



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

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Diocese of Leeds



Diocese of Leeds Vacancy in See  
**Statement of Needs**

# Welcome to the Diocese of Leeds



We're delighted that you're considering whether God might be calling you to serve in this diocese. It's a special place—rich in history, full of faithful and committed people and alive with the hope that God's kingdom might come more fully among us.

We are a people who long to see lives transformed and communities renewed by the love of Christ. We are a diocese with enormous potential, a deep well of hope, and yes, a decent amount of challenge too.

As a diocese we face many of the challenges common across the whole Church of England but we do so with confidence. Our first decade has enabled us to build good foundations as we have sought to live, love and learn together. We have carefully designed ways of working which enable all to feel connected through a clear area structure and we intentionally make sure our wide variety of contexts all have a voice and are seen.

We recognise the importance of this diocese not only to the people in our communities but also to the wider Anglican communion. This is a place which

takes that responsibility seriously and prayerfully and which seeks someone who wants to partner with us as we seek to fulfil our God given potential. We seek a Bishop who will shepherd, teach and lead – someone who is comfortable in working at scale and with some complexity, and who is willing to trust, collaborate and delegate in working with teams across our diverse diocese. We believe the Diocese of Leeds has a lot to offer and we yearn to see God work through us as we build His kingdom.

This Statement of Needs offers a flavour of where we've come from and where we sense God is leading us. It tells stories of what God is doing in our midst—through worship, witness, and service—and invites you to imagine what might be possible in the season ahead.

We are praying that God's call is heard and answered. And we will be praying for you as you discern whether this might be your next step in faith.

*The Vacancy in See Committee*

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*Almighty God, you give us Bishops to be shepherds of Christ's flock and guardians of the faith; to celebrate the sacraments, proclaim the Gospel, and lead your people in mission. Send your Holy Spirit upon this Diocese of Leeds to guide us in this season of loving, living and learning. By your grace, may your choice for our new Bishop be discerned, that we may receive them with joy; walk with them in faith; and serve with them in hope. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

# 1. The Diocese

The Diocese of Leeds covers a region whose economy is greater than that of Wales.

The diocese comprises five Episcopal Areas, each coterminous with an Archdeaconry. This is one of the largest dioceses in England and its creation is unprecedented in the history of the Church of England. It covers an area of around 2,425 square miles, housing a population of around 2.6 million.

The three historic dioceses (Bradford, Ripon & Leeds, and Wakefield) were created in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to cater for massive population changes brought about by industrialisation and, later, mass immigration.

The diocese comprises major cities (Bradford, Leeds, Wakefield), large industrial and post-industrial towns (Halifax, Huddersfield, Keighley, Dewsbury, Barnsley), market towns (Harrogate, Skipton, Ilkley, Ripon, Richmond and Wetherby), and deeply rural areas (the Yorkshire Dales). All of life is here, along with all the richness, diversity and complexities of a changing world.

The Diocese of Leeds represents the breadth and variety of the Church of England – it is a hope filled place full of people determined to see the Good News of Jesus Christ shared.



## The 11 year history / journey

The story of the Diocese of Leeds is one of hope and confidence—a journey marked by courage, faith and a collective desire to build something both vibrant and sustainable. The process was neither simple nor without its challenges; it required hard work and resilience, and a need for trust from across the diocese that it would be worth it. Through this shared commitment we are now all part of a diocese which is forward facing and outward looking.

This hopeful journey is reflected in our growth and renewed priorities. The diocese is now able to invest 75% of its resources directly into parish ministry, supporting worship, outreach and pastoral care.

Every member of the Bishop's senior staff team has been appointed to the Diocese of Leeds and so the team collectively are focused on the future and not the past. The team share the collective vision of what it means to be a large diocese and they work closely with those in parishes to foster a climate of collaboration, embracing both urban dynamism and rural traditions across the vast and varied landscape. From thriving cities to remote valleys, the diocese has become a tapestry of cultures, faith expressions and generational stories, each contributing to a shared mission of hope.

As the Diocese of Leeds steps confidently into its second decade, it remains a beacon of possibility—committed to loving, living, and learning together. Guided by the Holy Spirit, its journey continues, carrying forward the promise of new beginnings and the Good News shared with every community it serves.

