



DIOCESE OF EXETER

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

DIOCESE
OF EXETER
THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
IN DEVON





INTRODUCTION FROM BISHOP ROBERT

**Bishop of Exeter,
The Right Reverend Robert Atwell**

The pandemic has changed every aspect of our lives, including church. We continue to be challenged in all sorts of ways but, as this annual report reveals, people have stepped up and stepped out in faith. There has been deep engagement with local communities, proclaiming the joy of a God who, in Jesus Christ, yearns that people experience life in all its fullness. This report reveals the reach and range of church life in Devon.

Most of our parishes and mission communities have revealed their extraordinary resilience during the past year, but in truth even our largest churches feel a measure of apprehension about the future. With our fellow citizens, we are learning to co-exist with this virus without being paralysed by fear or anxiety. With St Paul, we are walking by faith, not by sight.

As we go into the New Year, the time has come for us to take stock as a diocese so that we emerge from the pandemic with a clear sense of direction.

Where we are
TODAY



OVERVIEW

Next Steps

"In the summer we launched the 'Next Steps' document which encapsulates our collective learning to date. It is not a new vision, but a reaffirmation of the journey we have been on as a diocese for the last twenty years in our resolve to create strong and sustainable mission communities with thriving congregations that make a difference.

"The document was embraced by the Diocesan Synod in October 2021, following an extensive period of consultation. As we move forwards, one step at a time, we believe that God is calling us to be communities of hope and prayer in an anxious world. With our network of churches, schools and chaplaincies we strive to be a Christian presence in every community in the county. In all things we seek to build God's kingdom and to serve the people of Devon with joy."

+Robert Exon.

You can read the Next Steps document [here](#).

NEXT STEPS IN 2022

Next Steps was developed in the summer of 2021, drawing on the learning of a number of working groups made-up of people from across the diocese, as well as consultation with various diocesan teams, like Growing the Rural Church.

During the autumn, nearly 500 people attended a series of online and in person listening events across the Diocese of Exeter's four archdeaconries. People shared valuable feedback about the possible challenges in implementing the Next Steps and the exciting opportunities that could emerge.

At the time of writing the Diocesan Mission and Ministry team is collating and evaluating the feedback and is in the process of creating a simple and effective health check tool for mission communities.

The aim of this is to help mission communities to plan for the future in a way that is achievable, realistic and hopeful.

In 2022 there will be a series of webinars and the health check tool and other Next Steps resources will be made available.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5





LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH

Bishop of Crediton, The Right Reverend Jackie Searle

Living in Love and Faith is the Church of England's process to discern how questions of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage fit within the bigger picture of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Throughout 2021 churches have been encouraged to run the five-week Living in Love and Faith course, which covers subjects like same-sex marriage and transgender identity. It also looks at what it means to live in love and faith together as a Church and within wider society.

The Diocese of Exeter has a Living in Love and Faith working group, led by our Living in Love and Faith Advocate, the Rt Rev'd Jackie Searle, Bishop of Crediton. It has been meeting regularly during 2021 and recently ran a Living in Love and Faith course online, which was attended by about 30 people from across Devon. The Diocese senior clergy team also did the course together online during the spring. Another online course is planned for January 2022 and we are encouraging as many churches as possible to run the course before Easter.

Anyone who has done the course is invited to feedback via an online survey, which is open until April 30 2022. After that the General Synod and House of Bishops will continue to discuss the way forward through 2022 and early 2023. This is a unique opportunity for individuals to have a say in the life and direction of the Church of England. You can download the course and complete the survey [here](#).

MISSION TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Children's Mission Adviser 0-5years, Clare Cooke

We were delighted to get back to the Devon County Show this year. We had a wonderful three days and had the privilege of meeting about 400 children and their families who came to our tent.

We were very excited to hold our first Diocese-wide live Bake-Along on Good Friday. We had a fun afternoon baking hot cross buns, learning about the symbolism of this delicious treat and exploring faith through food. Bishop Nick joined us and kindly judged the buns.

We held a Mission Shed and Clergy training session, on the topic of 'Beyond the Children's Corner'. It equipped churches to take a fresh look at their life together, with multiple suggestions of ways to be more welcoming and attractive, especially to the generation that too often seem to be missing – children, young people and families.

Our Children, Youth and Schools Grow Course was launched in May. This was very well attended and has received some fabulous feedback.

