

Diocese of St Albans Statement of Needs



Welcome

Welcome to the Diocese of St Albans

We are praying for a Bishop who has discerned a deep sense of calling to the Diocese of St Albans, to serve, shepherd and journey alongside us in faith, hope and love.

Our commitment is to live God's love for the people of Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Luton and Barnet. We are praying for a bishop who has a passion for mission, and the gifts and experience to lead us into a renewed expression of that commitment.

From Sharnbrook to Rickmansworth, and from Tring to Bishop's Stortford, St Albans is a lively, faithful, diverse and welcoming diocese, where our ministry is expressed locally in and through our churches, schools, chaplaincies and homes. We have a longing to grow in prayer, discipleship and mission. We are a place where the seeds of renewal are already visible, and where committed, imaginative leadership can help nurture new growth. We are praying for a bishop who can inspire, encourage and empower all God's people to be Christ's body in the world.

Celebrating all that is good and flourishing, we also recognise with honesty that we face real challenges including financial pressures, the call to grow younger and more diverse, divisions between us over issues such as human identity, and the heavy burdens carried by many. We express our readiness to face these challenges together, with the prayerful and courageous leadership of our new bishop.

We are a diocese named after Britain's first saint and martyr, whose story is defined by welcome, faith, witness, and courage. We will welcome our new bishop with warmth, generosity and open hearts, and we commit to journeying together in faith, and with courage to bear witness to Jesus Christ, in word and action, in every corner of our diocese.

The Very Revd Jo Kelly-Moore
Dean of St Albans
Chair, Vacancy in See Committee



Welcome to the Diocese of St Albans

Introduction

This Statement of Needs has been prepared to support the process of discerning the next Bishop of St Albans. It sets out a picture of who we are as a diocese—our people, our places, our challenges and hopes—and the leadership we believe is needed for the next stage of our journey.

The content of this document has been shaped by wide, prayerful and thoughtful input. It draws on the views of diocesan boards and committees, parish clergy and lay leadership, members of the diocesan staff and, crucially, over 600 responses from individuals and groups across the Diocese who took part in a public consultation. We are hopeful and grateful for the voices and stories that have shaped a shared vision for what the Diocese of St Albans seeks in its next bishop.

This is not just a profile—it's a tool for discernment. We trust it will guide the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC) and others involved in the appointment as they consider who is best suited to lead us. Our aim is not to prescribe, but to describe: to speak honestly about where we are, what we hope for, and what kind of leadership will help us respond faithfully to God's call. We hope it will be a guide in finding the person who God has already prepared to lead us forward.

A prayer for the vacancy and discernment of next bishop

Generous God,
we pray for our Diocese of St Albans.

As we take this journey of discernment for our new bishop, open our hearts and minds to hear the wisdom of your Spirit.

Be with those who sense a call to this ministry, with those discerning the appointment, and with all those leading and serving us at this time.

In this shared discernment, and always, draw us deeper into your love, that we may live it with joy and courage for your world,

in the name, and for the sake of, your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen



What we seek in our next bishop

The Diocese of St Albans is seeking a bishop who will walk with us on the journey in a time of opportunity and brings a prophetic and strategic vision to the challenges of today's Church and its mission in the world.

Rooted in the story of Saint Alban—the first British martyr—the Diocese of St Albans has long been a place of pilgrimage, shaped by the great Easter and Alban Pilgrimages and by generations of Christians who have walked, worshipped and witnessed here. In the north of the Diocese, the legacy of John Bunyan, author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, speaks to an inner journey of faith, courage and transformation.

Together, these stories remind us that pilgrimage is open to all—a path we walk with God as we grow in faith and deepen our discipleship.

We pray for a bishop who will help us continue that journey—walking with us, guiding us, and encouraging us to journey with one another as we follow Christ.

We seek a bishop who will ordain both women and men as priests and deacons and who is committed to work within the House of Bishops' Five Guiding Principles. We hope for someone who nurtures and supports the ministry of both clergy and all in licensed and commissioned lay ministry roles.

We also look for someone who can offer leadership not only within the Church but in the wider civic, interfaith, and public spheres—someone who can represent the Church of England with wisdom and who will champion social justice and social cohesion across the diverse communities of the Diocese.

Above all, we seek a bishop with a vision for mission and evangelism and a deep commitment to fostering church growth. We pray for someone called by God to lead us in nurturing flourishing, Christ-centred communities throughout this diverse diocese—communities in which people of every age, background and tradition are encouraged to encounter God, deepen their faith and respond to his transforming love through worship, service and witness.

We pray for a bishop who is:

- **A spiritual leader of vision and imagination**, able to articulate the Gospel afresh and lead us in mission, guiding us through changing times in a way that is collaborative and brings out the gifts in others
- **Rooted in prayer, Scripture and a deep personal faith**, led by the Holy Spirit and committed to preaching and teaching the Bible with clarity and joy, and able to speak of their relationship with the Lord in a way that inspires others
- **An experienced parish priest**, with a proven track record of leading a church into growth
- **An effective communicator**, who tells the good news of Jesus with confidence, humility and truth within the Church and beyond
- **A builder of unity**, able to lead with courage, compassion and integrity where there is disagreement, and to help us live generously and faithfully with difference
- **A pastoral presence**, who understands the demands of ministry, offers encouragement and helps foster a culture of spiritual renewal and wellbeing across the Diocese
- **Visible and engaged**, present in parish life, comfortable in different contexts and willing to listen deeply
- **Committed to safeguarding**, able to lead and shape a culture of safety, accountability and care
- **A champion of younger generations**, passionate about helping children and young people come to faith and grow as disciples
- **Shaped by ministry in a range of contexts**— rural, urban or multi-parish, schools and chaplaincies — who leads with pastoral sensitivity and wisdom grounded in real-world experience
- **A leader who loves people and engages across different cultures and traditions in a mixed ecology**, with experience of forming partnerships, navigating complexity and engaging constructively and graciously with differing views.

The Diocese of St Albans



The Diocese of St Albans

The Diocese of St Albans is a diverse and vibrant family of churches, schools, chaplaincies and communities across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Luton and part of the London Borough of Barnet. Rooted in the parish system and in the ministry in our schools and chaplaincies, we are animated by a shared commitment to Living God's Love. We are deeply thankful for the people and places that make up this diocese, while also aware of the challenges the Church faces and the opportunities before us.

Local ministry at the heart

Ministry in our local communities is at the centre of our diocesan life. The day-to-day ministry of clergy and lay people is the heart of the Church's mission—through worship, pastoral care and outreach in places of every size and setting—as we seek to inspire people to discover God, grow in their relationship with him and respond to his transforming love through serving others.

We are a diocese shaped by commitment and care, often expressed in quiet, unsung ways. There is a strong desire to strengthen the connection between diocesan structures and local ministry. Where there is distance—geographical or relational—we want to keep building bridges, ensuring that every parish is seen, heard and supported.



The Diocese of St Albans

Growing younger and more diverse

We are committed to the Church of England's strategic objective of growing younger and more diverse. Many in the Diocese speak warmly of this vision and the support being offered to churches, particularly in work with children and young people. There is real hope in the progress already being made and we are grateful for the clergy and lay leaders investing in this area.

However, the demographic reality is pressing: in many churches, the average age continues to rise and there is a relative lack of young people who are being nurtured as disciples. Encouraging youth engagement must remain a very high priority. We recognise that a culture shift is needed—one that prioritises work with children, young people and young adults—and this shift needs the support of prayerful vision, Godly leadership and wise stewardship of financial resources.

Our commitment to welcome and diversity also means addressing under-representation in leadership. We are working to widen access to training and vocations, so our diocese better reflects the rich diversity of all who live here.



The Diocese of St Albans



A Church of many traditions

We are a broad and varied diocese, with worship styles, theological perspectives and parish contexts reflecting the full spectrum of the Church of England. This diversity is a source of strength, creativity and connection to our communities.

At the same time, theological tensions—particularly around sexuality and marriage—remain a live reality. Holding together across difference requires courage and trust. We highly value our ability to express differing views within a framework of unity, and we want to remain a Church where a passion for the Gospel comes first, and our mission together is expressed through kindness and listening to one another.



The Diocese of St Albans

Supporting clergy and lay leaders

We recognise clergy and lay leaders as being central to the mission and ministry of the Diocese and their commitment sustains the ministries of the Church in every context.

While the Diocese has invested significantly in supporting parish clergy, with this investment bearing fruit in many places, we recognise that the pace and complexity of ministry today can take its toll. Clergy wellbeing is a significant concern, and we seek to support clergy with high workloads, concerns about stipends and pensions, and where morale is under pressure. Many clergy serve multiple parishes and manage a demanding mix of responsibilities. Volunteer fatigue, administrative tasks, church finances, buildings maintenance, and travel across rural benefices all add to the strain. There is an ongoing need for practical support, pastoral encouragement, and a culture that values rest as well as responsibility. To that end, various programmes are in place to support people in their ministry and wellbeing – including Support in Your Ministry, the Clergy Counselling Service and the Year of Spiritual Renewal and Wellbeing.

Diocesan staff are committed to serving the people, churches and schools and we want to continue to build a culture of trust where clergy and diocesan teams work together with a shared mission.

Lay leaders and volunteers too are at the heart of our shared life. We are aware of the need to make it as easy as possible for lay leaders to flourish and offer practical support to those who give sacrificially of their time and gifts to sustain parish life.



The Diocese of St Albans

Encouraging vocations and discipleship

We are encouraged by those discerning a call to ministry—lay and ordained—and are committed to supporting and nurturing that calling. Our vocations team support those exploring their calling, knowing that the journey into ministry is not always straightforward. Patterns of vocation are changing, and some groups continue to face barriers. People from Global Majority Heritage backgrounds, in particular, remain under-represented in leadership. As with our ambition to grow younger and more diverse, addressing barriers will require listening, creativity and sustained commitment.