## Five Episcopal Areas

Our diocese has three cathedrals, three minsters and 443 parishes supported by lay leaders and worshippers working together across the region from inner cities to remote rural villages. Children and young people are supported by the diocese in 236 schools and our churches hold thousands of services and events each year.

Our five Episcopal Areas of Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds, Ripon and Wakefield each have their own area Bishop and cover nearly all of West Yorkshire, the west of North Yorkshire, some of South Yorkshire and parts of County Durham, Cumbria and Lancashire. When the Diocese was created in 2014, these Episcopal Areas were designed to facilitate our connections to the local authorities of the region, so the Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield Episcopal Areas largely cover Leeds MDC, Bradford MDC and Wakefield MDC respectively. Huddersfield covers the Kirklees and Calderdale Districts, and Ripon much of North Yorkshire.

| Episcopal Area | Deaneries | Benefices | Parishes | Churches | Stipendiary Clergy | Self Supporting Ministers (SSM) | Worshipping Community |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Bradford       | 4         | 49        | 64       | 80       | 57.5               | 9.0                             | 5700                  |
| Huddersfield   | 5         | 63        | 105      | 121      | 49.5               | 12.0                            | 6400                  |
| Leeds          | 3         | 51        | 72       | 83       | 63.7               | 8.0                             | 8200                  |
| Ripon          | 6         | 59        | 139      | 214      | 64.1               | 17.0                            | 8400                  |
| Wakefield      | 3         | 35        | 63       | 76       | 38.8               | 10.0                            | 3500                  |



## Bradford Episcopal Area

- **Key Towns/Cities:** Bradford, Keighley, Bingley, Shipley, Ilkley, Baildon.
- **Population:** Approx. 575,000; fastest growing in the region, with a notably youthful demographic.
- **Community & Diversity:** Highly diverse, with significant historic and recent immigration. City of Sanctuary since 2010. At the 2021 census, 57% White British, 32% Asian or Asian British (second highest in the UK); forecast to become a majority-minority city soon.
- **Notable Features:** Saltaire (World Heritage Site), National Media Museum, Peace Museum, Brontë connections, David Hockney, Morrisons HQ, Bradford Literature Festival, 2025 UK City of Culture.
- **Recent Developments:** Economic and civic regeneration 2,000 business startups in 2012, planting of Fountains Resource Church in the centre of Bradford, robust ministry in under-resourced areas including grafting and planting, leadership in interfaith and intercultural engagement.

## Huddersfield Episcopal Area

- **Key Towns/Cities:** Huddersfield, Halifax, Dewsbury.
- **Population:** Approx. 602,000 (Calderdale 197,000; Kirklees 405,000); includes rural, post-industrial, and urban communities.
- **Community & Diversity:** Multicultural, with 14.8% Asian heritage in Kirklees, 6% in Calderdale, and significant African-Caribbean communities. Historically rooted in textiles, now focused on education and engineering.
- **Notable Features:** Huddersfield Choral Society, Eureka! Museum, Piece Hall, Quality Street, Brontë connections, Hebden Bridge, Pennine Way, two Nobel Prize winners.
- **Recent Developments:** Partnership with University of Huddersfield, major pastoral reorganisations, emphasis on new ministry patterns, team working, and interfaith relations.

## Leeds Episcopal Area

- **Key Towns/Cities:** Leeds.
- **Population:** Over 800,000 (Leeds Metropolitan District), part of the wider Leeds City Region (approx. 3 million). Over 60,000 students across five higher education institutions.
- **Community & Diversity:** Diverse, with 17.4% BME heritage and 22.5% of school children from BME backgrounds. Significant Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu communities.
- **Notable Features:** Headingley Stadium (Yorkshire County Cricket Club, Leeds Rhinos), Leeds Art Gallery, Henry Moore Institute, Roundhay Park, Opera North, Northern Ballet.
- **Recent Developments:** New housing in East Leeds, strong financial sector, major educational and health institutions, strategic church planting and revitalisation, resource churches, student-focused ministry.

