

GUIDANCE FOR GROWTH  
ST. CHAD, LEASOWE

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## INTRODUCTION

This document seeks to identify a meaningful way forward for St. Chad's Church, Leasowe. The focus is on means of growth and transformation within the church and the parish. It considers what resources might be leveraged and what partnerships could be developed. These are to be realistic and sustainable. The document also explores how the present congregation might embrace further innovative and inclusive methods to contribute to the church's mission. It is important to note that the intent of this document is not to serve as a step-by-step guide for increasing church service attendance on Sunday mornings or for any other functions held in the church during the week, but instead, seeks to offer deeper insight into creative approaches to the church's mission that might be prayerfully adopted within the parish.

Discussions with community figures, including local businesses, the hotel/local pub, leisure centre, parishioners, and key potential missional partners and diocesan staff have provided helpful insights. This document is by no means the last word, but is instead focused on contributing to a prayerful conversation.

Rather than dwelling on the past, this document aims to uncover how the diocese, deanery and existing congregation might see the future transformation of the parish and growth of the church.

## WHERE THE CHURCH CURRENTLY STANDS

It appears St. Chad's Church in Leasowe is well positioned for growth.

There is life in the church!

The existing congregation display a deep spirituality and a deep desire to serve Christ and the people in the community. They have done a good job at 'keeping the show on the road'. The attendance figures at Sunday services are approximately 14 – 20 weekly congregants. The congregation is predominantly made up of senior adults. The church engages with the community through a weekly program of events at the church. The congregation has a desire to further reach children, youth and young families in a way that folds them deeper into the life of the church. The challenge is that, within the current congregation, most of the work seems to be carried out by a few who have limited energy, time, capacity, and the lack of a clearly articulated vision. A responsive approach to challenges appears to be the current means of operation and this seems to have resulted in tiredness and, at times, deep frustration.

***For information on the church's current missional activities please refer to the report compiled by the PCC.***

A recent informal survey conducted with random members of the local community in the streets around the church revealed a diverse range of responses regarding the perception of church. People were asked if they were aware of the church's location and if they had ever visited the church. The varying answers suggest differing levels of community engagement and awareness of the church's presence and its activities.

Responses included:

'I have never heard that church.'

'They do a great thing with giving mums in the area clothes and stuff'

'It does stuff for the youngster's sometimes'

'It's the one over there; never been, never will.'

'It's lovely inside, but I went years ago and haven't been recently'

'I don't go to that church, I go to the Methodist one.'

'I know it is around here somewhere but couldn't tell you where.'

'I know someone that goes and gets stuff for her baby there.'

## St Chad – 4 Key assets

1. **Community Favour:** St. Chad's is known for its supportive role in the community. This recognition comes mainly through the beneficial services provided, such as the swap shop and debt advice. Moreover, the church's engagement with local schools, inviting pupils and staff to participate in services for Easter, Harvest, and Christmas, has bolstered its reputation.
2. **Church Building and Grounds:** The church's physical assets—its building, facilities, offices, and surrounding grounds—are underutilized resources. They hold potential for furthering mission work and ministry and the development of existing ministries within the parish.
3. **Existing Church Members and Volunteers:** The dedication of St. Chad's volunteers (although small in number) and the faithfulness of its PCC and congregation form its backbone. Their hard work and commitment to the church serves as a good foundation for the future.
4. **The church has a culture of prayer:** this has meant that, despite the challenges that it faces, the congregation has remained faithful and hopeful.

## A NEW LEADER – A VISION!

### **Developing a Unified Vision for Growth:**

From the beginning, it is important to suggest that St. Chad's Church needs a vicar or leader whose role will be pivotal in crafting and articulating a vision to guide the church's future. Finding the right person to lead in the shaping of the appropriate sustainable vision for the future is essential!

### **Characteristics of the Prospective Leader:**

- Compassionate heart for 'the last, the lost, and the least'
- Energetic and inspiring
- Visionary and strategic mindset
- Deeply rooted in prayer
- Outward-focused - creative in mission
- Desire to foster and build upon ecumenical partnerships
- Identifies and collaborates with key mission partners
- Relational and pastoral approach to ministry
- Comfortable in an educational setting forming relationships with staff, children, parents and caregivers

**The formation of a vision for the church's future direction, culture and initiatives is a priority!** The forming of a clear vision should happen in collaboration with the PCC and the existing congregation. The PCC needs to be open and welcoming of new ideas and different ways of being church. Crafting a vision will be a substantial endeavour. It will require a season of careful prayer and discernment from the leader, PCC, and the congregation.

