

ST ALBANS DIOCESAN SYNOD

8 March 2025

Growing Younger and More Diverse Programme Update

This paper provides an update on the Growing Younger and More Diverse (GYMD) programme, work to date, timeline and status, a summary of the proposals for inclusion in our first bid, high level financials, next steps and governance for Diocesan Synod members.

Programme context: the Diocesan Investment Programme

- **By way of reminder**, the Church of England has established a Diocesan Investment Programme – under which substantial funding is available for strategic missional programmes which meet its defined criteria. All dioceses can apply for this funding, which entails local consultation, project proposals, a diocesan mission plan, viability review and substantial bid documents.
- **The intention** is to focus investment on enabling the bold outcomes and priorities of the Church of England – helping dioceses to develop new areas of mission, revitalise mission and scale up mission approaches that are proving effective.
- **This programme takes a strategic long-term approach** – aiming to develop mission for a particular geographical area or demographic group or drive diocesan wide mission and capacity, based on robust and sustainable missional, people, and financial plans.
- **This is a good opportunity** to boost missional effort in our diocese, and it makes sense to bid for this funding. Diocesan Synod has made an in-principle strategy commitment to Growing Younger and More Diverse Priority, and the bid aims to draw younger and more diverse people into the life of the church. The heart of this work is to spot where God is at work to bless it, or to spot where God is asking us to step in to meet needs.
- **This is a nine-year programme**, so there is time for projects to be fully thought through, rather than trying to meet one fixed deadline.
- **Diocesan Synod and Council supported a successful capacity bid in 2023** for resources to develop a bid for the Diocese – achieving £659k over 3 years for the programme team (in post at January 2024), a Luton Director of Missional Change (to revisit this year) and expenses – hence none of this work is a charge on the common fund or on parishes.
- **So how has this worked to date?** The programme manager has worked with Bishop's Staff to agree selection criteria and with Rural/Area Deans to identify possible projects which might be ready for local engagement, discernment, and development as part of a diocesan bid. Local consultations were then led with the relevant Archdeacon and Rural/Area Dean, reporting to and receiving support from all relevant governance bodies over the course of last year (see below).
- **Project bids need to be developed in the context of an overall diocesan mission plan.** This is also in development, building on the diocesan strategy of Living God's Love, with direction from Bishop's Staff, to ensure only well thought through and integrated missional bids are made.

- **The programme is overseen by the GYMD Programme Board**, membership of which has been carefully chosen to include representation from the various governance bodies to which the Programme Board is accountable e.g. DBF, Bishop's Council, BMM and DBE.

Programme timeline

- **Project timeline** – project consultations have taken place over the course of 2024, with an initial bid to be made this year, subject to project readiness. The first wave of projects includes Luton, Watford, Hatfield and Linnmere (see below), alongside leadership and educational streams and a request for capacity. We are targeting the **12 June** Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (which makes decisions on funding bids), for which the bid submission date is **1 May**.
- **Programme status** – The program is currently on track against plan, although the timeline is subject to effective conclusion of the Luton consultation, completion of all required bid paperwork (extensive), governance and central church support for our proposals.

Project proposals

- **Overall missional pattern** – Extensive grass roots consultation across parishioners, lay readers, partner organisations, incumbents, church leaders and youth in our three major urban areas has drawn out patterns of missional vision and opportunity and areas of fruit and growth, which fall under four key themes: 1) town centre churches fit for the future, 2) engaging our youngest generations, 3) Christian witness and mission in diverse multi-faith, multi-ethnic communities and 4) raising up local diverse leadership, into which investment is proposed. It has been very encouraging to see so much life and missional vision across our parishes and deaneries.
- **In Luton** – Investment in parish life is proposed to enable St Mary's to be open daily, as a place of intercultural gathering, encounter and faith discovery, very timely with the town centre and stadium development, boost children, family, youth and young adult outreach with new deanery missional workers, boost community health, engagement and mission in diverse urban communities with new community missionaries, alongside some minor missional refurbishments.
- **In Watford** – Investment is proposed to expand community outreach and mission from Christchurch, with expanded leadership and new missional workers, boost children, family, schools and youth outreach with new deanery missional workers including chaplaincy, and boost community outreach in deprived areas through a new estate worker, intercultural worker and minor refurbishments to boost 'community hub' and youth 'drop in' outreach.
- **In Hatfield** – Investment is proposed to expand student and community outreach and mission from St Johns and create a new worshipping community near the De Havilland Campus with new missional workers, boost children, family, youth and young adult outreach with new deanery missional workers, and boost community outreach in deprived areas, with minor refurbishments.
- **In Linnmere** – Investment is proposed to create a sustainable new missional worshipping community in the Linnmere housing development, Houghton Regis, on the outskirts of Luton and Dunstable, through a missional leader and supporting part time children and family worker.

- A **leadership stream** proposes investment to grow the number of younger and more diverse leaders (lay and ordained), boost youth leader development and schools work, and an **education stream** proposes investment to boost parish and school engagement, pupil leaders of worship and collective worship, through a new schools and parish development role.

High level financials

- **Indicative scale of bids** – We anticipate a potential overall budget for DIP investment in the diocese in the order of £10m, although this could possibly stretch to c.£12.5m, across an anticipated 3 bids and 9 years. Importantly, this is not a confirmed position and will be subject to the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board view on the missional proposals presented.
- **Breakdown of potential bids** – In view of the above, in discussion with Bishop's Staff and the Growing Younger and More Diverse Programme Board, we are adopting a conservative approach, anticipating c.£8.6m for specific project areas (such as Watford, Luton etc.), c.£1m for leadership & education streams (skewed to grass roots leadership and schools development) and c.£0.4m capacity to continue to manage the programme and undertake local consultations in next in line areas. The anticipated breakdown of our first bid at £6m is set out in the table below (subject to finalising resource needs and approvals) which should leave a minimum of £2m each for two further bids, which we expect to be in the summer of 2026 and early in 2028, and which would include focus on rural ministry. While planning for a c.£10m ceiling, our intention is to seek the stretch to £12.5m on the back of a successful first bid, for further project development.

Bid 1	£000
Luton (phase 1)	2,000
Watford	1,250
Hatfield	1,000
Linmere	375
Local leadership development	750
Local schools engagement	225
Programme capacity	400
Total	6,000

- **Assumptions and sustainability** – the focus of the bid is front line missional roles to boost grass roots missional vision and opportunity, with some minor refurbishments to enable mission. Roles have been fully costed with 22.5% on-costs (pension/NI), 5% recruitment costs (year1), 5% operational expenses (pa), and 3% inflation (year on year). Local roles are fully funded for 4 years, with a taper foreseen to 6+ years to lead to local sustainable work.

Next steps and governance

- **Project development** – Project plans and proposals will continue to be developed including clarifying the specific resources that would be most impactful from a missional point of view with input from local church leaders and consequential refining of the budget ask, intended outcomes and metrics. This is in play at various stages of maturity across Watford, Hatfield and Luton.

- **Bid construction and development** – Construction of the bid pitch slides, project proposal packs, and development of extensive required appendices will take place across March and April.
- **Central church input** – Input will continue to be received on our missional design, required bid construct and paperwork from the point of view of the national church vision and strategy team, across March and April.
- **Governance** – Given timings, it is proposed that ultimate bid sign off will be by the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF), with DBF sub-group prior review, and a proposed single item special DBF meeting just prior to submission. The Mission & Ministry Board (BMM) and Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) will receive high-level updates in March, also seeking education stream approval by the DBE. The Growing Younger and More Diverse Programme Board will also receive a comprehensive update in early April for review and approval.