



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Pray, Grow, Serve 2035?

Pray, Grow, Serve is an ambitious 10-year strategic plan based on the diocese's five missional priorities: missional leadership, missional DNA, vocations, children and families and mixed ecology (varied forms of church). It aims to develop the diocesan vision we have had since 2014, which is to Grow in Prayer, Make New Disciples and Serve the People of Devon with Joy. It is designed to support and resource the fantastic Kingdom-building work already happening in so many of our parishes.

What is the aim of Pray, Grow, Serve 2035?

The aim of Pray, Grow, Serve 2035 is to share the Good News of our Christian faith with the 95% of people in Devon who currently have no connection to any church. It also aims to help churches across Devon grow, flourish and serve their communities in a sustainable way well into the future. Our hope is that every church in Devon will become a '5 priorities' church.

How is it being funded?

The Diocese of Exeter is delighted to have successfully been awarded £10m of missional investment to help churches across Devon grow, flourish and serve their communities well into the future. The grant, which is the largest the diocese has ever received, has been awarded by the Church of England's Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB). This first phase is a missional investment grant of £10m with an additional £2.5m implementation support available from 2027. The diocese will then be able to apply for phase two funding of £10m missional investment plus £1.5m implementation support in 2028. Overall, the diocese could receive £24m over six years.

This money comes from the Church Commissioners' national endowment and is specifically ring-fenced for growth and revitalisation initiatives - like training new leaders, hiring youth workers, and planting churches. It is 'restricted funding', meaning it cannot be used to pay for existing parish bills or the day-to-day operating budget.

How will the funding be distributed?

The funding is specifically targeted to help churches grow and make new disciples (one of the Diocese of Exeter's core aims.) It will be delivered through five interventions:

Energising & Releasing Clergy for Mission

Empowering Lay Disciples for Missional Transformation

Ensuring Children, Young People & Families (CYPF) are at the Heart

Enabling Growth Through Revitalisation, Planting, and Pioneering

A Bold Reshaping of the Church in Plymouth (known as Plymouth 2035)

You can read more about each intervention on our website.

What does Pray, Grow, Serve 2035 mean for my mission community?

There will be central investment to support **all parishes, benefices and mission communities** through:

- The Exeter Leadership Development Programme (ELDP) - delivered to all licensed clergy with two cohorts per year)
- The Exeter Ordination Pathway will aim to deliver at least 100 new Self-Supporting Ordained Ministers to increase sacramental and life-events ministry across the diocese, as well as increasing capacity for mixed ecology ministry and chaplaincy etc.
- Lay vocations support and free training pathways (i.e. Lay Commissioned Roles)
- The support of local Mission Enablers in each archdeaconry
- The opportunity to apply for up to £3000 Matthew 25 Funding (through the ELDP)
- A new Digital Learning Hub enabling free access to courses for all

Will every mission community receive the same interventions?

Some of the interventions will be offered to specific mission communities based on a set of carefully calculated metrics, including items such as mission and ministry, financial, church buildings, and census data. These targeted interventions include:

- New growing faith workers
- Working with a Mission Community Development Minister
- Specific interventions for churches in Plymouth
- Increase in the number of Self-Supporting clergy across the diocese through the Exeter Ordination Pathway. These will be based in their home mission community.

Why is the funding not just being divided equally between each mission community?

In order to receive this funding, we are required to use data-driven analysis to guide our decisions, rather than guesswork or favouritism. This helps us diagnose what a specific Mission Community needs. For example:

- Some areas might receive investment to become a Hub that resources others.
- Other areas might receive a Mission Community Development Minister (MCDM) to help them get unstuck and build a plan for the future.
- Areas with high potential for youth work might receive a Growing Faith Worker.

The distribution is based on need and opportunity, ensuring the right resource goes to the right place (equity) rather than just giving everyone a small but ineffectual amount (equality).

What is the timeline for recruiting the new Local Mission Enablers, Mission Community Development Ministers and Growing Faith Workers?

This is a ten-year plan, so these roles will be recruited in stages. Some roles, like the new City Dean for Plymouth have already been appointed. Others are still in the planning stage. We will provide regular updates on the progress of Pray, Grow, Serve 2035 over the course of the project, including news about appointments.

What if my mission community/parish is not chosen for a Growing Faith Worker or Mission Community Development Minister?

Not every mission community/parish needs a full-time worker to grow. If your mission community/parish is not allocated a specific worker, you will not be left behind. You still

have full access to the Matthew 25 Fund through the Exeter Leadership Development Programme to kickstart your own youth or mission projects. You will also have access to the Local Mission Enablers (LMEs) - experienced clergy who can offer coaching and guidance to help you develop your own local strategy. This plan is about partnership; we want to work with every mission community/parish that has a vision for growth, regardless of whether they receive a nationally-funded post.

Will this plan lead to cuts in clergy numbers?

No. On the contrary, this plan allows us to stabilise our stipendiary clergy numbers. Unlike some other dioceses that have been forced to make immediate cuts due to post-pandemic deficits, this investment provides a financial bridge that allows us to hold our stipendiary clergy numbers steady while we build for growth.

Furthermore, we are investing heavily in increasing our overall ministry capacity by training up to 100 new Self-Supporting Ministers (SSMs) through the Exeter Ordination Pathway (EOP). These will be locally rooted priests who will serve in their own communities, particularly in rural and coastal areas, ensuring that sacramental ministry remains available across Devon.

What is the Exeter Leadership Development Programme (ELDP) and why is it mandatory for new clergy?

The world has changed, and ministry is harder than ever. We have a duty of care to equip our leaders with the tools they need to thrive in this new context. The ELDP is a high-level investment in our clergy, focusing on missional leadership, resilience, spiritual health, well-being and managing change. It creates a network of support, so no clergy person feels isolated. It is mandatory for new Incumbents because we want to ensure every leader has the best possible start and is aligned with our shared vision for growth.

Why is there such a keen focus on Children and Young People?

The data presents us with both a crisis and a hope. 90% of our churches have fewer than five young people, representing a 'demographic cliff edge'. However, our data also shows that youth attendance is stable and growing where we invest. Prioritising the next generation is a missional imperative and obedience to the Gospel, quite apart from being a matter of survival. By funding new Growing Faith Workers, we are not just running youth clubs; we are building 'inter-generational' churches where faith is passed on in the home, school, and church. This creates the Church of the future.

Do we still need to pay our Common Fund?

Yes. The National Church funding is extra fuel for mission. It pays for the new people and projects (like Youth Workers, Church Planters, more lay and ordained ministry) that will help us grow the whole Diocese.

Common Fund fuels your vicar's stipend, housing, and the essential support services that keep our Diocese running right now. The investment funding cannot be used for these recurrent costs. If we stop paying Common Fund, the existing structure collapses, and we have no foundation to build upon. Our goal is that the growth of God's Kingdom here in Devon generated by this investment (more disciples, more generous giving) will, over the next decade, help stabilise both mission community/parish and Diocesan finances.

What is Mixed Ecology?

Mixed Ecology is a term used to describe different ways of doing and being 'church'. For example, it might mean a Mission Community where traditional parish communion services and services of the Word are taking place, alongside a Forest Church, Celtic Reflective services, Bubble Church, Cafe Church, Worship nights and more. It is part of the Church of England's vision and values different traditions of church equally.

What are New Worshipping Communities?

A 'new congregation' or 'new worshipping community' are defined as:

- Having as its purpose the worship of Jesus Christ and helping people grow in their faith. Practices will include two or more prayers, scripture, praise, sacraments, and acts of service.
- Aiming to reach people who did not previously attend church regularly and to make new Christian disciples.
- Meets at least once a month on any day of the week, in a church building or elsewhere.

Is Pray, Grow, Serve 2035 just about creating 'New Worshipping Communities' at the expense of traditional parishes?

Absolutely not. We believe that a healthy, revitalised parish is the 'engine' that powers our mission communities. The plan is designed to revitalise existing parishes/mission

communities and launch new communities, side-by-side – what is known as a ‘Mixed Ecology’.