Adopting a collective and prayerful approach in developing the church's vision is essential. It will ensure that the direction set forth is not only fully embraced by the current members of St. Chad's Church but is also clearly understood by potential mission partners.

## A vision!

The following 'imminent suggestions' and 'Discipleship pathway' are by no means exhaustive, but are instead designed to cultivate further discussion and imagination. It is important to note that these suggestions should not be implemented in isolation. Instead, they should be realistic, cost-effective, sustainable, and, importantly, align with a vision outlined by the church leader in collaboration with the PCC.

A vision forming process needs to happen. This could be during a special event dedicated to this purpose, a 'vision casting day,' or through a systematic approach, a 'vision shaping process.' This process will gather input, align goals, and create a shared understanding of the church's current and future mission and objectives among its leadership and congregation.

It is strongly advised that external support from the diocese is sought during this process.

Each of the following proposals presuppose that the appropriate safeguarding steps and risk assessments would be implemented.

## IMMINENT SUGGESTIONS

### A pause

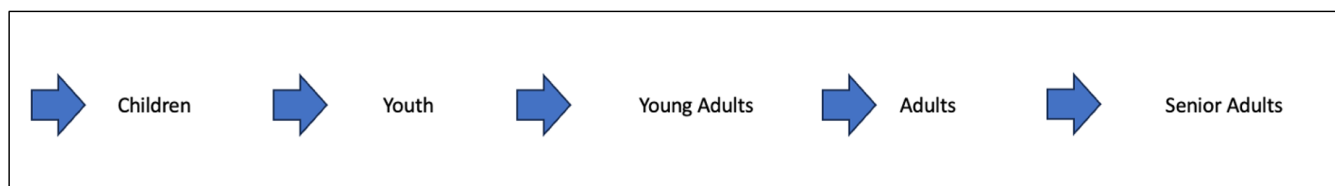
The church is in need of a holy holiday – a chance to pause and reflect on its sustainability and future path. Whether through a rejuvenating 'staycation' with a guest retreat leader, or an away retreat at a place like Foxhill, this time for rest is crucial to step back from the rigors of daily service and to realign with God's mission. Such retreats, far from being a one-time event, could become a cornerstone of the ongoing mission, providing a space to recharge.

### Streamline and focus

To cultivate a more sustainable ministry within the parish, it would be beneficial to streamline the efforts of the church and its volunteers. This could mean reducing the number of initiatives that are currently happening and concentrating on specific mission areas that invigorate the volunteers and congregation to more effectively feed into the broader, clear vision. These volunteers, by offering their unique gifts and skills in a focused manner, can contribute to the church's vision in such a way that is life-giving and sustainable!

## FORMATION OF A DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

The formation of a mapped-out discipleship pathway is required. This is to encourage a spiritual journey that allows for people to flourish and be nurtured across different stages of life, from child, to adolescent, to young adult etc. The journey is not merely about church attendance; it is about nurturing a deep, personal identification with the Body of Christ, where everyone finds home and calling within the embrace of God's people.





### **Mums and tots group.**

The church has good facilities, including areas for baby changing, break out rooms (if organised well), a large hall, and outside grassed area etc to support a group. This group would begin by catering to the needs of toddlers and their families. This age group is the place to begin! The group would build upon the existing swap shop. The goal would be to foster discipleship journeys in a supportive environment with minimal resources required. Mothers could come together in a dedicated space to support each other within the framework of the church's broader vision. The cost of setting up such a program would be minimal, and local organisations such as St James Centre, Birkenhead North, are willing to contribute necessary items such as toys.

### **Schools work**

*For information on the church's current schools activities please refer to the report compiled by the PCC.*

**Relationship with Holy Spirit School:** The parish has established good relationships with Holy Spirit School, which is considered a crucial avenue for reaching out to children within the parish. This further collaboration, with added strategic long-term planning, would play an integral part in relationship building with parents, caregivers, staff, and students.

**Broader Team Formation:** The suggestion to form a broader school work team, incorporating resources from organizations such as Open the Book, The Bible Society, and Scripture Union, would enhance the church's educational and spiritual contributions to the school. These resources would be invaluable for use in the other schools in the parish as part of a broader vision. This could be done in collaboration with other local churches or Christian groups.

**Collaboration with the Catholic Church:** There is an expression from the Catholic church to form deeper ties and a sense of collaboration in the school.

