

# Bishops Deanery Visits 2024



## Welcome

Bishop Pete has asked me to support the deaneries as they prepare for this series of days. This brief resource aims to supply on paper or electronically all the basic information that you need but it comes with a personal commitment from me to work with Area Deans and deaneries as they prepare their events.

I want to say just three things by way of introduction:

### Our common calling

*'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8)*

I write this as we approach Ascension Day. We can take encouragement from Jesus' words on that occasion. The Spirit empowers us to be witnesses for Jesus wherever we find ourselves in the world. Sometimes we lack confidence when it comes to evangelism but actually we have everything we need if we put our trust in God.

### A very achievable aim

Remember, each deanery has just one day. This might mean as few as five or six events spread over a day, with any single parish or mission area taking responsibility for one of them. In establishing a sense of perspective, I want to remind you that you, collectively, in each deanery can do this. Just as you have the spiritual resources promised by Jesus, so you have the practical skills to make this happen. These events will often build on the on-going mission and evangelism that you are already doing.

### One day ... but full of potential

Some deaneries will say: if we only have a few events, let's pray to God and choose carefully things that are going to make a difference. Let's be ambitious in our planning. Amen to that! Others will say: we want to have more events, perhaps something in most or every parish / mission area. We are going to need a bigger visiting team. Please do so, knowing that we will try to draw in other speakers and leaders, matching them to events, so that nobody has to miss out where a deanery has a fuller programme.

Our vision prayer could be a useful set prayer helpful to accompany your preparation:

Living God, Jesus calls his followers to seek first your Kingdom.  
Renew us as we make your love known;  
Release us to share freely together in mission;  
and Rejuvenate us to be fruitful in your service.  
Give us courage, wisdom and compassion,  
that strengthened with the grace of the Holy Spirit,  
we may, as the Diocese of Sheffield,  
both flourish and grow through Christ our Lord. Amen

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## Introduction

For a number of years in which deanery visits have had a 'consultative' flavour in relation to either reviewing or refreshing our diocesan strategy. This has been very profitable. However, 2024 marks a departure from this model, agreed by Bishops' Senior Staff Team agreed with Area Deans and others.

The focus this time is on evangelism, with each bishop visiting six deaneries for a day (daytime and evening). The evangelistic events can be very varied in nature. One Northern Bishops' Mission used a 'chilli rating' to distinguish a range of events from 'tread gently' first encounters to those where the Christian faith is clearly communicated with the opportunity for people to make some kind of response. In terms of the five marks of mission, this means we're focused mainly on the first one, 'to tell' the good news of Jesus, with the aim of making new disciples. Bishop Pete has been clear that, though we can sometimes find this challenging, we need to keep it as our focus.

You will see below that Archdeacons will accompany the bishops in their own archdeaconry. We might also have members of the Diocesan Community of Evangelists to support / speak at events. These days could also be an opportunity for local Christians to engage in evangelism; it is not all about the visiting team.

## Dates and deaneries

You will see that I have colour-coded the events to separate them into three streams: **midweek term-time** / **midweek holiday period** / **Saturdays**. Each of these present different opportunities and this will be reflected in the resources.

Date	Bishop	Archdeaconry	Deanery	Deanery Contact	AATE
Tue 2 July	+Pete	Sheff & Roth	Rotherham	Phil Batchford / Lynn Broadhead	Julie Bacon
Mon 29 July	+Sophie	Sheff & Roth	Ecclesfield (tbc)**	Pip Salmon	Mike Gilbert
Wed 4 Sep	+Pete	Doncaster	Snaith & Hatfield	Tim Mitchell	TBC
Thu 5 Sep	+Sophie	Doncaster	West Doncaster	Paul Richardson	Stephen Edmonds
Mon 30 Sep	+Pete	Sheff & Roth	Hallam	Matthew Rhodes	Mike Gilbert
Wed 9 Oct	+Pete	Doncaster	Wath	Fiona Kouble	Julie Upton
Wed 23 Oct	+Sophie	Doncaster	Adwick-le-Street	Dave Berry	TBC
Sat 26 Oct	+Pete	Doncaster	Doncaster	Richard Heard / Andrew Howard	Stephen Edmonds
Thu 31 Oct	+Sophie	Sheff & Roth	Laughton	Vicky Camber	Julie Bacon
Sat 2 Nov	+Sophie	Sheff & Roth	Ecclesall	Mark Brown	Chris Stebbing
Wed 6 Nov	+Sophie	Doncaster	Tankersley	David Hopkin	Julie Upton
Sat 9 Nov	+Pete	Sheff & Roth	Attercliffe	Lucy Sablan / Sue Stewart	Chris Stebbing

\*\*At time of publication, the date for Ecclesfield Deanery was still being finalised

# Support

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Bishop Pete has asked me to support churches / deaneries as they prepare. You can contact me as follows:

Mobile: 07392 091772

Email: [john.hibberd@sheffield.anglican.org](mailto:john.hibberd@sheffield.anglican.org)

I will also put resources on the diocesan website. You will find them here: [www.sheffdio.org/DeaneryVisits](http://www.sheffdio.org/DeaneryVisits)

John Hibberd, Mission Development Advisor (Renewed)

Additional support may be available from members of the Diocesan Community of Evangelists

**Please note:**

If you need us to recruit additional speakers / team members, please let us know this **as soon as possible**; the more notice we have the better.

## Planning for your deanery visit

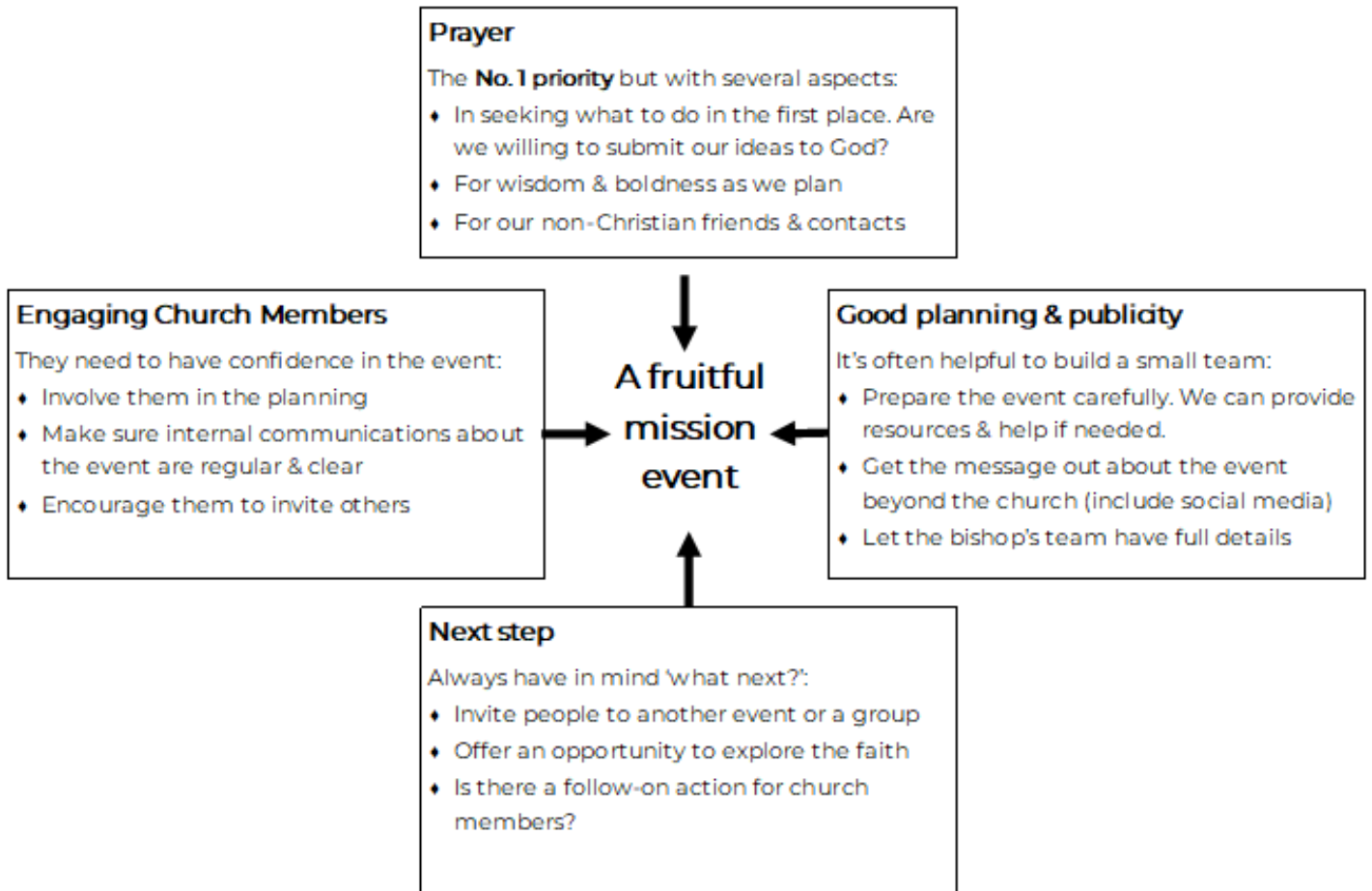
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### Recipe for a good evangelistic event / activity

**What do we mean by a 'good' event?** What criteria do you have? Sometimes, people focus 100% on people becoming Christians and make this the sole way to assess an event. People coming to faith is great but there are other ways to think about evangelistic events or activities. Did the event engage the church in doing something new? Did people share their faith for the first time? If we are trying new things, then sometimes these do not go according to our plans or expectations. Even if we think the event was a bit of a flop, we can learn from it.

I want to suggest a good common aim for events. **Do they offer people an opportunity to encounter the Lord Jesus Christ?** If the event does this, we can say the good news has been made known. This can be through words, personal stories or creative arts. It may, or may not, include an invitation for people to make some kind of personal response to the message. Setting this general goal – to make Jesus known – frees us from too narrow an assessment of our event.

If we are going to 'make Jesus known', here are some key building blocks to help us to achieve this aim:



These things do not guarantee a good event but, if we fail to do these basic things, we are likely to end up disappointed. We need prayer + a good event ('the right' event ideally) + church members on board + non-Christian people.

**During the event**, we need to give a genuinely warm welcome. People might feel nervous if the event is on church premises. Offering great hospitality can help. We need to make sure we don't lapse into insider jargon. If people come to an event and enjoy themselves, this will go a long way to them coming again.

**A next step**: this is something people often neglect. Ideally every event should have a 'so what's next?' This could be for the church: to do it again or to try something similar. But, ideally, we want to have something to offer to those who come. This could be another event: 'if you enjoyed this, join us at ...' If your event is in the autumn, this could be targeted towards Bonfire Night or Christmas. For those who want to explore Christian faith, could you run Alpha or a shorter course?

### Some ideas for mission events

- First steps
- What 'chilli rating?
- What size of event?
- Some examples of events that can work well
- Wider considerations

## First steps

Here are a few things to consider when you sit down with a blank piece of paper:

1. **What day is our visit?** If it's a weekday in term time, you can factor in schools. From previous missions, I would suggest you focus on offering input to GCSE or A-level classes in RE / Ethics. These can be valuable dialogue opportunities. You could link to a church-in-school congregation, if you have one. If your visit is a Saturday, schools are off the menu but you have a day when more working people are available in the daytime as well as the evening.
2. **What current events could we make use of that day?** For example, a well-attended coffee morning could be given a fresh twist with input from a bishop or a youth group could join with other local groups for a hub event. You might find you have some good events already, though be prepared to exercise a bit of 'quality control' if these events usually only attract one person and a dog!
3. **Mixing the social and the spiritual.** This is the essence of many of the examples of mission events listed in a later section. Sports, creativity, film, outdoor pursuits, and celebrations (e.g. barn dances) ... virtually anything that brings people together can be given an appropriate spiritual input. If it doesn't normally have such input, you just need to be honest in advertising the event that it will do this time.
4. **External venues.** Though we hate to admit it, some people don't find it easy to come to one of our buildings. It might cost you to meet in another venue but it could be worth it if it makes it easier for others to join you. Pubs, cafés, even open air in the right weather, and other places can be great places to meet.

## Chilli rating

Mission events can be 'stepping stones' into faith for people outside of church. This means that some events need to engage people early on their journey while others are for those who have already begun to explore Christian faith a bit. Blackburn Diocese developed a 'chilli rating' for events in their Northern Bishops' Mission, as follows:

### One chilli

- These events are mainly social with a very small amount of Christian content. This type of event is ideal for first contact with people.
- Examples: quiz night with input at half-time, barn dance / ceilidh with testimony, coffee morning events, etc. This can also cover 'activities' where the witness involves informal getting alongside people, e.g. pub visit, litter-picking & some forms of outdoor witness.
- NB. Work in schools is always necessarily one chilli or two chillies in nature. There are boundaries here to respect but still much value in having the opportunity to share what we believe.

### **Two chillies**

- An event that provides more information about the Christian faith and encourages people to explore further.
- Examples: apologetics events fit this category well with an opportunity to explore a specific issue (e.g. suffering, science & faith, etc.) or to ask any question (e.g. 'grill a bishop'). Pie & peas with a short talk or quiz can be this sort of event.

### **Three chillies**

- These type of events explain clearly the central message of the Christian faith, present people with the benefits and costs of choosing to be a committed Christian and present a clear invitation to respond to Jesus.
- Examples: virtually any event where you give a guest speaker time to speak, perhaps supported by other creative input, e.g. breakfast or an evening meal, guest service, etc.

The boundaries between events are not always as simple as this. An informal conversation might go deeper than you expect. Many events can fit more than one of these ratings, depending on how they are set up.

### **Size of event**

It would be a mistake to assume that all evangelistic events need to be large. By all means, be ambitious and organise some at the level of church or even deanery. Some people, however, feel more comfortable in smaller gatherings. If we have a team coming with the visiting bishop, it could be possible to split up to serve different events at the same time. In Acts chapter 8, Philip left a thriving mission to meet a single individual on a desert road because God saw this as an important encounter.

What sort of smaller gatherings are worthwhile? Often the key is a Christian who has good personal contacts with non-Christian friends or neighbours. They might set up a coffee event, a BBQ or a meal in their home and invite friends to meet someone from the team. You can see that the focus is different; it is the individual rather than the church who is central to this but it is still a valid church event.

Some other church groups can be small but significant, e.g. a youth group.

### **Examples of events that can work well**

These come in no particular order and are just there to stimulate your imagination. Here is a story from a mission in 2023 in Edenthorpe:

The church gained permission to have a table outside the supermarket with the question, 'Does Jesus love Edenthorpe?' People could throw a ball into a YES or NO bucket. They received a sweet and a leaflet of mission events, including an invite to a fun day in a local park on Saturday. There were some good longer conversations too.

The fun day had a huge turnout and people heard the gospel message alongside activities. This shows how very different events can link together, though you'd have to do something in advance to get the same benefit.

Theme	Example	Description
Food!	Men's / women's breakfast Curry night Free BBQ / pizza oven in a park Tea dance Coffee morning Lunch club	Good food + talk Or other theme + talk Maybe with sports + talk With short talk over drinks Add visiting speaker Ditto: visiting speaker
Outdoor / town centre	Healing on the streets Prayer tent / gazebo 'Blessings to go' Litter picking Car washing Sofa for a 'selfie with the bishop' Beliefs survey Night shelter / homeless	All fairly self-explanatory but shows the range from prayer through to physical action
Pub-based	Beer & hymns Harvest festival / meal in a pub Pints of view Games based	Can be chosen by regulars Speaker / harvest auction Apologetics Darts, pool, bowling etc. with talk with trophy presentation
Apologetics	Grill-a-bishop Themed event	Any Q (or with panel) Maybe: suffering, climate crisis, etc.
Occasional offices	Celebration of baptisms Celebration of weddings Annual bereavement service Couples night	Ready-made invitations lists These events vary widely in tone! Weddings: have cake, testimonies from people at different stages of marriage, wedding hymns, etc.
Children / youth	Lots of possibilities but note Light parties (Oct half-term) Holiday club (same week) Schools	Whatever you plan, try to link with our Centenary Project & with Mike North It's OK to do assemblies but I think classroom interaction is better for us and the school
Sports / activities	You can organise these around virtually any sport Don't forget walking groups / pilgrimage routes	Could you use the Olympics as a focus?[Do not use the 5 rings logo: the IOC are very touchy about this!]
Food / drink	Wine tasting Beer festival Bread making / 'bake off'	Can get experts to present but you give spiritual angle Actually make bread & speak relevantly into this theme
Arts-based	Film night, music, drama, paintings	Enjoy something but then create dialogue around it. Need to be careful on timing
All age events	Barn dance or ceilidh Quiz night Games evening	Brief talk at half time