We hosted a zoom on 'rethinking and reimagining your toddler event' during which we were delighted to announce that we have been chosen to be the trailblazer Diocese for 'Truth Be Told' (a toddler group model which invites older adults to attend as well as young children and their carers).



MISSION TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CONT'D

'Begin Well' antenatal courses are continuing to operate well across the county. We now have 10 churches involved and more training ready to start next year.

We have held 2 Online Retreats kindly led by Mary Hawes, National CofE Children & Youth Adviser. They have provided a greatly valued space for spiritual nurture.

Potting Sheds (local support hubs for children and family workers and following the model of Mission Sheds) have now been set up. They are providing an invaluable space for small groups of children, youth and/or family ministry leaders to share, encourage and pray together as well as to inform of initiatives and resources. In addition, we hold Zoom Drop-ins offering access to a broader group of people and have also been a valuable seed bed for support and nurture.

We continue to populate our Facebook group and send out fortnightly Seedlings newsletters. We provide email, phone, face-to-face and Zoom advice and support to church communities. Topics discussed include for example, how to run a covid-secure toddler group, Godly Play resourcing, how to launch family work, how to employ a children and families worker, etc.



Helen Williams at the Devon County Show. In December 2021, Helen decided to move on from her 5-11s Mission Adviser role to do more face-to-face children's work. Best wishes, Helen!



Members of the Young Christian Climate Network from Devon joined in a walking relay to Glasgow for COP26.

MISSION TO 16 - 25 YEAR OLDS

Diocesan Mission Enabler, The Rev'd Prebendary James Grier

'Although virtually all parishes have 16–25-year-olds living in them, some have far greater potential and responsibility for work with them., for example those in Plymouth and Exeter, which are host to our universities, as well as churches with links to our 10 Further Education colleges and secondary schools with sixth forms.

During the last year, Tatty Wilson has been seconded to give a day per week as Chaplaincy Advisor. She is working in partnership with Bath and Wells Diocese to offer the best provision possible. Mental Health First Aid has been offered to all chaplains in the education sector. In spite of huge complications and delays, she has helped re-establish Anglican chaplaincy provision at Plymouth University. Also, all curates now have an education placement as part of their training and for some this will be at FE colleges or university. The first university one has just been arranged.

Churches joined together to offer support for university students who were struggling with the continuing lockdowns and isolation. They are also now looking at how to address the ongoing impact of Covid on students.

South West Youth Ministries continues to offer leadership and development opportunities for those in this age profile. This year has seen an increase in young voices being involved with the work of the diocese, for example being part of the interviews for the new Social Justice and Environment Officer. Also, they have offered a strong lead around G7 and COP26 with the Young Christian Climate Network relay from St Ives to Glasgow and other associated campaigning. Within the central Diocesan staff team in the last year, we have had an unprecedented number of staff join who around this age. They offer understanding and insights that were previously lacking. Our work with FE colleges is still not we would like it to be, but there is much to be encouraged by as we head into 2022.

MISSION TO OVER 60s

Chair of the House of Laity and lead on Mission to over 60s, Annie Jefferies

The developments to support the Over 60's have progressed satisfactorily this year despite the COVID restrictions. It has been very evident that many elderly people in all of our Devon communities have felt lonely, isolated and anxious. Telephone calls made on a regular basis have been essential, as have online church services , but visits to people simply to deliver medicines and shopping have also ensured a direct contact with the outside world.

This past year the Diocese has focused on the development of the ecumenical Anna Chaplaincy model to give spiritual support to elderly people, wherever they may live. Volunteers have been recruited and trained and a successful pilot project ran within the three Deaneries of the Plymouth Archdeaconry. To this end, the Archdeacon of Plymouth commissioned six Anna Chaplains and two Anna Friends in November 2021. Anna Chaplains will now be recruited and trained across the other three archdeaconry areas. .

Other support to older people includes engaging with Linking Lives UK , a Christian befriending service for older people, and Parish Nursing Services and Social Prescribing opportunities. Links have also been forged with Devon Social Services and the Unitary Authorities of Plymouth and Torbay.



Annie Jefferies with Valentine's gift bags for the residents of Venn House care home near Tavistock.



16 people from across Devon received a St Boniface Award in recognition of their outstanding service.