The 101 new communities we aim to plant are not competitors; they are ‘fresh expressions’ designed to reach the 95% of people who are unlikely to walk into a traditional Sunday service. They will usually be planted by mission communities/parishes themselves, for their own communities, strengthening the mission community’s reach and influence, not replacing it.

How can we work smarter to ensure we are missional, without taking our eye off the ‘housekeeping’ (buildings/admin)?

We recognise that administration is a burden. That is why this plan includes specific support for administration. For example, the Digital Learning Hub will provide easy-to-access training for treasurers, churchwardens, and administrators to make their roles easier. We are also deploying Mission Community Development Ministers specifically to help struggling mission communities/parishes resolve structural or governance issues so they can focus on mission again. And we are strengthening our financial support for Mission Communities by employing a Head of Mission Community/Parish Support.

What help is there for mission communities/parishes facing big challenges?

We recognise that some mission communities/parishes are facing significant challenges and need more than just funding. That is why we are deploying Mission Community Development Ministers (MCDMs). These are experienced leaders who will come alongside ‘stuck’ or ‘at-risk’ mission communities/parishes to provide hands-on support, help resolve conflicts, and build a plan for the future. They are a tangible expression of our commitment to leave no mission community/parish behind.

What if my mission community/parish is not chosen for a Growing Faith Worker or Mission Community Development Minister?

Not every mission community/parish needs a full-time worker to grow. If your mission community/parish is not allocated a specific worker, you will not be left behind. You still have full access to the Matthew 25 Fund to kickstart your own youth or mission projects. You will also have access to the Local Mission Enablers (LMEs) - experienced clergy who can offer coaching and guidance to help you develop your own local strategy. This plan is about partnership; we want to work with every mission community/parish that has a vision for growth, regardless of whether they receive a nationally-funded post.

I'm a lay person. What is in this plan for me?

This plan is built on the belief that the Church is the responsibility of the whole people of God. We want to reduce 'clergy dependency' and release your gifts.

- **Training:** You can access high-quality, flexible training on the new Digital Learning Hub - whether you want to lead prayers, manage finances, or run a youth group. This platform is designed to ensure access to learning is available for everyone.
- **New Roles:** We have created new commissioned lay roles (like Lay Pioneers or Anna Chaplains) with clear pathways and support.
- **Funding:** If you have a vision for mission in your mission community, you can work with your vicar to apply to the Matthew 25 Fund to help get it off the ground.
- **Leadership:** We are actively looking for lay leaders to train for ordination or licensed ministry through our new accessible pathways.

How can we get involved with Pray, Grow, Serve 2035 and become a 5 Priorities parish?

Every parish and mission community can join in:

Clergy: Join a cohort of the new Exeter Leadership Development Programme.

People who feel called to ministry: talk to your vicar and the Vocations Officer as there are many kinds of ministry and many kinds of training.

How can we help you respond to God's call?

Everyone: Access flexible, high-quality training on the Digital Learning Hub once it has been developed.

PCCs: develop a new missional idea or start a new worshipping community and apply for seed funding from the Matthew 25 Fund.

Volunteers: Funded training for Lay Commissioned roles like Anna Chaplaincy, Children and Youth and Families leadership, Lay Pioneer and Lay Evangelist, Lay Leader of Creation Care.

Children and young people: We want children and young people to be Growing Faith leaders and participants in our mission plan - in our schools, churches and through our partnership with South West Youth Ministries.

I still have questions, where can I find out more?

You can find all the information about Pray, Grow, Serve 2035 on our website page.

In addition, we are holding information webinars with Bishop James. Here are the details of the first three webinars:

27 January at 2pm-3pm

4 February at 9am- 10am

5 March at 7pm – 8pm

Please click here to book your webinar place: <https://bookwhen.com/exeterdiocese/e/ev-s8m4k-20260127140000>

Where can I share my views?

As well as taking part in the information webinars, you can send any comments you have to: communications@exeter.anglican.org Please put Pray, Grow, Serve 2035 in the title.