



BISHOP OF SODOR AND MAN

Statement of Needs

“Bishops are ordained to be shepherds of Christ’s flock and guardians of the faith of the apostles, proclaiming the gospel of God’s kingdom and leading his people in mission.”

The Ordinal

Welcome to our Diocese

Thank you for reading our statement of needs that encapsulates how the Vacancy in See Committee has prayerfully discerned the needs for our diocese, as we seek a new Bishop to share with us in the life, mission, and ministry of the Church here in the Isle of Man.

At our heart is a love for Jesus and a desire to share the Good News and to continue to grow God's kingdom in this unique island community we call home. We are a diocese which knows the reality of the missional challenges we face and willing to try new things. It is a place where roots go deep and tradition is precious, but where we are willing to pioneer new ways of being church so that others may know the transformative love of Jesus Christ in their lives.

Here in this document you will find background information on our diocese and the varied communities we serve which helps inform our growth agenda, mission, and the key context for that mission. We hope this will give you an insight into our diocese and our needs as we pray for a Bishop who will enjoy the diversity of island life, offer us new perspectives and insights, and work with us to further the mission of Christ in this place.

*The Venerable Irene Cowell
Archdeacon of Man and Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee*

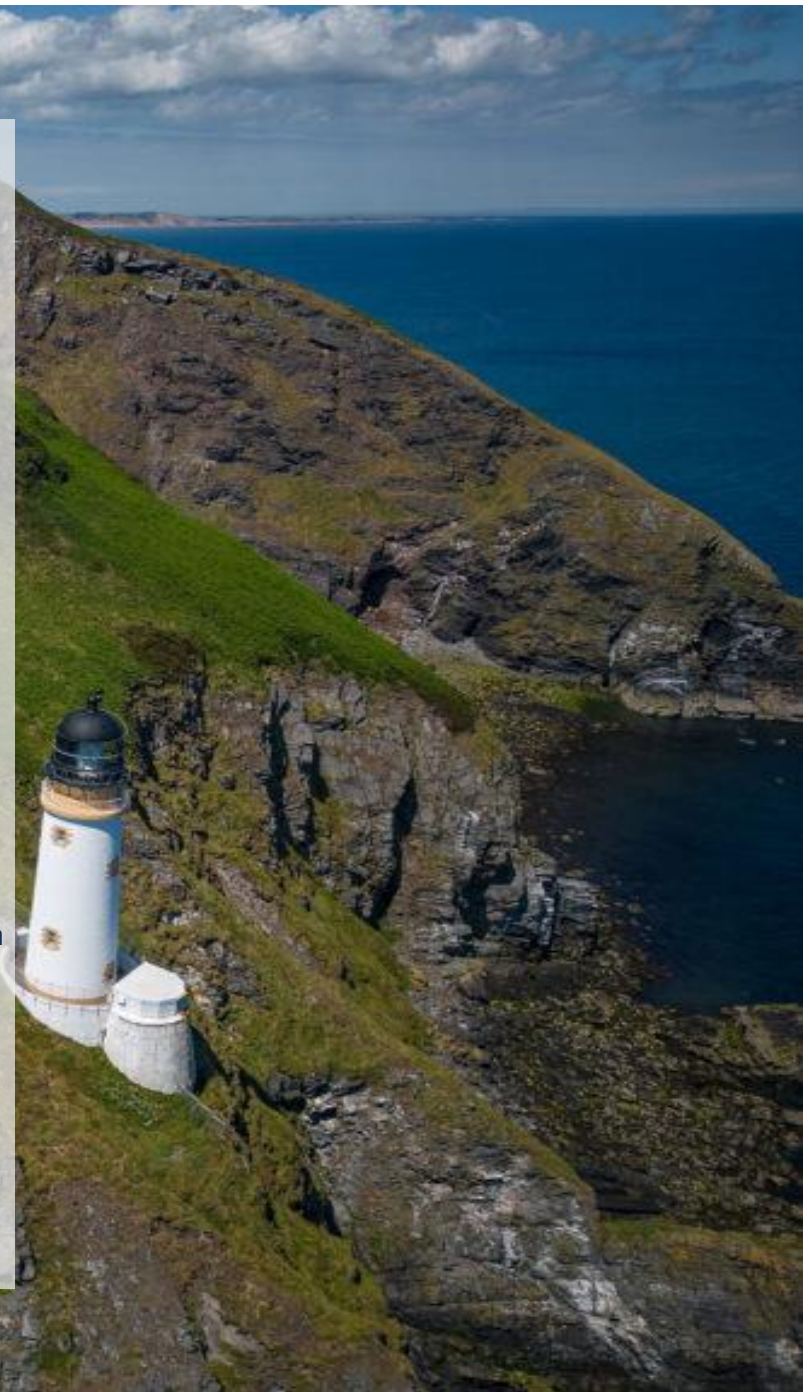
The Diocese - An Introduction

Whilst Sodor and Man is by far the smallest diocese in the Church of England, it has a rich history with significant missional implications. Christianity reached the island from Ireland and Scotland during the 5th century, developing a significant monastic base at Maughold, near Ramsey . A bishopric was rapidly established, and the diocese is the second oldest in the Church of England. The subsequent arrival of the Vikings resulted in a fusion of Celtic and Norse cultures, which remains evident in the decoration of the large number of extant stone cross-slabs. Several churches, especially in the north of the island, display examples found locally , and these draw a range of visitors from schoolchildren to overseas scholars.

Until the introduction of the parish system during the 12th century, worship centred on small chapels or keeills, of which about 160 are known. Thereafter, the island came under the archbishop of Nidaros (now Trondheim in Norway), and cultural links between Man and Scandinavia remain.

By 1542, the diocese of Sodor was being treated as part of the province of York, and was restricted to the Isle of Man, no longer including most of the Western Isles of Scotland. For some centuries it was left largely to its own devices, partly because of the language barrier. Its poverty made it unattractive to potential clerical recruits from off-island, but during the 18th century it benefited from the 57-year episcopate of Thomas Wilson (still a record in the Anglican Communion).

