

Swindon Deanery Vision (2024 Onwards)

Swindon Deanery: Social Context

Swindon is a large post-industrial town and one of the fastest growing towns in the country. This is likely to continue as large numbers of new houses are being, and are planned to be, built, particularly around the edges of the town. Consequently small, disparate communities with scarce community resources are being created, which provide great potential for church planting and outreach. As well as the urban area, the deanery includes some rural parishes and large villages.

Late 20th century economic development brought high skilled engineering, financial services and bioscience filling the gap left by Honda. Oxford Brookes University has a hub in the town but local skills and confidence remain low.

Swindon is a melting pot of people from many different places around the world, and has been for many years. An attraction of Swindon is the relatively low cost of housing and the high levels of employment. Historically skills shortages have been met by those moving westwards from London and Reading and more recently from around the world. The town now feels diverse and the churches reflect that diversity and are committed responding well to refugees and asylum seekers

Overall, the deanery is very mixed including a tired town centre (undergoing major redevelopment), established suburban areas, deprived areas, rural and large new estates within it. It includes the densely populated town of Swindon and also areas such as Highworth and many nearby villages which do not readily associate with Swindon. There are several areas of deprivation across the town and three small areas that are among the 2-3% of most deprived areas in the country. Some areas enjoy good leisure facilities or beautiful countryside and a sense of community. Others, notably in North Swindon are recognised as being deprived of community facilities. While Covid took a serious toll on our communities, especially some of the most vulnerable, some of the structural changes to working practices has been positive for parts of the deanery. The rise of homeworking has changed those neighbourhoods which were dormitory areas with very few people around during the day into livelier places with cafes springing up and flourishing. The lack of community buildings in these newer estates still suppresses any effective community spirit.

There are 61 schools in the Deanery and there are plans for at least 6 more. In recent years, the proportion and number of pupils in church schools has risen significantly, mostly as a consequence of new schools being developed by the Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust. They are bidding to develop many of the planned new schools.

Swindon Borough Vital Statistics

(The deanery includes 2 parishes wholly in Wiltshire County council and excludes 2 villages of Swindon Borough Council)

Population at 2021 census 238,000

Growth between 2000 and 2021 11.6% with 8000 new homes planned.

Born outside the UK 25%

Largest groups from

India 5.9% (14,000)

Poland 1.9% (4,500)

Average Age 39

(avg for UK population 40

avg for South West of England 44)

Swindon Deanery: Church of England context

The Deanery Vital Statistics

35 churches in 17 benefices
Plus 3 Bishop's Mission Order churches

16 incumbents (when no benefice in vacancy)
Of which 3 are currently part time posts
Plus 3 BMO leaders

9 Associate ministers (of which 7 are self-supporting)
17 retired clergy with PTO
Over 20 Licensed lay ministers

Within benefices, numbers of people served per incumbent ranges from <4,000 to >24,000

Anglican involvement in 4 Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

Swindon Deanery extends into Wiltshire on its western side, beyond the boundaries of the Unitary Authority, where it is largely rural, resulting in the deanery being more than 50% rural by size.

We are highly reliant upon, and very grateful for the many self-supporting associate and retired clergy who a vital to maintaining ministry across the deanery.

There is a strong legacy of ecumenism within the town and a continued desire to work in partnership across Anglican parishes and with other denominations.

Our churches vary greatly in size, age and churchmanship, but we are committed to working together, as appropriate, while retaining our individual and local character. Aware of the challenges facing the town of Swindon and the surrounding area we are keen to explore our role in drawing the town together into a flourishing community reflecting the Kingdom of God.

Opportunities

- Increasing number of church schools and therefore the number of families engaged with the Christian ethos.
- New communities needing, and ready, to be served and open to church engagement.
- A willingness for parishes to work in partnership
- Evidence of increasing numbers of people interested in spirituality
- Excellent links with Swindon Borough Council through Associate priest, Mark Tidey

Issues

- Supporting parishes in deprived areas which cannot meet their basic costs of operation
- Some Parishes wishing to dissolve local ecumenical partnerships that are not working well

Our Aims

We are committed to sharing the hope, love and Good News of Jesus with Swindon and the surrounding communities.

We want to see the lives of children and young people impacted by the love of Jesus

We want to be agents of social change, bringing the good news to people through practical action, particularly alleviating poverty and eradicating discrimination.

We want to promote growth in discipleship across the deanery.

We want to work in partnership with one another, other churches, charities and statutory bodies to achieve these aims

We are embracing the diocesan values of creativity, openness, bravery and generosity and wish to align with the diocesan priorities

- To have a form of church in every community in which all can participate & thrive
- To be people who worship God in every aspect of their lives
- To see the local church recognised as a powerful force for Gospel change
- To be environmentally and financially sustainable

The Headlines

In order to draw our community together and contribute to the flourishing of all people in the area covered by the Deanery we plan:

1. To work more closely together so that we can learn from one another and support one another in joint plans for mission, evangelism and social action. For example, in the several parishes with large new housing estates, or with a termly marriage course.
2. To support and be supported by a mission area providing leadership in an area of social change and in consolidating administrative support, as a model for others to copy.
3. To create partnerships between schools and parishes utilising Growing Faith Chaplains, providing opportunities for school children and their families to learn about Jesus.
4. To encourage and promote diocesan, parish and deanery wide opportunities to deepen discipleship and evangelism.
5. To support those who are marginalised in the deanery, through partnerships providing practical support and advocacy.
6. To develop new informal ecumenical links and build upon existing chaplaincies to provide more comprehensive support to schools, and neighbourhoods and other chaplaincies.
7. To build partnerships with Local Councils and other agencies to provide help with practical social action, following the lead of town centre churches.
8. To review inequalities in clergy deployment levels, with a view to consolidation and providing better clergy support for the denser and more deprived populations as appropriate.
9. To ensure new housing estates (both existing and imminent) throughout the deanery are served by congregations, outreach, and spiritual support in the right place.

