DELIBERATELY DIGITAL

The vision-led approach to digital mission developed by The Diocese of Sheffield

A Digital Mission Whitepaper

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THE DIOCESE OF SHEFFIELD
Renewed | Released | Rejuvenated

Contents

Introduction

This document has been created to describe the way digital mission is understood by the Diocese of Sheffield. The Diocese of Sheffield takes a unique vision-led approach to digital mission which we are calling 'Deliberately Digital'.

The detail in this report will provide clarity for those who are engaged in digital mission across the Diocese and raise awareness of digital mission for those who work in supportive roles. This document has also been created to accelerate discussion with a wider audience of conversation partners on the ongoing state of digital mission within the Church of England and beyond.

This document will go on to form the basis of a variety of content developed to communicate and implement the approach across the Diocese.

We are persuaded that 'Deliberately Digital', as a vision-led approach to digital mission, is the most comprehensive way for churches to engage in mission in our hybrid world.

TL;DR – Executive Summary

(Too Long; Didn't Read)

In our moment of rapid cultural, technological and organisational change, a shared understanding of digital mission can be quite an important way to pursue the Diocesan vision.

Deliberately Digital is a non-prescriptive approach to digital mission for the Diocese of Sheffield that helps worshipping communities recognise their hybrid context, embrace hybrid continuity and cultivate hybrid culture.

Achieved through training and support, the aim of the approach is to see worshipping communities of missionary disciples who are demonstrating and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in ways that reach and serve those living hybrid lives in our digital age.

The Immediate Context

The Diocese of Sheffield is made up of Church of England organisations located throughout South Yorkshire and the southern parts of the East Riding of Yorkshire. It comprises parishes, schools, chaplaincies, missional communities and other organisations all united by their common Christian faith. It is an Anglican Diocese that is made up of a diverse community of mission-focused people who are seeking to transform their lives, and the lives of others, by sharing the Christian faith. Since the creation of the Diocese in 1914, the shape of the villages, towns and cities may have changed but the people are still vibrant, energetic and passionate about serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

To help us create a sustainable platform to develop and deliver the Diocesan strategy, in consultation with the Diocese we have developed a programme to transform the model of ministry. This is a change in culture with the new model assuming a sharper focus for ordained leadership and a change in our structures for mission and ministry. [Read more about the transformation here.](#)

In 2019 to 2020, the Diocese of Sheffield worked with the national church to submit a bid to a new fund targeted to Diocese with the least historic and current resources. In December 2020, we discovered we had been successful and had been awarded £4.92 million from the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) of the Church of England to support our change transformation journey. [Read more about the funding award here.](#)

During that same time period the Diocese had to respond positively to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and what that meant for its worshipping communities. In a sense, the Diocese become digital by necessity. The Mixline Church Initiative was launched to ensure that churches were able to continue services online during the various national lockdowns.

85% of churches in the Diocese conducted some online activity or service during lockdown.

Yet from the initial research and through listening to the situation in Parishes as time went on, it was recognised that more needed to be done to resource and support churches in their online activities. It had become increasingly clear that although the global pandemic had occasioned the near-wholesale venture into online church, it could not be necessity that sustained the newly developed models of online church. The opportunity was apparent but the approach to digital mission was undeveloped.

In the highly-regarded e-book, *Revisiting the Distanced Church*, editor and Professor of Communications, Heidi Campbell, describes the effect of the pandemic as "somewhere between a wake-up call and an epiphany for the church."

Similarly, John Marsh, a Diocese of Sheffield Mission Development Advisor, described the opportunity as the chance "to become an incarnational 'mix-line' church in a 'mix-line' world."

The opportunity was for the Diocese of Sheffield to respond to a changing world. With particular attention paid to the changes brought about by the increasing integration of digital technology in our lives. The change required to implement appropriate ways of doing digital mission was taking place within a wider and more vast set of strategic changes in the Diocese as described above.

By the time national lockdowns had come to an end it was clear that the Diocese of Sheffield needed an approach to digital mission that would be effective within the short-term post-pandemic slowdown of online church and set a mid-to-long term vision for digital mission that would energise the Diocese in many years to come. The approach was to be developed within the Diocese of Sheffield Parish Support Team, with Elliot Hyliger, the Diocese of Sheffield Digital Mission Development Advisor, taking the lead. The approach had to respond to the digital landscape of our modern age, while providing practical support for parishes and catalysing cultural change across the Diocese.

The Digital Landscape

In 1998, Architect and co-founder of the MIT Media Lab, Nicholas Negroponte wrote: "Like air and drinking water, being digital will be noticed only by its absence, not its presence." Negroponte's assertion raises all kinds of questions for the future of the church's worship and witness in our increasingly digital age.