Under Wilson and his successor Mark Hildesley, the Bible and Prayer Book were translated into Manx and published, although this is balanced by the fact that the cathedral at Peel fell into ruin during this period. Shortly after, Methodism established itself on the island, seeing exponential growth and using the Manx language in hymnody and preaching.



Peter Kelly
ISLE OF MAN
PHOTOGRAPHY

The 19th century saw the development of diocesan institutions replicating that elsewhere in Anglicanism, including a theological college which functioned at Bishopscourt from 1879 to 1943. A pro-cathedral was also located here from 1895 until 1980, when Bishopscourt was sold. St German's church in Peel was then designated as the cathedral: it had been opened in 1884 with this in mind.

Today, the Diocese of Sodor and Man is a Diocese within the Northern Province of the Church of England. It comprises 12 ecclesiastical parishes, containing a total of 38 churches and chapels .

In such a small diocese, the size of the ministry team (see table below) means that a Bishop should expect to get to know many of the ministers personally. Bishops also share in leading the worship of vacant parishes. The body of ministers reflects the demographic of the island's population, and brings to bear a wealth of experience. Women play a full part in ministry at all levels, from Reader to Archdeacon. (One church has passed a resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration and, is under alternative episcopal oversight.)

Table 1: Ministers

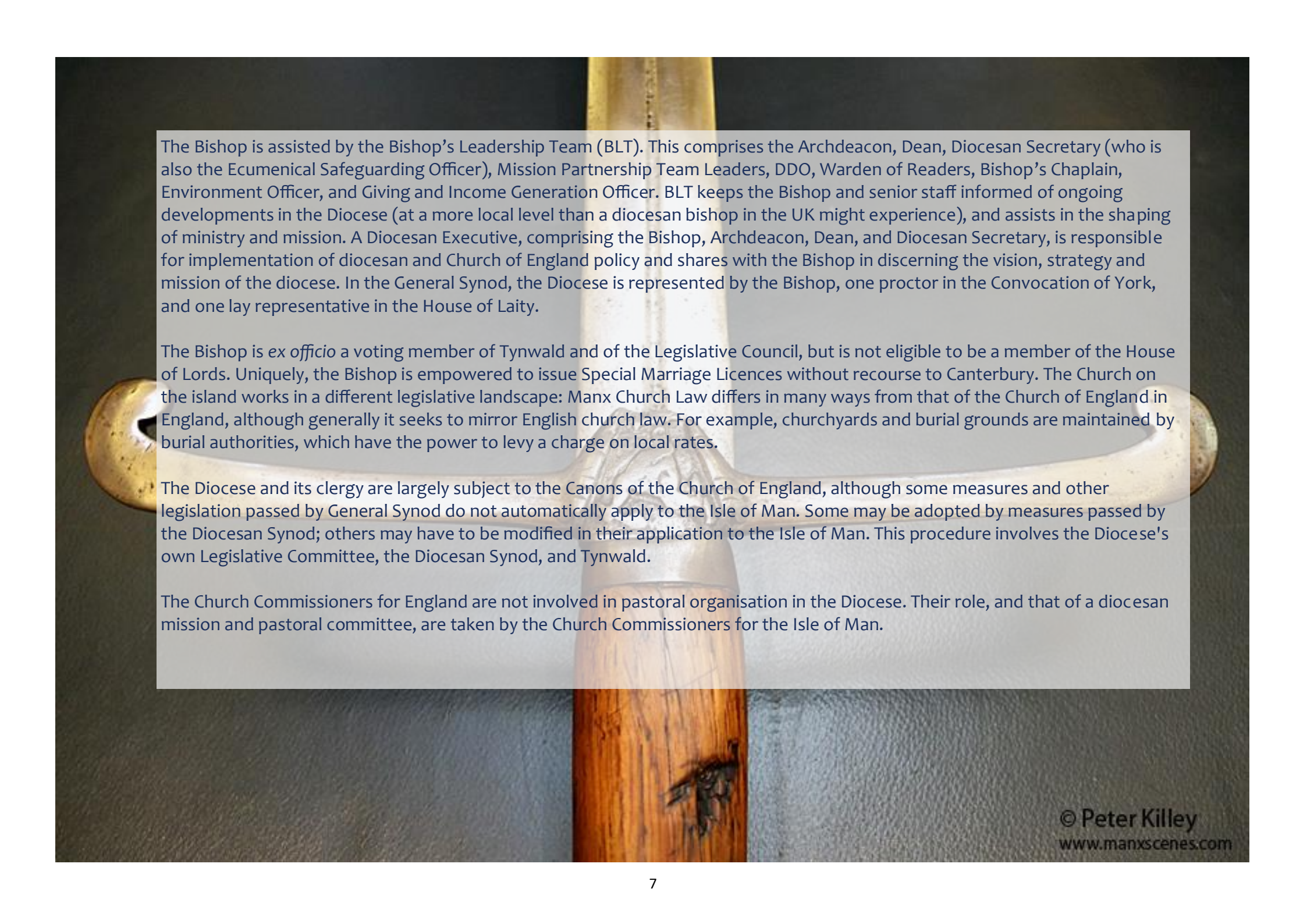
	Regular	PTO	Total
Clergy: full-time	10 men, 4 women		10 men, 4 women
Clergy: part-time	2 women		2 women
Clergy: self-supporting	2 men, 2 women	13 men, 5 women	15 men, 7 women
Ordinands	1 man		1 man
Sub-total of clergy	13 men, 8 women	13 men, 5 women	26 men, 13 women
Readers	2 men, 5 women	8 men, 9 women	10 men, 14 women
Readers in training	2 men		2 men
Sub-total of readers	4 men, 5 women	8 men, 9 women	12 men, 14 women
Total	17 men, 13 women	21 men, 14 women	38 men, 27 women

Apart from Readership, a number of other forms of lay ministry are exercised: these may be missional, educational, liturgical, or pastoral in nature. Clergy and lay people are also active in a range of chaplaincy ministries in such areas as health care, education, the prison service, and among the motor cycle racing community.

About 150 volunteers from the church and the wider community assist in various aspects of the cathedral's life. The cathedral itself is currently closed for refurbishment and reordering in order to facilitate its use for a range of cultural and community functions as well as worship, but it is due to reopen at Easter 2024. It does not fall under the Cathedrals Measure of the Church of England, which precludes its access to certain funding and also to legal support in the process of becoming a registered charity.

