

Deanery Planning Framework Example: Upper Wolds Way

We have produced a simple framework to help shape and record your plan. Use the example below from the fictional Upper Wolds Way Deanery to guide your thinking and then use the blank template to build your own plan.

| | Becoming more like Christ | Lead person |
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| Where are we starting from? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A monthly evening service, rotating around churches, using a variety of styles including contemporary, Taizé, and Celtic worship. 2. An annual Quiet Day. 3. We do not yet have a shared pattern of prayer across the deanery. A previous attempt to gather monthly in the market town did not gain momentum. 4. Access to, and confidence in using, worship and discipleship resources varies considerably across our parishes, especially in smaller villages. | |
| Where are we going? | The deanery will strengthen worship and prayer across our churches by resourcing parishes and offering opportunities that individual churches may not be able to provide alone. | |
| How will we get there? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue the monthly evening services, while actively encouraging a wider range of churches to host and contribute during the year. 2. Continue the annual Quiet Day. 3. Launch a monthly online prayer gathering from October 2027, with a strong emphasis on lay leadership. Review after six months. 4. Use part of a Deanery Gathering and Chapter Meeting, approximately six months apart, to share resources and experiences of using them. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revd M 2. Sam M 3. Freda N 4. Deanery Secretary |
| What might get in the way? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Differences in church tradition and theological perspective may limit engagement in the monthly services. 2. Some people remain hesitant about online prayer gatherings. | |
| What help do we need? | We can resource this ourselves. | |

| | Reaching people we currently don't | Lead person |
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| Where are we starting from? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confidence is low in many churches. 2. We have never addressed this goal as a deanery; we are starting from a low base, and we do not feel there are many on the DLT who are confident to lead in this area. 3. Some of our churches responded well to a Deanery Gathering on 'Welcoming Well' in 2025. 4. Most of our churches have parish activities that engage people beyond the congregation, but we are not good at valuing this or seeing it as a possible 'stepping stone' to more meaningful conversations. | |
| Where are we going? | We want our churches to grow in confidence, to see new initiatives take root and flourish, and for more people outside the church to encounter the gospel. | |
| How will we get there? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Celebrate and share stories of where God is already at work. 2. Build on the deanery's three natural areas – northern villages, southern villages, and town – by aiming to run an Explorer Course in each area during Autumn 2028. Planning conversations will help identify the most suitable course and how best to invite people. 3. Hold an open Deanery Gathering in early 2028, inviting people from similar contexts beyond the deanery to share experience and encouragement around mission and evangelism. 4. Encourage honest discussion around mission and evangelism within Clergy Chapter meetings. 5. Make this a regular theme within online prayer gatherings. 6. Build on the theme of welcome by inviting churches to share learning and stories following the 2025 gathering. | <p>1–3. Area & Lay Dean</p> <p>4. Area Dean</p> <p>5. Lucy K</p> <p>6. Revd Simon L</p> |
| What might get in the way? | Anxiety, caution, and the pressure many smaller churches feel simply to sustain day-to-day ministry. | |
| What help do we need? | People who can inspire and encourage our Synod, particularly people who understand contexts like ours. | |

| | Growing churches of missionary disciples – younger and more diverse | Lead person |
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| Where are we starting from? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mixed picture across the deanery. Many village churches have little discipleship activity beyond Sunday worship and Lent courses, and little or no engagement with children. Some villages have very few children living locally. The town churches are generally better resourced and all have some children attending. 2. There are five church schools within the deanery. Clergy are involved in all of them, alongside some lay governors. 3. The town churches, and several larger villages, have links with uniformed organisations. 4. We have not yet reflected seriously on diversity as a deanery. | |
| Where are we going? | <p>We would like to see:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greater engagement with children and families, and more children in church life. 2. Church members growing in discipleship and confidence in living out their faith. 3. A deeper understanding of diversity and what it means for our churches. | |
| How will we get there? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the Education Team to strengthen links between churches and schools, including exploring whether a deanery-wide Open the Book team would be appropriate. 2. Recognise that churches are at different stages in ministry with children and families. Rather than making this the focus of full Deanery Gatherings, encourage learning through self-selecting groups and the deanery's three natural areas. 3. Run a deanery-wide teaching and discipleship course in autumn 2028, followed by a second course in spring 2029 after the Explorer Courses, with the aim of making this an annual event. 4. Hold a Deanery Gathering in 2029 focused on “becoming more diverse”, and agree future actions from this. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tom D 2. Area & Lay Dean 3. Revd Mary Y 4. Lay Dean |
| What might get in the way? | A lack of visible progress in “growing younger” could quickly discourage people. | |
| What help do we need? | Support from the Education Team around children, families, and schools, alongside guidance on becoming more diverse. | |

| | Renewing structures and relationships | Lead person |
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| Where are we starting from? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In 2022, Synod became the “Deanery Gathering”, with an intention to make it more informal and responsive to deanery needs. Over time it has become more formulaic and dependent on visiting speakers. 2. Clergy Chapter includes lay ministers and works well. 3. The Lay Dean expects to step down before the end of 2027. 4. There are currently no deanery structures to support parish officers, although Parish Safeguarding Officers appear well supported by the diocesan team. 5. The Free Will Offer for the Long Valley Benefice is significantly below its direct ministry costs, while other benefices remain financially stable. The rector is expected to retire within the next two to three years. 6. We do not currently have a Deanery Financial Adviser (DFA), nor anyone within the DLT with a particular focus on growing younger. | |
| Where are we going? | We want relationships and structures that enable churches and leaders to support one another in creative, collaborative, and sustainable ways. | |
| How will we get there? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allow the deanery plan to shape the agenda of the Deanery Gathering throughout 2028. 2. By summer 2028, appoint a DFA, co-opt a Growing Younger Advocate onto the DLT, and prepare proactively for the appointment of a new Lay Dean. 3. Hold gatherings during 2028 for churchwardens, treasurers, and PCC secretaries to encourage mutual support and the sharing of ideas and resources. Different DLT members will coordinate each gathering. 4. When the rector of the Long Valley Benefice retires, begin conversations with the bishop, archdeacon, and benefice about whether a half-stipendiary post would be more appropriate than a full-time post. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deanery Secretary 2. DLT 3. Harriet O 4. Area Dean |
| What might get in the way? | We are confident these plans are achievable, provided there are no significant unforeseen circumstances, particularly regarding shared understanding and support within the Long Valley Benefice. | |
| What help do we need? | We may seek advice from the archdeacon regarding the wardens’ meetings, and may invite members of the Generous Giving or Finance Teams to support treasurers’ gatherings as needed. | |