The digital landscape seems to be shifting continuously but there are some principles that remain constant over time:

1. **Exponential Growth** - Technology is advancing at a rate that is faster than our intuition can comprehend. It is almost impossible to predict where the exponential growth of digital technology will take us in coming years.

   Church marketing strategy cannot be the only way churches engage meaningfully with digital things – We need theologies of digital technology.

2. **Perpetual Disruption** - The exponential growth of digital technology has led to significant disruption in the inherited patterns of life and long-established institutions. Furthermore, we are contending with a concoction of disruptions including: pandemic, disease and climate disaster, authority and trust erosion, and mental health and identity formation challenges.

   Yet, disruption is nothing new. The church has never existed in disruption-free times. David Kinnaman (President of Barna Group) and Mark Matlock even went as far as describing the church's task as "following Jesus in digital babylon" in their helpful book *Faith for Exiles*

3. **Combining Trends** - There are many noticeable digital growth trends, some more noticeable than others. Rather than responding to one trend at a time, surviving and thriving in our digital age depends on responding to a combination of digital trends that influence the emerging

social/cultural landscape.

Like missionaries crossing geographical borders, the church in our digital age must seek to understand how people live their lives in the new technological context.

4. **User-Focus** - The emerging digital landscape, must be conceptualised as a hybrid landscape, and is therefore best understood from the user's point of view. This view keeps focus tight and efficiency high when using technology to digitise the current organisation and explore new kinds of growth. Giving a high consideration to the user demands agility, an iterative ministry development cycle and a healthy attitude to experimentation and failure. Globally recognized digital expert David L. Rogers argues that organisations must be "willing to question its own assumptions and focus on the unique mission of how it serves [users]." (*The Digital Transformation Playbook*).

The church risks the loss of its identity when it pays closer attention to digital platforms or communication practices, than it does to it's people and those it is called to reach and serve.

Significant reflection and analytical thought are still required in exploring the churches calling in this emerging digital landscape. We include these principles to highlight the complexity of the digital landscape that the church is navigating. Yet, as we have seen above, none of these challenges are insurmountable. In many ways, the challenges may well drive the church of the future back to its core theological identity, missiological calling and ecclesiological distinctives.

What is Deliberately Digital?

Deliberately Digital is the Diocese of Sheffield's vision-led approach to digital mission. The immediate context of the Diocese of Sheffield in post-pandemic times and the wider context of our rapidly moving digital landscape, provide the background to the approach but it is the Diocesan vision that acts as its grounding.

As a Diocese we have been called to grow a sustainable network of Christ-like, lively and diverse Christian communities in every place which are effective in making disciples and in seeking to transform our society and God's world. Every day around the Diocese, dedicated, creative and passionate people are working together in the mission of God.

In developing an approach to digital mission special attention has been paid to the Diocesan vision's description of the diverse Christian communities that constitute the Diocese. The Christian communities are to be "effective in making disciples and seeking to transform [society and world]". A vision-led approach to digital mission seeks to give appropriate weighting to the Diocesan desire for effectiveness in mission. Which is to say that the shape of church services and the inclusivity of church practice are wonderful benefits of digital technology, but do not act as the grounding for digital mission. For us in the Diocese of Sheffield, the church's vocation in mission, must be the grounding for its digital mission.

To be *deliberately* digital is to be purpose-driven in the use of technology and digital things. It is to deliberately and critically evaluate how effective mission might take place in our hybrid world. It is a deep unwillingness to be distracted from the calling of making disciples and transforming society and God's world by new tech and digital platforms, but to view digital innovation as opportunity for ever more effective missionary disciple-making.

To be deliberately **_digital_** is to be open to the goodness and care of God experienced in the provision of tools, platforms and technology that happen to be digital. It is to be curious about where the common grace of God might be present in the 21st century and beyond. Being digital is to recognise the dignity of human creativity as a function of the _imago dei_, including in the creation of digital technologies. It is to avoid simplistic renderings of technology and our culture's engagement with technology. To be digital in this sense means to live in our hybrid age, full of gratitude yet recognising that neither their creators, nor the digital things themselves are without limitation – and treating them as ultimate or absolute, in overt or subtle ways, will only end in our undoing.

"...the only way out, when we are blinded by the idolatrous images of digitality, is to focus on God. To move from the culture to the divine: to move from digitality to Missio Dei, and in turn from the practicalities of mission to the reality of God. The only way out is to focus on God."

"If we are to properly observe Missio Dei in the digital age, we need to focus more on God than on the digital." Peter M. Philips, Missio Dei in a Digital Age.