The parishes are organised into four Mission Partnerships (replacing deaneries) – north, south, east, and west. Mission Councils in each are made up of lay and clergy representatives from member parishes. The aim is to promote the mission of the Church in its district, not least through mutual support and sharing ideas for mission, and to encourage community and co-operation among those parishes. Mission Partnership Team Leaders have broadly the same role as Rural/Area Deans, but without the same focus on finance, freeing them to focus more on mutual support in mission. Mission Partnerships are not part of the synodical system. Whilst the diocese has a Diocesan Synod, lay representatives on which are directly elected by the annual parochial church meetings, there are no deanery synods.





The Bishop is assisted by the Bishop's Leadership Team (BLT). This comprises the Archdeacon, Dean, Diocesan Secretary (who is also the Ecumenical Safeguarding Officer), Mission Partnership Team Leaders, DDO, Warden of Readers, Bishop's Chaplain, Environment Officer, and Giving and Income Generation Officer. BLT keeps the Bishop and senior staff informed of ongoing developments in the Diocese (at a more local level than a diocesan bishop in the UK might experience), and assists in the shaping of ministry and mission. A Diocesan Executive, comprising the Bishop, Archdeacon, Dean, and Diocesan Secretary, is responsible for implementation of diocesan and Church of England policy and shares with the Bishop in discerning the vision, strategy and mission of the diocese. In the General Synod, the Diocese is represented by the Bishop, one proctor in the Convocation of York, and one lay representative in the House of Laity.

The Bishop is *ex officio* a voting member of Tynwald and of the Legislative Council, but is not eligible to be a member of the House of Lords. Uniquely, the Bishop is empowered to issue Special Marriage Licences without recourse to Canterbury. The Church on the island works in a different legislative landscape: Manx Church Law differs in many ways from that of the Church of England in England, although generally it seeks to mirror English church law. For example, churchyards and burial grounds are maintained by burial authorities, which have the power to levy a charge on local rates.

The Diocese and its clergy are largely subject to the Canons of the Church of England, although some measures and other legislation passed by General Synod do not automatically apply to the Isle of Man. Some may be adopted by measures passed by the Diocesan Synod; others may have to be modified in their application to the Isle of Man. This procedure involves the Diocese's own Legislative Committee, the Diocesan Synod, and Tynwald.

The Church Commissioners for England are not involved in pastoral organisation in the Diocese. Their role, and that of a diocesan mission and pastoral committee, are taken by the Church Commissioners for the Isle of Man.



Whilst the bishop's role in Tynwald is distinctive, much more can be said in justification of the diocese's continued independent existence. The Isle of Man is a nation with a long and distinctive history, which is reflected in the history of the Manx church. Furthermore, the size of the Diocese means that it offers unique opportunities for experiential learning, potentially benefiting the Church of England as a whole. Small boats are easier to turn than supertankers! Whilst in some quarters there is a perception that the diocese and congregations are managing decline, there is also growth in new and established congregations. We look to a new bishop to lead the whole diocese forward with hope, even when that leadership includes taking difficult decisions.

The Church's Mission

The Diocese of Sodor and Man has as its vision: *'Together making Christ visible'*.

That happens at various levels: congregational, diocesan, and ecumenical. The Five Marks of Mission provide a useful framework for outlining what the diocese is doing to make Christ visible on the Isle of Man.

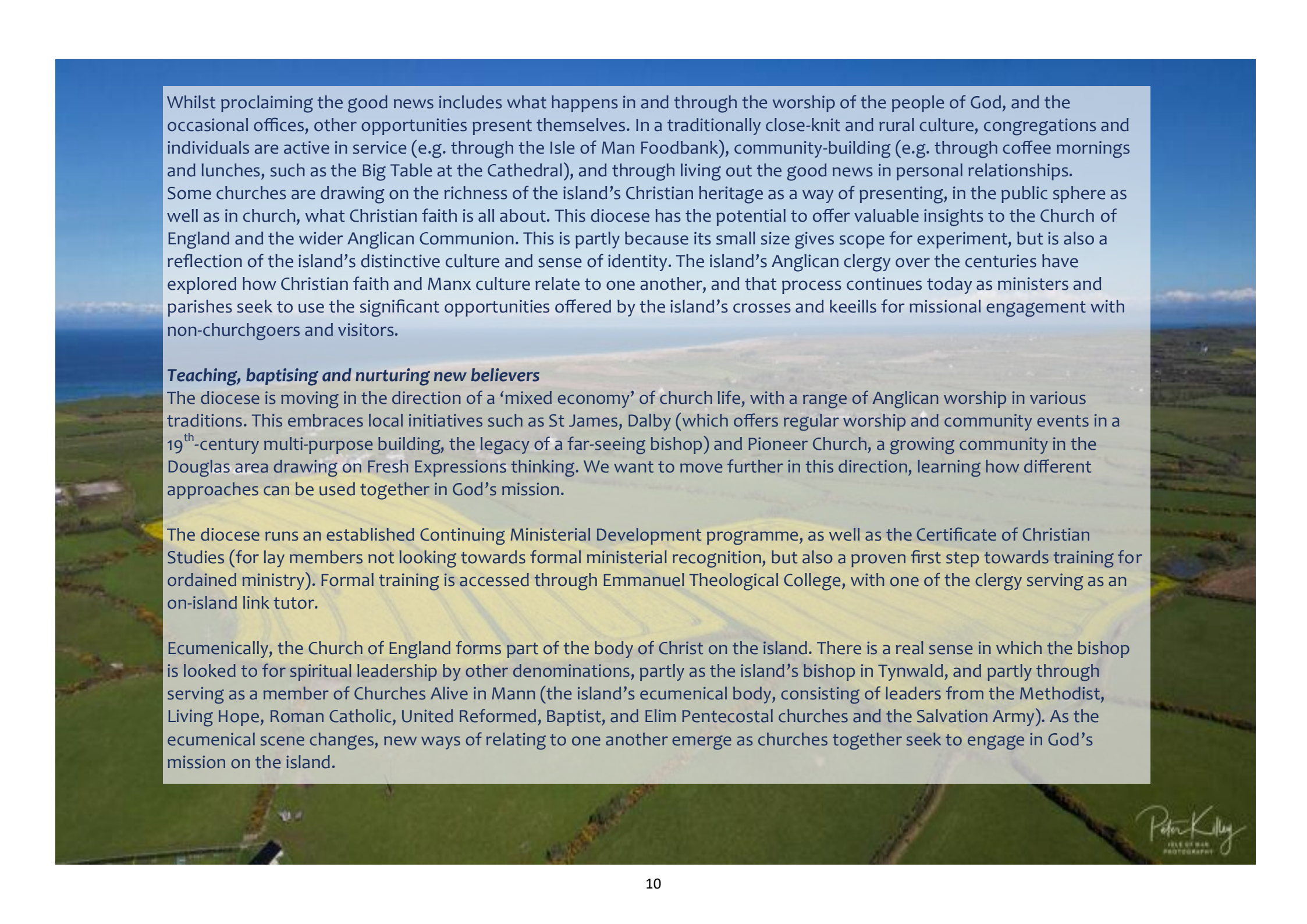
Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom

In terms of social change, the Isle of Man has sometimes been seen as some decades behind other parts of Britain, but one of the most significant statistics from the 2021 census is that of those who answered the question regarding religious affiliation: 43.8% described themselves as having no religion. These are spread throughout the age range, and outnumber those describing themselves as Christians in every age group up to 40-44 years. The island's churches thus face a major challenge.

Table 2: Religion

Christian	54.7%
No religion	43.8%
Islam	0.5%
Buddhism	0.5%
Hinduism	0.4%
Judaism	0.2%

The 2021 Statistics for Mission indicate that from 2017 to 2021, the worshipping community of the diocese declined steadily from 1,900 to 1,500. Average Sunday attendance has also declined, from 1,900 in 2011 to 1,100 a decade later. (This is the more noteworthy given that the impact of COVID on public worship was not as severe on the Isle of Man as it was in the UK: churches were able to meet in person without restriction during the second half of 2020 and for most of 2021.) Yet those who continue to worship include many whose wide experience, readiness to serve, and resilient faith offer a foundation on which to build for the future.



Whilst proclaiming the good news includes what happens in and through the worship of the people of God, and the occasional offices, other opportunities present themselves. In a traditionally close-knit and rural culture, congregations and individuals are active in service (e.g. through the Isle of Man Foodbank), community-building (e.g. through coffee mornings and lunches, such as the Big Table at the Cathedral), and through living out the good news in personal relationships. Some churches are drawing on the richness of the island's Christian heritage as a way of presenting, in the public sphere as well as in church, what Christian faith is all about. This diocese has the potential to offer valuable insights to the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion. This is partly because its small size gives scope for experiment, but is also a reflection of the island's distinctive culture and sense of identity. The island's Anglican clergy over the centuries have explored how Christian faith and Manx culture relate to one another, and that process continues today as ministers and parishes seek to use the significant opportunities offered by the island's crosses and keeills for missional engagement with non-churchgoers and visitors.

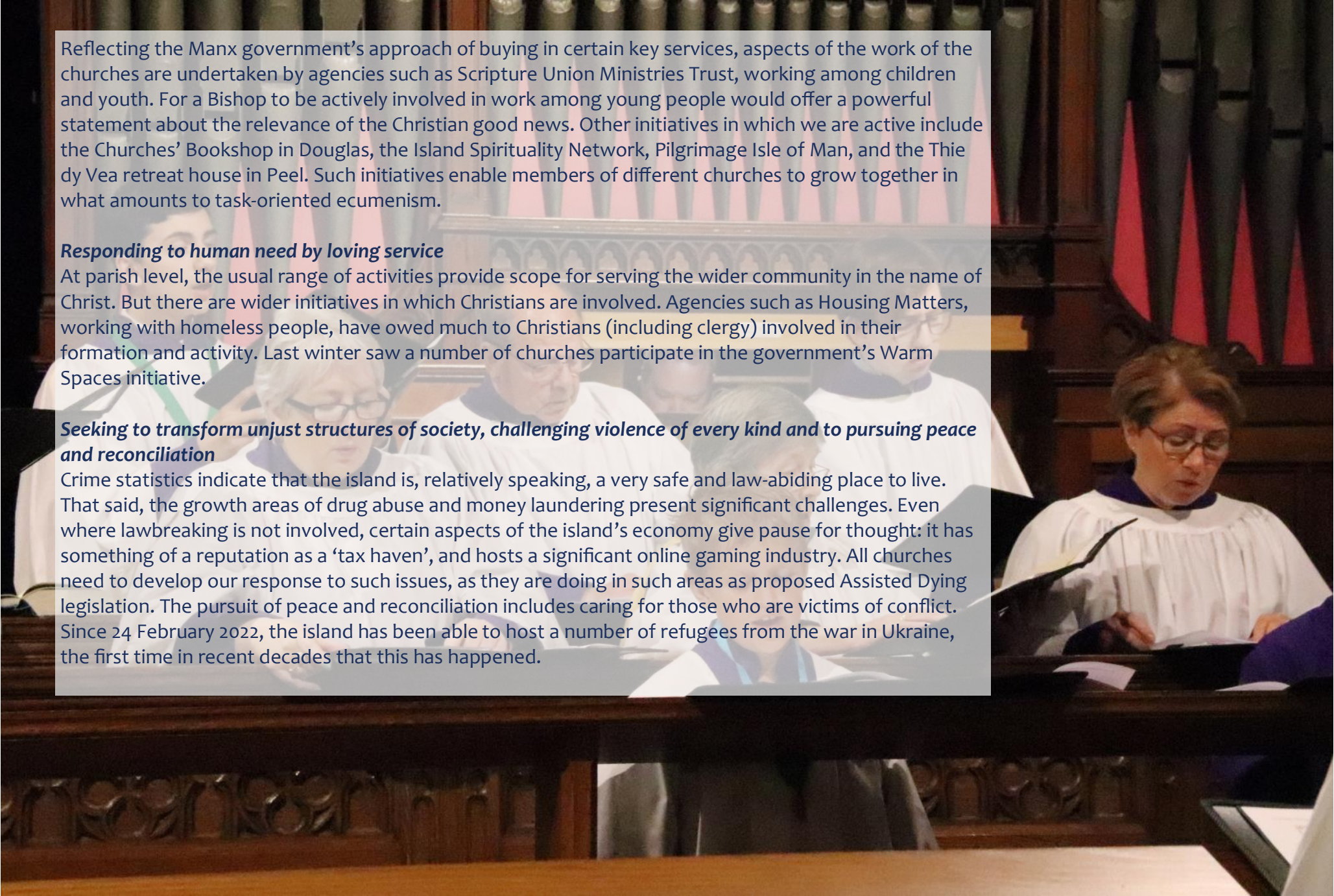
Teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers

The diocese is moving in the direction of a 'mixed economy' of church life, with a range of Anglican worship in various traditions. This embraces local initiatives such as St James, Dalby (which offers regular worship and community events in a 19th-century multi-purpose building, the legacy of a far-seeing bishop) and Pioneer Church, a growing community in the Douglas area drawing on Fresh Expressions thinking. We want to move further in this direction, learning how different approaches can be used together in God's mission.

The diocese runs an established Continuing Ministerial Development programme, as well as the Certificate of Christian Studies (for lay members not looking towards formal ministerial recognition, but also a proven first step towards training for ordained ministry). Formal training is accessed through Emmanuel Theological College, with one of the clergy serving as an on-island link tutor.

Ecumenically, the Church of England forms part of the body of Christ on the island. There is a real sense in which the bishop is looked to for spiritual leadership by other denominations, partly as the island's bishop in Tynwald, and partly through serving as a member of Churches Alive in Mann (the island's ecumenical body, consisting of leaders from the Methodist, Living Hope, Roman Catholic, United Reformed, Baptist, and Elim Pentecostal churches and the Salvation Army). As the ecumenical scene changes, new ways of relating to one another emerge as churches together seek to engage in God's mission on the island.

Peter Kelly
ISLE OF MAN
PHOTOGRAPHY



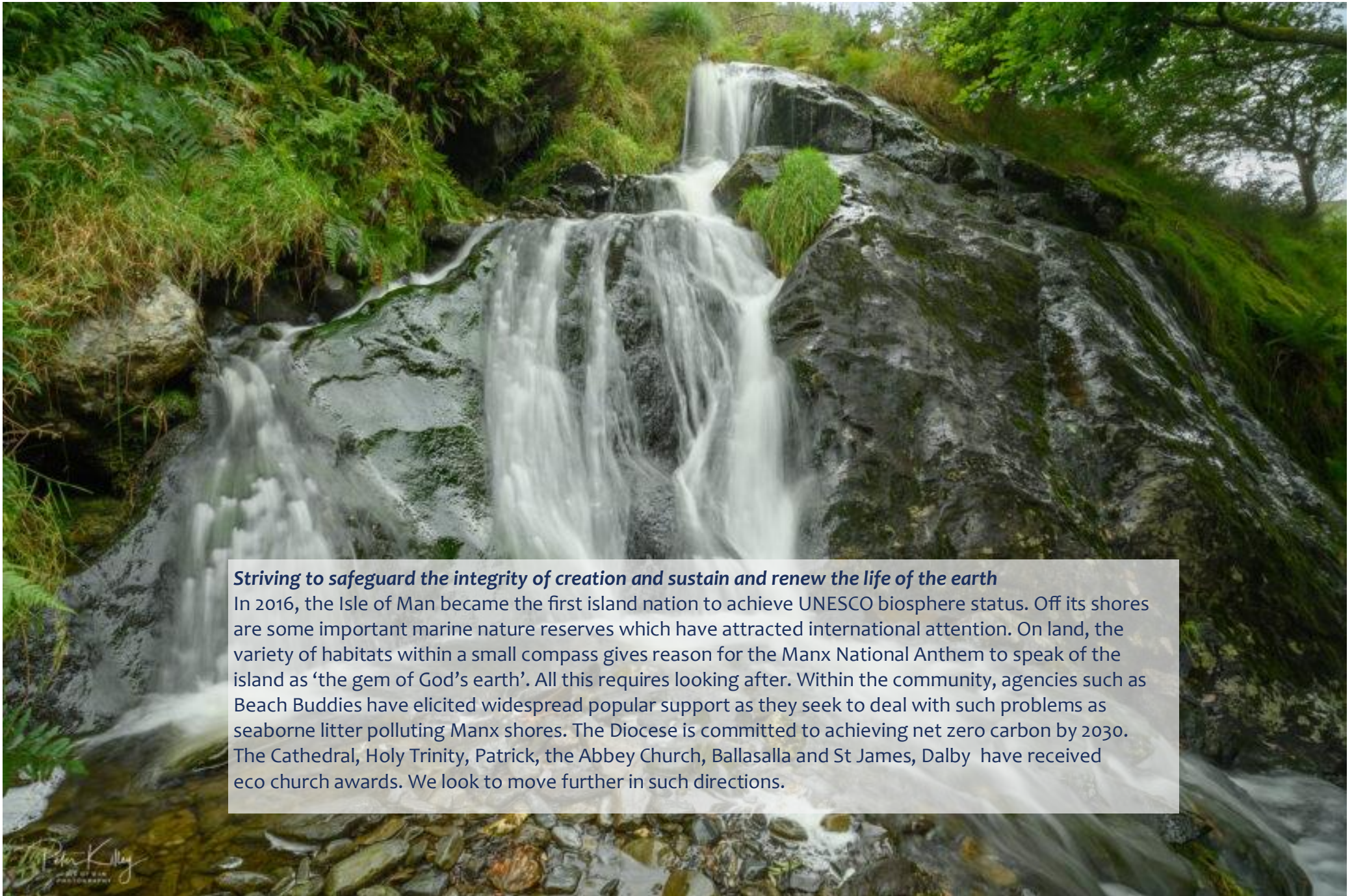
Reflecting the Manx government's approach of buying in certain key services, aspects of the work of the churches are undertaken by agencies such as Scripture Union Ministries Trust, working among children and youth. For a Bishop to be actively involved in work among young people would offer a powerful statement about the relevance of the Christian good news. Other initiatives in which we are active include the Churches' Bookshop in Douglas, the Island Spirituality Network, Pilgrimage Isle of Man, and the Thie dy Vea retreat house in Peel. Such initiatives enable members of different churches to grow together in what amounts to task-oriented ecumenism.