LAY DISCIPLESHIP

Lay Discipleship Project Manager, Dr Jon Curtis

Building on the foundations of the last few years of cataclysmic events, the Lay Discipleship project has been empowered by many people in our churches around Devon taking bold steps to reinforce the foundations of their worshipping and wider communities. Grow courses have been run to enable lay people to find support and learning around the roles they currently fulfil, or are considering. In the past 12 months, over 200 people have attended at least 1 Grow course online. These learning opportunities are based on topics including Children, Young People and Schools, Pastoral Care, Leading Small groups, Administration, Preaching and Leading From The Front. Next year sees a number of new courses including Creation Care, Digital Ministry and An Introduction to Liturgy. They are all missional in outlook, and encourage the laity to explore the glorious spectrum of their lay vocation.

These Are Our Stories: a Lent Course for a pandemic year was created by the Diocese in collaboration with a number of clergy and lay people. During Lent 2021 it was run at churches across Devon encouraging people to reflect upon their experiences during this unprecedented period of history.

In June we were able to celebrate some amazing examples of lay discipleship at the second annual St Boniface Awards at Exeter Cathedral. We are incredibly grateful to all who have gone above and beyond in the name of the Kingdom this year, both lay and ordained, employed and voluntary, and thank God for all their hard work.



SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CREATION CARE

Social Justice and Creation Care Officer, Lydia Perris

As a Diocese, we are working towards achieving Net Carbon Zero by 2030, which aligns with international targets to limit global temperature rise, caused by carbon emissions, to 1.5 degrees. This is an ambitious yet much-needed target. We are aiming to recruit a new Carbon Officer from early 2022 to work with churches on the practicalities of achieving this goal. I look forward to working with them.

I loved running an Instagram takeover on the [@CofEDevon](#) Instagram page for the duration of COP26 where I shared thoughts, advice and prayers on all things climate change related. I did this in collaboration with JustLove Exeter, a student group passionate about pursuing the biblical call to social justice. We ran live 'Q&A' videos throughout the two weeks where JustLove volunteers, committee members and alumni shared their thoughts on a range of topics: the theology of social and environmental justice, the impacts of climate change, the power of collective action, and hopes and dreams for the future, amongst others. It was so encouraging to hear the voices and enthusiasm of young Christians!

Since starting this role in September, I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting and learning from colleagues across the Diocese who lead social justice projects, such as Transforming Plymouth Together, and I look forward to working with these inspiring people and organisations in 2022. I am hopeful that next year we will see practical steps taken in achieving our environmental goals, and that social justice initiatives are championed across the Diocese.

OUR OVERSEAS LINKS

Archdeacon of Plymouth, The Venerable Nick Shutt

Melanesia

The highlight of the year was the visit on 18th September of the Archbishop of Canterbury to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Patteson. A series of events were organised by the Melanesian Mission including visits to Feniton, Alfington and the Cathedral. The Archbishop formally opened the new pilgrimage route, the Patteson Way, and took a short stroll along the beginning of the route. It was the first time since the start of the pandemic that the Archbishop had left London and the whole experience was excellently organised by Katie Drew, the Executive Officer of The Melanesian Mission UK. Since then we have continued to publicise the effects of climate change, which the Solomon islands are already suffering through rising sea levels. The Bishop of Exeter drew attention to Melanesia in his maiden speech in the House of Lords and followed up by asking several parliamentary questions about UK Government funding to the Solomon Islands. We have also been praying for peace following recent anti-government protests in the islands.

Thika, Kenya

2021 has been a difficult year as the pandemic continues to prevent international travel and so we have kept in touch with Thika through email contact throughout the year. The effects of the pandemic have been keenly felt in Thika and we continue to uphold them in our prayers. We also waved a sad farewell to key members of our Link Committee, Brian and Jane Inwood who moved away from Devon. Jane has been an immense help to the Link acting as secretary for many years. We hope that Jane and Brian will continue to maintain an interest albeit at a distance.



The Archbishop of Canterbury opened the Patteson's Way pilgrimage route which follows in the footsteps of John Coleridge Patteson, the first Bishop of Melanesia.



OUR OVERSEAS LINKS CONT'D

Cyprus and the Gulf

The annual Synod of the Diocese was held by Zoom this year because of the pandemic and Bishop Jackie attended this virtual synod, contributing a report on how we are faring as a diocese. A proposed meeting of the Friends of Cyprus and the Gulf scheduled to take place in Exeter in the autumn has been postponed until next spring in the expectation that the pandemic will allow us to meet up without restriction.

