



Preaching resources and Small Group reflections on our strategic priorities



Welcome

You'll find here a set of preaching prompts and small group studies on the themes of the Diocesan Strategy. These are linked to the lectionary for a seven-week period, beginning on Sunday 31st May 2026 (Trinity Sunday), though of course these resources can also be used at any other suitable time of the church year.

Week 1: Introduction: *God's Story is Our Strategy*

Week 2: *Parish Renewal*

Week 3: *Developing Missional Leaders*

Week 4: *Racial Justice*

Week 5: *Net Zero Carbon*

Week 6: *Growing Younger*

Week 7: *Church Planting and Revitalisation*

Preaching: Key Principles Followed

We have focused on the set Gospel reading for each Sunday, because most Lectionary-following churches will always have it, and in Ordinary Time it remains the same regardless of whether a church may be following the 'related' or 'continuous' tracks from the Lectionary. Where one of the set Old Testament or Epistle readings complements or expands on the theme as explored in the Gospel, we have included it as an optional extra element, with the exception of Trinity 5, where none of the readings lend themselves to the theme of *Growing Younger* without completely contorting the texts!

Small Groups: Key Principles Followed

The small group studies are also linked to Sunday lectionary readings. They can be used alongside materials for Sunday preaching, as a stand-alone resource for small groups, or for individual use.

- Each Study begins with a core Bible reading, then questions to introduce the week's theme, reflections on the reading, and suggested prompts about how we might respond to theme in action and in prayer.
- Alongside each Study is a Prayer you are encouraged to use, specially written for each of the themes of the Strategy.

You are encouraged to share respectful and prayerful discussion and reflection, mindful of confidentiality and some of the pastoral sensitivities around some of the themes. May God be with you!

With thanks to all who have provided comments, wisdom and prayer...

Revd Simon Cook, Revd Phil Cansdale and others... April 2026

You'll find more resources and ideas
on our vision and strategy on our website at
www.manchester.anglican.org



Sunday 31st May 2026 (Trinity Sunday)

The Great Commission



<p>Matthew 28.16-end <i>The Great Commission</i></p> <p>Isaiah 40.(12-17,) 27-end <i>The power of God to renew those who wait on the Lord</i></p>	<p>Our vision and strategy begins not with structures, programmes or ambition, but God's initiative. This grounds the vision and strategy in our fundamental Christian calling in the Great Commission.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Sending not stasis" – for everyday life and not just Sundays or in church. This is not just for those who are like us, but for all who God has made• We are reminded of the promise that Jesus is with us always as we go – not an optional extra but key to our call.• We can hold onto the promise of renewal for those who wait on the Lord's power, and pray for that ourselves• Parishes may go through seasons of soaring / running / walking. In each of these we are to wait on the Lord.
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Sunday 7th June 2026 (Trinity 1)

Parish Renewal

<p>Matthew 9.(9-13) 18-26 <i>The woman who reaches out in faith, & the raising of a young girl</i></p> <p>Romans 4.13-end <i>The promise of faith – reckoned as righteousness to all who believe in the one who raised Jesus</i></p>	<p>Parishes lie at the heart of our vision for the growth and transformation of the diocese.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We see Jesus noticing those who reach out quietly, trusting that even a small act of faith might be enough. He can be trusted with our longings, questions and struggles.• In the gospel reading we see a faith which is not loud or always confident, but is patient, persistent and hope-filled. We can come in the same way.• Even where there is pain, or a sense of loss, Jesus speaks of new possibility. This might speak encouragement in our parishes and our communities.• In Romans 4 Paul reminds us that God's promise rests not on what we can sustain, but on trust in the God who brings new life.
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Sunday 14th June 2026 (Trinity 2)