Responding to human need by loving service

At parish level, the usual range of activities provide scope for serving the wider community in the name of Christ. But there are wider initiatives in which Christians are involved. Agencies such as Housing Matters, working with homeless people, have owed much to Christians (including clergy) involved in their formation and activity. Last winter saw a number of churches participate in the government's Warm Spaces initiative.

Seeking to transform unjust structures of society, challenging violence of every kind and to pursuing peace and reconciliation

Crime statistics indicate that the island is, relatively speaking, a very safe and law-abiding place to live. That said, the growth areas of drug abuse and money laundering present significant challenges. Even where lawbreaking is not involved, certain aspects of the island's economy give pause for thought: it has something of a reputation as a 'tax haven', and hosts a significant online gaming industry. All churches need to develop our response to such issues, as they are doing in such areas as proposed Assisted Dying legislation. The pursuit of peace and reconciliation includes caring for those who are victims of conflict. Since 24 February 2022, the island has been able to host a number of refugees from the war in Ukraine, the first time in recent decades that this has happened.



Striving to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

In 2016, the Isle of Man became the first island nation to achieve UNESCO biosphere status. Off its shores are some important marine nature reserves which have attracted international attention. On land, the variety of habitats within a small compass gives reason for the Manx National Anthem to speak of the island as ‘the gem of God’s earth’. All this requires looking after. Within the community, agencies such as Beach Buddies have elicited widespread popular support as they seek to deal with such problems as seaborne litter polluting Manx shores. The Diocese is committed to achieving net zero carbon by 2030. The Cathedral, Holy Trinity, Patrick, the Abbey Church, Ballasalla and St James, Dalby have received eco church awards. We look to move further in such directions.

The Candidate

Our vision for the next bishop has drawn extensively on the process of consultation with the general public. This was undertaken at a time of high-profile debate regarding the future of the bishop's seat in Tynwald. It included a presence at the annual Tynwald Day ceremony, encouraging feedback via electronic media, and interviews with specific stakeholders and groups. The amount of response demonstrated the wide interest, within and beyond the churches, in the vision and needs which should shape the ministry of our next bishop.

Our vision may be summed up in words from the form of service for the Consecration of a Bishop.

Bishops are ordained to be shepherds of Christ's flock ...

We seek:

Someone who is willing humbly to learn to understand the local insular culture and recognize its distinctiveness and rural nature, who will grow to love the island, for whom the Isle of Man will become 'home'; who will not only do this themselves but find ways to encourage parish clergy to do so. Someone with the wisdom to negotiate the tension between risk-taking and pastoral sensitivity. With the likelihood that the Church of England will be increasingly reliant on lay ministry, we need someone to lead us in discerning, developing, and deploying gifting flexibly and creatively, within the Anglican tradition, in order to ensure that the flock is cared for.



... and guardians of the faith of the apostles, ...

We seek:

A creative thinker, able to express and apply theological principles, with the energy, courage, clear sight, and love to lead God's people into service.

Someone to oversee the provision of high-quality and relevant teaching which encourages lay and ordained, fringe members and those heavily involved, to think deeply, prayerfully, and clearly about how their Christian faith plays out in the Manx context. The bishop would not be expected to do this alone, but to lead in identifying and deploying the gifts of others.

... proclaiming the gospel of God's kingdom ...

We seek:

In an increasingly secularised context, someone who will give a passionate lead in making known the good news, at the heart of which is Jesus Christ.

Someone who knows what life is like outside the church, possibly a first-generation Christian or someone with experience of other forms of work.

Someone with experience of planting new congregations.

... and leading his people in mission.

We seek:

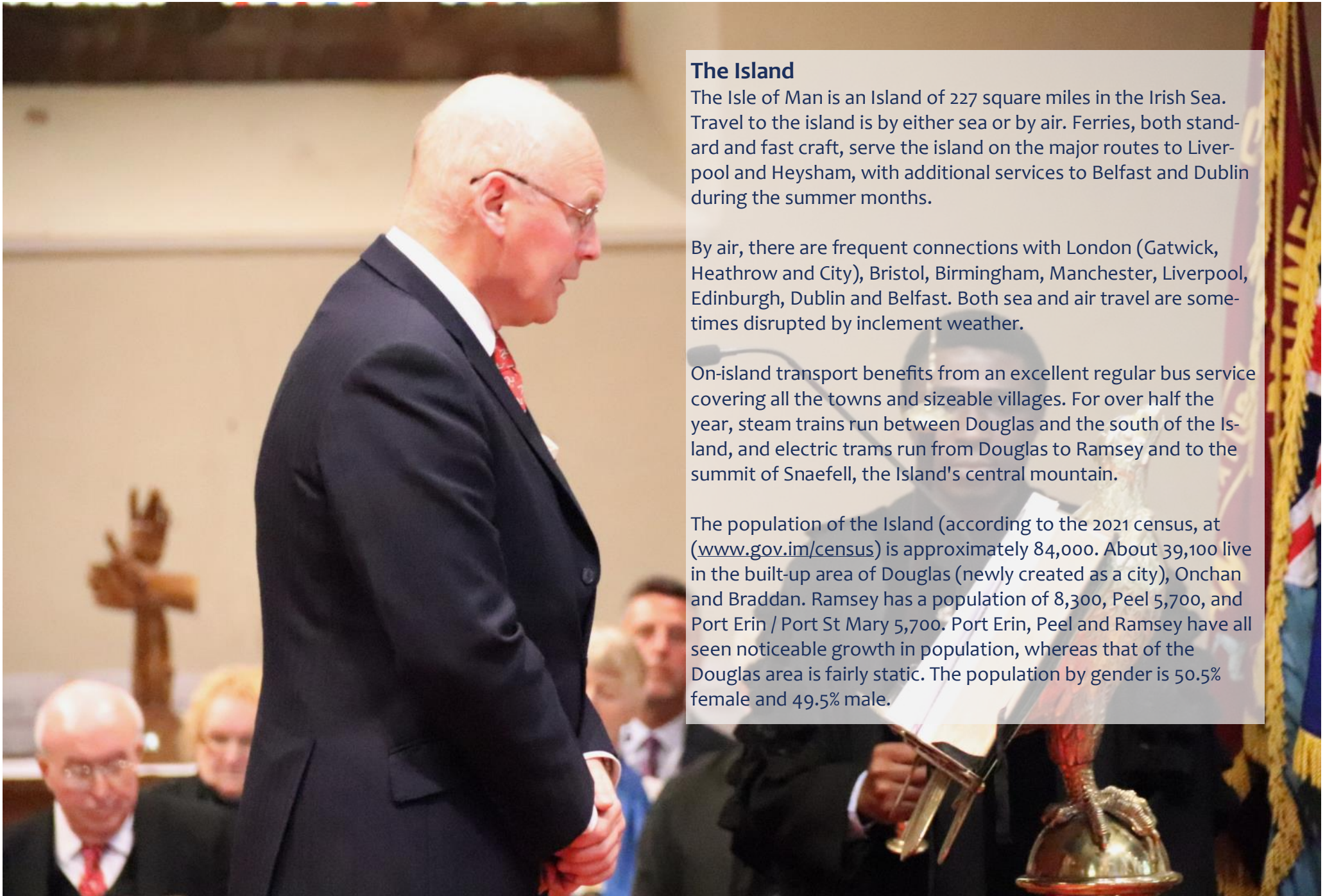
Someone who is happy to be visible in the community, not only when engaged in ministry but when relaxing or shopping.