This paper is not the place to rehearse the story of God and participation in His mission. (See Christopher Wright, N. T. Wright and Kevin Vanhoozer)

Deliberately Digital is a vision for church mission, appropriate for our hybrid age. Deliberately Digital seeks in its implementation to narrow the gap between digital theology or theology in our digital age and digital practices such as communications, design and marketing. Deliberately Digital is a vision for the disruption of how we tend to imagine mission happening today. It is a vision for the Digital Transformation of the Diocese of Sheffield and its worshipping communities; the seeking of missional imagination for our digital age.

This will look drastically different across the Diocese. We are a network of diverse worshipping communities engaged in a

diverse range of contexts. It may mean developing a calendar of sponsored Twitter posts in one context, providing anonymous online chat servers for the bereaved in another context, deep embeddedness in football forums in yet another context. Deliberately Digital as a Diocesan approach to digital mission doesn't elevate any single method, platform, tool or technology. Rather, by telling a single vision-story (the story of our hybrid context and continuity), it seeks to foster a hybrid culture where the digital elements of church mission are given the attention they deserve.

Vision-Story: Hybrid Context

In January 2022 the annual Digital Global Overview Report calculated that there are 4.62 billion social media users (https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2022/01/digital-2022-another-year-of-bumper-growth-2/). 'Social media users' may not represent unique individuals, but that figure, even when adjusted down, would represent close to half of the world's total populations.

In the United Kingdom, based on figures generated by advertisement reach, 40% of adults use TikTok. That's 21 million people spending an average of close to one hour per day on the social media platform. (https://datareportal.com/reports/?tag=Digital+2022).

Whether it's through social media or the many other ways that digital technology has become seamlessly integrated into our daily lives, we must recognise that the world has changed. We work, rest, play and love across physical and online space, without ever really thinking about the boundary in between. We live hybrid lives. Just consider, when was the last time you visited a restaurant without checking its online reviews? The world has changed, and so have we. In his industry-defining work, *Digital Transformation*, Thomas Siebel warns that failure to respond to those changes will "make the difference between thriving existence and ultimate extinction." Siebel is speaking in a context of business and government entities, so must not be uncritically applied to God's people but his analysis of our context deserves our reflection.

The acceleration of digital technologies has so transformed our lives that digital things are no longer mainly online tools for physical life, but are more often online environments for meaningful digital elements of hybrid life. Crucially, therefore, the context for the ministry and mission of every church in the Diocese of Sheffield is, amongst other things, technologically hybrid. Or to borrow the phrasing of the British theologian,

Lesslie Newbigin, we just ask ourselves what would it mean for worshipping communities to have a 'missionary encounter' with their hybrid contexts?

> It was only a short way through our meeting that the Oversight Minister I had arranged to meet realised something quite profound about her local community. She is well-known locally from her work in schools and supporting local initiatives but what she had come to notice recently was the ease with which people would talk to her via social media. It is increasingly common for her to find messages in her inbox from local people seeking pastoral support. "They talk to me like an old friend! As if they really know me." – I tried to encourage her; "They really do!"

In our digital age, life is lived across physical and digital space, to the extent that our digital lives are in fact our 'real' lives. Our digital interactions are interactions with real people. We live in a 'Hybrid' context, seamlessly integrating digital technology into our embodied relationships and ways of life.

Therefore, our hybrid context, requires thoughtful hybrid ministry and mission; ministry and mission that wisely utilises familiar physical modes of engagement and less familiar digital modes of engagement. But prior to that we must simply and honestly, come to recognise the change that has and is taking place.

And of course, with change comes fear, but the change being recognised does not take place in a vacuum. The ability to recognise our hybrid context and the opportunities that now exist is rooted in the stability of a theological understanding of our world and technology. Technology being "the human activity of using tools to transform God's creation for practical purposes". (John Dyer, *From the Garden to the City)*. That is to say that for churches around the Diocese, motivation to excel in

their digital offering will be short lived if not grounded in its foundational calling to join in with God's renewal of all things.

Recognising our hybrid context answers the 'why?' of the Deliberately Digital vision.

Vision-Story: Hybrid Continuity

Our world is changing. Our world has changed. The change, amongst other things, means that we now live life across physical and online space without even thinking about the border between those spaces. That lack of thought may be convenient for hybrid life but it may not always be wise or healthy.

A lack of thought may mean practices that developed in a predominantly analogue world are continued without reflection in our now hybrid world. Like somehow transporting an English speaker to rural Argentina, flourishing in a new context is as much about translation as it is about transportation. A lack of careful thought may mean that the church's ministry and mission is simply transported into newly developed hybrid context, rather than translated into practices and forms appropriate to and cogniscient of the complexities of the new context. What is at risk is effectiveness in mission.