The next steps

| Project | Initial Actions | Target date | Responsible |
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| <p>Finalise Deanery Vision</p> | <p>Share this high level vision widely across Swindon Deanery (including at Deanery Synod, Chapter and with the LLM group).</p> <p>Open up channels to receive feedback.</p> <p>Finalise Vision (though it will be an evolving document).</p> | <p>Synod July 19th 2023</p> <p>Feedback until October</p> <p>Agree Vision Synod November 16th 2023</p> | |
| <p>Working together</p> <p>To work more closely together so that we can learn from one another and support one another in joint plans for mission, evangelism and social action. For example, in the several parishes with large new housing estates, or with a termly marriage course.</p> | <p>Embed this culturally by hearing more from one another at synods.</p> <p>Create working groups for common interests (eg new housing estates).</p> <p>Foster a network of church administrators across the deanery.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>From November synod</p> | |
| <p>Swindon Mission Area</p> <p>As well as meeting local needs for these parishes, this Mission Area will provide leadership in at least one area of social change (eg environmental challenges) and a trial of centralising administrative support with a view to rolling this out further across the deanery.</p> | <p>Engage with all parishes to ensure no potential links are missed.</p> <p>Understand how ministry to deprived estates relates best to Mission Area development</p> <p>Discern the best cluster of 2 or 3 parishes to apply to be a Mission Area.</p> | <p>Engage with all parishes by end of September.</p> <p>Definite proposal for cluster by end November.</p> | <p>TC.T Strategy activity</p> <p>Ensure our forms of church best serve our communities</p> |
| <p>Growing Faith Chaplains</p> <p>Work together to find willing schools and churches where Growing Faith</p> | <p>Assess learning from successful projects in the past, especially in North Swindon.</p> <p>Engage with all parishes to gauge strength of existing</p> | <p>November 2023</p> <p>October 2023</p> | |

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| <p>Chaplains will be able to work. Build on past experience of the North Swindon schools' worker and engage with the new Growing Faith Chaplains to find the best clusters of schools/parishes to seek to appoint GFCs.</p> | <p>school/church links and find strongest potential partnerships.</p> <p>Identify the recommended number of parishes and schools and scope of chaplain role to write bid for chaplains</p> | <p>By December 2023 (or timetable set by diocese)</p> | <p>TC.T Strategy activity</p> <p>Engage under 18s</p> |
| <p>Discipleship Growth</p> <p>To encourage and promote diocesan, parish and deanery wide opportunities to deepen discipleship and encourage evangelism.</p> | <p>Explore existing courses and discipleship programmes being run within Deanery and promote more widely</p> <p>Review gaps in provision, including what Diocese provides and seek ways to fill these gaps</p> | <p>January 2024</p> <p>Mid 2024</p> | <p>TC.T Strategy activity</p> <p>Build pathways into deep, lived-out Christian Faith</p> |
| <p>Prioritising deprived communities</p> <p>To support those who are marginalised in Swindon Deanery, through partnerships providing practical support and advocacy.</p> | <p>Audit projects which already exist to engage with the marginalised.</p> <p>Seek to extend these by enlargement or replication as appropriate.</p> | <p>January 2024</p> | <p>TC.T Strategy activity</p> <p>Support low-income communities</p> |
| <p>Ecumenical working</p> <p>Once existing Local ecumenical partnerships who wish to be dissolved, there will be a need to ensure unity and mission opportunities are grasped ecumenically.</p> | <p>Support dissolution of existing LEPs, where parishes wish it.</p> <p>Continue discussions through Good News for Swindon and other channels to see where working together brings benefits especially in terms of evangelism, working with schools and young people and social justice issues.</p> <p>Provide 'map' of ecumenical partnerships for local and town wide initiatives</p> | <p>As required by LEP</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Mid 2024</p> | <p>TC.T Strategy activity</p> <p>Build Partnerships for Gospel Change</p> |
| <p>Partnerships with Council and charities</p> <p>We hope to involve the new Bishop of Swindon in building these partnerships depending upon when they arrive.</p> | <p>Contact the council to assess who and how to create new channels of communication between departments with needs and churches.</p> <p>Assign ongoing points of contact for council officers in</p> | <p>September 2023</p> | |

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| | <p>locations and aspects of need.</p> <p>Develop projects across parishes to meet these needs, beginning with those provided by New Town and Pattern churches.</p> | <p>December 2023</p> <p>2024 and beyond.</p> | <p>TC.T Strategy activity</p> <p>Build Partnerships for Gospel Change</p> |
| Clergy deployment | <p>Consider long term options for providing more appropriate levels of ministry which reflect the areas of need and population density.</p> <p>Produce plan for future deployment to meet the overall Deanery aims</p> | <p>December 2023</p> <p>Mid 2024</p> | <p>TC.T Strategy activity</p> <p>Ensure our forms of church best serve our communities</p> |
| <p>New Estates</p> <p>To ensure new housing estates throughout the deanery are served by churches and spiritual support in the right place.</p> | <p>Form a working group to help discern how we might build capacity for mission in new housing estates. (including Tadpole Garden Village, Ridgeway Farm, Broad Blunston, Wichelstowe, Town centre, Eastern Villages)</p> <p>Support the current proposal for a church plant into Redland village (eastern Villages), currently being investigated by Jo Winson and Pattern Church.</p> <p>Prepare for increased pastoral support required in The Villages and South Marston.</p> | <p>November 2023</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>As house building increases</p> | <p>TC.T Strategy activity</p> <p>Ensure our forms of church best serve our communities</p> |