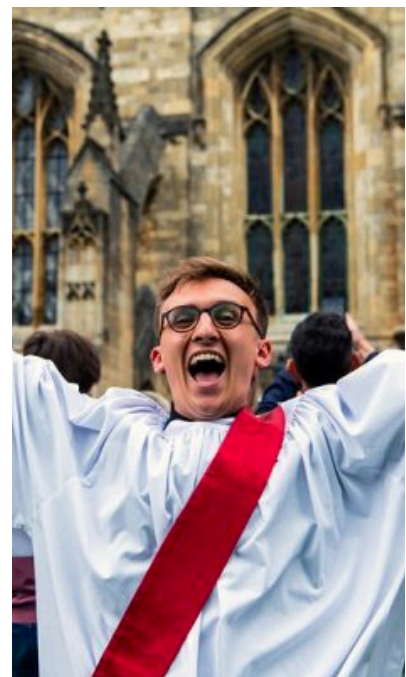


‘Walking the Wessex Way’: A Story and Vision for the Diocese of Winchester

Resources for discussion, reflection and prayer in
parishes, deaneries, PCCs, synods and worshipping
communities





The Story of the Diocese of Winchester – A Legacy of Grace

Dear sisters and brothers,

Without the distinctive story of the Diocese of Winchester, this world would be a very different place. The Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Wessex which encompassed the whole of our diocese – most of Hampshire and NE Dorset and beyond – was ruled by some of the earliest Christian Kings, Alfred and Athelstan amongst them. Think of the Alfred Jewel, commissioned, along with many others, by Alfred the Great, which was certainly not a jewel at all but the head of an ‘aestel’, or pointer - a teaching tool, designed to help people engage with the text of Scripture above all, part of his great mission to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.



The Christian heritage we inherit in our communities is therefore rooted in these ancient times – it is a legacy of grace that has cascaded down through the centuries, shaping our history and culture, and giving birth to countless stories of people and places deeply rooted in faith in Jesus. It is a legacy of grace to be proud of, and on which our diocese now stands. We see its inheritance

in the many powerful acts of Christian love and faithfulness that you, the churches, schools and chaplaincies, are engaged in today and which I now have the great joy of witnessing.

As this legacy of grace has shaped our past so it should shape our future too, as we walk the same path countless others have walked before us – a path of service, of learning, of growth – and of love above all.

I invite you to engage with this document, to pray together, to share your stories of service, learning, growth and love. Ultimately, it is my hope that together we will continue to discern a fresh vision for this Diocese: founded on this living legacy of grace.

Philip Mounstephen, Bishop of Winchester



A Legacy of Service

This Diocese has played a major role in shaping this nation. The relationship between Church and State today owes its existence to the Kingdom of Wessex: not for nothing does the Bishop of Winchester have a seat as of right in the House of Lords.

There is great privilege in that relationship, but it is ultimately one of **service**: a posture best exemplified by St. Swithun, remembered for simple acts like restoring a basket of broken eggs, and wanting to be buried outside, under the feet of passers-by where the raindrops might fall on him.



St Swithun

BISHOP OF WINCHESTER 852-863

Small wonder then that the life of this Diocese is still marked by loving service, in innumerable ways, reaching out in love to those on the margins, serving the wider community, the nation and the wider world.



A Legacy of Service

A Living Legacy...

Anna Chaplaincy

Anna Chaplaincy for Older People, now a widespread ministry around the UK, was founded in our diocese, in Alton, in 2010. The name is inspired by the widow Anna who appears with Simeon in Luke's gospel – both fine role models of faithful older people who have served God their whole lives, who recognise the child Jesus as the longed-for Messiah. In turn, Anna Chaplains serve the older people in their communities, providing spiritual and pastoral care, and championing the contribution of older people to society.



Millbrook Food Bank

Like many of the food banks in our diocese, Millbrook Marketplace was set up to serve some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Founded in 2022 by members of All Saints and St Peter's Churches, Southampton, it is a membership food club where customers pay a subscription fee of just £5 and can choose 15 items, which allows people to access the food they need with dignity and choice. The marketplace is chiefly staffed by volunteers from the church, motivated by their faith in Jesus to give up their time to serve their community.



Winchester Cathedral

Since its founding in 1079, Winchester Cathedral has played a vital role in serving the civic life of our diocese – welcoming everyone from dignitaries to (in a recent development) dogs! From hosting all our schools for their Year 6 Leavers' Services, to celebrating the contribution of judges, barristers and councillors on Law Sunday, to gathering all the uniformed services and brigades on Remembrance Sunday, the Cathedral's service of society means it continues to be a cherished part of our national life.



What does this legacy look like where you are? How might it look in the future? What is your prayer for your setting?

A Legacy of Learning

This Diocese has been a major engine of Christian **learning** and education, from the time of King Alfred onwards, through the establishment of schools and abbeys, churches and priories.



Winchester University
FORMERLY KING ALFRED
COLLEGE

Winchester University traces its origins from humble beginnings as the Diocesan Training School, through to its time as King Alfred's College, training thousands of teachers in the process.

Bishop Lancelot Andrewes oversaw the translation of the Authorised Version of the Bible, work which reshaped our language and formed a people of faith, hope and love.



Bishop Lancelot Andrewes
BISHOP OF WINCHESTER 1619-1626

*Small wonder then that this Diocese remains
a centre of education, learning and
discipleship, through its universities and
colleges, through its schools and churches.*

A Legacy of Learning

A Living Legacy...

St Mark's All Through School

St Mark's Church of England School, Southampton, is the diocese's first 'all-through' school, taking children through from aged 4 up to 16, with a foundation of the "core Christian values of love, service and belonging". Our Education team engages with and supports no less than 152 Church of England schools and academies, encouraging them to continue the legacy of Christ-centred learning in our diocese, reaching out not only to their communities but as global citizens and ambassadors for the common good.



Chatting Faith

Chatting Faith is an education project in our diocese which provides resources to parents and carers to reflect on aspects of faith children may encounter in storybooks – using books as a springboard for relaxed conversations to help learn about the Christian faith, introducing family discipleship to the home. Over 15 parishes have been involved, with another two cohorts ready to read! Many families have commented on their own faith development and learning, some of whom have begun exploring faith anew and have started worshipping in their local church.



500 BCM Licenses

Inheriting the rich legacy of learning in our diocese, over the past five years 500 people from across our diocese have completed the Bishop's Commission for Mission (BCM) training and discipleship programme for lay people. The course has helped a vast number of people grow in confidence and understanding in various areas of ministry, including Pastoral Care, Worship, Children, Families & Youth and Creation Care, who are then celebrated and licensed by the bishop at the Cathedral.



What does this legacy look like where you are? How might it look in the future? What is your prayer for your setting?

A Legacy of Growth

This Diocese has been a major engine of church **growth** and of mission, as parish churches, priories and abbeys were planted across the beautiful landscape we still enjoy today.



Mary Sumner
FOUNDER OF THE MOTHERS'
UNION

Growth can also be seen in subsequent generations, as our cities and towns grew, new churches were established to serve the needs of their growing communities. The largest global women's organisation, Mothers' Union, was additionally founded in this diocese.

Small wonder then that in this Diocese today we are still working for the revitalisation and renewal of our churches, equipping and enabling them for the challenges of this generation and beyond, nationally and internationally.



A Legacy of Growth

A Living Legacy...

Winchester Diocese Mother's Union

The Diocese of Winchester is proud to be the place where the Mothers' Union (MU) was started in 1876 by Mary Sumner. Mary wanted to create an organisation for women, rich and poor, which would support mothers from all walks of life as they brought up their children in Christian faith. Today's Mothers' Union is an international Christian membership movement, working in 84 countries with over 4 million members, working to tackle issues of poverty and gender violence, and is an example of how God has used our diocese to grow His Kingdom not only locally but globally.



The Pillar Initiative

The Pillar is a mental health initiative for young people held at St Wins Church, Totton, which was launched in September 2023. It is a fast-growing weekly drop-in focusing on young people's wellbeing, where young people have the opportunity to engage with the NHS '5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing' through conversation, learning new skills and connecting with others, using evidence-based mental health interventions alongside Christian discipleship resources. It is an example of how our diocese is engaging creatively with mission and with local statutory services to grow a thriving ministry.



EDGE Missional Community

EDGE is a Christian missional community group, based on the Townhill Estate Southampton, who have been involved in the local area for around seven years, linked with Ascension Church and the Church Army. EDGE stands for 'Every Day God Encounters', as at the heart of the project is the knowledge that God cares about every detail of normal people's everyday lives. Gathering people from all walks of life on a Sunday to worship, including over a dozen baptisms, EDGE also puts on fun days for the community and has opened a Hub Café, a place for local people to come together, and has grown to become a cherished part of the estate's identity.



What does this legacy look like where you are? How might it look in the future? What is your prayer for your setting?

A Legacy of Loving

The Diocese's Christian heritage is rooted in the two great commandments: to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. Of course we have often failed, but the **love** that has emanated from this diocese has changed our communities and the wider world in innumerable ways.