There is also a shared desire across the Diocese to strengthen parish-level discipleship. Encouraging people to explore vocation begins with nurturing confident, articulate faith in our congregations—something many parishes are actively working to do.



The Diocese of St Albans

Partnering with schools and young people

Our schools are a major strength of the Diocese, with around 31,000 children and young people currently in Church of England education. The Diocese is committed to strengthening the links between schools and parishes, with a focus on emerging areas like school chaplaincy. The Schools Team provides highly valued support to schools, ensuring they maintain their Christian distinctiveness and thrive in all areas of school life.

Safeguarding and culture

We are committed to embedding safeguarding as a culture, not just a process. We are supported by a strong diocesan safeguarding team, which works closely with clergy, parishes, and senior leadership. Following the Scolding Review into abuse at Soul Survivor, we have strengthened governance and updated our policies for Bishops' Mission Orders, and we are continuing to reflect on how to lead, listen and respond in ways that are both robust and pastoral.

We know that trust must be earned through sustained action. This includes walking with survivors, offering clear guidelines and ensuring that safeguarding is integrated into the whole life of the Church.



The Diocese of St Albans



Finances and generosity

The Diocese is financially stable and well-managed, as a result of careful stewardship underpinned by a strong culture of generosity across our parishes. Nonetheless, we know that financial pressures are real at parish level.

Encouraging joyful, sustainable giving—and communicating clearly about how diocesan resources are used—is a shared challenge. Ensuring continued strong parish-led giving is critical to avoiding fragility in the Diocese's overall financial health. Some parishes report not feeling fully connected to the wider financial picture, and we want to keep improving how we communicate around generosity, responsibility and shared mission.

There is also significant hope in current and emerging missional projects, particularly through the use of external funding to support priorities such as our growing younger and more diverse work.

Governance and strategic leadership

Governance in this diocese, as in many others, is grounded in good practice, transparency and collaboration. These principles underpin the shared work of elected members, officers and senior staff to enable effective decision-making, support local mission and ensure accountability across the Diocese. Like many dioceses, we are navigating how to balance vision with practical demands, and how to lead strategically without becoming overly managerial. There is a shared sense that decisions and structures should serve the Church's mission—not distract from it.

Recognising not every parish experiences diocesan governance in the same way, there is a continued opportunity to grow mutual understanding between local contexts and diocesan teams and to keep investing in ways of working that are responsive and rooted in partnership.

The Diocese of St Albans



Caring for creation

In line with the Fifth Mark of Mission, we are actively pursuing our Net Zero Carbon ambitions. Around 30% of our churches use only electricity and are on track to meet our environmental targets. But significant challenges remain—particularly in decarbonising vicarages and school buildings, and utilising glebe land well, including through renewable energy development.

We want to lead with integrity on climate justice, and we are grappling with the practical and ethical questions that this work involves, especially where buildings and finances pose significant complications.



Our geography



Our geography

The Diocese of St Albans covers a wide and diverse area across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Luton and part of the London Borough of Barnet. It includes a broad mix of communities—from deeply rural villages and market towns to significant urban centres and commuter hubs.

The city of St Albans, home to the Cathedral, takes its name from Saint Alban, venerated as the first British Christian martyr. Alban was a Roman citizen who lived in Verulamium (modern-day St Albans) during the 3rd century. He converted to Christianity after sheltering a fugitive priest and was subsequently executed for his faith. His act of martyrdom has been commemorated for centuries, and the site of his execution became a focal point for pilgrimage. Today, St Albans continues to be a significant pilgrimage destination.

Urban areas such as Luton, Watford, Bedford, Hemel Hempstead and Stevenage represent major population centres, each with its own distinct character and demographic profile. Luton is one of the most ethnically diverse towns in the country, while towns such as Hertford, Dunstable and Welwyn Garden City reflect the mix of market town heritage and commuter-belt living that shapes much of the region.

Like many parts of the home counties, the Diocese is seeing the development of significant new housing areas, including strategic expansions to existing towns and the creation of entirely new settlements.

Many of these urban areas are well connected by public transport, particularly into London. The Diocese is also served by major roads: the M1 and A1 run north–south through its centre, with the M11 skirting the eastern boundary. However, as with public transport, east–west travel can be more challenging. Rail routes between parts of the Diocese often involve travel through central London, and the road network, while supported by several A-roads, does not always offer direct connections across the region. This relative lack of internal connectivity contributes to the sense of a diocese composed of strong local identities rather than a single cohesive region.

Ministry in this varied context brings with it both familiarity and contrast. Clergy and lay leaders often find themselves at home in some areas and stretched in others. The range of settings offers a breadth of experience—from parishes where the Church is one of few community anchors, to those where it is one voice among many.

Our geography

Rural ministry

Almost half of our parishes serve communities with populations typically under 3,000. Around a quarter of stipendiary clergy serve in rural settings, often across several parishes. This brings both variety and complexity as clergy navigate the demands of travel, buildings and local relationships, supported by lay leaders and volunteers.

In many villages, the church provides a regular pattern of worship and prayer, offers hospitality, and plays a role in community life. Congregations are often long-established and committed, and many have close links with local schools and community groups and are known and trusted by those around them.

Eighty-four rural parishes report few or no children attending regularly. Yet there is ongoing work to engage with younger generations—through schools, family services and local events. In many places, ministry is adapting to local needs, with new ideas emerging alongside existing patterns of church life.



Archdeaconries



The Archdeaconry of Bedford

Geography and transport

Covering the Diocese's central and northern reaches, the Archdeaconry of Bedford includes rural borders with Cambridgeshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire, and the urban centres of Luton and Bedford. The area lies within the Oxford–Cambridge Arc and is linked by the M1, A6 and the emerging East West Rail, which will connect Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. It offers a mix of village, town and city life and continues to experience significant demographic and economic change, influencing mission opportunities across the region.

Major employers include London Luton Airport, the universities of Bedfordshire and Cranfield, NHS Trusts and logistics firms. The planned Universal Studios theme park near Bedford is expected to bring major economic benefits in employment, housing and infrastructure.

Churches and communities

With six deaneries and 141 parishes, the Archdeaconry of Bedford offers diverse settings for worship and community life—from historic listed churches to modern gatherings in schools and community centres. It spans a striking breadth of context, from the interfaith and multicultural urban centres of Luton and Bedford, to the rural parishes of Sharnbrook and the surrounding countryside. Local communities range from some of the most deprived areas in the south of England to some of the most affluent in the region, making this one of the Diocese's most socially and culturally varied areas.

Mission and ministry

Ministries are shaped by local realities—whether in multicultural, economically challenged areas such as Luton and Bedford or more affluent rural settings. Priorities include youth engagement, interfaith work and practical support for vulnerable residents.



The Archdeaconry of Bedford

Education and chaplaincy

There are 46 church schools, ranging from small rural primaries to large urban secondaries, with many in three-tier systems. Chaplaincy plays a strong role, including at the University of Bedfordshire (Luton and Bedford campuses), London Luton Airport, Bedford Prison and healthcare settings.

Strategic priorities

Churches, chaplaincies and schools are addressing the complexities of change, diversity and inequality with commitment and care. Local efforts are grounded in pastoral support and education and are bolstered by targeted investment.



The Archdeaconry of Hertford

Geography and transport

The Archdeaconry of Hertford is bounded to the west by the A1(M), meets the Diocese of Chelmsford at Hockerill and Sawbridgeworth, and extends south into the London Borough of Barnet. It is well-connected and continues to grow, with major housing projects underway, including in West Stevenage, Bishops Stortford and Gilston Garden Town.

Key employers include GlaxoSmithKline in Ware and Stevenage, Tesco's headquarters in Welwyn Garden City, and Ocado in Hatfield, which are all central to the local economy.

Churches and communities

The Archdeaconry includes seven deaneries and 110 parishes, covering urban neighbourhoods, commuter suburbs and deeply rural parishes along the Hertfordshire borders. It features team ministries, Local Ecumenical Projects, and the Oak Church in Stevenage (a Bishop's Mission Order). Notable towns include Royston, Baldock, Stevenage, Hertford, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Hoddesdon and Potters Bar.

Mission and ministry

Ministry here is shaped by the character of local communities, with churches engaging in a range of ways—from supporting new housing developments and forming ecumenical partnerships to launching new worshipping communities in growing areas.



The Archdeaconry of Hertford

Education and chaplaincy

There are 55 church schools in the Archdeaconry, from rural primaries to a large secondary academy, working within both two- and three-tier systems. The University of Hertfordshire in Hatfield is a key mission partner, supported through an active chaplaincy.

Strategic priorities

As new communities emerge, churches, schools and chaplaincies are finding fresh ways to connect. There is a strong focus on children's and youth ministry, building school partnerships and welcoming new residents—backed by diocesan support.



The Archdeaconry of St Albans

Geography and transport

From Tring in the west to Hitchin and Letchworth in the north-east, and down to the edge of North London, the Archdeaconry of St Albans is well-served by the M1 and A1(M), with direct rail links to London. A key commuter belt, the area continues to see significant housing growth—bringing both opportunities and challenges for mission and ministry.

Major employers are based in St Albans, Watford and Hemel Hempstead, including Warner Bros. Studios, EE, Computacenter and Skanska.

Churches and communities

The Archdeaconry comprises seven deaneries and 90 parishes, with parish contexts ranging from urban and suburban centres to commuter towns and rural villages, including parts of the Chilterns and northern Hertfordshire. The historic City of St Albans is central, with major towns including Watford, Hemel Hempstead, Harpenden, Berkhamsted, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Tring and Rickmansworth. While often perceived as affluent, the area includes pockets of real deprivation.

Some of the Diocese's largest churches by attendance are here, including Christ Church and St Andrew's Chorleywood, St Nicholas Harpenden, St Paul's St Albans, St Paul's Letchworth and Soul Survivor Watford. The Hub in Hitchin, another Bishop's Mission Order, is also based here.