Developing Missional Leaders

<p>Matthew 9.35-10.8 <i>'The labourers are few' and the sending of the twelve</i></p> <p>Romans 5.1-8 <i>Suffering – endurance – character – hope: the gift of Christ's love for his followers</i></p>	<p>Our focus is on developing ordained and lay people who are representative of the diversity of our diocese. We want them to be confident and equipped to lead our churches.</p> <p>Developing missional leaders begins not with recruitment or strategy, but learning to see, pray and send in the way of Jesus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the gospels we see Jesus attentive to the needs of the crowds, moved with compassion, and honest about the scale of the harvest and real limits of what can be carried alone• Jesus begins not by acting alone or heroic activity but by inviting prayer.• Those whom Jesus summons are taught, equipped and sent – not as experts but as disciples learning as they go, ministering together, and growing in faith.• In Romans 5, Paul reminds us that Christian character is formed over time, through perseverance and hope, sustained by the love of Christ – a pattern that shapes all Christian leadership
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Sunday 21st June 2026 (Trinity 3)

Racial Justice

<p>Matthew 10.24-39 <i>Call to courageous confession and the cost of discipleship</i></p> <p>Genesis 21.8-21 (contin.) <i>Hagar and Ishmael – God's compassionate justice vs the failure of human judgement</i></p>	<p>We celebrate the rich diversity of people who shape our communities, and press on in our vision to nurture worshipping communities where people of all nations can belong and flourish. This work towards justice – including racial justice - requires costly, courageous discipleship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scripture reminds us that God seeks relationship with all humanity, and that no one is invisible to God, even when human systems fail to see or protect them.• In the story of Hagar we glimpse how fear, misunderstanding and unequal power can lead to exclusion – and how God hears the cry of those who are pushed to the margins.• In Matthew's gospel, Jesus prepares his disciples for the cost of truth-telling, urging them not to be silent or afraid, but to trust God when what is hidden is brought into the light.• Jesus invites his followers to face discomfort and resistance with courage, choosing faithfulness over fear, and love over self-protection.• Throughout these readings runs Jesus' repeated assurance: <i>"Do not fear"</i> – reminding us that costly discipleship is sustained by God's presence, and shaped by truth, compassion and hope.
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Sunday 28th June 2026 (Trinity 4)

Carbon Net Zero

<p>Matthew 10.40-42 <i>Faithfulness in small things and the shared life of the disciples</i></p> <p>Jeremiah 28.5-9 (related) <i>Listening for God's truth amidst competing voices</i></p>	<p>Caring for God's creation – and our working towards the Church of England's 2030 Net Zero carbon goal - is part of faithful discipleship, rooted in gratitude for what God has entrusted to us and a desire to pass on a flourishing world to future generations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In Matthew's gospel, Jesus speaks of recognising Christ through simple acts of faithfulness, hospitality and care – reminding us that discipleship is often expressed through small, attentive choices.• Scripture consistently calls God's people to listen carefully for what is true and life-giving, resisting the temptation to accept only what is comfortable or convenient.• The voice of the prophet helps God's people to see reality more clearly – not to overwhelm us, but to call us back to faithfulness, hope and responsibility.• Responding to God's truth involves not only words but action: living with care, restraint and generosity as part of our worship and witness.• Jesus assures us that such faithfulness is not wasted – God sees even small acts of obedience, and promises that they matter in his kingdom.
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Sunday 5th July 2026 (Trinity 5) – Growing Younger

<p>Matthew 11.16-19, 25-end <i>Children in the marketplace: what is hidden and what is revealed: "come to me"</i></p>	<p>Our aim is to double the number of young active disciples and ensure there is a flourishing children and young people's ministry within reach of every young person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the gospel, Jesus names the confusion and restlessness of his generation, and contrasts the world's expectations with God's surprising wisdom.• Jesus rejoices that God's truth is often hidden from the self-assured and revealed to those who are open and receptive – reminding us that the wisdom of the kingdom is not the same as the wisdom of the age.• Becoming like an infant is not about immaturity, but about trust, dependence and attentiveness – a posture that lies at the heart of faithful discipleship.• Jesus' invitation, "Come to me...", speaks directly into weariness, anxiety and pressure, offering rest and a lighter yoke shaped by love rather than performance.• Growing younger invites the Church to listen more carefully to children and young people, not simply as recipients of ministry, but as those through whom God may be speaking afresh.
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Sunday 12th July 2026 (Trinity 6)

