

## **A collaboration of six dioceses across the West Midlands**

We are a collaboration of six dioceses. Although all are in the West Midlands, each diocese is very different. You will be working with all of us! Of course, you will want to do your own research, but here's what we choose to say about ourselves if asked for a few paragraphs.

### **Church of England Birmingham**

Birmingham is the UK's second city with the youngest urban population in Europe and one of the most lively, diverse and creative regions. Birmingham becoming the cradle of the industrial revolution gave rise to the identity of a 'city of a 1000 Trades', however our rural parish communities make up 15% of our family. As hinted at by the incredible wealth of languages found in the region's education establishments, the Church of England Birmingham is perhaps better reflected as 'a region of 1000 cultures and traditions'

Geographically, The Church of England, Birmingham, covers an area of nearly 300 square miles and includes parishes in the West Midlands including Birmingham and parts of Solihull, Sandwell, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. Right at the heart of what we do there are over 180 Church of England worshipping communities with an average weekly attendance of 17,000 from a population of 1.5 million and 52 Church of England primary and secondary schools educating over 18,000 pupils every day from. The diocese has 180 church buildings ranging from historic listed buildings to brand new, purpose-built places of worship or those re-ordered to more effectively serve the mission of God. Over 170 licensed clergy, both stipendiary and self-supporting serve in the diocese alongside over 115 licensed Readers who help with leading services and pastoral work and numerous others undertaking commissioned or more informal ministries.

At the heart of our calling to serve each of the diverse communities of our region in all their variety of contexts is our renewed commitment and focus on our shared diocesan Transforming Church vision: Growing churches at the heart of each community.

### **Diocese of Coventry**

The Diocese of Coventry represents the Church of England in Coventry, Warwickshire and parts of Solihull. With our network of over 200 parishes, we have a Christian presence in every local community.

We have a rich variety of people, traditions and organisations united by our shared purpose of worshipping God, making new disciples and transforming communities. The purpose of the Diocese of Coventry hasn't changed:

Our vision is that, as we do this together, we will rejoice in being bearers of life, bringers of life, agents of life with:

- Restored health
- New growth
- Renewed relationships

That we would be a family of parishes and church communities, some ancient some more recent, schools, chaplaincies, charities and Cathedral that are life-bearing, life-bringing, agents

of God's purposes of life in the world. Partners-together, reaching every part of society, with the good news of the God's energising, empowering, life-giving love.

## **Diocese of Gloucester**

The Diocese of Gloucester covers almost the entire county of Gloucestershire, a significant part of the Unitary Authority of South Gloucestershire, together with some villages in Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire.

The population is about two thirds of a million people. There are two archdeaconries, Gloucester and Cheltenham, and nine deaneries. There are 380 churches, divided into around 100 benefices and we have 117 Church Schools, which includes one secondary school.

While there are areas of affluence there are also areas of urban deprivation and in more hidden rural poverty. Both manufacturing and health are significant sectors in the county. Other major sectors include public administration and defence (e.g. GCHQ), education, construction and retail. The county has easy access to London, Bristol and Birmingham both by rail and the motorway system.

## **Diocese of Hereford**

Our worshipping community is made up of people of all ages and backgrounds. We are responsible for 402 churches, 13 Deaneries, 86 Benefices, and 344 parishes - we are the Church of England in Herefordshire, south Shropshire, and parts of Monmouthshire, Powys, and Worcestershire. We were founded in 676 AD and cover roughly 1,650 square miles, with many of our church buildings of historical importance. Serving 326,000 people, we are part of the Church of England, which itself is part of the wider Anglican Communion.

Much of our diocese is intensely rural with many areas of outstanding natural beauty, yet the glorious landscape is often a setting for serious poverty and paucity of opportunity for chances in life.

Although we not far removed from the urban areas where many people find employment, the areas have very distinctive characteristics of their own. This is traditional border country; cultures overlap and interact with each other within its boundaries. To the west our diocese shades into Wales; small differences can accumulate into something important. Sometimes boundaries seem distinct; to the east of Shropshire the boundary is marked both by the longest steam preservation railway and the largest contiguous oak forest in England. The part of Telford that lies within our diocese, to the north, is both the birthplace of the industrial revolution - with its associated monuments and museums – and also a place where there is severe deprivation and social concern.

Nearly 12,000 children attend one of our 78 schools and academies, although 40% of these schools have fewer than 100 pupils; there are more pupils in our C of E schools than regular attendees at Sunday services. In 2022, we maintained over 110 properties across the diocese which are occupied mainly by our stipendiary clergy and curates. We have the fewest stipendiary ministers but the highest clergy level per person simply because we're a rural diocese.

## **Diocese of Lichfield**

In the Diocese of Lichfield, we are conscious of being a pilgrim people, inspired by the example of our first bishop, St Chad of Mercia. His was a ministry of evangelism and mission.

Stretching from the Welsh border to the Peak District and from north Staffordshire to the Black Country, the Diocese of Lichfield is one of the largest in the Church of England, serving over two million people in nearly two thousand square miles. It is at the heart of England, not just geographically but culturally and socially. Areas of spectacular natural beauty sit beside the legacy of centuries of industry and commerce, areas of growth, aspiration and hope beside urban deprivation and rural poverty.

Our three episcopal areas are cared for by the Bishops of Wolverhampton, Stafford and Shrewsbury, working collegially with the Bishop of Lichfield. The Diocese envelops all, or a part of, 7 local authorities and we have 205 church schools with approximately 45,000 pupils. The diocese has 532 churches, 195 fresh expressions and 80 chaplaincies. Over 300 licensed clergy (both stipendiary and self-supporting), over 300 clergy who hold a Permission to Officiate serve in the diocese alongside over 130 licensed Lay Readers who support the mission and ministry of the Diocese. In addition to this our Racial Justice and Inclusion Task Group has shaped an agenda for racial justice across the Diocese, providing strategic oversight to support the diocese in becoming a 'racially just' Diocese at all levels.

## **Diocese of Worcester**

The Diocese of Worcester covers an area of 670 square miles and includes the County of Worcestershire, the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley, and a few parishes in northern Gloucestershire, southeast Wolverhampton and Sandwell, and ranges from the culturally diverse urban north to the mainly agricultural rural south, both of which provide a great range of opportunities and challenges. Today the Diocese covers a population of 895,000, with 92 benefices, 169 parishes and 274 churches. In 2021, across the Diocese: 7,800 people attended a church service on an average week, and 11,600 people were part of a Worshipping Community. We are active in the education offered to 22,000 children in our 100 church schools. Social action, social justice, and concern for the environment are vital elements of our mission.

As a Diocese, we seek to grow as Kingdom People sharing the good news of Jesus' love in Worcestershire and Dudley. As the body of Christ, we join together to worship God, make disciples, share hope, and transform communities. We want to enable church communities across the Diocese to grow in health and sustainability. Our transformation priorities are that over the period 2023 to 2030, we might: Double the number of children and young people worshipping in our churches; Create 100 new worshipping communities offering a range of ways for people to come to faith and worship God; Invest in the renewal of around a dozen churches to ensure that each major area of population has at least one church with 150 people attending weekly, enabling them to support other local churches; and Underpin these priorities by investing in our clergy and lay leaders, providing training and development opportunities to enable them to grow and feel supported and equipped for mission.

When Martin Gorick was appointed as Bishop of Dudley in January 2020 he contacted all clergy and lay leaders in the diocese who were UKME/GMH and with the assistance of Sharon Prentis formed MEAL (Minority Ethnic Anglican Leaders) group. Initial meetings were on Zoom but a meeting of around 35 people met for a meal at Top Church, including some joining from Lichfield, Gloucester

and Birmingham too. We have reviewed Lament to Action and made an initial action plan with some quick wins such as Unconscious Bias training for all Diocesan Staff and Parish Reps involved in appointments and selection, and a day's anti-racism training for Bishop's Senior Staff. Kashmir Garton (General Synod rep) now co-chairs the group which has been re-named Racial Justice Forum and we are currently working on a Diocesan Charter, and look forward to working with the regional team when appointed. Kashmir and Harriet Chimani (also on RJF) attended the national RJ gathering in 2023. Harriet has also been elected to Bishop's Council and an early member of MEAL has since been appointed as a Bishop's Advisor for national clergy selection.