Mission and ministry

Ministries are rooted in the life of parish churches and shaped by their local contexts—from community outreach and refugee support to growing youth and family work. Investment in children and families posts, youth ministry and school chaplaincy strengthens this engagement.



The Archdeaconry of St Albans

Education and chaplaincy

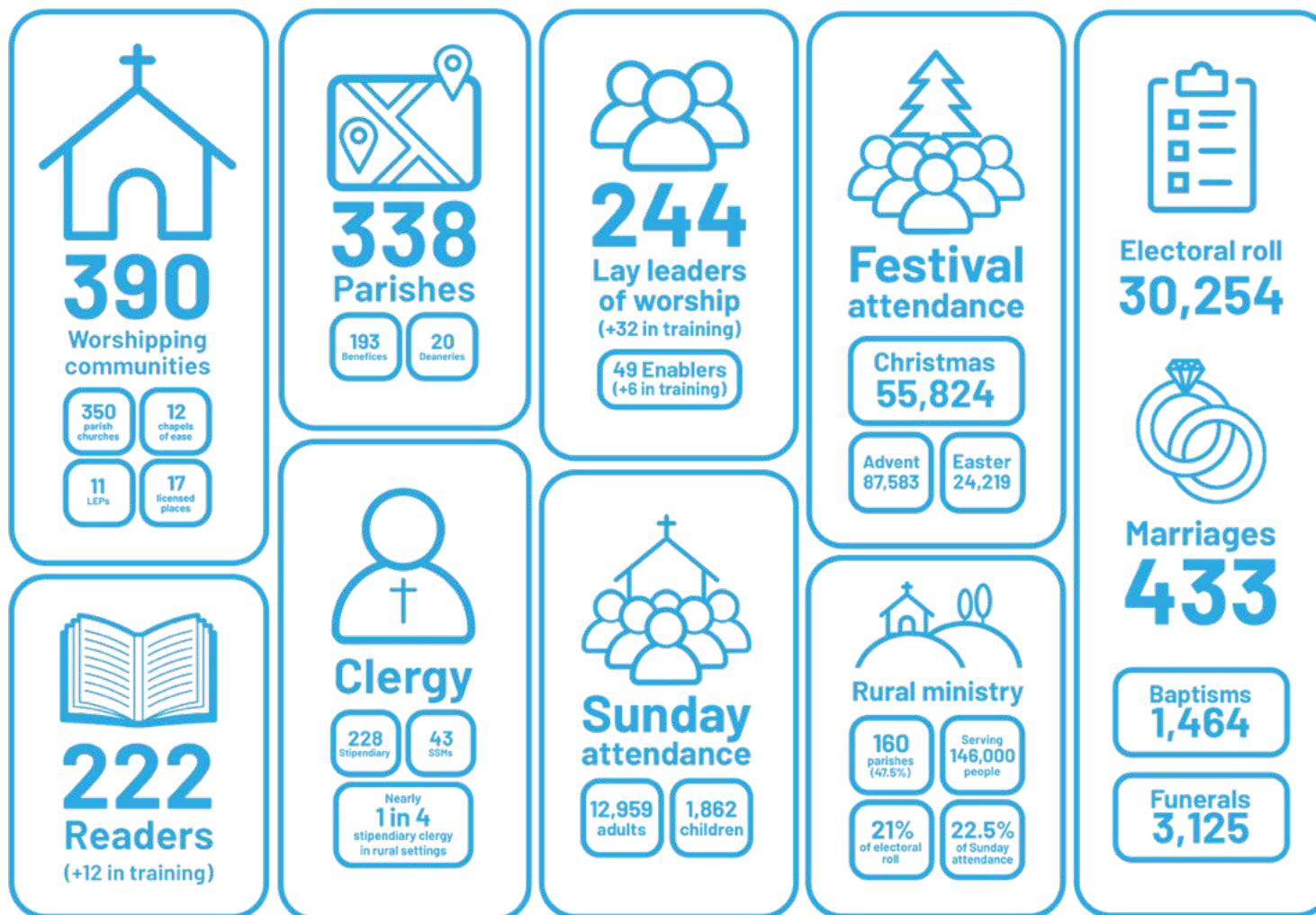
There are 34 church schools—primary and secondary—actively involved in their communities and supported through chaplaincy and wider ministry among children and families.

Strategic priorities

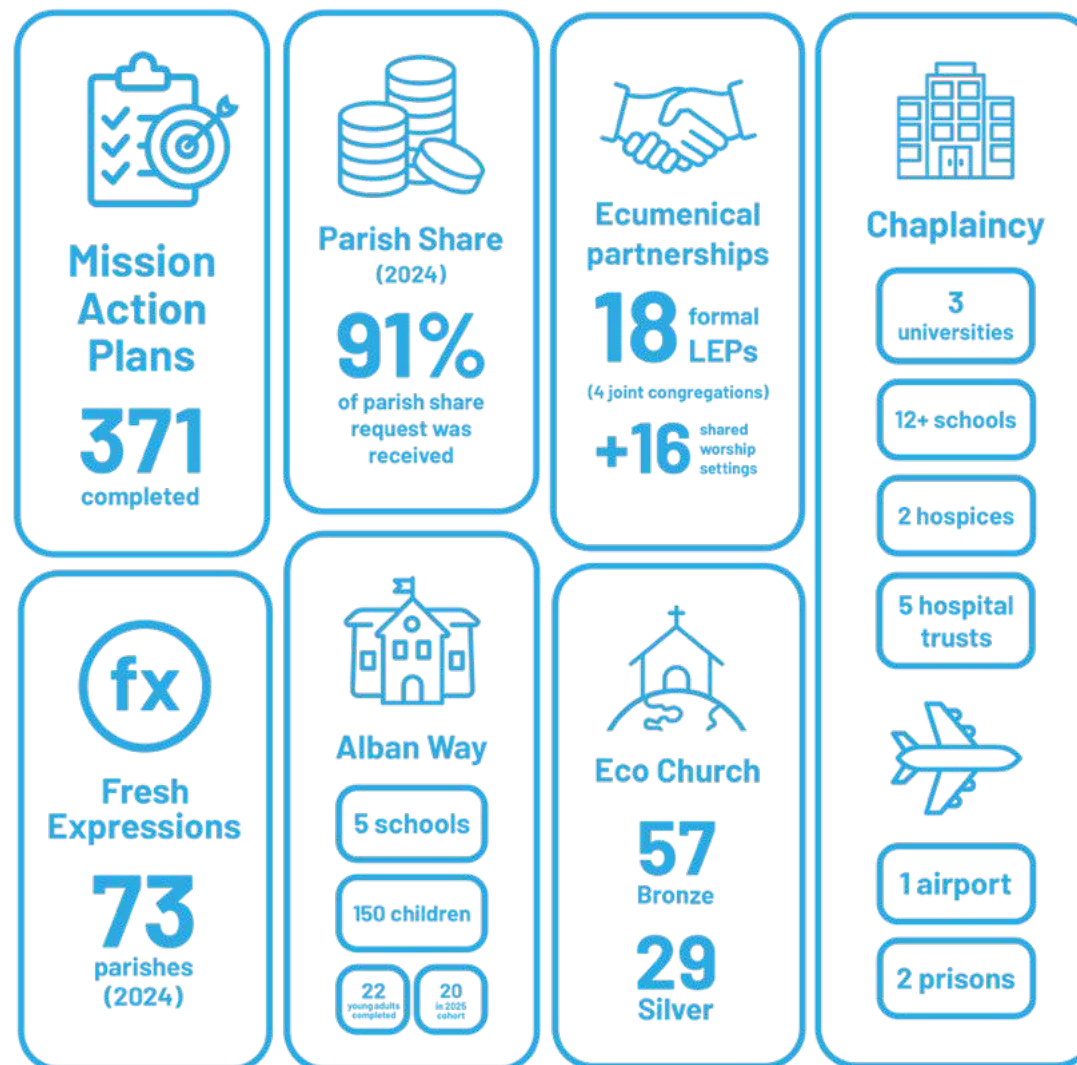
Churches are responding creatively to local growth and shifting demographics. In Watford deanery, a proposed Diocesan Investment Programme bid supports revitalisation, stronger engagement with children, young people, families and schools, and fostering more diverse congregations—building on existing energy and vision.