Someone with a vision to equip churches to make disciples, discerning each person's God-given gifts and talents, and creating space for these to be exercised, rather than merely looking for people to fill established roles.



Obedient to the call of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, they are to gather God's people and celebrate with them the sacraments of the new covenant.

Since the smallness of the diocese offers potential for it to function as a learning and proving ground within the wider Anglican communion, it would be an excellent place for a younger candidate who is willing to commit a significant period of time to living and ministering here. This is particularly important as, in the local culture, any new initiative needs time to be followed through.



The Island

The Isle of Man is an Island of 227 square miles in the Irish Sea. Travel to the island is by either sea or by air. Ferries, both standard and fast craft, serve the island on the major routes to Liverpool and Heysham, with additional services to Belfast and Dublin during the summer months.

By air, there are frequent connections with London (Gatwick, Heathrow and City), Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Dublin and Belfast. Both sea and air travel are sometimes disrupted by inclement weather.

On-island transport benefits from an excellent regular bus service covering all the towns and sizeable villages. For over half the year, steam trains run between Douglas and the south of the Island, and electric trams run from Douglas to Ramsey and to the summit of Snaefell, the Island's central mountain.

The population of the Island (according to the 2021 census, at (www.gov.im/census) is approximately 84,000. About 39,100 live in the built-up area of Douglas (newly created as a city), Onchan and Braddan. Ramsey has a population of 8,300, Peel 5,700, and Port Erin / Port St Mary 5,700. Port Erin, Peel and Ramsey have all seen noticeable growth in population, whereas that of the Douglas area is fairly static. The population by gender is 50.5% female and 49.5% male.

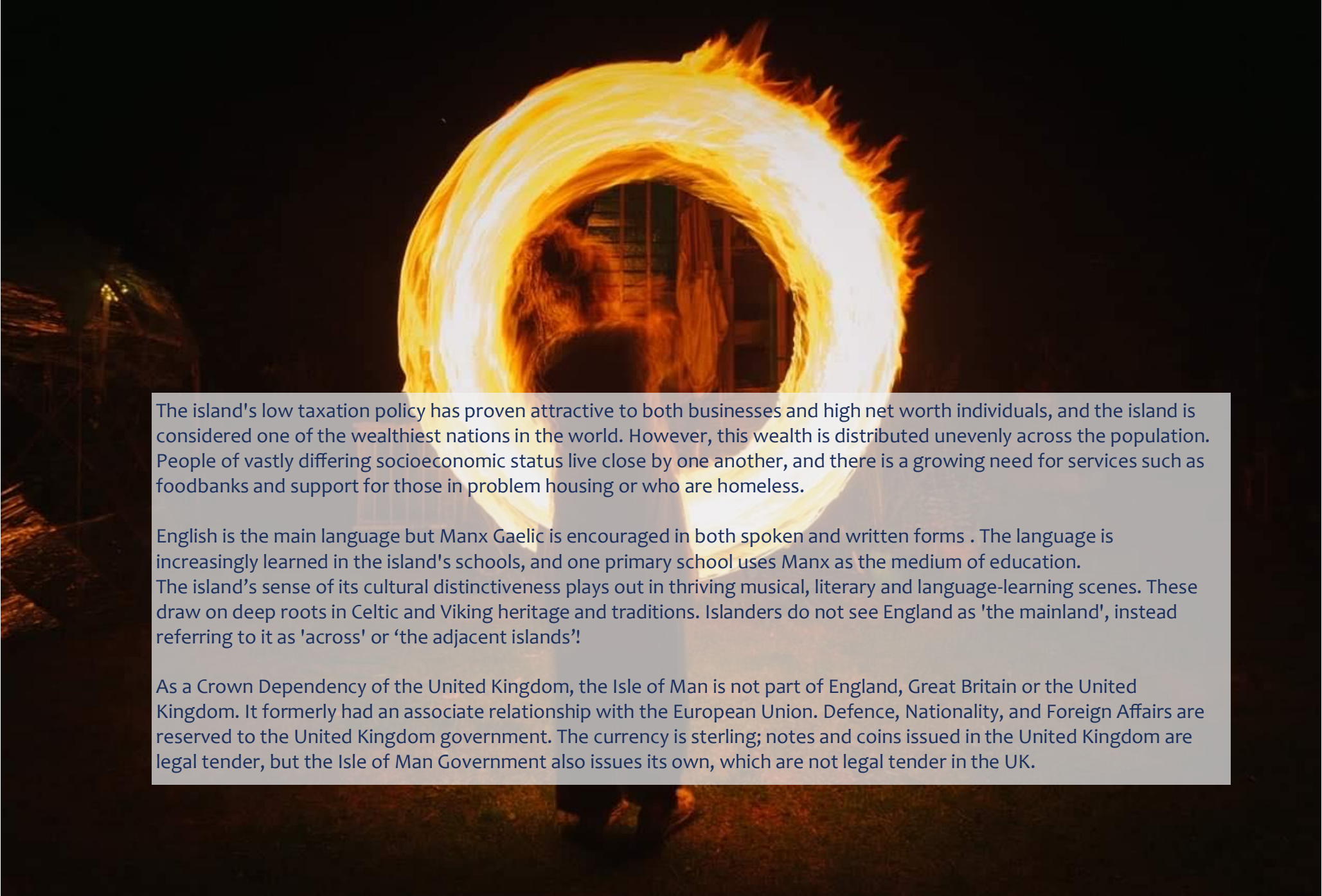
Significantly, the average age is 44.4 years, and 22% of the population are over the age of 64. Government economic strategies have seen an influx of population from many places; just under half the population (49.6%) were born on the island, as the table below shows. This proportion is likely to decrease as the government pursues a medium-term strategy to increase population to 100,000.

