



Further Education colleges and their local churches

Diocese of Portsmouth

The Church of England has launched a new network of 40 worshipping communities today, furthering its vision of becoming younger and more diverse. The new FLOURISH network will establish partnerships between schools or Further Education colleges and their local churches, aiming to engage a large number of children, young people, and their families.

An initial two-year pilot programme will introduce these worshipping communities through churches partnering with primary schools, secondary schools, and FE college settings across 12 Dioceses: Bath & Wells, Birmingham, Bristol, Chester, Derby, Lichfield, Peterborough, Portsmouth, Salisbury, Southwark, Southwell & Nottingham, and Truro.

The FLOURISH network builds on the momentum of leaders dedicated to strategic partnerships between church, school, and home, inspired by the pioneering efforts of the Church of England's Growing Faith Foundation. This foundation has been instrumental through its programmes, networks, research, and events.

As part of the pilot, 200 adult leaders from schools, colleges, and churches, along with 800 young leaders from the schools and colleges, will receive training and development. This initiative will be led by The Church of England's Education team in collaboration with Ministry Development colleagues.

The FLOURISH worshipping communities will be based on five core principles:

- Young people's voices are instinctively at the centre of all leadership decision-making and implementation
- Clearly articulated and shared purpose to grow a younger and more diverse community of Christian disciples
- Strategic leadership partnership between school/college and at least one church community (with appropriate long-term governance and resource commitment)
- Intergenerational faith development experiences involving children and their families of all ages
- Worship that is fully integrated into the regular rhythms, practices, structures and resources of the school/college's vision for flourishing of children and adults

The 40 pilot locations will share their insights at local, diocesan, and national levels to assess whether this innovative approach to worshipping communities in educational settings could be a viable opportunity for Dioceses to consider in future strategic funding plans.

While many pilot locations are in Church of England schools, the initiative also includes community (non-CofE) schools, Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), and FE colleges, with over half serving communities with above-average disadvantage metrics and a significant proportion serving highly diverse populations.

Andy Wolfe, Executive Director of Education for the Church of England, overseeing the national pilot programme, said, “The Church of England has a great opportunity to imagine new ways for children, young people, and their families to grow in faith through deepened strategic partnerships between schools, colleges, and their local churches. The FLOURISH pilot will help us learn more about this opportunity and open up the chance for churches, schools, colleges, and their Dioceses to explore this on a larger scale in the future.”

Debbie Clinton, The Church of England’s Co-Director of Vision & Strategy, added, “Becoming a church that is younger and more diverse requires us to think in new ways and imagine new possibilities to ensure there is a flourishing worshipping community within reach of every child in the country. FLOURISH offers a highly creative and innovative way of connecting with large numbers of children, young people, and their families by locating these worshipping communities in educational settings, while grounding them in strategic partnerships with local churches.”

The FLOURISH network will formally launch on 2 July with leaders from all locations and Dioceses joining together for a training and commissioning event led by The Rt Revd Dr Jonathan Frost, Bishop of Portsmouth and Lead Bishop for Education.

The worshipping communities will begin their pilot phase in Autumn 2024, with research into the growth and effectiveness of this approach shared throughout the two-year pilot. This learning will inform the potential expansion of this vision beyond the pilot group to potentially hundreds of other locations in the coming years.

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