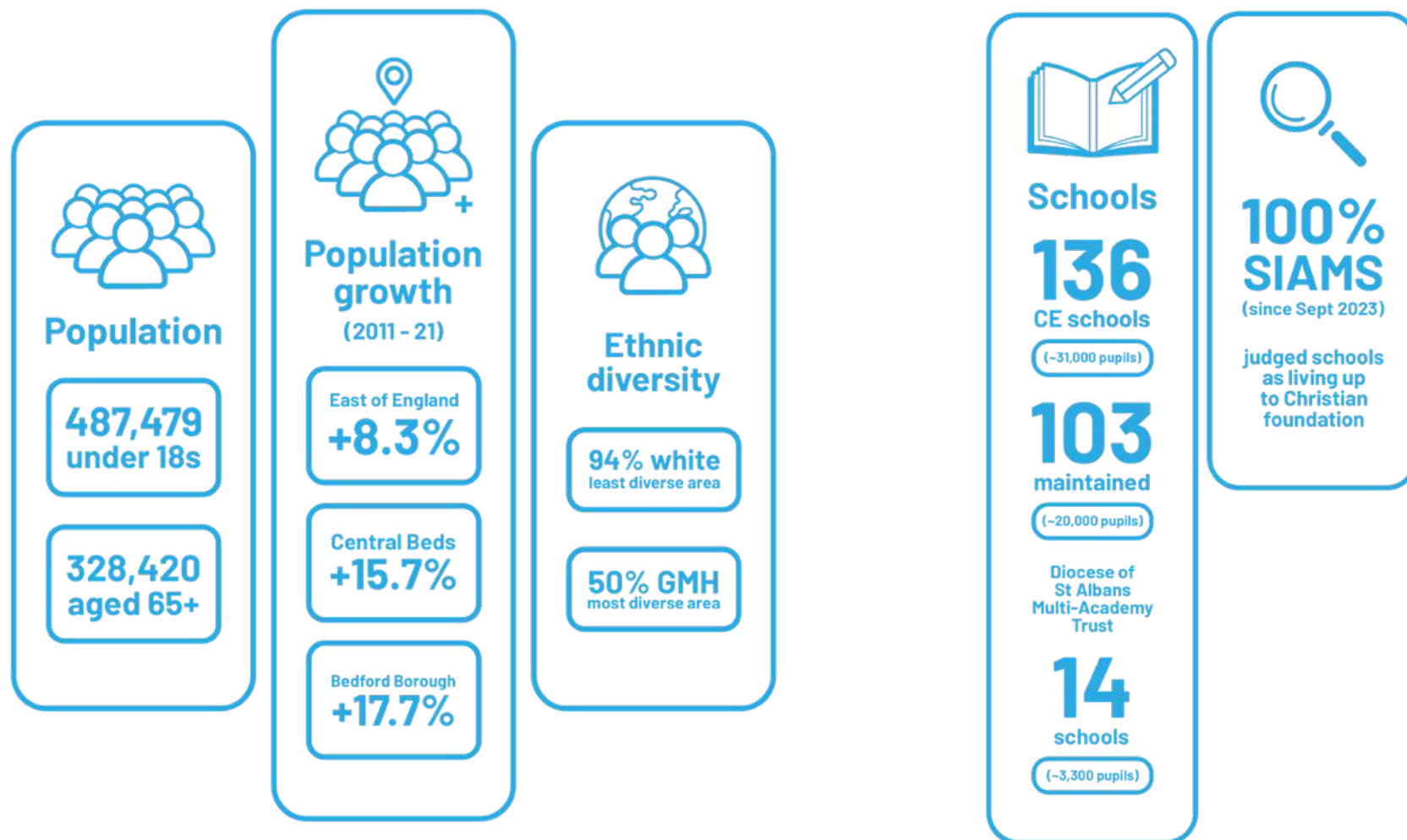
The Diocese in numbers



The Diocese in numbers



The Diocese in numbers



The Bishops



The Bishops

The Diocese of St Albans is well served by a strong and collaborative episcopal team. Alongside the Diocesan Bishop, there are two suffragan bishops—the Bishops of Bedford and Hertford. Although there is no formal area scheme, the two suffragans carry significant delegated responsibility and are closely involved in the day-to-day life of the Diocese.

The Rt Revd Richard Atkinson, as Bishop of Bedford, leads on ministry in Bedfordshire and Luton, including clergy appointments and pastoral care. He also chairs the Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee Executive, and takes the lead on matters of racial justice, interfaith relations, deliverance ministry and civic engagement in Bedfordshire.

The Bishop of Hertford, the Rt Revd Jane Mainwaring, has a parallel role in Hertfordshire and Barnet. She chairs the Board for Mission and Ministry, the Diocesan Environmental Group and the Growing Younger and More Diverse Board, and serves as Warden of Readers.

Each suffragan bishop acts as sponsoring bishop for ordinands from their respective area and works closely with local archdeacons. The Bishop of Bedford and Archdeacon of Bedford work as a team, as do the Bishop of Hertford and the Archdeacons of St Albans and Hertford. The team is further supported by six honorary assistant bishops who live within the Diocese, along with the Bishops of Richborough and Ebbsfleet, who provide alternative episcopal oversight where it is required.



St Albans Cathedral



St Albans Cathedral

St Albans Cathedral is perhaps the oldest site of continual Christian worship in the United Kingdom. As a place of pilgrimage since the death of Alban, Britain's first saint and martyr, this Cathedral and Abbey Church is known locally, nationally and internationally as a place of prayer, witness, service and inclusive welcome.

The Cathedral has a strong congregational life including thriving ministry with children and young people; a strong network of study and faith exploration groups; well-coordinated pastoral care; social activities for all ages; active committees that lead us in our priorities of social and environmental justice; and strong community partnerships. Ecumenical ministry is a hallmark of St Albans Cathedral with regular Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox and Free Church services. With over 13,800 school students visiting the Cathedral last year, and a comprehensive adult education programme, we celebrate our world-class learning department.

Worship is the heartbeat of the Cathedral's life, and a thriving cathedral music department supports this. The Cathedral is very busy with occasional offices, and the Chapter has agreed to offer Prayers of Love and Faith. With over 623,000 visitors to the Cathedral in 2024, inclusive welcome informs our daily ministry. All this is enabled by a Cathedral team of five full-time clergy, 55 staff and over 500 volunteers.

As the location of their *cathedra*, we hope that the next Bishop of St Albans will find a home at the Cathedral.

In 2024, after wide consultation across the Diocese, the Cathedral community set a new vision for the next five years which now shapes our work.

Following Christ in Alban's footsteps we are committed to

Welcome and Compassion
Worship and Witness
Courage and Justice
Leadership and Service



Mission and Ministry in the Diocese

Mission and ministry in the Diocese reflects a mixed ecology of churches across all contexts and traditions. Through a wide range of pathways, training and resources, we aim to help people in every place encounter the good news of Jesus and be empowered in their discipleship and calling. We seek to do this by being resourceful, imaginative, caring and hopeful in how we respond to the needs and opportunities before us.

Our vision is to see our people and places flourish in God's purposes. This includes growing confident disciples, supporting healthy and sustainable parishes, enabling ministry across all traditions, nurturing new and diverse worshipping communities, strengthening governance and safeguarding, and responding to environmental challenges.

Mission and ministry is always evolving. We have seen God at work in many inspiring ways, and while much is already underway to encourage further growth, we recognise the challenges that remain.



Mission and Ministry in the Diocese



Vocations and discipleship

Across the Diocese of St Albans, vocations are encouraged and nurtured as people respond to God's call and discern the form of ministry to which they are being led. Pathways are genuinely open to people of all traditions, supported by a committed network of Assistant Diocesan Directors of Ordinands and Vocations Advisers.

There is much to celebrate. Flexible, accessible and modular discipleship resources are being developed for individuals and parishes. There has been an increase in candidates for both lay and ordained ministry, including more younger candidates than in previous years. While Soul Survivor has, in recent years, been an important source of vocational candidates, this has declined following recent events in the church. However, we remain hopeful that, as the church continues to re-establish its strength, this pattern will change once again. There are also opportunities to maximise the contribution of older candidates for ministry, both lay and potentially ordained.

Work continues to develop these new resources, build awareness of how ethnicity, gender, class and disability shape the discernment journey and broaden engagement beyond traditional church settings – for example, by attending a school careers fair. Improving accessibility remains a core priority, including addressing barriers experienced by people of Global Majority Heritage and others who may be under-represented in ministry.

Mission and Ministry in the Diocese

Chaplaincy

Chaplaincy is a vital expression of the Church's presence in daily life, reaching people where they study, work, receive care, or face key life events. The Diocese of St Albans supports a rich and diverse range of chaplaincy ministries across schools, universities, hospitals, hospices, prisons, emergency services and London Luton Airport.

This ministry is sustained through a variety of models. Some chaplains are full-time; others combine paid chaplaincy with parish responsibilities; many are voluntary and part of general parish ministry. Roles may be lay or ordained and many work within ecumenical or multi-faith teams. School chaplaincy is evolving, principally through new arrangements that share time between parish and school. There are currently three paid chaplains in Diocesan Board of Education schools, as well as chaplains in eight independent schools across the Diocese. The Diocese supports chaplaincy in three universities and two prisons, and has a presence across five hospital trusts and two hospices. At London Luton Airport, a full-time Anglican chaplain serves as part of a wider volunteer chaplaincy team supporting people of all faiths and none.

Many clergy and lay ministers also offer chaplaincy-style care informally in schools, care homes and local organisations—extending the reach of the Church far beyond its buildings. This often-unseen ministry plays a crucial part in the Church's mission and witness. It offers pastoral care, a listening ear, and a presence to those who may never enter a church building.



Mission and Ministry in the Diocese

Ministry Development and Support

Ministerial development and support in the Diocese of St Albans focuses on initial and ongoing formation, reflective reviews and wellbeing provision for lay and ordained ministers.

The Enabling Ministry course now trains 'Enablers'—local commissioned specialist lay ministers—and serves as an access route into Reader ministry. Ministers benefit from a range of support, including Support in Your Ministry, the Clergy Counselling Service and the Dispute Advisory Service. The Mixed Ecology Symposia, held twice a year, offer space to reflect on the opportunities and challenges of mission in different contexts.

Training is grounded in listening and relationship. Development opportunities include Transforming Conversations, a coaching-skills course and the First Incumbency Leadership Pathway, which combines teaching, action learning, and mentoring for new incumbents. Post-ordination assessments are light-touch and practical, and access to training has improved significantly.

Current priorities include enhancing post-ordination training for curates and the Early Ministry Development programme for Readers, aligning learning more closely with parish practice and tailoring it to reflect different forms of ministry. We are working to foster a culture of active learning, strengthen training for Training Incumbents, and expand the scope and depth of Mission and Ministry Development Reviews (MMDRs). MMDRs are conducted by appointed reviewers, with bishops undertaking an interim MMDR every other year. These reviews are currently being relaunched for Readers, reflecting a renewed emphasis on supporting lay ministry.

Training on supporting people with specific needs, including neurodiversity, is also being offered. We continue to explore new ways to encourage wider participation in learning opportunities across the Diocese.

As ministerial vocations evolve, we are developing new training and ministry models that reflect this changing landscape. We are also committed to removing barriers to vocation and formation—both visible and hidden—and to enabling greater representation from Global Majority Heritage backgrounds. Many local ministers balance significant responsibilities, and we remain focused on creating flexible, accessible learning that supports them in their calling.