Before thinking critically about the border between physical and online spaces we must become aware of it. Many of us will have experienced the modern phenomenon of meeting someone physically who we have only previously met digitally. Whether it be distant family members, work colleagues or gaming friends, when interacting with others online we do not believe we are interacting with a 'online version' of them. This becomes apparent when, after meeting physically, the person in the room with us doesn't quite match the conception we had built of them via digital technology. The boundary between physical space and digital space is never more noticeable than when we experience discontinuity as we move from one to the other. "You are much taller than I expected" – "I didn't even recognise you – You look so slender on Zoom!"

That sense of hybrid dis-continuity indicates that the online world is not some separate realm of existence, unconnected to 'real life', but is in fact an 'extension' (to borrow the language of Strawn and Brown in their book *Enhancing Christian Life*) of the

world we inhabit and in which we exist. Therefore, Hybrid Continuity is the lived reality that who we are in the online world is an extension of who we are in the physical world.

> This became undeniable when visiting a church on the northern edge of the Diocese some months ago. I met with the Priest and church warden to discuss whether to continue livestreaming their weekly service. They were clearly a caring church, placing a strong emphasis on welcoming new visitors. They had a welcome table positioned where visitors would find it hard to miss and a rota of 'welcomers', who would offer to sit with the guest and explain elements of the service if they hadn't had much experience of their church tradition before. They had clearly considered how to make a visitor feel welcome when experiencing the church service physically. Slowly it became clear that the same careful thought had not been given to the visitor's sense of welcome when experiencing the church service digitally. The livestream was a 'transportation' of the physical act of worship into digital space. The priority of welcome and the role of 'welcomers' had not yet been translated to the new context.

If the digital world is an extension of the 'real' world and who we are in online spaces is an extension of who we are in physical space, then a church's witness in online spaces is at least an extension of its physical witness. Hybrid Continuity is founded on the conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord. Lord of all life and all the ways that life is extended via technology. His mission is not limited to the elements of our lives that take place in physical space (although it is worth recognising that even our online activity is the result of our physical engagement with physical screens, goggles and interfaces). When the church faithfully responds to it's calling to participate in his mission, it does so in ways that may well be mediated by digital technology. This ought to have more to do with human extension via tools than it is to do with human disembodiment via tool.

Mission in God's world takes place when a person alerts people to the reign of God in Christ through the proclamation and demonstration of the good news of Jesus. However that 'alerting' takes place, it is always an embodied or incarnate process. Whether in physical space or online space, mission happens as human beings relate to one another in particular ways that bring further awareness of and participation in the Kingdom of God.

This is a question of strategy, or, more precisely how a Diocese, its vision and its worshipping communities can undergo a digital transformation? (Digital Transformation is the process undertaken by organisations to adapt to our ever-accelerating digital age).

Therefore, Hybrid Continuity is what happens when a church seeks to live out its calling in mission in the (hybrid) context that it finds itself in. Embracing Hybrid Continuity (of mission) is the desire to seek authentic engagement with those who haven't yet responded to the love of God for them in Jesus Christ. Whether that engagement is in physical space or online space, or more likely across both over time, isn't the important thing. The important thing is that the church recognises that it's calling is to be translated into those spaces in ways that can be understood by those who are being served. Put simply, Hybrid Continuity, is the logical expression of the church's missional vocation in our Hybrid Context.

Embracing hybrid continuity answers the 'how?' of the Deliberately Digital vision.

Vision-Story: Hybrid Culture

When we recognise our Hybrid Context and embrace Hybrid Continuity the result is not simply a list of digital practices that all churches ought to do. The practical principles of being effective in mission must also go further than executing a digital strategy. Rather than things a church must do to be effective, the Deliberately Digital vision for digital mission culminates in what a church must become – or a way of being that is appropriate for our hybrid times. Being culturally hybrid.

Every church is a unique embodiment of the good news of Jesus Christ and as it responds to its context, making disciples and transforming society, its ministry and mission inevitably are varied and bespoke. Fostering a Hybrid Culture, recognises that unique blend and advocates for a thoughtful improvisation, rather than the adoption of particular platforms or techniques. It is also important to resist the temptation to prioritise global opportunities above the hybrid lives in the geographically proximate context of the church.

Hybrid Continuity challenges the strategy of transporting physical activities into the digital world. Ultimately, Hybrid Culture is the desire to move beyond transportation and so embed the translation of physical activity into online activity – That churches became natively hybrid. Churches living in two very different yet interconnected spaces, desiring meaningful engagement need to grow fluent in the 'language' of both spaces. In one sense, churches need to go beyond translation and actually become compound bilinguals; A compound bilingual is an individual who learns two languages in the same environment, often at the same time, so that they are able acquire one notion with two verbal expressions. To be able to give voice to a single idea or purpose with the kind of clarity that makes it's reception possible across the two extremes of our hybrid context. Never one or the other but always both.