Table 3: The main countries of origin of residents

Source: 2021 Census Report, Part I

Isle of Man	41,658
UK	32,153
Ireland	1,630
South Africa	1,218
Philippines	923
Poland	622
Bulgaria	426
Germany	329
India	314
USA	238
Romania	226
China	221


Census statistics indicate that immigration to the island from outside the UK has largely been a feature of the last thirty years, well within the memory of many locally born people. Now, however, over a hundred countries are represented among the island's population.

A person is seen from behind, holding a large, glowing ring of fire. The ring is bright yellow and orange, with flames extending outwards. The background is dark, suggesting a night setting. The person is wearing a dark jacket and pants. The fire ring is the central focus of the image.

The island's low taxation policy has proven attractive to both businesses and high net worth individuals, and the island is considered one of the wealthiest nations in the world. However, this wealth is distributed unevenly across the population. People of vastly differing socioeconomic status live close by one another, and there is a growing need for services such as foodbanks and support for those in problem housing or who are homeless.

English is the main language but Manx Gaelic is encouraged in both spoken and written forms . The language is increasingly learned in the island's schools, and one primary school uses Manx as the medium of education. The island's sense of its cultural distinctiveness plays out in thriving musical, literary and language-learning scenes. These draw on deep roots in Celtic and Viking heritage and traditions. Islanders do not see England as 'the mainland', instead referring to it as 'across' or 'the adjacent islands'!

As a Crown Dependency of the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man is not part of England, Great Britain or the United Kingdom. It formerly had an associate relationship with the European Union. Defence, Nationality, and Foreign Affairs are reserved to the United Kingdom government. The currency is sterling; notes and coins issued in the United Kingdom are legal tender, but the Isle of Man Government also issues its own, which are not legal tender in the UK.



Tynwald is the Island's government body. It claims to be the oldest continuously existing parliament in the world, with over one thousand years' history. It consists of two branches, the directly elected House of Keys, and the second chamber, the indirectly elected Legislative Council. His Majesty the King is Lord of Mann and is represented on-island by the Lieutenant Governor who is appointed for a five-year term. The current Lieutenant Governor is Sir John Lorimer KCB (appointed 2021).

In times past, agriculture and fishing provided the island with significant employment. However, the mid-20th Century saw decline in these and other traditional industries, including tourism. Legislative changes in the 1950s and 1970s laid a path for its place now as an international centre of the financial services industry. In recent years there has been considerable growth in the e-gaming industry, and an increasing development of small artisan businesses, alongside light manufacturing, space technology and motorsport engineering. A gently rejuvenated tourism industry and international business visitors provide markets for the hospitality sector. Almost 44,000 residents are in employment. Many of the tourists visit for the four weeks of the year when the island's roads become a race track for the famous TT and Manx Grand Prix motorcycle road races. The population can swell by up to 40,000 at such times.

The education system is held in high regard. There are 32 primary schools, including one Church of England and one Roman Catholic primary school. These feed into the Island's 5 secondary schools. There is also one independent boarding school, King William's College (an Anglican foundation), along with its primary facility, the Buchan School. Further education is provided at University College Isle of Man, which offers degree-level courses of study validated by the University of Chester. Students from the island are regarded as overseas students by UK universities, and the island still offers a generous student grant scheme.

The island's National Health Service is similar to its UK counterpart. Provision for hospital care is at Noble's Hospital on the outskirts of Douglas and a Cottage Hospital in the north of the island in Ramsey. There is a reciprocal health agreement with the UK and treatment for major illness is often carried out in some of the larger hospitals in the Manchester and Liverpool areas, with a patient referral service enabling cost-covered transport to the UK in such circumstances.

The Island has three local radio stations, Manx Radio (government subsidized), 3FM and Energy FM (both commercial). There are three weekly newspapers, the *Examiner*, the *Independent* and the *Courier*. All are owned by a UK based publisher.

Conclusion

We have set out in this document a summary of how we see the context in which the new diocesan bishop will be called to minister. In this diocese there are strong interconnections between the church, its ministers and congregations, and the whole of the community.

We cannot possibly include mention of everything that happens in such a diverse place and we hope that all those who have contributed their views about this appointment will find that, at least in some small way, they have influenced the descriptions.

The Isle of Man is a wonderful place to live and to serve but also one in which there are challenges – both problems and opportunities – for which we believe the church – our church – is well placed, ready in prayer, and called by God, to address.

We look forward to working with the leadership and inspiration of the new Bishop.





To the glory of
God our loving
memory of his
wife Alice dedicated
to all competitors
in the TT races
These windows
were presented by
John A. Antler of
Blackburn A vice
president of the
ACU June 1983



Acknowledgements

Photographs:

- Alex Brown
- Peter Killey
- John Coldwell
- Steve Hamer

“You cannot bear the weight of this calling in your own strength, but only by the grace and power of God.

Pray therefore that you may be conformed more and more to the image of God’s Son, so that through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit your life and ministry may be made holy and acceptable to God.”

The Ordinal