Mission and Ministry in the Diocese



Flourishing churches

Churches across the Diocese are being supported, equipped and encouraged in their numerical and spiritual growth, in loving and serving their communities, and in growing generous giving as part of Living God's Love.

Churches are showing strong engagement across a range of contexts and traditions. Leaders are embracing coaching, and Mission Action Planning is embedded in diocesan culture. Churches are receiving support to grow generous giving, with an increasing number developing intentional plans for mission. Digital giving is increasing, and there is meaningful engagement with rural churches in this area.

The focus is on growing well-resourced, confident churches led by prayerful people equipped to lead their churches into growth. A shift is underway from a clerical to lay-led approach, and many churches are cultivating a culture of joyful generosity. Supporting churches which have been less engaged remains a priority, as does strengthening connections across diocesan structures. We continue to offer support, training and resources to help churches navigate the practical demands of ministry, grow in confidence, and develop sustainable patterns of leadership and service.

Mission and Ministry in the Diocese

Children and young people

Supporting youth and children's leaders is central to building a Church where every generation is equipped to lead. This includes training, mentoring and investment in both volunteers and paid staff.

In 2023, the Diocese saw a 3.4% increase in children and young people's (CYP) engagement. Some churches report that under-18s now make up 25% of their congregations. Over 250 leaders have trained through Youthscape Essentials, a course for volunteer youth leaders, with a further 50 completing Launchpad, a programme designed to equip church leaders for work with children and young people. These programmes are equipping leaders with clarity and confidence, supporting growth across a mixed ecology of ministry settings.

Churches are continuing to invest in this area, with current developments including an increase in CYP workers—both paid and voluntary—piloting Launchpad 2, launching a new Children's Essentials training offer, and ensuring every church has access to quality support.

Challenges include ensuring CYP ministry is seen as essential and not optional and addressing gaps in reporting, which limit strategic planning. Sustained growth depends on continued investment in the next generation of leaders.



Schools



Schools

Living God's Love in education: enabling life in all its fullness

Church schools are at the heart of the Church's ministry across the Diocese, with around 31,000 children and young people currently in Church of England education.

The Diocese of St Albans has a Schools Team that exists to support its network of church schools. It has a strong track record of working alongside headteachers, governors, and clergy, and school leaders consistently value the practical support and pastoral care on offer, particularly in times of challenge. Local clergy also play an important role in school life, especially through leading collective worship, governance and supporting senior leaders.

The Diocesan Board of Education provides oversight for this work. As a statutory body and committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance, it helps shape strategy while ensuring schools are well supported in their day-to-day life and Christian distinctiveness.



Schools

A distinctive education landscape

The Diocese's school system is unusual in that 103 of its 136 Church schools remain in the maintained sector, serving around 20,000 pupils—most of them in Hertfordshire. Alongside these are several smaller Church and community multi-academy trusts, and the Diocese of St Albans Multi-Academy Trust, which currently supports 14 schools and nearly 3,300 pupils.

The Schools Team provides a service-level agreement that 99% of schools subscribe to, offering training, specialist advice and guidance across all areas of school life.

High standards and national recognition

Since the introduction of the new SIAMS framework in 2023, all Church schools inspected in the Diocese have been found to be 'living up to their foundation as Church schools'. The Schools Team received national recognition in 2024 at the Green Church Awards for Heart for the Earth, a resource encouraging theological reflection and environmental action. The Diocese's education podcast, *Flourishing Together*, has attracted national and international listeners.



Schools

Strengthening church-school links

Building stronger links between schools and parishes is a priority. While many strong partnerships already exist, there is more to do to embed this consistently across the Diocese. The emerging area of school chaplaincy also offers potential for future growth.

There is a strong hope across the Diocese that the next Bishop of St Albans will continue to champion the role of Church schools—not only as a vital part of the Church’s mission, but as central to the life and witness of the Diocese.

What we heard from children through consultation

We asked children in our Church schools what they hope for in the next Bishop of St Albans. Their responses were thoughtful, grounded in kindness, care and fairness, and often surprisingly direct.

Many spoke about the kind of person the bishop should be. Words like kind, caring, loving and respectful came up again and again. Others described someone who is honest, helpful, wise and a good listener. A few shared longer descriptions, painting a picture of someone who is happy, supportive, and encouraging—someone who brings joy as well as compassion.

When asked what the bishop should care about, the most common response was the environment. Children mentioned the planet, pollution and plastic waste, showing a clear concern for creation and its care. They also spoke about people—valuing kindness, faith, education equality, mental wellbeing and inclusion.



Vision and Strategy

Living God's Love

Living God's Love has been the vision shaping our common life across the Diocese of St Albans since 2011. Rooted in the conviction that we are called to be a Christ-centred, outward-looking Church, it continues to inspire our parishes, schools and chaplaincies to grow God's Kingdom through worship, witness and service.

Our vision is to see flourishing, Christ-centred communities, inspiring people of all ages and backgrounds to discover God, grow in their relationship with him, and respond to his transforming love through serving others. We pursue this vision through three key themes:

- **Going deeper into God** – deepening our spiritual life through prayer, worship, learning and discipleship
- **Transforming communities** – living out our faith in practical ways that serve others and seek the common good
- **Making new disciples** – sharing the good news of Jesus and helping people come to faith.

These themes are underpinned by four values: generosity, joy, imagination and courage – values we seek to express in all that we do together. In 2015, the Diocese undertook a review of Living God's Love, listening to grassroots voices to reflect on the first five years. This process affirmed much good work, particularly in transforming communities, while also identifying that making new disciples remained a shared challenge. In response, renewed support and guidance were made available to help local communities re-engage with the vision in ways that made sense in their own context.

A further refresh of Living God's Love had been planned for 2020, but this was necessarily overtaken by the immediate demands of the COVID-19 pandemic and the long process of recovery. Now, after more than a decade of alignment around this vision, we look to our new bishop to bring renewed energy to it—or to help us discern a new vision to deepen our life and service as followers of Jesus.

Today, Living God's Love is the starting point for the Mission Action Plans created collaboratively by clergy and lay leaders and structured around the three key themes. These plans help people listen well to their communities and discern how they might grow in depth, impact and number. There is also a particular emphasis on growing younger and more diverse, which is reflected in clergy appointments and ongoing diocesan priorities.

Vision and Strategy



The Living God's Love prayer

Living God, draw us deeper into your love;
Jesus our Lord, send us to care and serve;
Holy Spirit, make us heralds of good news.
Stir us, strengthen us, teach and inspire us to live your love
with generosity and joy, imagination and courage;
for the sake of your world and in the name of Jesus,
Amen

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility across the Diocese — held at diocesan level, but actively supported and encouraged in our parishes, schools and chaplaincies. We remain committed to creating environments where all people, especially children and vulnerable adults, are safe and supported.

The diocesan safeguarding team is made up of experienced professionals. Led by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, the team handles casework, safeguarding agreements and delivers training for clergy, Readers and parish officers. It includes two full-time and two part-time safeguarding specialists, supported by two administrative staff.

Leadership on safeguarding is embedded in the culture of our senior team. It is a standing item on the Bishop's Staff agenda, with a clear reporting schedule to Bishop's Council and the Board of Finance. We work closely with the National Safeguarding Team and neighbouring dioceses, committed to continual learning and improvement.

External scrutiny is provided by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, chaired independently and including professionals from statutory and voluntary agencies. We also work with Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs), the police, the Charity Commission and local safeguarding partnerships, ensuring safeguarding is subject to multiple layers of independent accountability.



We have learned important lessons from the experience of Soul Survivor Watford, a church in the Diocese operating under a Bishop's Mission Order (BMO). The Scolding Review, which followed findings of abuse by the church's founding leader, set out clear recommendations. Through that process, the Diocese acknowledged and apologised for its own failings in oversight. In response, we have updated BMO policies, strengthened governance, and deepened our focus on culture — recognising that safeguarding must be more than a process: it must be embedded in the way we lead, listen and respond.

Above all, we are committed to placing victims and survivors at the centre of our safeguarding practice — ensuring they are heard, supported and placed at the heart of our approach.

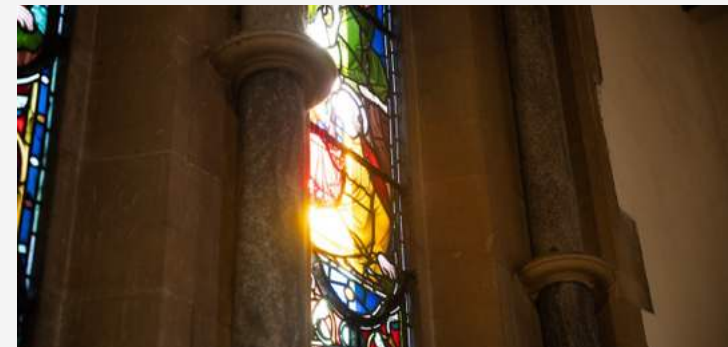
We welcome the direction set by the General Synod in February 2025 towards greater independence, transparency, and survivor-focused safeguarding, and we are committed to playing our part in that transformation.

Resources and finances

In a time when many dioceses across the Church of England are under financial strain, the Diocese of St Albans is in a position of relative strength. This reflects a combination of historic endowments, careful stewardship, thoughtful glebe management and sustained generosity from our parishes. Together, these have enabled us to meet core costs while continuing to invest in ministry and mission across the Diocese.

As in every diocese, our principal expenditure is the support of stipendiary ministry – including stipends, housing and operational costs. Over Bishop Alan's 16-year tenure, we have maintained a broadly stable number of stipendiary clergy posts. While there has been a modest reduction in recent years, and further minor reductions are anticipated in our five-year plan, the Diocese has continued to sustain ministry across its parishes.