This require what we are calling hybrid culture a way of being and doing that is natively physical and digital. This kind of culture require cultivating as we generally tend to be more deliberate about our physical life together. We can begin to cultivate Hybrid Culture by periodically asking six vital questions. The six Hybrid Culture questions below are heavily adapted from the 14 aspects of digital culture found in Daniel Rowles and Thomas Brown's practical guide to successful digital transformation, *Building Digital Culture.*

Hybrid Foundations – What kind of world do we find ourselves in? What is it that God is doing in that world?

Hybrid DNA – Are our fundamental self-expressions (purpose, mission, vision, values etc) formed for life in our world?

Hybrid People – Are our people being equipped to flourish in the world we find ourselves in?

Hybrid Presence - Are we a demonstration of the good news to those in physical and digital proximity to us?

Hybrid Activity – What should we make a priority of doing in our world? And how do we decide?

Hybrid Tools – What technologies might we need to explore, abandon and critique to achieve our aims in sustainable ways?

These are formed as questions because cultivating hybrid culture is an ongoing process of formation. Developing hybrid culture will not be a constant and intense activity but will receive seasonal focus amongst the many other priorities in church life. It is an iterative evolution that requires intention for practices to actually be transformed.

In his latest book, MetaChurch, Dave Adamson concludes that "helping your church thrive in the future is not about being the

first on new platforms, updating your website, or simply posting more content online. The church leaders who will be well-placed for the future are those who are open to innovation, testing new opportunities and listening to experts."

Cultivating a hybrid culture is one way to keep innovation, opportunities and expertise at the forefront of a church's digital offer. It also provides a framework to engage critically with new digital technologies and platforms as they become available. A church with a Hybrid Culture may not be particularly cutting edge or have the resources and people to deploy significant online activities, but they will be alive to their context in mission, seeking the continuity of their mission in that context and routinely deliberating over to why, how, and what it means for them to be deliberately digital.

Cultivating hybrid culture answers the 'what?' of the Deliberately Digital vision.
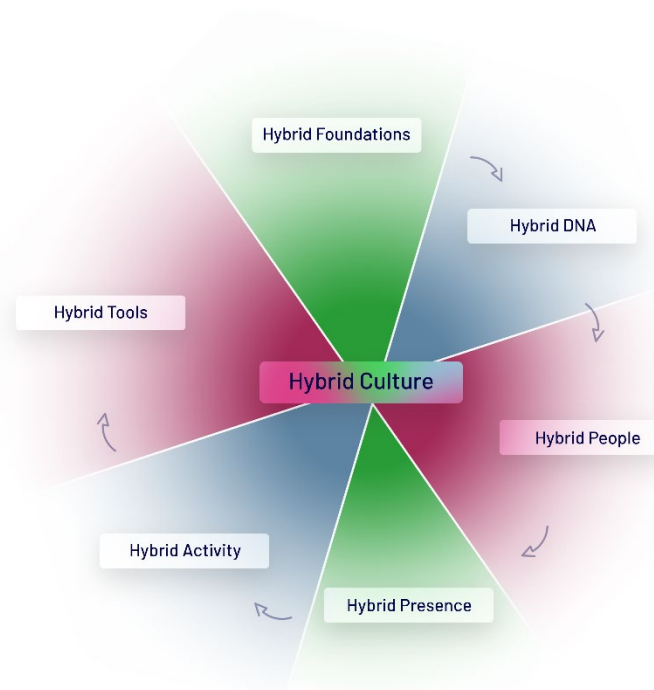
Outlining our Approach