Church Planting and Revitalisation

<p>Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23 <i>The Parable of the Sower and its interpretation</i></p> <p>Isaiah 55.10-13 <i>God's word sent out, bringing life and growth</i></p>	<p>Having set up a number of Resource Churches in recent years, we are accelerating and strengthening our approach to church planting across the diocese.</p> <p>Church planting and revitalisation begin with faithful, generous participation in God's life giving work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the parable of the sower, Jesus speaks of sowing that is intentional yet generous, casting seed widely and trusting God with what takes root.• Different kinds of soil remind us that context matters: the same seed encounters different conditions, challenges and opportunities, calling for patience, attentiveness and care.• Growth is not always immediate or visible, and fruitfulness unfolds over time as seed is nurtured – reminding us that faithful sowing is our calling, while growth belongs to God.• The varied yields in Jesus' parable reassure us that faithfulness is not measured by uniform results, but by trusting obedience and openness to God's ongoing work.• Isaiah's vision holds this hope before us: God's word goes out with purpose, bringing renewal and joy, and calling God's people to go out in hope, walking in God's ways rather than our own.
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Week 1: God's Story is our Strategy



Before we make plans God is already at work in the world. This first week invites us to notice that more fully, and to ask how we might respond faithfully in the story God is writing today.

Read Matthew 28.16-end: Jesus' Great Commission

INTRODUCING THE THEME

- What's your favourite story – a book, film or real life? Share why it speaks to you and how it makes you feel.
- What story might God be already writing in your church or local context? Where is He already at work?

GETTING INTO THE BIBLE

- When you listen to Jesus' words in the Great Commission, what stands out to you most? What do you find challenging, and what do you find encouraging?
- What picture of God and of the Church do these verses give us? What kind of story do you hear Jesus inviting his followers into?
- Jesus promises, "I am with you always." How does that promise shape how we hear the call to go and to make disciples today?

RESPONDING IN ACTION AND PRAYER

- Looking at the four themes of the Diocesan Strategy (Parish Renewal, Growing Younger, Developing Missional Leaders, Church planting and revitalisation), what stories can you already tell about any or all of them in the life of your church or mission community? What stories would you hope to tell in four years' time?
- How could you turn the stories you hope to tell into prayers for your church and this Diocese? What simple commitment could you make to pray for these stories to come true, now and in the future?

A PRAYER FOR OUR DIOCESE

*Almighty and eternal God,
we thank you for the life and witness of your people
in Manchester Diocese over many years,
and give thanks for the signs of your kingdom today.
As we look to the future,
may we grow deeper in faith,
proclaim the hope that comes from knowing you,
and live the gracious love of Jesus.
We ask these things through the power of the Holy Spirit
and in the name of Christ our Lord, **Amen***



Week 2: Parish Renewal



God often brings renewal quietly in the most ordinary of places and over time. This week we reflect on how Jesus speaks hope into places that feel weary or fragile, and how parishes remain at the heart of God's renewing work.

Read Matthew 9.18-26: Jesus heals two people

INTRODUCING THE THEME

- When you hear the phrase "Parish Renewal" what thoughts or feelings come to your mind?
- Can you think of a time when something small or quiet brought new life or hope – in a church, a community, or your own life?

GETTING INTO THE BIBLE

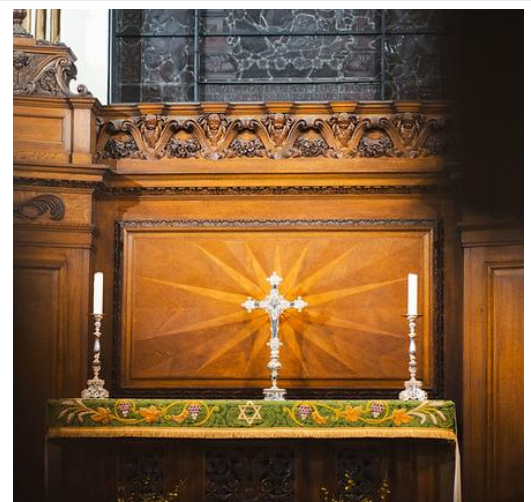
- As you read Matthew 9.18–26, what do you notice about the people who come to Jesus? How do they approach him, and what seems to prompt their response?
- What kind of faith is shown in these two encounters – and what, if anything, surprises you about how Jesus responds?
- What do these stories suggest about how Jesus brings renewal and hope, especially in situations that feel fragile, interrupted, or long-held?

RESPONDING IN ACTION AND PRAYER

- Where do you see signs of faith and hope already in the life of your parish – even if they feel small or not yet fully formed?
- Are there places locally where people may be longing quietly for renewal and encouragement?
- What gentle commitment to prayer or attentiveness might God be inviting you to make this week?

A PRAYER FOR PARISH RENEWAL

*God of grace, we hold before you
the people and places entrusted to our care.
By your Holy Spirit, renew our parishes in mission.
Give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions,
and power to our witness.
May we grow daily in love for you and for one another,
that the whole world might know your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen***



Week 3: Developing Missional Leaders



This week we reflect on how Jesus calls, forms and sends ordinary disciples, and how missional leadership grows over time through faith, perseverance and hope.

Read Matthew 9.35-10.8: Jesus sends out the twelve.

INTRODUCING THE THEME

- Think of a time when you tried to help bring people together or support a shared task. What did you find life-giving? What felt hard or demanding?
- When you hear the phrase “missional leader”, what comes to mind? Do you associate it with particular roles, or with ways of living and serving?

GETTING INTO THE READING

- In Matthew 9, what moves Jesus to act? What does he notice first?
- Before Jesus sends the disciples, he invites prayer. Why do you think prayer comes before action here?
- How does the way Jesus calls and sends the twelve challenge or encourage how we think about leadership today?

RESPONDING IN ACTION AND PRAYER

- What qualities of leadership do you see in Jesus in this passage?
- Where might you be invited to share in Christ’s compassion and mission in everyday life – at home, work, church, or in the community?
- How could your church or group more intentionally pray for God to raise up and sustain leaders, lay and ordained, in this season?

Rather than rushing to action, spend time turning these reflections into **prayer** – asking God to shape hearts, deepen trust, and guide the Church’s future.

A PRAYER FOR DEVELOPING MISSIONAL LEADERS

God of love, we thank you for all whom you are calling to lead and serve in your Church.

We ask you to continue raising up missional leaders, lay and ordained.

Deepen our faith, develop our gifts, and form us into the likeness of Christ.

Open our eyes to see where you are at work, and give us courage to join in boldly and faithfully.

Amen



Week 4: Racial Justice

God's love and justice extend to all people. This week we reflect on God's compassion for those who are marginalised, and how discipleship invites courage, attentiveness, and hope.



Read Genesis 21.8-21: the story of Hagar and Ishmael.

INTRODUCING THE THEME

- Can you recall a time when you became more aware of what it means to belong – or not to belong – in a group or community? What helped you notice that?
- Why do you think listening is such an important part of Christian discipleship, especially when experiences differ from our own?

GETTING INTO THE READING

- As you read the story of Hagar and Ishmael, what do you notice about the experiences of the different people involved?
- Where do you see fear or brokenness in this story? Where do you see God's care and compassion?
- What does God's response to Hagar reveal about who God notices and listens to?

RESPONDING IN ACTION AND PRAYER

- What might it mean for churches to become safer and more attentive spaces for listening to experiences different from our own?
- How can prayer help us to hold together truth, humility, courage, and hope as we seek justice?
- What gentle, faithful practice of listening or prayer might God be inviting you to this week?

A PRAYER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

*God of mercy,
we rejoice in the rich diversity
of peoples, cultures and languages
through which your love is made known among us.
Stir up in us a holy longing for racial justice.
In all that we do, teach us to act justly,
love mercy, and walk humbly.
May we be one in Christ,
that the world may see a community where
every tribe and nation find their home in you. Amen*



Week 5: Net-Zero Carbon



Caring for creation is part of faithful discipleship, shaped by gratitude for God's gifts and responsibility for future generations. This week we reflect on how Scripture helps us listen for God's truth, respond wisely, and act with hope in a fragile world.

Read Jeremiah 28.5-9: two prophets with two messages.

INTRODUCING THE THEME

- When you think about caring for creation, what feelings or questions come to mind?
- Where have you seen people make thoughtful or faithful choices for the good of others or the environment, even when those choices were not always easy?

GETTING INTO THE READING

- In Jeremiah 28, what tension do you notice between hopeful messages and difficult truths?
- Why might Scripture encourage God's people to listen carefully and test what they hear?
- How might this passage help us approach complex issues like climate change with humility, discernment, and faith?

RESPONDING IN ACTION AND PRAYER

- What might it look like for churches to respond to concerns about creation with faithfulness rather than fear?
- How can prayer help us to hold together concern for the world, care for neighbours, and trust in God's purposes?
- What simple practice of attention, prayer, or care for creation might God be inviting you to begin or deepen?
- Spend time offering prayers for God's creation, for communities most affected by environmental change, and for wisdom for the Church as it seeks to act faithfully.

A PRAYER FOR NET ZERO CARBON

God of wonder, we praise you for the rich diversity of creation that reflects your glory.

Help us to cherish all you have made.

As we work towards Net Zero, give us wisdom to make sustainable choices, courage to advocate for justice, and boldness to act with the urgency required.

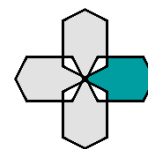
May our words and actions bear witness to our faith in you, and show our commitment to care for your world, and pray for our neighbours near and far.

*We pray through Jesus Christ, in whom all creation, **Amen***



Week 6: Growing Younger

This week we hear Jesus' invitation to come to him, and how the church can become a place where people of every generation are seen, heard and welcomed.



Read Matthew 11.16-19, 25-end: seeing things Jesus' way.

INTRODUCING THE THEME

- How did you see the world when you were younger? How did you imagine yourself fitting into it? How do you see it now? What has changed, and why?
- Where do you notice some of the greatest pressures and expectations facing younger people today? How might these experiences shape how people respond to faith?

GETTING INTO THE READING

- In Matthew 11, how does Jesus describe the responses he receives from many people? What seems to frustrate or grieve him?
- What kind of people does Jesus say are able to receive what God is doing? Why do you think that is?
- Jesus' invitation is "Come to me...". What kind of rest does he offer, and what kind of burden does he lift?

RESPONDING IN ACTION AND PRAYER

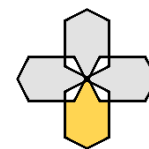
- In Matthew 18:3, Jesus speaks about becoming like a child. What qualities does this point to – and why do they matter for discipleship?
- How might the Church learn to listen more carefully to children and young people, not simply as those we care for, but as those from whom we can learn?
- How can we pray for those carrying heavy burdens, and for ourselves, that we might be open to seeing and receiving the life Jesus offers?

A PRAYER FOR GROWING YOUNGER

*God of every generation,
we thank you for all children, young people
and families across our Diocese.
Strengthen us in our calling to nurture younger disciples.
Bless those who already follow Christ,
and guide those who are searching after him.
Give courage, imagination and hope
to all who serve in churches, schools and chaplaincies,
that together we may see new generations grow & flourish,
through Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen***



Week 7: Church Planting & Revitalisation



Church planting and revitalisation invite us to trust that God is always at work bringing new life, even where things appear fragile, slow, or uncertain.

Read Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23: the Parable of the Sower.

INTRODUCING THE THEME

- Have you ever grown a plant from a seed? How did you go about it, and how did it make you feel? What helped growth, and what made it harder?
- When you hear the words “church planting” or “revitalisation”, what comes to mind? What feelings or questions do these words raise for you?

GETTING INTO THE READING

- In the Parable of the Sower, what seems to matter most for growth to happen?
- What obstacles prevent growth, and which of these are within human control – and which are not?
- How does this parable help us think about success, patience, and faithfulness in the life of the Church?

RESPONDING IN ACTION AND PRAYER

- What might it mean for a church to sow generously and faithfully, even when outcomes are uncertain?
- Where might God be inviting your parish or mission community to prepare the soil – through prayer, hospitality, listening, or care?
- How could you pray regularly for church planting and revitalisation in your mission community, deanery, or wider diocese?

A PRAYER FOR CHURCH PLANTING & REVITALISATION

*God of life, you call your Church
to proclaim afresh the gospel in every generation.
We pray for the growth of your Church,
that we may see new churches planted
and others revitalised.
Draw us into the work of your Spirit,
that we might see an increase
in number, discipleship and fruitfulness.
May new communities of faith take root,
grow strong, and be signs of your Kingdom.
We ask this for the glory of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen***