The diocesan support staff team is comparatively lean, and demonstrably smaller than in many dioceses of similar size. Nevertheless, the Diocese has been able to enhance its support for parishes by securing National Church funding for roles aligned with strategic priorities: generous giving, net zero carbon, church buildings and growing younger and more diverse communities. Our education team is separately resourced through its own endowment, enabling sustained investment in Church schools and their leadership.



Resources and finances

Parish Share is calculated using a deanery-based formula agreed locally. Though not without its challenges, the scheme has proved resilient. Share collection rates remained above 90% even during the pandemic, and in 2024 stood at 91.25% – just below the 92% target and a sign of ongoing commitment from parishes.

During 2020–22, lockdown and reduced parish attendance led to a cumulative deficit of £1.2 million. This was followed by a return to financial surplus in both 2023 and 2024. This recovery was driven by careful cost control, including reduced employer contribution rates for clergy and lay staff pensions, and a brief, unintended increase in clergy vacancies – now back within the target range of 8–10%.

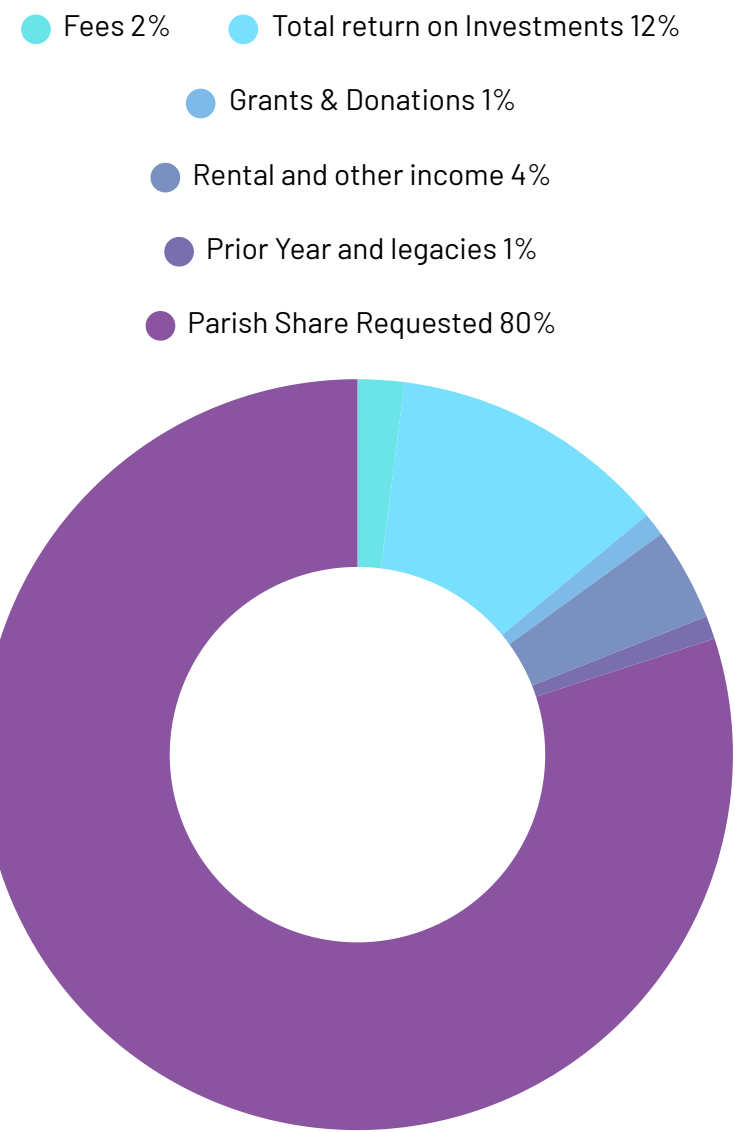
A significant development came in 2022 with the adoption of a total return investment policy, allowing for a sustainable 3.5% distribution rate. This has markedly increased returns from our assets and enabled the release of around £500,000 per year for parish grant schemes focused on mission initiatives and carbon reduction.

Overall, the Diocese's financial position is healthy and sustainable. However, there remains a continuing need to sustain parish finances, and a significant potential to grow parish financial strength. Encouraging generous, joyful giving is a key opportunity—particularly as the average donation per church member does not fully reflect the financial strength of many parts of the Diocese.