Although this approach to digital mission is vision-led, because our ultimate desire is to see Christian communities growing increasingly effective in mission in our hybrid age, it is not enough to simply retell the Deliberately Digital Vision-Story. What follows is an outlining of the strategy approach employed to deliver a Deliberately Digital Diocese.
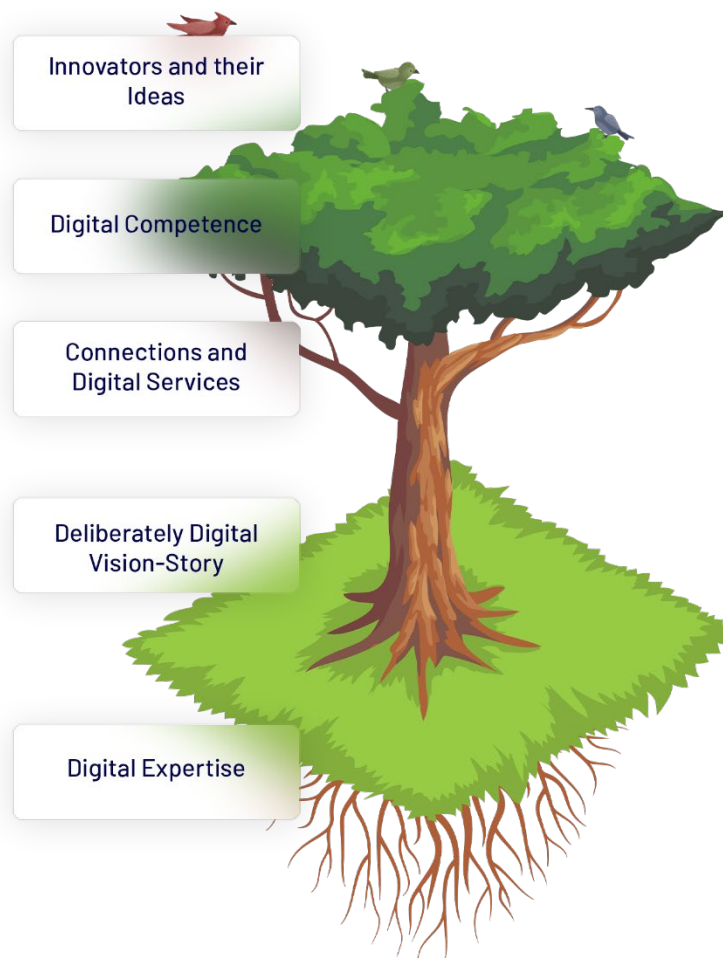
The vision-story is rooted in, and continually nourished by bleeding edge Digital Expertise. That Digital Expertise and insight is often opaque and unhelpful at parish level, so it must be first distilled into a meaningful Vision-Story that anyone can recognise their place in. That Vision-Story then become the basis of various connections and conversation throughout the Diocese and beyond. Those connections and conversations shape the development of Digital Services that meet the ministry

and mission needs of the Diocese. This process is intended to remain agile to the fast-moving digital landscape, be owned at a parish level, create bi-directional learning relationships and develop effective digital mission support. The fruit of which is the budding Digital Competence of the Diocese and an environment culturally supportive of Innovators and their Ideas.

Digital Mission Development Advisor

In the Diocese of Sheffield, vital to the vision-led approach to Digital Mission is the effective function of a key role – The Digital Mission Development Advisor (DMDA). As a function of leading the Digital Transformation journey of the Diocese of Sheffield, the role holder is responsible for executing the approach under the strategic oversight of the Director of Mission and Ministry.

Working closely with the Mission Development Advisor-Rejuvenated and the Director of Strategic Communications, the role holder seeks to provide key support and development regarding digital evangelism and discipleship to Mission Areas in the Diocese of Sheffield, act as an advocate link between the Mission Areas and Diocesan Strategy communications planning and support and contribute to the work of the Communications Department as it delivers its strategy. The Key Accountabilities have over time been augmented and reformatted into the Digital Mission Development Advisor Vision, Strategy, Goal and Objectives.

DMDA Vision: To see every church in the Diocese and the supporting Diocesan structure being Deliberately Digital in its mission and ministry.

DMDA Strategy: By developing Digital Mission Expertise, retelling the Deliberately Digital Vision-Story, making Digital Mission Connections and establishing Digital Mission Services, the DMDA will encourage and equip churches to cultivate hybrid culture that builds Digital Mission Competence and champions Digital Mission Innovation.

DMDA Goal: At least 10 new disciples each year can tell of how their journey to faith in Jesus Christ included significant engagement with church digitally.

Approach Objectives

Develop Digital Mission Expertise

In an age of rapid technological change, expertise in Digital Mission includes a keen grasp of current and anticipated digital trends, digital theology, theologies of technology and the missiological implications of life in our hybrid context. Developing this expertise may include formal education, online learning, self-directed reading and research, digital mission mailing lists and the use of resources developed by other organisations invested in digital mission.

Rehearse the Deliberately Digital Vision-Story

Expertise is not enough on its own. The Deliberately Digital Vision-Story is the attempt to demonstrate the relevance of that expertise in way that are recognisable, digestible and fruitful for lay and clergy leaders around the Diocese. The Vision-Story must be so coherent with the biblical worldview that it can become another angle to view the world as it really is, and thus the DMDA must be a living embodiment of it – able to retell and rehearse it in and for a variety of contents and teams. Rehearsing that story may include publishing blogs, delivering presentations, running workshops, refining the narrative based on its growing expertise and its impact, and even including the telling of the vision-story when providing strict technical support.