It was compassionate love, for example, that motivated Florence Nightingale, raised and buried in this diocese at Embley near Romsey, to defy social convention to train as a nurse and then to travel to the Crimea to care for soldiers in appalling conditions.



Florence Nightingale
SOCIAL REFORMER



Gilbert White
PARSON • NATURALIST

Similarly, it was a love of creation that caused Revd Gilbert White, the pioneering naturalist and vicar of St Mary's, Selbourne, to study nature in such depth, transforming the way we look at the natural world, such that he is often described as being the father of ecology – an example to inspire us as we look to the future and take seriously our legacy to God's creation.

Small wonder then that still today as people encounter our churches, schools and chaplaincies they find themselves brought face to face with the love of God in Christ, and find their lives changed as a consequence.

A Legacy of Loving

A Living Legacy...

All Saints Odiham Work with Ukrainian Refugees

The More to Life Benefice in the North Hampshire Downs made it their mission to reach out and support the many Ukrainian refugees who have joined their community in recent years who have fled the conflict in their country. Volunteers from the church have demonstrated the love of Christ for the refugees in numerous ways, including organising housing, administrative help, offering English language teaching at church, community meals, and youth trips – including a sailing adventure to the Isle of Wight!



Volunteering at SCRATCH Southampton

As part of their Christmas celebrations, diocesan staff have volunteered for several years at SCRATCH, a Christian charity which works to relieve the effects of hardship, disadvantage and poverty for people living in Southampton and the surrounding area. At Christmas, the charity provides toys and gifts to children, young people and families who may not otherwise be able to afford presents. It is an opportunity for staff at the diocese to palpably embody the Christian value of loving service, which underpins all the work of the diocesan team.



St Thomas' Church

St Thomas' Church, Lymington was the first church in our diocese to achieve a Gold Eco Church Award from A Rocha, in recognition of all their efforts to love and care for God's earth. From careful management of their churchyard, to reducing the carbon footprint of their building, to initiatives such as installing water butts and cycle racks, being a local recycling hub and embedding creation care in their teaching programme, St Thomas' is putting love for the natural world at the heart of their mission.



What does this legacy look like where you are? How might it look in the future? What is your prayer for your setting?

All of that is the heritage in which we stand today: one of **learning, serving, growing and loving**. It is a heritage which has shaped not just this Diocese, but this country and the wider world. It is a legacy of grace, which should lead us on into the future.

And it is a **Christ-centred heritage**: our **learning** has been – and must be – a learning of Christ; our **serving** has been – and must be – a **serving** like Christ; our **growing** has been – and must be – a **growing** into Christ; and our **loving** has been and must be a **loving** in the name of Christ. It is a **Christ-centred heritage** which must lead us on into a **Christ-centred future**.

A Vision for the Diocese of Winchester

A Christ-Centred Future

Serving – Christlike engagement with our communities, bringing peace, hope and reconciliation

Learning – deepening our discipleship as followers of Christ

A LEGACY OF GRACE

Growing – the renewal of the Church as the Body of Christ

Loving – making the loving presence of Jesus known in our midst, as his body



Being Part of the Unfolding Story

We hope that the stories in this document have both encouraged and inspired you. These stories provide evidence of God's grace and generosity among us, bringing about growth, service, learning and loving.

ENCOURAGED TO...

- Recognise how much is happening in your setting and communities already
- Be proud to be a part of the heritage of the Wessex Way
- Remember that we've already started a journey together

INSPIRED TO...

- Reflect and pray about what more is possible
- Find others to work alongside - we're never alone as we Walk the Wessex Way
- Be ambitious about how the future might unfold

This document, though, is only the start. It is an invitation to be part of something. It's an invitation to reflect and be imaginative; to continue to be part of an unfolding story, recognising where we have been, and shaping all that will be.

Get Involved

There is so much more to be said, and that is where you come in. PCCs, deaneries, synods, chapters, worshipping communities, and others from across the diocese are invited to join the discussion about Walking the Wessex Way.

You are invited to pray about and reflect on two key questions:

- What does the legacy of living, loving, serving and growth look like where you are?
- How might it look in the future?

And we want to hear about your discussions. We want to hear the stories from your setting which could also have been part of this document. We want to hear what Walking the Wessex Way looks and feels like from your perspective, where you are.

Wherever your discussion is taking place, you can feed back either personally or collectively using the following email address: WessexWay@winchester.anglican.org

The Bishop's Staff Team would also like to join some of your conversations, so please be in touch with your relevant Archdeacon or Bishop if you feel that their presence would help.

This document captures a moment in time. The story is ongoing. Where is God leading you and your community as we Walk the Wessex Way together?