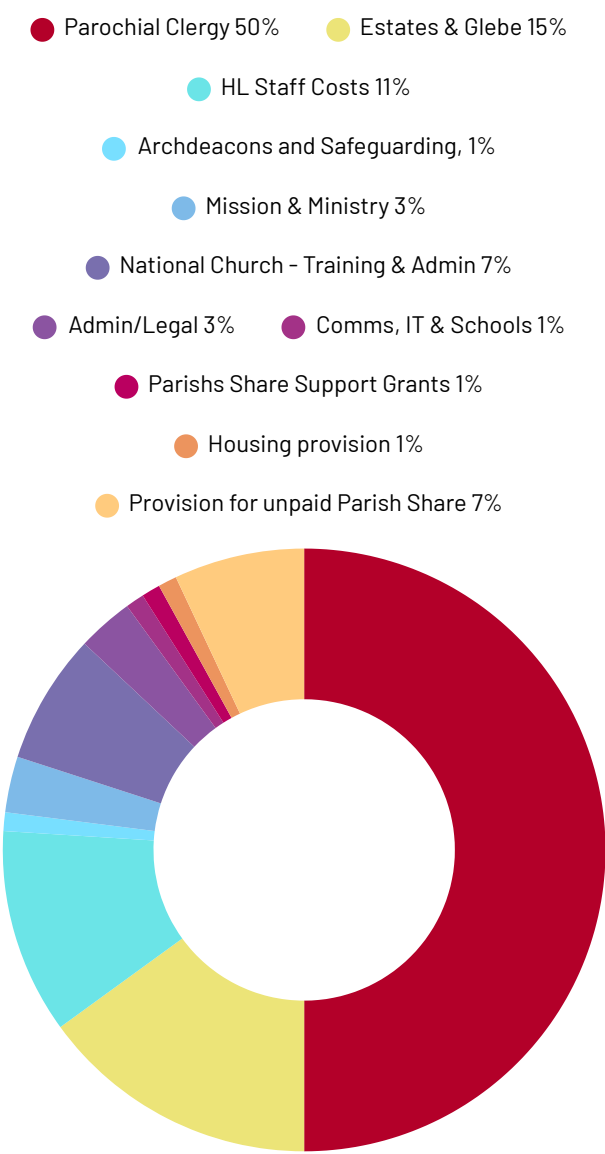


Resources and finances

Income 2025 Budget

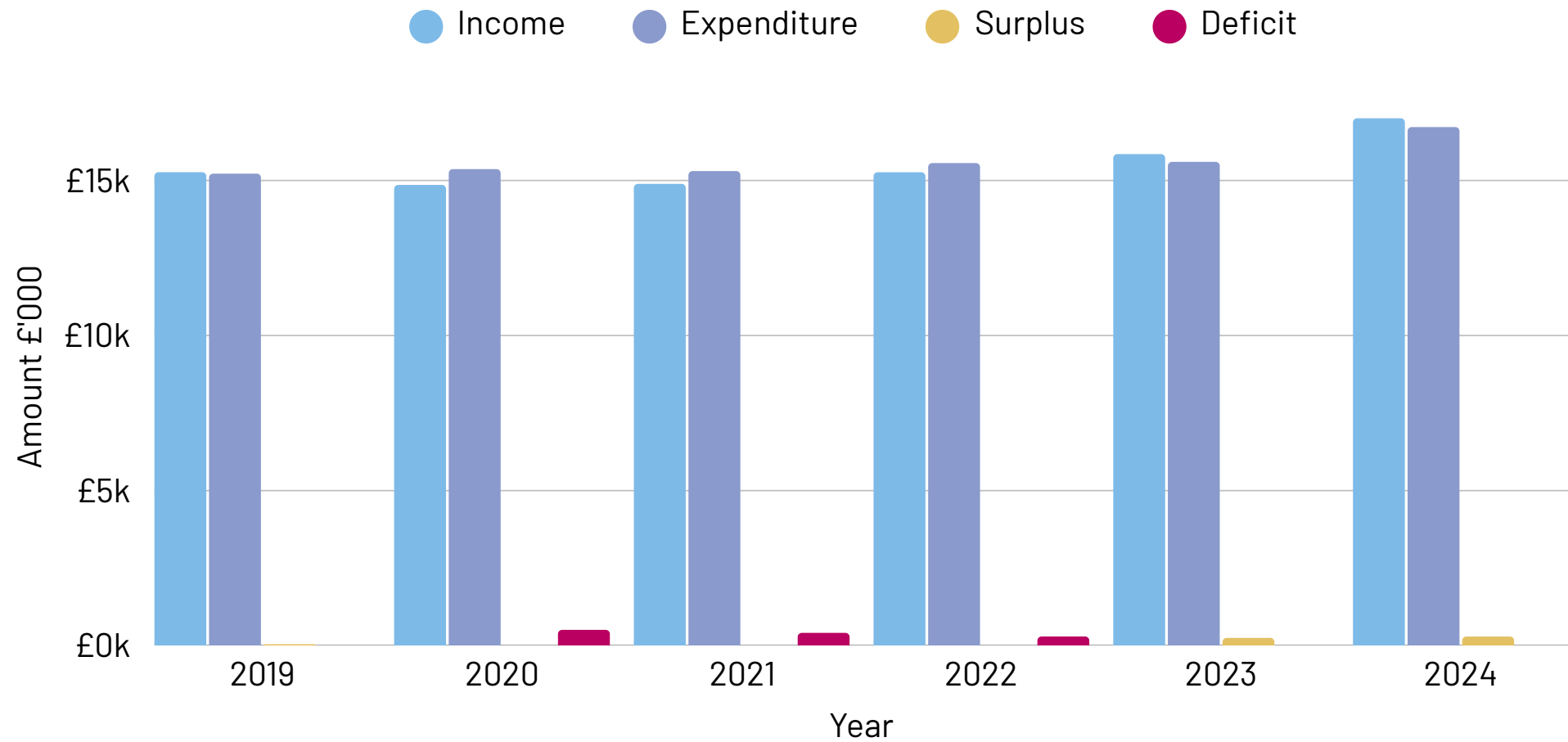


Expenditure 2025 Budget



Resources and finances

Total Income and Expenditure 2019-2024



Church buildings and Glebe



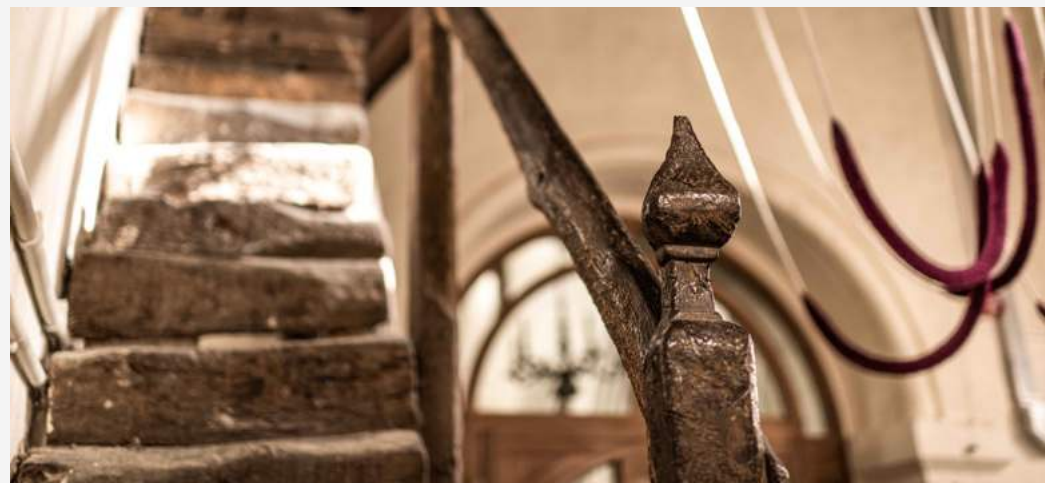
Church buildings and Glebe

The Diocese is home to around 380 consecrated churches, over 75% of which are listed – including more than 130 at Grade I. These sacred spaces range from ancient rural churches to 20th-century buildings in urban and New Town areas, each cared for by a local worshipping community as a centre of worship and mission.

Only two churches have been formally closed in the past 15 years, and none are currently being prepared for closure. While a small number face challenges due to building costs, small populations or limited volunteer capacity, the overwhelming majority remain active and valued in their communities. Sixteen churches are currently on the National Heritage at Risk Register, with support offered to help parishes meet repair needs and plan for long-term viability.

The Diocese holds more than 3,000 acres of glebe land, mostly tenanted farmland. Strategic sales, driven by rising demand for housing in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, have helped grow the glebe portfolio from £30 million in 2018 to £55 million in 2024. These assets are managed with long-term sustainability in mind, balancing income generation with responsible stewardship.

At Linmere, north of Luton, the Diocese holds a 14% stake in a major housing and commercial development – including 5,000 homes – via a trading subsidiary, generating income projected to continue into the late 2030s. A second subsidiary has acquired farmland with further development potential, strengthening the Diocese's asset base.



Relationships and partnerships

Ecumenical relationships

The Diocese of St Albans is part of a varied ecumenical landscape, with relationships that reflect both longstanding formal structures and newer, more informal patterns of collaboration. Churches Together in Hertfordshire and Churches Together in Bedfordshire are resourced on a part-time basis and provide a framework for ecumenical engagement across the region. A regular meeting of church leaders from across the area has taken place over many years, though it has become more intermittent in recent times.

In Hertfordshire, a number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) continue, including several shared church buildings originally constructed to serve the post-war new towns. As elsewhere, the number of LEPs has declined, but some remain active and committed to joint mission and worship.

Links with independent churches are limited, as many of these congregations operate outside more formal ecumenical structures. At the same time, an increasing number of parishes host congregations of African, Asian, Caribbean and other Global Majority Heritage, providing opportunities for relationship-building and shared presence in local communities.

St Albans Cathedral plays a prominent role in the ecumenical life of the Diocese, frequently hosting shared services, civic events and acts of public witness. It has been a setting for ecumenical recommitment and collaboration between church leaders from a range of traditions.



Relationships and partnerships



Interfaith work

The Diocese of St Albans covers areas with significant religious diversity. Luton has a population where about one-third—and over half of school pupils—identify as Muslim. Hertsmere has the highest concentration of Jewish people outside London. Towns like Watford and Bedford also have well-established communities of other faiths.

Much of the Diocese's interfaith engagement is carried out in partnership with Grassroots in Luton, which supports a network focused on dialogue and community relationships. The Diocese also works with regional bodies such as the Hertfordshire Interfaith Forum, Luton Council of Faiths, Bedford Council of Faiths and various local interfaith groups. The Diocese is a signatory to the Hertfordshire Faith Covenant, which expresses a commitment to working together across faiths for the common good.

The Bishop of Bedford leads on interfaith relations and is particularly well known in Luton for his work there. However, the role of the diocesan bishop—and their voice in the challenging circumstances of the past 25 years—has also been significant. This public witness has helped open up important opportunities for the Church to take its place in community life.

Luton churches have a strong record of interfaith work, especially in fostering social cohesion and countering extremism. These efforts often stem from longstanding local relationships and shared concern for community wellbeing. The Cathedral contributes visibly to this work, notably through its annual Interfaith Week event, which brings together people from different faiths to reflect, learn and build mutual understanding.

Relationships and partnerships

Civic engagement

The Diocese of St Albans plays an active role in the civic life of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, with relationships across political, social and community spheres.

There are partnerships with Members of Parliament, local government leaders, the Lord Lieutenants and High Sheriffs of both counties, as well as with other civic figures. In Hertfordshire, civic life is often focused on St Albans Cathedral, which hosts key moments in the public calendar, and occasionally around All Saints' Hertford. In Bedfordshire, St Paul's Bedford typically serves as the civic church, with St Mary's Luton and St Mary's Woburn also playing host to significant events.

Parishes across the Diocese often have close links with their local civic and community leaders. This was clearly demonstrated during the period of mourning following the death of Queen Elizabeth II and in the celebrations marking the Accession and Coronation of King Charles III, when churches worked closely with local authorities to support community commemorations. The High Sheriffs' annual Justice Services remain a prominent feature of civic life, drawing together representatives from the judiciary, law enforcement, education and the voluntary sector. These services are part of a broader pattern of engagement that reflects the Church's vocation to serve the common good.

Civic engagement in the Diocese is not confined to formal occasions. It spans all layers of society and reflects a Church that listens, responds and offers hospitality. Episcopal hospitality, both formal and informal, remains a valued and effective expression of this ministry.



Relationships and partnerships

Global links

The Diocese of St Albans has a long-standing companion link with the Caribbean dioceses of Guyana, North East Caribbean and Aruba, the Windward Islands and, more recently, Belize.

While these relationships are not formally ended, they are at present very much in abeyance—sustained only through occasional visits and limited support in response to natural disasters. There is deep gratitude for these moments of solidarity, and a question remains as to whether and how the link might be renewed in future.

The Diocese is part of the Porvoo Communion and enjoys a long-standing link with Linköping in Sweden. First established in 2007, the covenant between the two dioceses has been renewed regularly, most recently in November 2023. The renewed covenant reflects a shared commitment to intentional partnership in ministry and mission, grounded in prayer and mutual learning. Over the years, the relationship has included exchanges between the two cathedrals, interfaith groups, parish visits, and a recent pilgrimage to Vadstena. Both dioceses continue to explore how this link can grow and deepen in the years ahead.

The Diocese also has a connection with the Italian dioceses of Pesaro, Fano and Urbino. While not a formal diocesan programme, the link has been kept alive through civic partnerships—particularly between St Albans and Fano, a town on Italy's Adriatic coast. St Saviour's Church in St Albans has a parish link with San Paolo in Fano and representatives from Fano have regularly joined pilgrimages to St Albans. The link offers potential for further ecumenical and civic partnership.

Several parishes have also developed their own overseas connections, often through mission partnerships, twinning arrangements, or long-standing relationships with churches in other parts of the Anglican Communion.

Together, these international and ecumenical links reflect our commitment to building relationships across cultures and contexts in ways that strengthen our shared calling to live and proclaim the gospel.



Initiatives and priorities

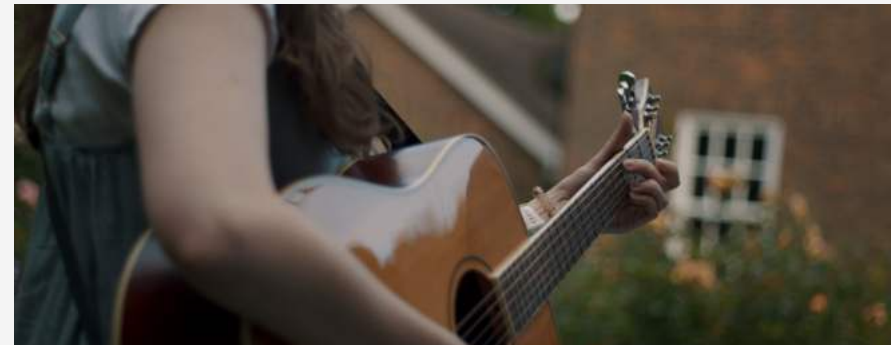
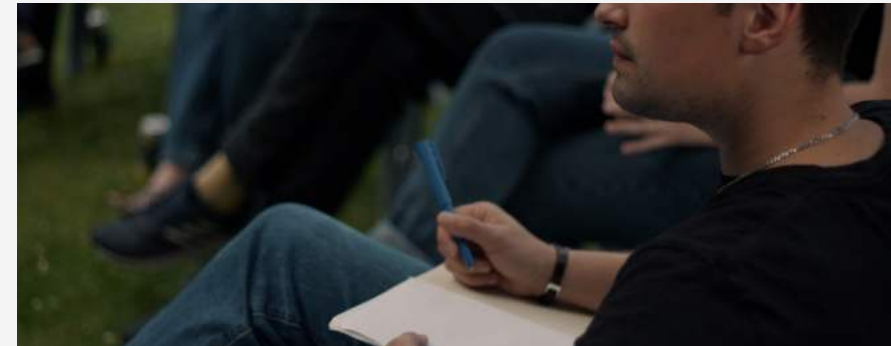
The Alban Way

The Alban Way is the Diocese's leadership formation programme for children and young adults. It nurtures prayerful, resilient, imaginative leaders through spiritual depth, creative practice and community-based learning.