Make Digital Mission Connections

The Vision-Story in its various forms is an attempt to connect leaders with the big story of God's world and human technology. That connection takes place best through relationship where open conversation can shape what we think, feel and hope for. Digital Mission Connections are culture-shaping relationships, where stories are shared and honoured. Making these connections may include approaching Diocese churches, identifying digital mission practitioners, collaborating with central support team, generating digital mission contact through Diocesan communication channels and requesting time with senior staff.

Establish Digital Mission Services

Conversation is essential but lay and clergy leaders around the Diocese need practical support that serves their digital mission requirements and opportunities. Digital Mission Services are standalone, modular development tools that can be deployed by churches however suits them best, whenever suits them best. Establishing the Digital Mission services includes developing standalone services that help churches to cultivate Hybrid Culture by supporting churches in answering one of the 6 Hybrid Culture questions in their own way, for their own mission context. This may include, but is not limited to the Digital Mission Services (currently under development) shown below:
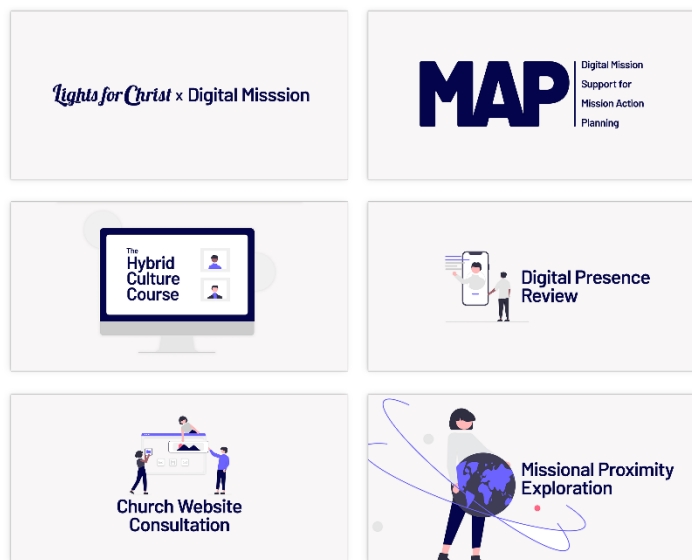
These Digital Mission Services can be deployed with limited engagement with the DMDA but the optimal deployment would be a process where the church in question makes a strong connection with the DMDA, is open to new ways of seeing the world through the Digital Mission Vision-Story and therefore, has the opportunity to apply bleeding edge digital mission expertise in a bespoke, context-specific and sustainable way.

Build Digital Mission Competence

The intention behind engagement in that kind of process is the building of digital mission competence at a parish level but also within the Diocesan support structures. This may include
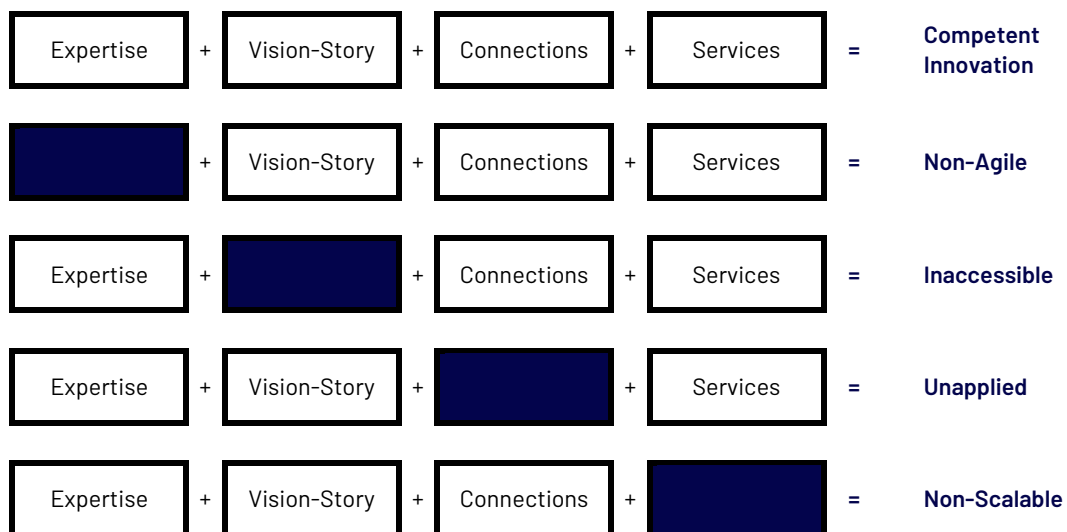
formally recognising churches that have demonstrated ongoing engagement with Hybrid Culture cultivation, encouraging churches that struggle with digital things and dismiss anything more than technical support, telling stories of digital mission competence through Diocesan communication channels and participation in conference and event planning. This will include the launch of the Deliberately Digital Development Program.