## Wider considerations

**Should we aim for a 'deanery event'?** It is more likely that events will work best within individual parishes or mission areas. Church members are more likely to commit to something local. More importantly, those who are not yet connected to a church are far less likely to travel to a 'deanery event'. The one exception would be where you have a place in your town or city that everyone feels they 'own', e.g. a park or a market or an iconic venue. If you pair this with an event that is really attractive, you might be able to pull off a deanery event.

**Time of year.** Take this into account, particularly if planning anything outdoor. Keep an eye on the news for sporting fixtures where you live and, at some point this year, a general election. You cannot ignore these things.

**Strategic opportunities.** It is possible that, in some deaneries, the bishops will ask about any plans to reach particular groups. For example, are there any plans to engage with local government or businesses? Or, in Sheffield, there are huge numbers of students, with whom we do not perhaps connect as well as we could.

**Twin deaneries.** Several people have asked whether there are ways to retain any working as twin deaneries, which has been a feature over recent years. One day to cover two deaneries would have spread the impact too thinly, which is why single deanery events are being planned. However, there is no reason why one deanery should not support its twin deanery and vice versa, perhaps in providing people to be involved in events, where appropriate.

## Practicalities

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We are going to be looking at providing some supporting resources, e.g. attractive gospels or materials for children. There will be more on this in due course.

Bishops (plus any others you might need) will be available all day and the evening. They will need adequate time to get from event A to B to C, etc. and a bit of 'down time' to recover but their whole focus during visits will be on working with you.

Don't forget to give consideration to food! Bishops (and any others) will need to eat, though you can probably combine this with mission events for the most part.

## Timeline

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The dates for events range from early July to early November. Therefore, some deaneries have much less time to prepare. In addition, two events take place very early in September, which means their plans almost certainly need to be in place by the end of July (August being a month when it is usually difficult to progress things like this).

- Now            Make sure each church / minister has a copy of these materials  
Begin to pray & discuss possible events for your deanery day  
The timeframe for this will be more urgent for the earliest events
- Next            Deaneries will need to shuttle between an initial joint discussion to establish  
priorities / a pattern of events, followed by planning at individual church level,  
and then finalising things together
- 'T minus 1'    I suggest that you have a (draft) programme ready **one month before** the  
date of your event. This will give you time to advertise & invite. It will also give  
the bishops (and any other visiting team) time to prepare.

## Good Follow Up

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An important part of the value of these deanery visits will be what comes next. Some of this can, and should, be planned as part of the preparation.

### Follow-on events

- Are there any events you intend to run where the next step is to invite people to something similar in a couple of months' time?
- Are you organising an event that is intended to launch something new like a monthly or weekly gathering?

If you plan to do either of these things, have invitations ready for the next event. Inviting people again can begin to build relationships. The secular world does this all the time and often we lag behind in church.

### Opportunities to explore Christian faith

- Could you run an explorers' course such as Alpha, Christianity Explored, Emmaus or similar?
- If you are not into courses or your event is awkwardly timed in relation to, say, summer holidays or Christmas, could you offer a one-off event of this nature?

Research from 'Talking Jesus' reveals that many people outside church have questions about faith and would love an opportunity to discuss them with us. To give people space to do so is time well spent.

### Reflect on the deanery visit

Churches that hosted events and the deanery as a whole should take a moment to reflect on their day. What went well / badly? What could we repeat or adapt?