Since its launch in 2022, more than 250 children have participated through school-based cohorts, and 24 young adults (aged 18–35) have completed the non-residential programme. A quarter of this year's young adult participants come from Global Majority Heritage backgrounds. The programme develops a pipeline of leaders from varied ages, church traditions and contexts. In the past year, the number of young adult cohorts has doubled—from one to two—enabling more participants to take part. Built on prayer and spiritual formation, it is both imaginative and responsive.

The programme continues to grow—expanding existing cohorts, piloting a new pathway for those aged 14 and over, and developing partnerships with other dioceses. It is helping to raise up a new generation of leaders, confident in their calling and equipped to contribute to the Church's future.

The Alban Way's development to date offers a platform for further growth—providing funding can be acquired or allocated.



Initiatives and priorities



Growing Younger and More Diverse

Growing Younger and More Diverse is a diocesan strategy aligned with the National Church's vision to invest in local leadership, encouraging innovation and resourcing mission with and for children, young people and young adults. We are encouraged by a renewed missional vision emerging in many churches. Clergy and lay leaders are discerning God's call in their contexts, and learning is being shared across traditions. To date, 15 small grants have supported local work with children and young people.

We are preparing a strategic funding bid through the Diocesan Investment Programme, focusing on projects in Watford, Hatfield and Luton, and diocese-wide projects in leadership and education. The goal is to support existing work while planting new, sustainable expressions of ministry. Local ownership is key, as is alignment with national priorities.

Challenges include navigating church politics at both local and diocesan levels, holding space for theological diversity and uniting local visions with diocesan strategy.

Initiatives and priorities

Caring for creation and becoming Net Zero Carbon

The Diocese of St Albans is committed to caring for God's creation as an integral part of our mission. We have adopted a Net Zero Carbon Action Plan and are working to reduce our carbon footprint in line with National Church targets. This commitment is being embedded across our governance and decision-making structures, enabling carbon impact to be considered alongside other key factors.

We are supporting parishes, schools and people who manage property in practical ways. Carbon literacy training has been delivered to clergy, staff and volunteers, and introductory sessions have been held for diocesan office staff. Around 30% of our churches use only electricity and are expected to reach Net Zero as the national grid decarbonises. For others, the challenge is greater, and work is under way to develop information to help parishes balance capital and operational costs, comfort, and carbon emissions. National Church funding streams are beginning to complement diocesan grants, enabling more parishes to identify and act on low-carbon opportunities.

The Diocesan Advisory Committee supports parishes in thinking holistically about both Net Zero and climate resilience, including emergency planning. Twenty-nine of our churches have achieved a Silver Eco Church award, with another 57 holding Bronze. Our demonstrator parsonages are providing insights into the realities – financial, logistical and practical – of decarbonising residential properties. A wider retrofit assessment of the diocesan estate is planned, though funding and the availability of suitably skilled tradespeople remain significant barriers.

We are also working with our schools to develop heat decarbonisation plans and encourage leadership teams to use energy data more effectively. However, resourcing the school estate's transition to Net Zero remains challenging. Some of our glebe land is of interest to renewable energy developers, which introduces the challenge of working alongside local communities who have concerns about such developments. Across the Diocese, care for creation is increasingly being seen not as an add-on, but as part of the Church's life and witness. This focus is beginning to help us engage with younger generations and with those whose communities are already affected by climate change. It is also prompting reflection on the sustainability of our buildings and the Church's role in responding faithfully to environmental crisis.



Initiatives and priorities

Racial justice

The demographic composition of the Diocese of St Albans varies considerably. The 2021 national census indicates that 22% of the general population across the diocesan area is from a UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) or Global Majority Heritage (GMH) background. Some urban areas—such as Luton, Bedford, Watford and Hatfield—have significant concentrations of these communities. At the same time, approximately 100 parishes self-identify as being almost entirely White British.

Initial work to identify ethnicity within our churches suggests that around 14% of regular worshippers are from UKME/GMH backgrounds. UKME/GMH worshippers are concentrated in some town centres and parishes.

There has been historic under-representation of clergy and other leaders from UKME/GMH backgrounds in the Diocese. Some progress has been made in recent years through discernment and training processes. Approximately 23% of current and recent ordinands, and 13% of those recommended for Reader training, are from UKME/GMH backgrounds.

The Diocese strengthened its commitment to racial justice in 2020–21, following the Black Lives Matter protests and alongside the national Church's work. Since then, an active Racial Justice Action Group has been established, which developed the diocesan Racial Justice Policy (approved by Diocesan Synod) and now leads several initiatives to identify, address and champion racial justice issues across the Diocese.

The Church of England has awarded national funding to support the appointment of a Racial Justice Officer in the Diocese. Recruitment for this three-year post is expected in mid-2025. The Officer will be responsible for implementing initiatives to promote racial justice and supporting the development of structures and a culture for longer-term impact.



Initiatives and priorities

A Year of Spiritual Renewal and Wellbeing

The Diocese of St Albans is currently observing a Year of Spiritual Renewal and Wellbeing. Emerging from the disruption and isolation of the pandemic years, and responding to growing concerns about stress, burnout and disconnection, this initiative invites churches, schools and individuals to lift their eyes to God and invest in rest, prayer and deeper discipleship.

A wide-ranging programme of retreats, quiet days, seminars and community events is running throughout 2025. Clergy and lay ministers are being encouraged to make space for reflection and restoration; congregations are exploring fresh ways to grow spiritually and care for one another, and schools are engaging with specially-created worship and enrichment resources.

Funded through external trusts, the Year is designed to be widely accessible and has been shaped in response to recent wellbeing surveys and clergy feedback. It reflects a shared desire across the Diocese for renewal, wholeness and a deeper life with God—priorities that will continue to shape our common life in the years ahead.



Governance and leadership structures

Governance in the Diocese of St Albans, as in other dioceses of the Church of England, can be complex and sometimes ambiguous. Nonetheless, it provides the necessary structures that support the Church's mission and ministry. These structures also create a context in which elected clergy and lay members, alongside key officers and the senior staff team, work together to grow that mission and ministry, and to hold it accountable.

Diocesan Synod meets three times each year, typically attended by 130 to 150 members from the Houses of Clergy and Laity. One of these meetings is held online, reflecting the Diocese's support for the Net Zero Carbon Action Plan.

Two senior executive bodies support the Synod's work: Bishop's Council, which serves as its Standing Committee, and the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF), which acts as the Diocese's financial and legal body. Together, they oversee key responsibilities, with the support of a range of operational committees focused on areas such as property, audit, environment and racial justice.

In 2024, Synod established a Nominations Committee to encourage a wider range of candidates to stand for diocesan elections, particularly younger people and those from underrepresented backgrounds. Some progress has been made, though this remains an area for continued attention.

There is some interest across the Diocese in the possibility of combining Bishop's Council and the DBF, as has been done in other dioceses, and the next Bishop may wish to explore this further.

The Bishop's Staff Team is intentionally small, comprising the Suffragan Bishops, Archdeacons, the Dean, the Diocesan Secretary and the Director of Mission and Ministry, supported by the Bishop's Chaplain. Other officers attend as needed. The team meets monthly for a full-day meeting and weekly online for urgent business and holds an annual residential.

The governance structures in the Diocese are well established, and there is scope for ongoing review and development in response to changing circumstances.



In conclusion

Thank you to everyone who has contributed

The Vacancy in See Committee is grateful to all who helped shape this Statement of Needs. Your insight and honesty have been invaluable in forming a clear picture of who we are and what we seek.

Above all, thank you to those who have held—and continue to hold—this process in prayer. Your faithfulness sustains and surrounds this period of discernment as we look with hope toward the future of our diocese.

We believe that God is already calling someone to be the next Bishop of St Albans. If you are that person, we want you to know you will be welcome here. The Diocese of St Albans is a place of deep faith, rich history and diverse communities. Today, we long to grow in faith, in confidence and in number. We hope for leadership that is grounded in prayer, confident in the Gospel and open-hearted in the face of difference.

Here, shoots of renewal are already visible—in congregations rediscovering joy, in parishes reaching out in new ways, in young people coming to faith and in communities working together in service. We sense God at work among us, and we are eager to walk with a bishop who will help us tend, encourage and grow this new life.

There are real challenges, of course. But there is also real energy, creativity and faithfulness. We are looking for someone who will share the journey with us—bringing wisdom and courage, but also kindness and hope. Someone who will cherish what is good, challenge us where we need it and inspire us to follow Jesus more closely. If you are being called here, know that you will not be walking alone. We will welcome you with prayerful hearts, open hands and a shared desire to serve the Lord who goes before us.

We began this journey of discernment in prayer, and we will keep praying. We invite you now to pray with us.

Generous God,
we pray for our Diocese of St Albans.

As we take this journey of discernment for our new bishop, open our hearts and minds to hear the wisdom of your Spirit.
Be with those who sense a call to this ministry, with those discerning the appointment, and with all those leading and serving us at this time.
In this shared discernment, and always, draw us deeper into your love, that we may live it with joy and courage for your world,
in the name, and for the sake, of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen