

# Blackmore Vale Deanery



## Five-Year Plan 2024-2028

Approved and adopted by Deanery Synod on 16 January 2024

# Introduction

The creation of a new diocesan vision and strategy in 2023, following the installation in 2022 of the new Bishop of Salisbury, The Rt Revd Stephen Lake, has enabled Blackmore Vale Deanery to produce a new five-year plan of its own. It seeks to mirror the diocesan plan and to implement it at local level, with concern for the detail that makes this deanery unique in its own right. As a deanery, an interdependent and mutually supporting group of parishes, we seek to hold to this common vision and plan, and work together to *Make Jesus Known* throughout the Blackmore Vale.

## Who We Are

The Blackmore Vale Deanery comprises eight benefices and 34 parishes in the northernmost part of Dorset. Our Archdeacon is The Ven Penny Sayer, Archdeacon of Sherborne, and our Area Bishop is The Rt Revd Karen Gorham, Bishop of Sherborne.

## Benefices, parishes and ministry teams

*LLM = Licensed Lay Minister. LPA = Lay Pastoral Assistant. LWL = Lay Worship Leader. CLP = Commissioned Lay Pioneer.*

*Excluding retired clergy and LLMs with Permission to Officiate, who we greatly value, but there is insufficient space to name them all here.*

### Gillingham, Milton on Stour and Silton

Rector: Vacant | Associate Priest: Revd Canon Tim Heaton

Assistant Curate: Revd Angus Mayhew | LLM: Barbara Priest | LPA: Sarah Snook

Gillingham  
Milton on Stour  
Silton

## Shaftesbury

Team Rector: Revd Donna Gibbs | Team Vicar: Revd Helen Williams  
Assistant Curate: Revd Maggie Crosbie | LPAs: Sarah Hunt, Ann  
Surtees, Gill Waine | LWLs: Rodney Atwood, Philippa Forrest | LWL  
& CLP: Emma Smith

Compton Abbas  
Melbury Abbas  
Motcombe  
Orchards with Margaret Marsh  
Shaftesbury St James and Enmore Green  
Shaftesbury St Peter

## Stour Vale

Vicar: Revd Clare Dean | LLM: Fiona Hedges | LWLs: Richard Jones,  
Richard King, Liz Newton, Libby Pooley, Jenny Sledge, Denise Trevor

Buckhorn Weston  
East Stour  
Fifehead Magdalen  
Kington Magna  
Stour Provost  
Todber  
West Stour

*The five southern benefices are established as a group  
ministry known as the Blackmore Vale Pilgrim Group:*

## Hazelbury Bryan and the Hillside Parishes

Rector: Vacant | LLM: James Hepburn | LWLs: Jenny Knotwell-  
Sissons, Helen Sinclair

Belchalwell  
Fifehead Neville  
Hazelbury Bryan with Stoke Wake

Ibberton  
Mappowder  
Woolland

## Marnhull

Rector: Revd Gaenor Hockey | Assistant Curate: Revd Angus  
Mayhew

Marnhull

## Okeford

Rector: Revd Andrew Gubbins | LPAs: Ruth Allen, Carolyn Angelucci,  
Jill Burton | LPA & LWL: Abi Rudd

Child Okeford with Manston  
Hammoon  
Okeford Fitzpaine  
Shillingstone

## Spire Hill

Rector: Revd Canon Richard Hancock TSSF | Assistant Curate: Revd  
Belinda West | LPA: Rachel Page | LWLs: Sarah Bollen, Vinny Taylor,  
John Worth

Purse Caundle  
Stalbridge  
Stock Gaylard  
Stourton Caundle

## Sturminster Newton, Hinton St Mary and Lydlinch

Vicar: Revd Mary Gubbins | LPAs: Carol Moody, Fiona Norman,  
Brenda Stables | LWL: Kevin Peto-Bostick

Sturminster Newton  
Hinton St Mary  
Lydlinch

## Key deanery contacts

### Rural Dean

Revd Canon Tim Heaton  
tim4heaton@yahoo.co.uk

### Assistant Rural Dean

Vacant

### Lay Chair

Pauline Batstone  
p.batstone@btinternet.com

### Secretary

Sarah Lidsey  
deanerysynod@gmx.co.uk

### Treasurer

Anne Powell  
powellanne@btinternet.com

### Information Officer

Annette Newman  
ibbertonnews@gmail.com

## Making Jesus Known

The diocesan vision, carried through into this deanery plan, is:

*“To make Jesus Christ known in every place so that all might flourish and grow, seeking His Kingdom, here and now.”*

The aim is to accomplish this through a church that is simpler, humbler and bolder. We seek to bring the love of God to all people, making known his mercy and forgiveness, his compassion and his peace, his power to heal and to save.

We are informed in this by Jesus’s own words in Luke 4:18-19, the so-called Nazarene Manifesto: “To bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.”

To achieve our vision, we pledge ourselves to action through five strategic priorities:

1. Courageous Christian leadership
2. Working for justice
3. Creative partnerships in local mission
4. Championing climate justice
5. Financing the future sustainably

## 1. Courageous Christian leadership

We acknowledge that ministry belongs to the whole people of God by virtue of their baptism into Christ, but only some are called to a role of leadership. The Church of England is episcopally led and synodically governed, the leadership of our bishops being extended either by licence (to clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers) or by commission (to Lay Pastoral Assistants, Lay Worship Leaders and Commissioned Lay Pioneers), who all share in this role.

The church of today, with fewer ordained ministers than before, will increasingly be served by lay ministers who are trained and authorized by licence or commission from the bishop.

“As in all walks of life, it is the quality of the leadership, whether lay or ordained, that makes the difference and will determine whether a church grows or declines.” *How Village Churches Thrive.*

We pledge to grow the numbers of Licensed Lay Ministers, Lay Pastoral Assistants, Lay Worship Leaders and Commissioned Lay Pioneers in our parishes over the next five years.

We will encourage all our churches to focus on vocations and always to be on the lookout for potential leaders from among their own

congregations. In addition, the Deanery Information Officer will keep parishes informed of vocations awareness sessions being held by the Diocesan Vocations Coordinator and the Diocesan Lay Ministry Development Officer, as well as training courses for the authorized ministries taking place in the deanery and diocese.

We will nurture and deploy confident leaders in all our churches and schools. Courageous leadership will be seen from those who have the creativity and willingness to try new things, even in the face of opposition and resistance from others who would prefer to see no change to the status quo.

## 2. Working for justice

We acknowledge that the church has a mission to challenge injustice wherever it may be found. We will listen to and magnify the voices of people facing poverty and injustice, and support local action in

“The Bible makes it clear that we are called to have a special care for the vulnerable, the widow, the stranger, and that in doing so, where relationships are formed and nourished, community thrives.” *How Village Churches Thrive.*

our churches and schools. We will support our neighbourhood foodbanks and other local charities such as Friends of North Dorset Women’s Refuge and Shaftesbury Refugee Group.

As the social ties that used to bind communities together have frayed, social isolation and loneliness have increased, especially in rural areas where maintaining social relationships can be

We pledge to use the local knowledge within our churches and parish networks to search out those in need and help them to discover God’s love for them.

difficult owing to the lack of public transport and other municipal services.

This is something that impacts both young people and the elderly. In our rural churches there is a unique opportunity to respond to these issues by providing key community facilities and occasions for social interaction.

The church may be one of the few public buildings in the community, and it is one where those who inhabit it can express their faith by offering friendship and care to the lost and the lonely, the sheep without a shepherd.

### 3. Creative partnerships in local mission

We acknowledge the imperative for every church to be deeply immersed in the life of its community, seeking connections with other organizations and getting to know these as well as individual families and households. Many examples may be given, including town and parish councils, Scouts, Guides, Royal British Legion, Women's Institute and Toddler groups.

We will form good relationships with other community and pastoral workers, for example the PCSO, district nurse and funeral director.

As rural churches we will pay

special attention to our ministry to the farming community, working with rural chaplains to meet the particular needs of farmers and their families.

We will forge strong ecumenical alliances with other denominations in our area, seeking jointly to provide the best possible ministry in areas of mutual interest such as our nursing and residential care homes.

"Children are often described as 'the future of the church' and that's why we need to invest our time and energy in this area."  
*How Village Churches Thrive.*



But foremost among all of these must be our partnership with our schools, which presents the strongest opportunities for connecting with children and young people.

We pledge to support our local schools through prayer and by encouraging individuals to serve as Foundation Governors and Trustees, and to engage with staff and pupils through Collective Worship and other initiatives such as Open the Book.

As more local schools are preparing to join the Sherborne Area Schools Trust (SAST), this provides the opportunity to develop partnerships with community schools as well as church schools. The Blackmore Vale Pilgrim Group is already pioneering new ministry to schools by the provision of one day's dedicated chaplaincy per week to schools across the area.

In Shaftesbury, a Community Hubs Project enables young people's voices to be heard as church, school and community come together, a model that is to be extended into Gillingham. The current plan is that these two hubs will join with Sherborne in a Dorset Pilot Area project to develop the Growing Faith initiative, which seeks to place children, young people and families at the heart of all ministry and mission so that it becomes second nature for them to be included in every aspect of church life.

## 4. Championing climate justice

We acknowledge the terrible injustice of human-induced climate change, which is that among the nations suffering most from its effects are those that have caused it the least. We will pursue

“Churchyards can be a visible expression of one of the Church of England’s five marks of mission: ‘To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.’” *How Village Churches Thrive.*

climate justice, protect creation, and seek to improve local biodiversity and the health of ecosystems.

We will foster an environmental mindset throughout the deanery so that it becomes a natural reaction to consider the environmental

impact of all actions that we take. The power sources and energy efficiency of our buildings are especially important in the quest to achieve Net Zero Carbon, though we recognize that the church building stock we have inherited and the regulations surrounding them impose many hurdles.

In 2018 the Diocese of Salisbury was declared by A Rocha to be the first Eco Diocese. While there is no formal recognition of an Eco Deanery, we will encourage all our churches to register to join the Eco Church Community with a view to achieving a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award. Eco Church is A Rocha’s award scheme for churches in

We pledge to be an Eco Deanery by encouraging collective action and supporting environmental endeavours in all our parishes.

England and Wales who want to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God’s earth.

We will guard our churchyards as wildflower and wildlife habitats, and encourage participation in projects such as Dorset Wildlife Trust’s “Living Churchyards” and Caring For God’s Acre’s “Love Your Burial Ground Week” and “Churches Count On Nature”.

## 5. Financing the future sustainably

We acknowledge that sound and sustainable financial governance needs to be front and centre of all our work if any of the preceding aims are to be achieved.

Consequently, this fifth and final priority underpins everything that goes before it. We will develop innovative ways of fundraising to finance local ministry as well as to support mission and look after our church buildings.

We seek to create through regular teaching an awareness and acceptance that generous giving is a joyful responsibility rather than something we do reluctantly and mean-spiritedly.

“Church buildings provide brilliant opportunities to connect with your community, through which you may draw people both into the worshipping life of your church and find ways to share the responsibility of caring for your building now and in the future.”  
*How Village Churches Thrive.*

We pledge to strengthen the financial resilience of every parish in the deanery and work for their long-term sustainability.

We recognize that Parish Share is the method by which we pay and house our stipendiary clergy, which means that the financial resources to support local ministry must come from local sources. In other words, local ministry can only be provided to the extent it can be locally funded.

We will find ways of increasing footfall through our church buildings by way of community events and hirings. We will encourage the use of modern digital methods of giving (for example,

card readers and QR codes in churches and Donate buttons on websites) alongside more traditional approaches such as Gift Days, so that the obligation of giving can be shared by the whole community and does not fall on church congregations alone.

## Conclusion

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ. Our five strategic priorities are aligned with the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

To achieve our vision of *Making Jesus Known*, we pledge ourselves to prayer and action.

**Loving God, show me how I can make Jesus known to the people around me today, so that they may see and experience your love and peace. Amen.**

*How Village Churches Thrive: A Practical Guide* is published by Church House Publishing. Copyright © 2022 The Archbishops' Council.