resilience, generosity and strong local commitment, and there are encouraging signs of growth, renewed interest in faith and creative mission initiatives. At the same time, churches face pressures around clergy vacancies, finance, ongoing pastoral re-organisation, volunteer capacity, building maintenance and demographic change. In both the more rural and more urban parts of the archdeaconry, there is a strong desire to serve local communities faithfully. In their different ways, the churches of Hastings Archdeaconry each seek to proclaim the gospel with confidence, work for the flourishing of the Church, and serve both God and neighbour.

The Archdeaconry of Horsham

The Archdeaconry of Horsham, first created in 1975, now encompasses the four deaneries of Cuckfield, East Grinstead, Horsham and Hurst, and covers the central part of the diocese to the north of the South Downs. The archdeaconry includes some of the larger commuter-belt communities of Crawley, Haywards Heath, Horsham and Burgess Hill, alongside the surrounding rural areas. Within this blend of urban and rural life, there is also a rich diversity of people, cultures, faiths and styles of worship.

392,000 population

53 parishes

75 churches

1,700 U18 (20% of Worshipping Community)

8,600 All Age Worshipping Community (2.2% of Population)

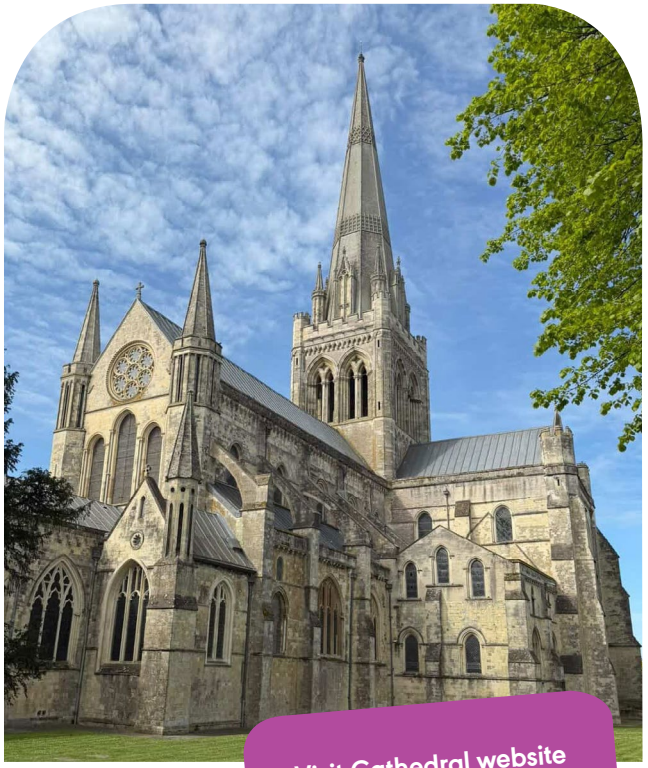
Alongside areas of considerable wealth and a higher-than-average number of independent schools, there are also communities facing significant hardship, including homelessness, and the challenges associated with drug and alcohol misuse. Across the archdeaconry, the church family is deeply aware of the challenges we face in the years ahead, both financially and through increasing pressure on already stretched human resources. While some of our churches are growing in number and becoming younger, others remain steady while growing older. Each has a distinctive and valued gift to offer: those with deep-rooted faithfulness stand alongside and support those who are new to the Faith.

One of the distinctive features of this archdeaconry is that churches with different traditions often flourish within the same community, and alongside one another as good neighbours. In East Grinstead, a town whose railway line was famously kept open and which continues to thrive as a commuter centre, there is both the town-centre church, with its lively community led by a pioneer minister and offering contemporary worship alongside civic services, and, just across the tracks, the enchanting St Mary's, another flourishing church with deeply traditional roots, where the solemnity of Anglo-Catholic worship sits alongside the much-loved annual Beer Festival. In Burgess Hill, another commuter town, the recently blended BMO of The Point Church and the Conservative Evangelical church family of St Andrew's has proved highly successful. This partnership has strengthened both congregations and brought a new building complex, providing generous space for worship and missional outreach as the community continues to grow. In the Crawley area, Gatwick Airport is one of the major employers, driving innovation and industry, while the town is one of the Diocese's most ethnically, religiously and socially diverse communities. The rural part of the diocese has a number of attractions including England's premier showjumping venue at Hickstead and the Bluebell Railway.

More centrally, the Ardingly Showground, officially known as the South of England Showground and operated by the South of England Agricultural Society, hosts major public exhibitions, agricultural shows, music festivals and private corporate events. At the southern edge of the archdeaconry lies the South Downs National Park.

Chichester Cathedral

Nestled beneath the South Downs in the heart of the historic Roman city, Chichester Cathedral has stood as a place of worship, welcome and inspiration for over 950 years.



Visit Cathedral website

In 1075, the decision was taken to move the seat of the bishop from Selsey to the more populous Roman settlement of Chichester.

The cathedral has borne witness to many significant moments in English history, including the siege of Chichester in 1642. It has also endured fires and the dramatic collapse of its spire in 1861, each event shaping its story and fabric.

A longstanding site of pilgrimage, focussed on the shrine of St Richard, the cathedral continues to welcome visitors from near and far. In the 950th anniversary year of 2025, it received over 55 pilgrimages and 103 group visits – almost all from around the diocese.

Each year, more than 200,000 people come through the cathedral's doors for worship, pilgrimage and tourism. Its daily rhythm of prayer and worship includes around 24 services each week, with Sunday services and daily Evensong sung by the cathedral choir.

Chichester Cathedral is sustained by a dedicated community of 42 staff and more than 310 active volunteers, who support every aspect of its life, from chaplaincy and bellringing to education and flower-arranging.

Through worship, music, education and the stewardship of its heritage, the cathedral serves the wider community, welcoming people of all backgrounds and at every stage of faith in its role as a registered charity.

Our Vision

Guided by St Richard of Chichester's vision of the Christian life, the cathedral seeks to know, love and follow Jesus Christ, and to make him known in the city, across the diocese, and to the many who visit. To fulfil this calling, it is committed to three central aims:

1. To grow in the love and knowledge of God.
2. To love one's neighbour as oneself.
3. To nurture, sustain and pass on what has been received.

Free to enter: Chichester Cathedral remains one of a diminishing number of English cathedrals that does not charge for entry. The Chapter is committed to maintaining free access so that all may encounter its worship and life.

Internationally recognised contemporary artworks: The cathedral is home to a significant collection of modern art, including works by Graham Sutherland, Marc Chagall and John Piper.

A very special Bell Tower: Its Bell Tower is a unique, Grade I listed medieval campanile, built around 1400. It is the only surviving detached medieval cathedral bell tower in England and is due to undergo some maintenance imminently as part of a broader restoration project.

Ministry / Apostolic Life

Ministry across the Diocese of Chichester is vibrant and varied, offering opportunities for clergy and lay people to share in mission and ministry, known in the diocese as 'apostolic life'.

The diocese has relatively recently introduced the category of Authorised Lay Ministry into its ministry offering. Authorised Lay Ministers are trained on one of 12 training programmes specially curated to meet a need within parish life, for example preaching, pastoral care, or care for creation and eco church. With nearly 350 ministers authorised over the last three years, including 72 Worship ALMS, attention and focus is being paid to how to continue to develop and encourage them in their ministry.

The diocese also has 150 licensed Readers. Reader Ministry is currently under review as we consider how Readers are best deployed, and how to attract a younger generation of lay people into this service. The Bishop's Certificate, launched in January 2026, has attracted more than 80 participants from across the diocese. In addition, monthly lay events, often held online, provide engaging teaching, discussion, and opportunities for theological reflection.

Alongside the ministry of lay people, the Diocese of Chichester rejoices in the ministry of its clergy of all types and varieties. We want every member of the clergy to thrive and grow their churches. One way in which we support our parish clergy in their ministry is by maintaining a high ratio of clergy to population. This gives clergy the best chance to make an impact in their communities and to grow their church.

As of the end of April 2026, we have 242 stipendiary clergy people working in the diocese – of whom:

May Camp seminar

196 are full-time and 46 (19%) are part-time.

50 are female (20%) and 192 are male.

15% are under 40, and 34% are over 60.

We also have 42 house for duty posts, of which 31 have incumbent status and 11 serve as associate clergy.

We are blessed also by the ministry of a significant number of ordained Chaplains and lay people serving in Chaplaincy in a wide range of healthcare, education and emergency services contexts. They bring rich perspective to diocesan life and often serve parish churches in addition to their chaplaincy work.

The self-supporting and retired clergy of the diocese are a vital source of ministry and wisdom. The support they give to parish clergy is much appreciated.

As of May 2026, the vocations team was working with 31 active early-stage enquirers, 23 candidates in formal discernment and nine ordinands in training.

The Shared Discernment Process (SDP) for ordained ministry and the religious life is overseen by the Diocesan Director of Ordinands and supported by the Deputy DDO and an administrator. The wider vocations team of volunteers includes 10 assistant DDOs and nine Vocations Advisers.
These are predominantly clergy (parish-based and chaplains), geographically spread across the diocese and representing different traditions.

The vocations team holds an annual diocesan vocations day to coincide with Vocation Sunday (40 attendees in 2026). The team attends and speaks at groups across the diocese, including May Camp (youth), deanery synods, chapter meetings and diocesan events and celebrations.

After their initial training, candidates are ordained to the diaconate and move into Initial Ministerial Education Phase Two (years 4–7), which is coordinated by the Director of Apostolic Life in partnership with St Augustine's College.

After their first parish posting, those moving into posts of responsibility are invited to join a three-year continuing ministerial development programme to support them through the transition. Clergy undergo MDR every two years enabling them to thrive and flourish; further opportunities for this come through CMD.

All the clergy of the diocese can access support from the Wellbeing for Clergy and Families service (WCF) in the form of face-to-face visits, phone calls, or occasionally, when needed, Traumatic Event Debriefing. Whenever helpful, clergy are signposted to further resources within the diocese (such as Clergy HR) or support from external agencies. The WCF counselling service currently commissions 15 professional counsellors, working across the breadth of the diocese. These include specialists in children's therapy and work with neurodiversity.

A new development this year has been the design and delivery of conflict transformation skills training.

Deacons at their ordination

Baptism

Parish Support

The team at Church House in Hove is focused on supporting our parishes and schools. Under the leadership of the Diocesan Secretary, teams include:

Apostolic Life

supporting ministers and ministry, both lay and ordained, from vocation and throughout ministry. The Wellbeing Service is a part of this team.

Church Buildings

helping parishes steward the 447 church buildings in the diocese. This team also leads on the Mission and Pastoral work, and includes fundraising support to parishes and a nationally funded Church Buildings Support Officer.

Education

servicing the 150 Church schools across the diocese. This includes a team of School Effectiveness Officers.

Finance

accounting, budgeting and reporting for the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) and supporting parishes with their financial challenges, as well as acting as Custodian Trustee for £25 million of parish trusts.

HR

caring for our employees and officeholders.

Parish Support

providing a range of practical help with governance, finance, generosity, youth and children's work and parish development.

Property

maintaining our 227 clergy homes and looking after our glebe properties and closed churches.

Safeguarding

working on developing parishes' capability and on managing individual cases.

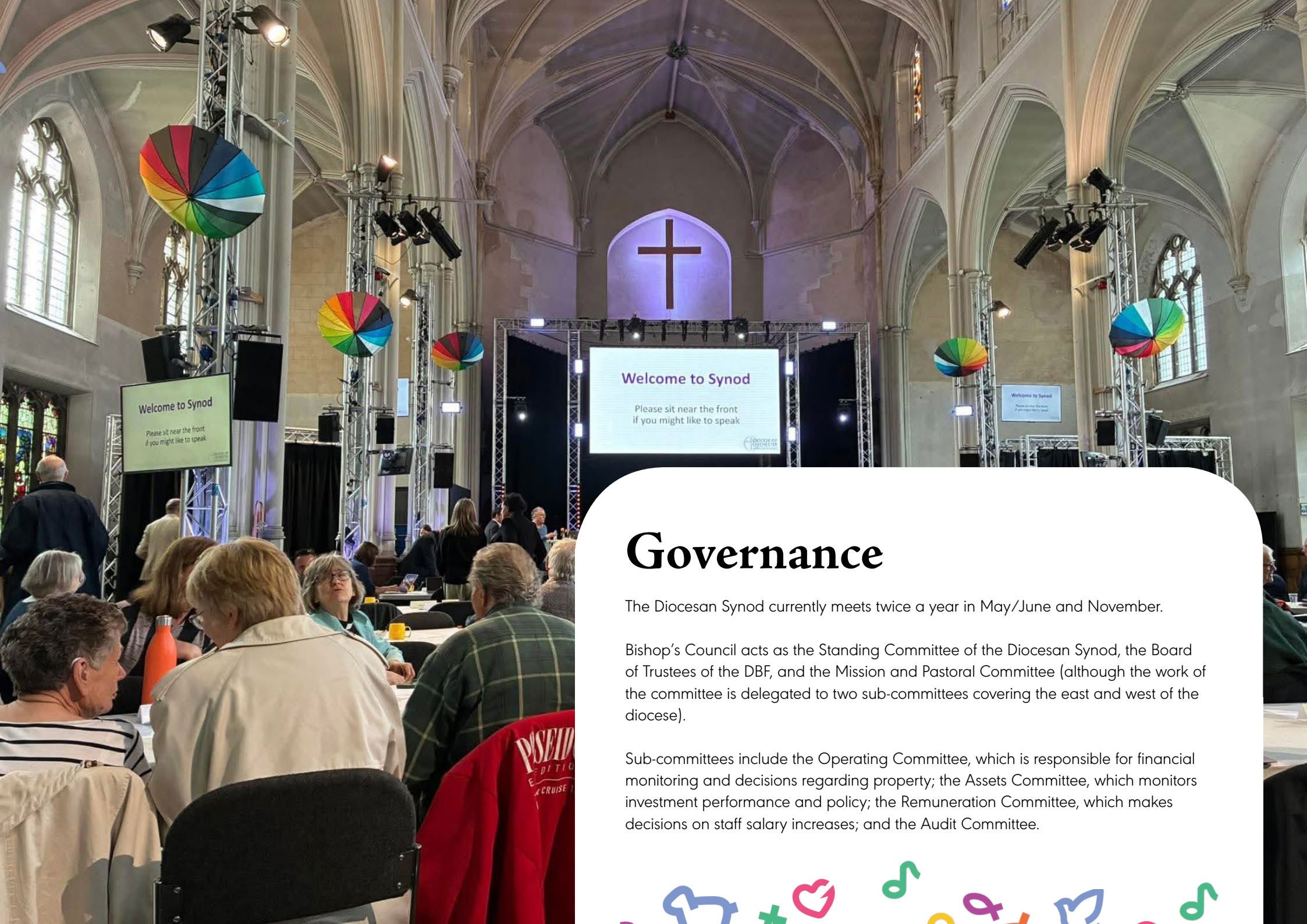
The Bishop's Staff

The team supporting the Bishop of Chichester is led by a Chief of Staff, together with the PA to the Bishop, the Palace Administrator, the Appointments Secretary & Clergy HR Officer, the Clergy HR & Appointments Administrator and the PTO & Licensed Clergy Administrator. The team is based at the Bishop's Palace in Chichester.

The bishop's wider staff group, meeting around eight times a year, is led by the Bishop of Chichester, together with the Suffragan Bishops, the Archdeacons, the Dean, the Diocesan Secretary, the Dean of Women's Ministry, the Associate Archdeacon for Diversity & Inclusion, the Director of Safeguarding and the Bishop's Chief of Staff.

The Bishop's Palace

The Bishop of Chichester lives in the Bishop's Palace, a medieval building situated next to the Cathedral at the western end of the diocese. It provides an excellent base for hospitality as well as differentiated space for residential and office use.



Governance

The Diocesan Synod currently meets twice a year in May/June and November.

Bishop's Council acts as the Standing Committee of the Diocesan Synod, the Board of Trustees of the DBF, and the Mission and Pastoral Committee (although the work of the committee is delegated to two sub-committees covering the east and west of the diocese).

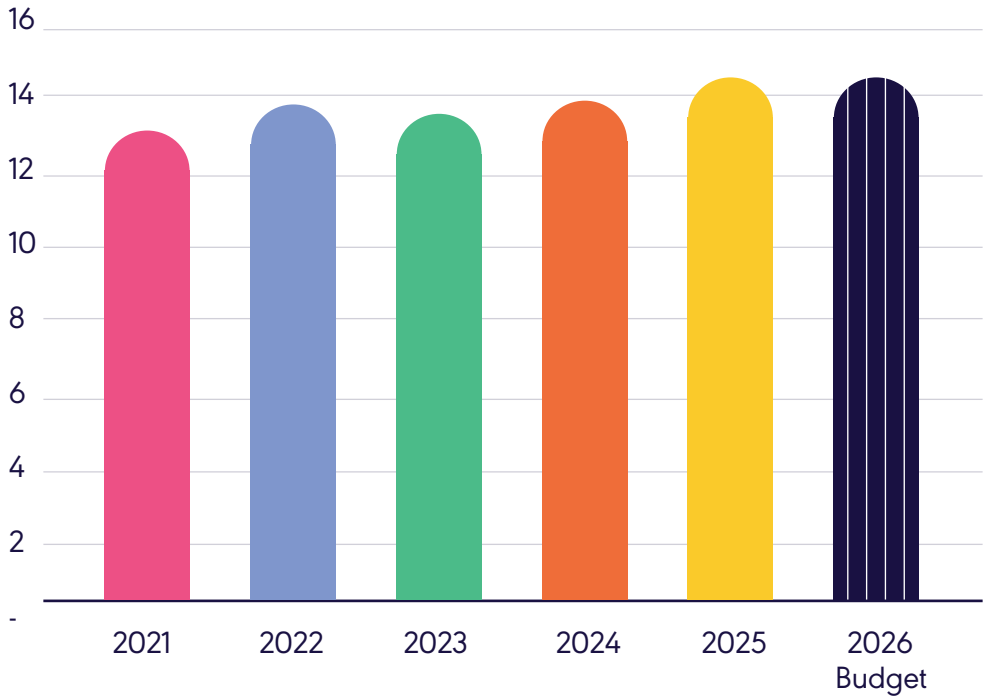
Sub-committees include the Operating Committee, which is responsible for financial monitoring and decisions regarding property; the Assets Committee, which monitors investment performance and policy; the Remuneration Committee, which makes decisions on staff salary increases; and the Audit Committee.

Finance and Resources

Although we face the ongoing challenge of an annual budget showing greater expenditure than income, the extent of our operating deficit has been lower than that of many other dioceses. The largest financial pressure arises from an ongoing mismatch between the annual rise in stipends and salaries and the corresponding change in parish share, which forms the major part of our income.

We are seeking to steward our resources actively, and Bishop's Council is considering adopting a Total Return approach to the Clergy Stipends fund, although this is only likely to match historic income levels rather than increase them. We are part-way through a programme of converting surplus housing stock into equities to obtain a higher long-term average yield.

Parish share receipts 2021-2026:



Size of operating deficit 2021-2026:

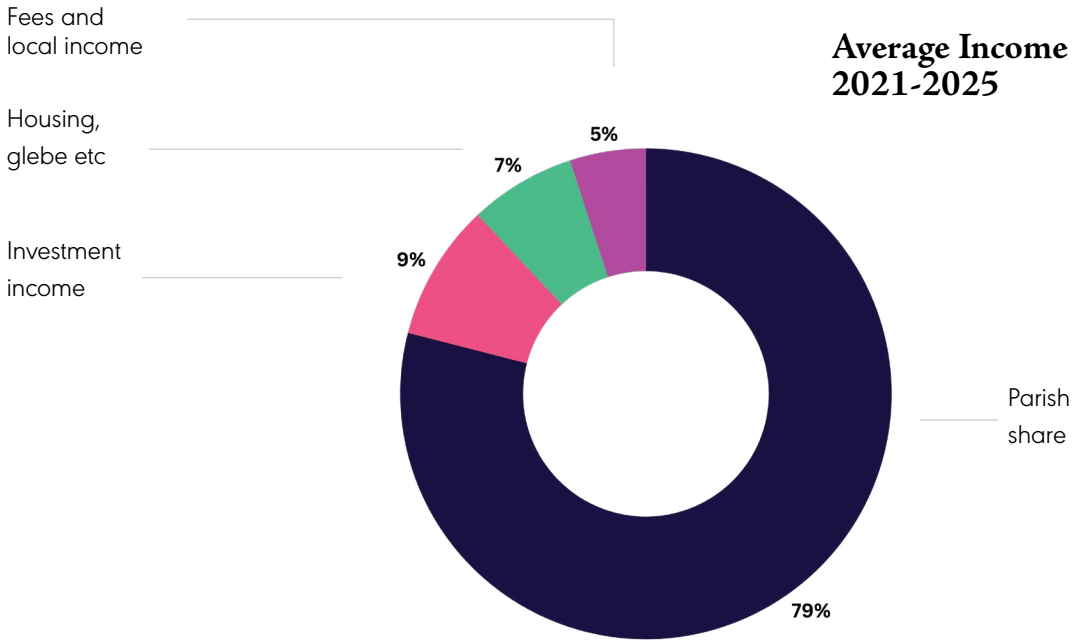
Our Parish Share system informs parishes of the average Parish Ministry Cost (PMC) of the ministry allocated to their benefice and invites a contribution towards the costs of ministry across the whole household of faith. We do not expect our most deprived parishes to be able to contribute the whole of their PMC, and we are blessed to receive around £1 million income from the Clergy Stipends fund to support them. Our principal challenge is to maintain growth in Parish Share, with the annual increase over the past 10 years averaging just 0.6%.

23 parishes currently make use of a dedicated restricted fund offered by the diocese to ringfence their Parish Share soley for the support of ministry aligned with a traditional view of marriage. Contributions to the fund in 2025 totalled £1.64 million. No parish is refusing to contribute parish share.

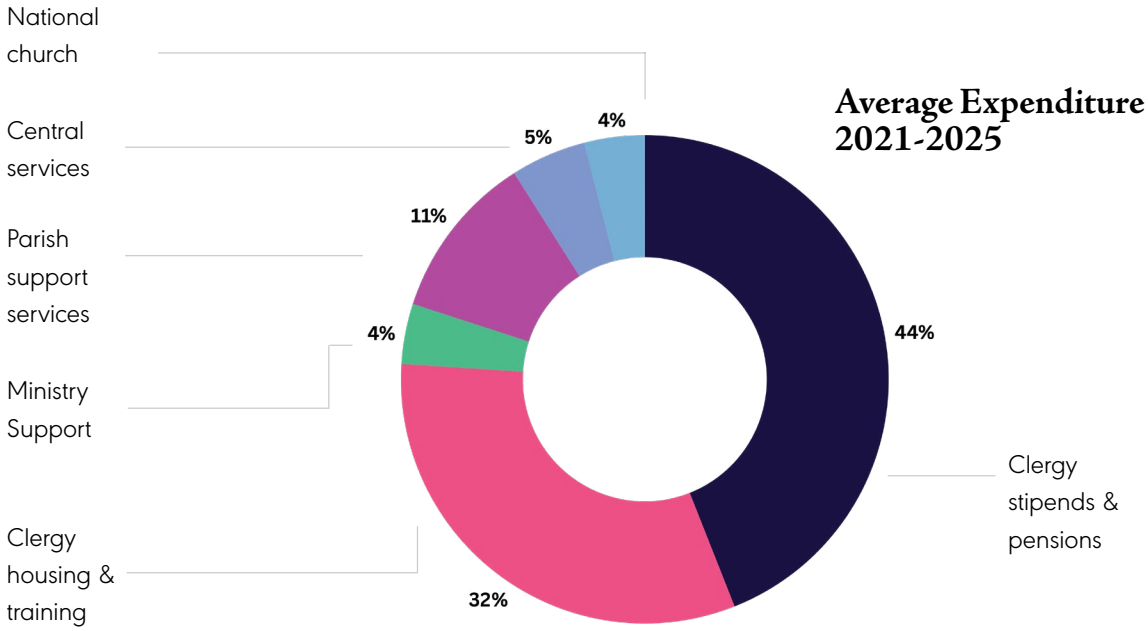
A long-standing series of autumn deanery meetings allows the Church House team to engage with parishes each year on the plans and challenges for the year ahead.

Click to read 2025 Report and Accounts

Average Income 2021-2025



Average Expenditure 2021-2025



Church Schools

School leavers' service

There are **154** Church of England schools across the diocese: a mix of **114** maintained schools across three local authorities; **40** academies within eight Multi Academy Trusts and one stand-alone academy. **37** schools have entered into a formal federation. These schools educate approximately **38,500** children and young people.

Currently, 90% of schools are rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, and 98% of schools have been judged by SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) to be living up to their foundation as a Church school, enabling both pupils and adults to flourish through their vision and practice.

The Education team, on behalf of the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE), appoints Foundation Governors to all Church schools. There are currently 281 Foundation Governors serving Church of England schools in the diocese. The team provides training for both school leaders and governors around SIAMS, RE, Collective Worship and Spirituality. We also invest significantly in the nurture and development of Heads who are new to Church schools each year.

The DBE is unincorporated and operates as a committee of the DBF. It meets six times per year to ensure that the statutory functions as prescribed under the DBE Measure 2021 are being fulfilled. Alongside this statutory role, the DBE has a key focus on the sustainability and viability of small and rural schools, as well as providing distinct opportunities for schools to strengthen their relationships with their local church.

The Education team is bold in its ambition that schools should enable children to 'know, love and follow Jesus'. As such, we seek opportunities to be involved in national initiatives. We are proud to be the first Church of England diocese to partner with the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation (CYMFED), to make the Faith in Action Awards available to our pupils. Equally, we have also partnered with the Royal Society of Church Music to make Hymnpact! available to all Church of England schools across the diocese, and we have been successful in securing a Growing Faith Hub project to develop a resource for families to explore faith together in an after-school club context.

Safeguarding

The history of safeguarding in the Diocese of Chichester is well-known, having been selected in 2018 as the case study for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse's investigation of the Church of England. Whilst IICSA was critical of the past, the inquiry was positive about the present, noting the high level of co-working with the statutory safeguarding authorities and the extent of support offered to survivors of abuse, both of which were cited as exemplars of national best practice.

More recently, in 2025, INEQE praised the continued improvement in the diocese's safeguarding culture and practice: the 'overwhelming majority' of the 600+ respondents to their survey said that a safeguarding culture is now 'firmly embedded'.

This consistent trajectory of progress over the last 18 years – despite enormous challenges and amidst unprecedented scrutiny – reflects the very high level of teamwork between senior clergy in the diocese, senior staff in the DBF, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) and our parishes. It also reflects the extent to which the statutory safeguarding authorities have been willing to engage with us in our efforts to improve all aspects of our safeguarding practice and provision. This 'teamwork' approach is very much a part of the safeguarding atmosphere across the diocese. The DST balances its work between casework and development, with a particular focus on developing healthy and preventative cultures in our parishes. The DST is supported by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, chaired by an independent safeguarding expert with members drawn from the statutory safeguarding agencies across Sussex.

The DST recently began a structured programme of induction, support and coordination of the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) community throughout Sussex. This reflects the level of dedication and enthusiasm amongst PSOs, who remain exceptionally committed to continued improvement of safeguarding in their parishes. This commitment is further reflected by attendance at training – over 2,500 people in the diocese completed at least one safeguarding training module in 2025 – and by the very successful rollout of the Parish Dashboard in 2025.

Referrals to the DST remain high, with the majority arising from parishes that have observed safeguarding concerns within their congregation or community and who seek further advice on how to respond. This reflects the ongoing diocesan commitment to see safeguarding as gospel work, arising from the core of our mission to be 'salt and light' in our communities.

PSO induction day at Church House, Hove

Opportunities and Challenges

Our Vision

Echoing the prayer of St Richard of Chichester, our diocesan vision is to see more and more people across Sussex come to know, love and follow Jesus.

Our 'Year of' series, 'Living the Mystery of Faith' has focused attention on aspects of the Christian life, exploring prayer, vocation, the Bible, the Old and New Testaments and culminating in a Year of Faith in 2025.

2025 also marked the 950th anniversary of the relocation of the cathedral from Selsey to Chichester and the 1700th Anniversary of the Nicene Creed. This created the opportunity for a four-day residential clergy conference in Canterbury.

Over the next four years, the 'Living the Mystery of Faith' series will turn to the four portraits of Jesus provided by the gospel writers, beginning in 2026 with the Gospel of Matthew.

Our Priorities: Inspiring Prayer and Worship

Through prayer and worship, we learn to love God with heart, soul and mind, and it is through them that this love is expressed and deepened. Newcomers to a church should not only find a welcoming and loving community, but also encounter the living God. That encounter in word and sacrament is central to the Church's identity and mission, shaping disciples who will come to know, love and follow Jesus.

As a diocese, we remain committed to the parish system with continued provision of high-quality ministry of word and sacrament, in order that the people of God are gathered, fed, formed and sent out confidently in mission. We currently have a level of stipendiary ministry in relation to population 18% higher than the Church of England as a whole, with one full-time equivalent priest for every 7,000 people in the diocese. They are supported by an increasing number of authorised and licensed lay ministers. In some of our churches, long years of faithful service have been accompanied by smaller congregations. Limited capacity and patterns of worship can cause newcomers to struggle to recognise the presence of God in the worshipping life of the church. Part of this priority, therefore, is to help churches renew their confidence in the gospel, in part through having a programme of revitalisation as part of our growth strategy.

A further component of the plan is to become more effective at enabling those who encounter the Church to find a pathway to faith. We have developed a new catechetical resource to support baptism and confirmation preparation, and to support ongoing formation. The past two years (2025 and 2026) have seen increased numbers of candidates for confirmation.

St Michael's, Eastbourne

Family Camp 2026

St Bartholomew's Church, Brighton

Our Priorities: Engaging Children and Young People

Children and young people are the heartbeat of a growing church. Yet across Sussex, their presence in worship has declined sharply, with average weekly attendance among under-16s now less than half what it was 12 years ago. One of our top three priorities is to seek growth by investing in paid children, youth and families' workers (CY&F) and equipping volunteers to nurture faith from toddler to teenage years.

This approach is grounded in strong evidence. National research demonstrates that employing CY&F workers leads to measurable increases in participation, while diocesan data shows even stronger growth locally. In some contexts, growth rates of over 100% have been achieved when CY&F ministry is well supported. We plan to increase the number of churches with paid children's and youth workers from around 65 to 100, and by prioritising missional outreach, we aim to make church a place of joy, belonging, and spiritual discovery for the next generation.

At its heart, the plan builds on a clear and positive vision: that well-resourced CY&F ministry not only transforms the lives of children and young people, but also renews the wider church by drawing in families and helping to form a younger, more representative community.

This is not only about numbers – it's about forming lifelong disciples and ensuring our churches are more inter-generational, better reflecting the communities they serve. When children and families thrive in faith, the whole church flourishes.

The plan includes building stronger links with schools, supporting families in sharing faith at home, and creating pathways that help young people explore and grow in faith.

Training pathways for CY&F workers have been developed and piloted and are now being rolled out. We recognise that recruiting enough workers will be challenging and are giving focused attention to this.

Our Diocesan May Camp 2026 drew 300 young people to an inspiring weekend of worship, talks, games and activities.

Click here to watch video

More than 120 volunteers from several churches participated in a week-long mission to Steyning Grammar School, one of the largest C of E schools in the country. It had such an impact on the school that they've asked for a repeat in 2026.

Our Priorities: Excellent Leaders

A flourishing Church depends on leaders who are deeply rooted in Christ, equipped for mission, and committed to lifelong formation in the service of the gospel.

Through baptism, every disciple is called into a life of service, witness and transformation into the likeness of Christ. Leadership is therefore not the preserve of a few, but the shared vocation of the whole people of God. The calling of the Church is fulfilled most fruitfully when ordained and lay leaders together foster communities that are spiritually alive, missionally confident and outward-looking.

This priority seeks to strengthen leadership at every stage, from initial discernment of vocation through lifelong ministry, recognising that some contexts will need greater encouragement and support. Our priorities include:

- Developing a more proactive vocations strategy that encourages, nurtures and calls out candidates for ordained and lay ministries. This includes creating a new stream of focal ministry in multi-church benefices where local leaders – lay or ordained – support the incumbent by providing additional leadership in a specific church and community.
- Assessing the effectiveness and appropriateness of our current range of licensed and authorised lay ministries with a view to growing the number from around 250 to 500.
- Developing high-quality training and support for salaried children's, youth and family workers, both initially and ongoing, whilst also equipping those who oversee and manage them.
- Designing clear pathways for lifelong learning and formation for both lay and ordained leaders, supported by relevant, high-quality training that includes practical skills. An important part of this will be to draw on proven external and national training providers, with funding to make such opportunities accessible.

2026 ALM commissioning at Chichester Cathedral

Click here to watch video

Our Strategy for Growth

Approved by Diocesan Synod in March 2025, our Diocesan Growth Strategy seeks growth throughout the household of faith – across contexts and traditions, especially focusing on under-represented groups and communities.

The plan, which has received funding of £11.7 million from the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB), has four strands, which in its first phase will seek to strengthen 80 churches across the diocese. Under God's grace, we expect to attract 4,000 new disciples, of whom at least 1,300 will be under 16 – with the prayerful hope that from 2032, the diocese might be growing with a balanced budget.

The four principal elements are outlined to the side. These four elements are supported by investment in leadership development (our Excellent Leaders programme) and capacity (a small central team to resource the programme).

Revitalisations

We plan to revitalise around 23 churches in projects starting between 2026 and 2031 – particularly focusing on deprived, urban areas with higher populations. This strand will receive the greatest proportion of funding on account of the deprivation of many of the churches it will engage. Many of these projects will be through Apostolic Partnerships – Chichester's term for church planting – reflecting that many of these projects will be a shared endeavour. This is a proven approach: over the past 10 years, we have engaged in 14 Apostolic Partnerships across the diocese, which have, on average, seen growth of 72 adults and 28 young people.

Focal Ministry

A Focal Minister is a lay or ordained leader called out from within the local community who provides local leadership and a regular, visible presence for a single church community, under the authority of an Incumbent who gives oversight.

Although the cost is small, this is strategically important. Alongside pastoral reorganisation in multi-church benefices, we seek to appoint focal ministers who can become the face of the local church, seeking modest growth in 30 churches rather than the decline that so often accompanies pastoral reorganisation.

Children, Youth and Families

This strand seeks to grow the number of paid Children, Youth and Families workers to 100. With the investment and a sharpened focus on missional outreach engaging children and young people outside the Church, we expect numbers to grow.

Mission Fund

Our mission fund seeks to achieve two things: to provide small grants (<£2,000) to support missional ambition right across the diocese, and to support missionally innovative and creative proposals which have potential future re-application. The fund will be able to grant up to £1 million during the programme.

Strategic Development Funding (SDF)

The Diocese has been awarded three SDF projects, of which two are still ongoing and scheduled to be completed in 2029.

The first award in 2017 for £600,000 covered four projects across the diocese. One of these projects was to plant a church into St John's Crawley, and this continued with the 2022 project (see below).

In 2021, we were awarded approximately £2.5 million to cover the planting of four new partnerships from an HTB resource church in Brighton, with two of these partnerships into churches that were closed or marked for possible closure. These two partnerships have flourished; one has more than 200 worshippers each Sunday, and the other – which started with a foodbank ministry to local families – now has more than 100 people worshipping regularly. They have addressed the root causes of food insecurity, becoming the first Trussell Trust foodbank to close due to its success!

The 2021 project also included the revitalisation of a large Anglo-Catholic church in Hove.

Across all churches involved in this project, the adult Worshipping Community has increased by over 700 already and is on target to reach the target of 1,200 by the project's conclusion.

In 2022, we were awarded approximately £1.6 million to continue the revitalisation in Crawley, building on the 2017 project with more resources being applied to St John's centrally to allow them to revitalise two other churches and to plant into nearby housing estates. To date, there has been an increase in the worshipping community in excess of 550 across the churches, including 65 youth and more than 250 baptisms since 2017.

The most significant challenge with all these projects is achieving sustainability, sufficiently increasing income to maintain the mission as the SDF grants reduce.

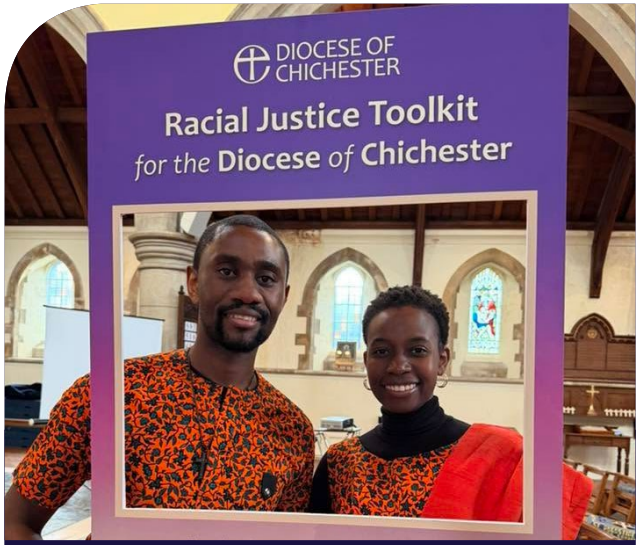
St John's, Crawley

All Saints, Hove

Other Funding

As a diocese, we have been proactive in sourcing other nationally available funding. In addition to the £11.7 million for the Diocesan Growth Strategy, we have been able to secure funding of just over £1.7 million in the past few years (excluding the SDF projects).

The additional finance has enabled work on racial justice and net zero carbon initiatives. It has also resourced the provision to parishes of advice on growing generous giving, buildings support to parishes including a small grants fund, and the Growing Faith initiative seeking to integrate faith across church, school and home.



Racial Justice Toolkit launch at St John the Evangelist, Brighton

Racial Justice

In 2025, the diocese was awarded a further £225,000 to progress work towards implementing the 'From Lament to Action' report. A Racial Justice Co-ordinator has been appointed. Within just over six months, he has developed a Racial Justice Toolkit and Strategy, which has been presented to the Diocesan Synod.

Ongoing work includes training and supporting racial justice advocates, delivering anti-racism training, and equipping parishes, chaplaincies and schools with the resources they need to engage confidently and effectively in this work. He has delivered Racial Justice training and presentations across a wide range of diocesan contexts, including several Deanery Synods and Chapters, May Camp, the Diocesan Vocations Day and the Diocesan Environmental Day.

He is also currently partnering with several organisations and networks to strengthen intercultural ministry, inclusion and community engagement across the diocese. These include the Zimbabwe National Anglican Fellowship for Intercultural Worship, Brighton & Hove Black History for Black History Month initiatives, Gypsies, Roma and Travellers Friendly Churches and the University of Sussex International Student Office.

Care for Creation and Net Zero Carbon

Responding to the climate change crisis is an essential part of our responsibility to safeguard God's creation. We are committed to the Church of England's Net Zero Carbon (NZC) strategy across parishes, in church schools and clergy housing. The diocese has around £300,000 of live Net Zero funding, split broadly equally between funding staff to carry out project work, and creating a 'quick wins' fund to support parishes in reducing their carbon emissions.

We have also been successful in bidding for government funding and have supported schools with DfE capital funding. As a result, one school fully transitioned to low-carbon heating systems in 2024, three in 2025 and two more will be completed in the summer of 2026.

Our journey on climate change is both spiritual and practical. Many across the diocese have participated in the Carbon Literacy course for Christian congregations.

Chichester is a Bronze-level Eco Diocese. 40% of parishes have registered for the UK Eco Church scheme, and there are 60 Bronze, 20 Silver and four Gold Award churches, including the cathedral.

Opportunities & Challenges

We are seeking a bishop who will draw alongside us in facing the challenges and embracing the opportunities that are in our midst. Our consultation of nearly 2,000 people suggested that the key areas of opportunity and challenge are:

Evangelism and Growth

Evangelism and church growth are expressed as a strong hope across all groups and contexts – yet it is perceived to be structurally impeded by the diocese's primary challenge: declining finance and shrinking clergy numbers. The Diocesan Growth Strategy seeks to provide some growth.

Decline

Addressing decline in attendance was rated the single highest-scoring challenge. Contributions suggest respondents feel the shrinkage of the Church acutely and in the present tense, not merely as anxiety about the future. This mirrors and partially explains the strong hope for evangelism and growth.

Finance & Resources

Finance & Resources is the most frequently expressed challenge, with those from both urban and rural churches expressing this. Decline and clergy numbers closely forming a structural trio of interconnected pressures. It will be critical to increase generosity – encompassing individual giving, contributions to Parish Share and the willingness to work together to seek growth.

Clergy

The challenge of clergy numbers and vocations ranked second overall and is implicitly embedded in almost every stated hope. The ordained ministry of both women and men underpins mission, formation, renewal and pastoral care. Nurturing vocations is a priority, but we recognise that a wider variety of ministry patterns and continued strengthening of women's ministry is required.

Youth

Young people appear with equal intensity in both the hopes and challenges data. The demographic skew of the respondent base (57% over 65) lends this particular urgency: older Christians hoping for a future the next generation has yet to claim. This is one of our priorities.

Unity

The diocese has reasonable strength across all traditions within the church, and on the whole relationships on the ground are good. Our opportunities are also our challenges, and vice versa, sometimes due to the diversity in the household of faith across the diocese. As with the wider church, the LLF/PLF process has tested relationships. We seek unity wherever possible and see this as an opportunity for this diocese to be an example.

The Implications for the Next Bishop

The set of opportunities and challenges presented in this section, together with our priorities and strategies, carries some implications for the next bishop:

- There is clear evidence from our consultation that our clergy and laity across the spectrum of traditions want to be equipped, encouraged and enabled as the priesthood of all believers.
- Working on growth across the diocese will require us to be creative in how we connect with one another, given the challenging geography of the diocese. Clergy particularly notice this dislocation of connection from one end of the diocese to the other.
- In terms of application for funding from the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board, we have received a major funding award, which means that our next major application cannot take place until around 2029/30.
- The need to build trust and trustworthiness (considered by General Synod in July 2026) means that if we are to be effective in addressing the challenges that we face, and to realise the opportunities, then we will also need to:
  - Engage with a range of contrasting yet coexisting forms of marginalisation – for example, some deep-rooted working-class deprivation, and a sizeable LGBTQ+ community (especially in Brighton).
  - Help parishes think creatively and imaginatively about their distinctive Christian contribution in their wider community, so that those of faith and those of none can experience and encounter the outpouring of God's love.
  - Value policy, process and governance as an important part of our shared life, so that it not only liberates us to focus on the spiritual and pastoral elements of our shared life, but builds confidence in the institutions of the Church, both local and diocesan.

DIOCESE OF CHICHESTER

KNOW LOVE FOLLOW JESUS