Champion Digital Mission Innovators and their Ideas

A growing digital mission competence around the Diocese is the beginning of the Digital Transformation journey of the Diocese of Sheffield, the result of which is that digital mission innovators will have find the right conditions within the Diocese to explore new ideas in mission and imagine new possibilities for the church in our hybrid world. This may include developing roundtable collaboration for sharing of 'start-up' ideas, coaching digital mission innovators, delivering teaching to those 'starting new things' around the Diocese, collaboration with the New Congregations support team and celebrating stories of insight-driven risk through Diocesan communication channels. This will include the launch of the Innovators Roundtable.

A Cumulative Impact

It is difficult to conceive of how competent innovation in digital mission across a Diocese can be achieved without addressing each of the components in the approach outline here.

Expertise	+ Vision-Story	+ Connections	+ Services	=	**Competent Innovation**
■	+ Vision-Story	+ Connections	+ Services	=	**Non-Agile**
Expertise	+ ■	+ Connections	+ Services	=	**Inaccessible**
Expertise	+ Vision-Story	+ ■	+ Services	=	**Unapplied**
Expertise	+ Vision-Story	+ Connections	+ ■	=	**Non-Scalable**

Key Transformation Markers (KTM)

Digital Transformation is the process undertaken by organisations to adapt to our ever-accelerating digital age ensuring fidelity to their vision and values while serving its audience even amongst significant cultural upheaval and disruption. Digital Transformation for the Diocese of Sheffield means our churches and supporting structure becoming intuitively and appropriately digital and that, of course, is a journey of gradual change.

The progress of that transformative change is not wholly dependent on the DMDA but a wider constellation of factors. Yet the progressive change can be measured by what we've termed Key Transformation Markers (KTM). The KTM are monitored through the DMDA's monthly reporting.

Qualitative
- Digital Mission Clarity across the Diocese
- An increase in the telling of Digital Mission Stories
- A Cultural shift in Digital Mission Perspective
- Unlocking Missional Imagination in our digital age - The whole people of God released for the whole mission of God

Quantitative
- Digital Mission Competence – Deliberately Digital Development Program participant numbers
- Digital Mission Innovation – Innovators Roundtable participant numbers

Limitations to our Approach

The Deliberately Digital approach to digital mission makes some pivotal assumptions about the worshipping communities of the Diocese. These are not nonconscious assumptions but they are required in order to clear a starting point for missional support that doesn't address every part of church life.

- Deliberately Digital assumes that worshipping communities are making disciples.
- Deliberately Digital assumes that the discipleship happening within worshipping communities includes the formation of missionary identity.
- Deliberately Digital assumes that worshipping communities have access to significant Parish support resources.

Conclusion

Why do people change?

People change for all sort of reasons, but in a world of accelerating change, why go through the upheaval of opening ourselves up to continual change?

John Lewis & Partners is well known for employing excellent storytelling in their Christmas advertisements. Over the Christmas of 2022 the retailer introduced us to "a big-hearted man who takes up a certain new hobby a little later in life..."

The advert centres around the effort it takes for the gentleman in question to learn how to skateboard. "Although he struggles initially, he never gives up – despite the bumps and scrapes. And, after a few weeks, he begins to get the hang of it. But then, with a ring of the doorbell, it becomes clear what – or who – all his efforts have been for."

The door opens to reveal his new foster daughter, clutching her skateboard. She immediately spots the well-worn skateboard in the house hallway and the conversation – and the relationship – begins.

The new foster father embraced the upheaval of significant change. He changed because his new daughter could only receive the message of his love when it was embodied in ways she could grasp.

He changed because he loved.

And herein lies the unlikely yet important lesson from Britain's largest department store chain; we don't change simply because the world around us is changing – that is a recipe for exhaustion. We change because and as we love.

Ultimately, we change because God so loves the world and has sent his people to the world as witnesses to that love, that some might grasp his message, embodied in our hybrid lives. Our God-given purpose doesn't ever change but if our context does – which it has - the expression of that purpose must also change. We change because we love.

That is the call of Deliberately Digital. Our world has changed. Our mission continues. The mission of God in our digital age means that because we love, we will inevitable change, so that the message of God's incredible love in Jesus Christ is embodied in ways that can be grasped. The call of the Deliberately Digital approach is for the Diocese of Sheffield to embrace particular

cultural change for the sake of love. All that we might be more effective in making disciples and in seeking to transform our society and God's world.

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