Bayeux-Lisieux, France

In a year of Covid restrictions on travel, meeting and worship, the regular exchange of preachers during the January Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was not possible. In its place, the two diocesan bishops exchanged greetings by video, which was especially significant as Mgr Jacques Habert has been newly appointed. Laurent Berthout and David Nixon also recorded sermons on Youtube and exchanged them. We were especially grateful for a further message from Mgr Habert sending condolences on the death of the Duke of Edinburgh.

Plans are starting for an exchange in 2023 with a visit here from Bayeux-Lisieux, with a likely in-person swap of preachers in 2022.

Farming God's Way has been training farmers in Thungururu, Thika, in sustainable crop production. The project's officer has thanked the Diocese of Exeter for its generous donations.

GROWING THE RURAL CHURCH

Growing the Rural Church Project Manager, Sarah Cracknell

2021 has been a year of great change for Growing the Rural Church with positive new initiatives and lots to learn from and continue to build on.

In March our [new website](#) went live and we launched our new service delivery model with a programme of webinars and 1:1 advice appointments open to all. Our online resource hub has guidance and toolkits which cover every aspect a rural church might need to think about to ensure their sustainability.

We also launched our toolkit *Lightening the Load*, designed for Mission Communities unsure of where to start. It helps you to consider each area of church life, identifies what you're doing really well and helps to pinpoint things you can change quickly and simply to 'lighten the load', and the things you might want to prioritise looking at how you can work better together as a Mission Community. It also signposts to all the other resources on the website so you know what your next steps are.

In the summer we launched our missional project: [Devon Pilgrim](#), and we now have two routes established as part of that; The Archangel's Way and St Boniface Way, as well as supporting the new Pattenon Way. We've been so excited by the conversations we've had with people interested in pilgrimage and wanting to be part of Devon Pilgrim who would not otherwise engage with the church.



GIVING AND STEWARDSHIP

Mission Resources Adviser, Brigit Kiyaga

Another extraordinary year is behind us, and the Mission Resources team has, over these last 12 months, engaged with parishes in our diocese to provide training and support linked to matters of gratitude, generosity and giving. These three themes are the main headlines of the Diocesan Giving Strategy, which was approved by Bishop's Diocesan Council and can be found on our website. We have concentrated on the provision of resources for teaching and preaching, small group materials, sharing good practice and supporting the further roll-out of the [Parish Giving Scheme](#) and digital giving, to name but a few. Webinars, email exchanges, Zoom & phone calls have been part of our weekly experience and it has been a real joy to be able to start meeting in person again.

We have also been busy writing and filming the Diocese 2022 Lent course: [Surprised by Generosity](#). We are excited about making these resources available to churches in January. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Corinthian church, says: 'we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches'. This grace resulted in rich generosity and that is my prayer for you and for me; that God will bless us with this gift, so we might be a blessing to those around us. Let this coming year be filled with stories of great acts of kindness across our beautiful county, and may God pour out His blessing upon us as we respond to Him with thanks for all He has done.



Community cafes can be a way of encouraging giving in your parish.



Multimedia-Storyteller, Matt Prior filming Bishop Robert's Next Steps video in a vineyard in Devon.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Diocesan Director of Communications and Engagement, Chlöe Axford

It has been an exciting year for the Communications and Engagement team with the launch of the [Devon Church Weddings](#) project. The aim is to encourage more couples to marry in one of Devon's 600 or so Anglican churches. The team created a new website and Instagram account for the project and the launch by Bishop Jackie at one of the region's main wedding fairs was covered by all the main local media outlets. Next year we will continue building on the project and raising the profile of church weddings.

The Communications team was also very involved in the launch of [Devon Pilgrim](#) in the summer of 2021 and the subsequent launches of the individual routes. We also worked alongside the Melanesian Mission UK in the planning and coverage of the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to Devon in September. We have been doing a lot of engagement work around the [Living in Love and Faith](#) course and communicating the Diocese vision 'Next Steps'. This work will continue into 2022 as we take the feedback from the listening events and work with other diocesan colleagues to create a helpful and realistic health check tool for Mission Communities. Communications support and training for clergy and lay people remains an important part of our work. 2022 will see the continuation of our regular communications training and the launch of a new Digital Ministry Grow Course.



The Rev'd Nathan Kiyaga features in the Kingdom Calling 2022 calendar, sharing his calling to be a school chaplain.

VOCATIONS

Diocesan Director of Ordinands, The Rev'd Prebendary John Fisher

The Vocations Development Officer and the Diocesan Director of Ordinands, work with their teams to foster and encourage those sensing a call to serve God in the authorised lay and ordained ministries. Three events were held to help people consider and explore both ordained and lay licensed ministry as well as other focused work. Developing the ministry of women; encouraging candidates from a UKME heritage (including event planning with the National UKME adviser) and encouraging younger vocations remain significant priorities. There has also been work with the Communications team to produce *Kingdom Calling*, a Diocesan Calendar for 2022 focusing on the subject of vocations.

During 2021 the Rev'ds Stephen Cook and Clive Sedgewick stepped down from the roles of Assistant DDO. We thank them for their contribution. The Rev'd Laura Selman came on board, as an ADDO, and it is a pleasure to welcome her to the team.

By autumn 2021, 33 candidates from Exeter Diocese were training for ordained ministry at theological college. This follows 11 people being recommended for ordination by the Bishops Advisory Panel over the previous academic year, which was a 100% recommendation rate from the Bishops Advisory Panels for Exeter candidates. The coronavirus pandemic has continued to have a significant impact on the process with candidates attending online discernment panels (rather than residential).

VOCATIONS CONT'D

The ordination service for deacons at Exeter Cathedral, and for the priests at various churches across Devon, in September 2021 were livestreamed, since numbers allowed to attend were still restricted due to the pandemic. The services continue to attract media interest. 16 new deacons were ordained, and 16 new priests.

The Church of England launched the new Shared Discernment Process for those considering ordained ministry in October 2021. This is a two-stage process at national level following extensive discernment work with candidates locally before each stage. This has involved the Exeter team in implementing and aligning diocesan work with the new 6 Qualities framework used by the national team.

| Candidates recommended at BAP (2020-2021 academic year) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|
| Age at start of training | Male | | | | Female | | | | GRAND TOTAL |
| | Stip. | SSM | DD | TOTAL | Stip. | SSM | DD | TOTAL | |
| 31 and under | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 32 - 39 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 40 - 54 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| 55 and over | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| TOTAL | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 11 |

| Candidates in training (in September 2021) | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Age at start of training | Male | | | | Female | | | | GRAND TOTAL |
| | Stip. | SSM | DD | TOTAL | Stip. | SSM | DD | TOTAL | |
| 31 and under | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| 32 - 39 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| 40 - 54 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 15 | 17 |
| 55 and over | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| TOTAL | 7 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 12 | 7 | 4 | 23 | 33 |

| Priests ordained September 2021 | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|
| Age at Deacon's ordination | Male | | | | Female | | | | GRAND TOTAL |
| | Stip. | SSM | DD | TOTAL | Stip. | SSM | DD | TOTAL | |
| 31 and under | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| 32 - 39 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| 40 - 54 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| 55 and over | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 8 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 7 | 16 |

| Deacons ordained September 2021 | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|
| Age at ordination | Male | | | | Female | | | | GRAND TOTAL |
| | Stip. | SSM | DD | TOTAL | Stip. | SSM | DD | TOTAL | |
| 31 and under | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 32 - 39 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| 40 - 54 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| 55 and over | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 9 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 16 |



A new Church of England school in Paignton opened its doors to its first pupils in September 2021.

EDUCATION

Diocesan Director of Education, Sue Lockwood

This year has seen the work of schools change and evolve in response to Covid and the associated national and local school closures for many pupils. As ever, school leaders have rallied around to ensure they are able to provide well for their children, young people, staff and wider communities.

Remote learning has become part of teachers' 'regular' provision alongside their in-school face to face work. The wellbeing of all associated with schools has come increasingly into focus.

As a diocesan education team our work has changed too. Much of our training and support for schools had to move online and now, towards the end of the year, we are seeing the benefits of a new blended approach (online sessions and face to face visits). Attendance at our leadership forums has increased significantly and we have had good take up at our new governance forums.

The sharing of experience and expertise across the educational community has reaped benefits for many. Much of our work has seen us supporting church schools as they hold fast to their individual school's Christian vision to help shape and inform their decision making in what has often been challenging circumstances.



EDUCATION CONT'D

We have helped schools who have found themselves in vulnerable circumstances; supported the recruitment of new school leaders; recruited some strong new governors; delivered quality training, for example in RE, spirituality, diversity and governance; and supported the first school placements for curates. We have successfully navigated the centralisation of SIAMS inspections; launched Flourish, our newsletter which pulls information together into one place; appointed a new Diocesan Director of Education; and seen a new Church of England School open in Paignton.

As a Board of Education, we have revisited our own vision which now sees us seeking to 'nurture vision-inspired education, nourish personal and spiritual growth and enable connected communities that flourish', as we enable all, through the love of God in Jesus Christ, to 'live life in all its fullness' (John 10:10b).



Bishop Robert visiting St Mark's Church in Plymouth, where Transforming Plymouth Together is based.

TRANSFORMING PLYMOUTH TOGETHER

TPT Strategic Lead Officer, Chris Forster

This brief report looks at the work of Transforming Plymouth Together and the projects we have led or been involved in over 2021 (particularly from June 2021 until September 2021).

We bade a sad farewell to Hannah Fleming-Hill, who had to move away from the area in June, but were delighted to welcome in her place Dawn Long, who joined us to continue the work with our Feast of Fun project alongside churches and families. Hannah's media and communications duties were taken over by Dave who was able to remain with us having come to the end of the Covid Cash Recovery project.

With still so much uncertainty in the middle of the year about what the next coming months' regulations would look like, many churches were unsure as to what exactly they would, or would not be able to do during the summer holidays. We have found, though, that Churches are easing into activities that were run prior to lockdown but look slightly different. Current conversations with churches indicate that many would like to, and others already have, established 'community larders or 'pantries', in order to provide continual support for their communities, for example, after hours or at the weekend. One church has set aside two days a week for the community to pop in and help themselves to whatever items they might be needing. This also offers the chance for families to converse and connect with other church members and representatives.

TRANSFORMING PLYMOUTH TOGETHER CONT'D

On the 12th of August, Plymouth was rocked by a terrible tragedy where six people lost their lives at the hands of a gunman. St. Marks' church, where TPT has its offices, was opened up as a place of sanctuary and refuge for the community of Ford and Keyham. TPT was also on hand to provide refreshment and emotional support to any witnesses, or simply for any local community members who were affected by these events. Our prayers remain with the relatives, friends, and neighbours who will be trying to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of the shootings.

During the last few months, Chris indicated that he will be retiring from TPT, but has agreed to stay until March 2022, to see a good handover to the new lead officer Ayshea Cross. We would also wish to thank the Diocese for their financial and pastoral support given to TPT.

IN CONCLUSION

As we look ahead to Christmas, we will continue to be supporting the churches, taking into consideration their different requirements. Plymouth church leaders really understand their communities, and have planned their events around the community's needs, each one being different from the other. Some churches will still be providing the traditional Christmas hampers containing a mix of ambient and fresh food, some are offering cooked meals, others will be supplying fresh Christmas food (uncooked) to families, and two or three churches will be offering 'Christingle' events. We are also currently investigating funding opportunities that would enable the churches to provide toys, Christmas decorations and crackers to families.

Presently, both the churches, and TPT are facing the challenge of deciding 'where next', and although at the time of writing nobody has clear answers as to how things will look in the future, all we can say for certain is that Feast of Fun has had a massive impact for the better for over 300 families across Plymouth, despite all of the many challenges and obstacles presented during the year. We would also reiterate that none of this would be possible without the incredible organisation and hard work of the vast army of volunteers across the city, and for them we give thanks to God and pray that He will continue to bless them with compassion, good health and stamina in their efforts in their communities.



Some of the staff based in the Old Deanery offices in Exeter.

PEOPLE

Diocesan Director of People and Safeguarding, Anthea Carter-Savigear

2021 has been another year driven by the requirements of the Coronavirus Pandemic and to make life easier the People team organised its work under five People promises: Appointing People, Developing People, Engaging People, Culture and Wellbeing.

Under the Appointing People Promise we continued to provide recruitment support for key positions and were successful in recruiting a new Diocesan Director of Education, amongst other key roles, during very challenging times.

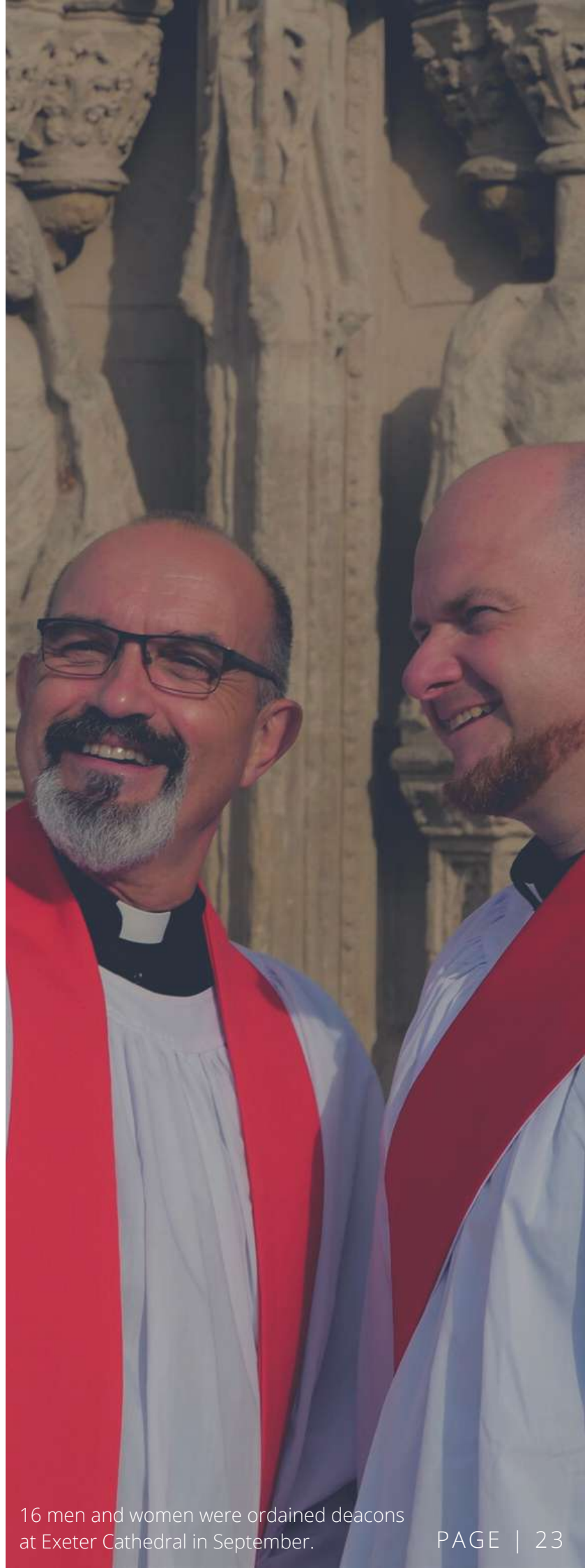
Under the Developing People Promise, we made good use of the People HR management system to enable EDBF employees to undertake a comprehensive electronic performance review process negating the need for paperwork and filing. This will also serve well us with our environmental plans.

Under the Engaging People Promise, we responded to employee feedback received from the Return-to-Work pulse survey. A significant outcome of the survey was to develop and offer a Hybrid Working Policy. Enabled by technology EDBF employees are now trailing flexible working practices over the next twelve months. The People team continue to make good use of online resources such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams; collaboration and mutual support are very much emphasised.

PEOPLE CONT'D

Under the Engaging People Promise, the People team also offered increased support and advice to the Archdeacons and Bishops addressing all manner of issues arising as a direct result of the pandemic and employment law issues relating to Parish employees. We have also reviewed over 35 EDBF policies and Parish template policies to ensure legal compliance. The People team worked with the Bishop of Exeter and senior colleagues to revise the Diocesan Vision and Strategy aims. The People team was instrumental in developing behavioural values to encapsulate some of our Christian values. The result of this ground-breaking work is that the diocese now has a framework to support people to relate well. Wellbeing is recognised as being very important for ministers and employees to flourish.

Under the Wellbeing Promise the People team continued with the ongoing development and work of our Employee Forum and Wellbeing Panel. We developed and shared Living Well in the Workplace and Living Well in Ministry handbooks and put together wellbeing packs for all. We are looking forward to next year and feel best placed to respond quickly and with great purpose to whatever challenges 2022 might bring.



SAFEGUARDING

Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Charlie Pitman

2021 has seen significant challenge and change for safeguarding in the Church of England. Publications of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual abuse highlighted some significant failures in past practices but also recognised the improvements made in respect of safeguarding arrangements. This has been further evidenced in the conclusion of the Past Cases Review 2 process which has seen independent scrutiny of all our safeguarding records and personnel files and reported in very positive terms the Diocese of Exeter safeguarding arrangements and practices.