**Role of the Vicar or Leader:** The vicar or church leader should not serve as a school chaplain, but is required to have a more visible and involved presence in the school, beyond leading worship and attending assemblies. This approach would aim to deepen the church's relationship with the school.

**Headteacher:** The headteacher of Holy Spirit School is identified as a key contact and supporter of this collaboration. The headteacher's positive stance towards the partnership underscores the mutual benefits envisioned by both the school and the church.

**Location and Opportunities:** The fact that the school is located on Catholic property is not seen as a barrier, but rather an opportunity for further collaboration and ecumenical ties.



In recent discussions with Youth for Christ (YFC), it came to light that there were recently three young people in the local area that committed their lives to Christ. YFC did not know of a church that they could send these young people to in the area so that they could grow in their discipleship journeys.

Subsequent dialogues with YFC have yielded several proposals aimed at creating pathways for youth and young people to engage with and grow in their faith at St Chads.

**Support for Youth Programs:** YFC have offered support for initiating youth-oriented programs in the parish, emphasising the need for this type of provision to be provided in this area in the Wirral given the lack of youth ministry and youth work in the area.

**Youth Pioneer Role:** If funds were available from the diocese, there could be the possibility of providing a worker that would work in collaboration with YFC and the church. This is a successful model that has been used elsewhere on the Wirral and has meant the sharing of youth work provision and missional resource.

**Training for Volunteers:** YFC mentioned the potential of training locally identified volunteers to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of any potential youth programs.

**Shared Resource Collaboration:** It may be possible to partner with, and pool the resources of, local churches or groups that provide youth provision across the area.

**Need for Clear Strategy:** A clear strategy, accompanied by a vision for funding, was identified as a prerequisite for the successful launch and sustainability of any joint initiative.

**It is worth exploring further with the Message Trust the opportunity for an Eden team to join the parish. The parish is well positioned to fulfil the criteria of Eden.**



### Faith introduction course or group

Currently, the church does not offer a suitable space or course focused primarily on introducing individuals to the faith. This could be set up in partnership with other local churches or Christian groups.

**Purpose of Creating Such a Space:** To create a space that welcomes those who feel like temporary members of the church community. This space would encourage informal discussions, allowing individuals to ask questions, explore their faith, and feel a stronger sense of belonging to the church family.

**Informal Setting for Exploration:** The intended space would provide a casual environment for those who have not yet attended formal church services but are interested in learning about the faith in a less formal setting.

**'Next Steps' for Engagement:** A course is a way to offer tangible next steps or continued engagement for someone looking to explore faith outside the structure of a traditional church service.

Resources worth exploring (each provide a unique offering that would need to be tailored for participants):

The Alpha course

<https://alpha.org/>

Just 10

<https://just10.org/>

Christianity Explored

<https://www.christianityexplored.org/>

It is helpful for the church to consider the question; how many doors are there to faith in our church for those not yet Christians in our parish? How might we increase the number of doors? Are the existing offerings suitable doors?

### **Ecumenical relationships that extend beyond 'high season gatherings'.**

It appears attendance at various churches in the local area is low. This could provide the opportunity for collaboration and partnership among different churches across denominations. Such cooperation could manifest in joint regular services, youth, and children's work initiatives where churches come together to advance the work of the Kingdom within the community. Executing these in a sustainable and regular way would require planning and a willingness to embrace new ideas. The goal of these inter-denominational efforts would not be limited to working together on projects and initiatives; but instead with the purpose to cultivate deep friendships and relationships. Through this unity and fellowship, those who do not currently attend any church might witness a powerful example of faith and unity in action.

## **OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES**

### **A Mission team to reseed the church**

To support the mission at St. Chad's, a lay mission team could be formed drawn from churches and organisations with a fruitful background in mission work. This team (of approximately 6 people) would be assigned to St. Chad's for a set term, bringing their expertise and experience to the table. The strategy would involve a gradual handover process, where the mission team's active role diminishes over time, allowing for the natural talents and gifts of St. Chad's own congregation and identified long-term mission partners (this is a process that would need to take place during the term of the Mission team) to come to the forefront. The primary goal during this time is to cultivate vision, pastoral support, offer guidance, and facilitate training. This approach is designed to strengthen the congregation from within while ensuring that the church is well-equipped to sustain its growth and mission activities independently.

There would be a focus on the following areas:

- Shaping a culture of collaboration with other churches and agencies, invitation, mission, hospitality and growth.
- Identifying and engaging key long term mission collaboration partners, e.g. The Message Trust, YFC, other local churches and Christian groups.
- Offering training where appropriate.
- Engaging with schools and community work.
- Realising an agreed vision.
- Empowering the PCC.

## Website

**This is an important outreach tool! Not just a forum for giving information.**

The church's website excels at delivering text information clearly and effectively, yet it could more prominently feature the children's and families offerings available to the parish. By showcasing these ministries more **visibly upfront**, the church is able to invite local families to see themselves as an integral part of the church's life. The website is an opportunity to reflect the bespoke welcoming and inclusive spirit of the church, making it easier for families to understand how they can get involved, feel a sense of belonging and find an answer to the question **“where do I fit in at that place?”**

A good example of this, with the proper permissions in place, might be to showcase the amazing work done over the Christmas period on the website UPFRONT, with images of parents, children and families. The engagement with local schools, the Christmas fair, and the array of services that were held were all reasons to celebrate and should be featured more prominently! Highlighting these images online would greatly enhance the outreach efforts, showing that the church is much more than just a structure; it is a family that cherishes every member, regardless of age.

## The beach front

How many parishes have a beach front? The beachfront presents an untapped opportunity for mission work—a place where the church can connect with the community in meaningful ways. Recent conversations with beachgoers revealed a lack of awareness about the church's location and its contributions to the local community. This highlights the potential of the beachfront as a fertile ground for strategic outreach initiatives. Imagine a coffee cart, kiosk, or table stand with church volunteers offering ice creams and 'free prayer.' Church members could also distribute invitation cards to those curious about God's message and the church's role. Any initiative taken must align with a clear and feasible vision, ensuring sustainability and impact. With the right blend of vision, simple implementation and vigour, these efforts could enrich not only the lives of beach visitors but also those of church volunteers who are actively reaching out, truly embodying the spirit of 'going to where the people are' within the parish.

## The green at the front of church

The green at the front of St Chad could be optimised as a space to hold different types of services. During the summer months services could be held outside in the warm weather. Special services such as 'Community Carols in the Cold' could be held here in the lead up to Christmas. Baptism services could be held here. A blow-up outdoor pool could be erected for full immersion baptisms. This would provide a fantastic witness to the community. What a gift!



## Offices

**Current Church Services:** The church currently conducts a limited number of baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

**Formation of a Discipleship Pathway:** By establishing a clear discipleship pathway, the church would foster trust, a sense of belonging, and ownership among the community. This would encourage the community to more fully embrace these offerings by the church.

**Community Perception:** The goal is for the local community to view the church as "their" church, creating a personal and communal connection with the church where they would see themselves engaging in these forms of service.

Important to note:

A hotel within the parish is hosting a significant number of weddings, particularly in the summer, which suggests there is a requirement for weddings in Leasowe. It is suggested that by properly marketing the church and offering competitive pricing, the church could become an attractive (or alternative for those with a less generous budget) venue for weddings and potentially other services including receptions etc. This might be conducted with advice from the diocese.

## FINANCE

### Church building and hall facilities as a Primary Revenue Stream

The Church building and hall possess the requisite amenities for community engagement and event hosting. The venue stands as the pivotal asset for the parish's financial strategy. There is a need for necessary renovations to ensure that the hall is a compelling option for potential renters within our community.

Despite its current listing on the church website, the visibility of this information is less than optimal. To rectify this, a more robust advertising strategy is recommended. This would include traditional methods such as distributing leaflets in the local vicinity, displaying posters in nearby shops and establishments, and engaging in dialogues with local business proprietors to secure preferential rates for parish members.

Furthermore, a dynamic social media campaign is recommended to augment outreach. Such initiatives are anticipated to enhance the hall's attractiveness to the community and beyond, thereby solidifying its position as a significant source of income for our church.

### Sustainable Income Generation through Discipleship Pathway Components

Upon the ongoing establishment of the various elements of the discipleship pathway, which includes offerings such as youth programs, mums and toddler sessions, and community outreach events, a nominal participation fee structure is proposed. A modest charge in the region of £1 to £2 per session could be charged. This strategic approach is designed not only to cover operational costs but also to contribute to a sustainable revenue stream for the church.

It is important to note that these contributions are not merely transactional but serve to reinforce the value of the services provided while ensuring accessibility for all.

## **PRIORITIES**

- New leader and vision.
- Streamlining activity.
- Formation of a discipleship pathway - building on existing ministries.
- Embracing imaginative forms of mission and outreach.
- Mission team collated from lay members in the diocese to reseed a congregation.
- Development of new strategic mission partners - building on links with existing partners.