The National Safeguarding Team has been working hard in developing and publishing new policies and procedures such as Safer Recruitment, National Safeguarding Learning Framework and Responding to Victims and Survivors of Abuse, to which we as a diocese, are required to respond and implement. We recognise and value the hard work and commitment of the very many people across our diocese and parishes, who ensure we meet these requirements.

We recognise the demands placed upon churches and parishes but hope we can all remember that Safeguarding is pastoral and is about 'looking out for and looking after' those in our communities. Looking forward to 2022, we hope to return to more personal contact after the restrictions of the past two years, our continuing priority being to ensure we provide an accessible and demonstrably supportive service to our parishes and communities in recognition that the safeguarding is delivered where we interact with our communities.





Flowers being planted in St Swithuns churchyard during the launch of the St Boniface Way pilgrimage route

FINANCE

Diocesan Director of Finance, Neil Williams

The last 12 months has continued to be very challenging for both parish and diocesan finances. Whilst churches could remain open in the most recent national lockdown in early 2021, many parishes went back to worshipping online (where possible), as many did not feel comfortable to meet for worship. This had an inevitable impact on parish income, although once again those with membership of the Parish Giving Scheme, or established regular giving schemes, fared better than those relying on collections at services and fund raising.

As restrictions eased in the summer of 2021, many of us were able to get back to some semblance of normality with meeting together and starting to consider fund raising activities once again. It will, however, take time to return to where we were before the pandemic. Unsurprisingly, contributions towards our Common Fund were significantly down from the level we had seen in previous years, with a shortfall in 2020 of 9.5% (or £900k). Action was taken to reduce our costs as much as was possible, so vacancy freezes were put in place for both staff and clergy, the clergy housing maintenance programme for 2020 was deferred, saving £500k, and general expenses were reduced, due to the reduction in our usual level of work with parishes. Sadly, it was also necessary to review our staffing levels late in 2020, which led to 9 posts being made redundant. This will realise annual savings of £250k, but has significantly reduced the level of support that can be provided. So far, unlike many dioceses, we have managed to avoid major reductions in the number of stipendiary clergy.

FINANCE CONT'D

2021 remains challenging, and it looks like our Common Fund shortfall will be around 8.5%, which is slightly better than last year, but this shortfall will still require covering from reserves. There have been some continuing savings, resulting from the lower activity supporting parishes in the first half of the year. Diocesan Synod has now approved a budget for 2022, which will see an underlying rise of 2% in the Common Fund request, This is below the current level of inflation and follows no increase in 2021. This will mean we are making the lowest actual request in over 10 years. The expenditure budget only increased by 0.2%. We are all hoping that 2022 will be a more positive year.

We are so grateful for all of the work that our PCC and Deanery treasurers have been doing to keep parishes functioning and sustainable in the last couple of years. We also acknowledge the support given by all PCC members, our clergy and everyone in our mission communities – it really has been a team effort.





The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall visited Exeter Cathedral for their first public event after the lifting of coronavirus restrictions in July 2021.

EXETER CATHEDRAL

Dean of Exeter Cathedral, The Very Reverend Jonathan Greener

It's good to end 2021 able to look back at all that has been possible this year despite the pandemic. It's hard to forget last Christmas, when our seating at the Grandisson Carol service was limited to just 80 people (contrasting with 1450 in 2019), and when all our family celebrations were curtailed with very short notice. My reflections at the time were how close these disruptions brought us to Mary and Joseph, whose lives were massively disrupted when they had to give birth in a stable, and return home by a different route to escape Herod in his wrath.

This whole year has of course been majorly disrupted for us, as for churches across Devon. Visitor numbers at the cathedral have been much reduced (with almost no one from overseas), there have been very few events, and our pattern of worship has been changed and curtailed, often with very little notice. On a positive note, we've learned greater flexibility, our online offer has broadened and improved, and we've had some time and space (and fortunately the necessary grant income) to allow us to undertake quite a lot of work to the fabric of the building.

Recognising the need to invite people back, and to improve the way we make people feel at home, we are currently in the midst of a Year of Invitation and Welcome (Sept 2021 - Aug 2022). The cathedral is such a special building, giving our visitors a glimpse of the beauty and glory of God, but it can only work its missional magic when people come inside. So we are experimenting with a period of entry by donation from the opening of the Christmas Market until 2 February, and we are doing all we can to encourage people from all over Devon to come and experience their cathedral for themselves. Please do drop in: it will be great to see you.