## Ripon Episcopal Area

- **Key Towns/Cities:** Harrogate, Knaresborough, Ripon, Richmond, Wetherby, Skipton, Settle, Barnoldswick.
- **Population:** Approx. 282,000, covering the west of North Yorkshire and part of Lancashire (1,581 sq miles).
- **Community & Diversity:** Predominantly rural, including Yorkshire Dales National Park and market towns. Economy based on tourism and agriculture; home to Catterick Garrison, the largest military base in Northern Europe.
- **Notable Features:** Yorkshire Dales, Fountains Abbey (World Heritage Site), RHS Harlow Carr, Great Yorkshire Show, Harrogate Conference Centre, Swaledale Sheep, Wensleydale Cheese.
- **Recent Developments:** Post-Brexit rural uncertainty, housing developments, community chaplaincies, innovative deanery-focused projects (rural change enablers, maintenance collectives), focus on sustainability, partnerships, and support for small schools and churches.

## Wakefield Episcopal Area

- **Key Towns/Cities:** Wakefield, Pontefract, Barnsley.
- **Population:** Approx. 452,000, covering Wakefield Metropolitan District and most of Barnsley Borough.
- **Community & Diversity:** Former coal mining centre, now with a vibrant arts scene and diverse population. Significant South Asian and Muslim communities; Wakefield is a City of Sanctuary for asylum seekers.
- **Notable Features:** Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Hepworth Gallery, Pontefract Castle, Cannon Hall, Nostell Priory. Birthplace of Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth.
- **Recent Developments:** Mission expansion to youth and young adults (SDF funding), creative responses to the pandemic, ongoing revitalisation, strong social action and support for vulnerable groups, emphasis on encouragement and strategic leadership post-pandemic.

# Parishes

Whilst the area system provides a much-needed structure for organisation and administration, the Diocese of Leeds is at its heart rooted in the parish system. This is the core of all we do, fulfilling the Church of England's unique vocation to provide a visible Christian presence in every community. Across 443 parishes there are countless examples of people faithfully serving God and ensuring the good news is both lived and shared.

Our parishes come in all shapes and sizes, with both large and small congregations as well as plenty in between. We have churches which offer services covering the whole spectrum of liturgical preferences as well as a host of new worshipping communities meeting away from our church buildings and doing things in ways which meet the

needs of the communities they serve. The churches operate in places where they are the very heart of the community, whilst in others they are the only Christian beacon surrounded by communities of other faiths and none.

All continue to play a pivotal role in being the Church. We have thriving parishes of every tradition, in places of wealth and of poverty.

Across every area there are countless examples of lay and clergy working in partnership with community groups, schools and other organisations to provide places of welcome, support and hope. This is a diocese which has put encouraging confidence in the parish at the centre of its strategy.



## Holy Nativity, Mixenden

*Holy Nativity, Mixenden is powering into the diocese's next decade, supported by the diocese and now backed by fresh funding from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Jo Beacroft-Mitchell, Holy Nativity's new Fundraising, Development, and Community Engagement Manager said, "Our ambitious vision is to develop Holy Nativity Church into a flagship eco-friendly church and vibrant community centre. Partnerships have grown over the past 10 years and it is time to really show what a parish church can do for everyone." Expressing pride in the parish's achievements, Revd Robb Sutherland praised the people of the economically-challenged area. "Our goal is to inspire others in estates ministry and show what riches can be found in areas like ours. Places like ours may often be seen as burdens, but Mixenden and Illingworth show that grass roots people and strong lay leadership can transform lives."*



### St. Mary's, Arkengarthdale

*Built in 1820 near the Tan Hill Inn, St Mary's is a box-shaped building with no other rooms. Water came from an outside tap and the toilet was a shed in the churchyard. And so it stayed, until the congregation, led by worshipper Tony Oldershaw, decided the building could be reordered to offer community space that could grow the church. After much planning and many cups of tea, funds were raised and the work was completed in 2023. This was a lay-led process, through the PCC, with encouragement from the clergy. There is now a disabled toilet, a kitchenette, and a large multi-purpose space at the back of the nave, which has allowed it to become The Arkengarthdale Hub – a church and community group which now offers zumba, pop up choirs, rural arts workshops, concerts and coffee mornings; the list goes on ... “Our hope and prayer is that now we can have conversations with those who come in, invite them to open their hearts to faith, and join a community that follows Jesus,” said Revd Canon Caroline Hewlett, vicar of Swaledale with Arkengarthdale.*

The Diocese also works with a trusted partner, Wellsprings Together, to support parish based social action. Wellsprings Together maintains a strategic focus on supporting faith communities in their social engagement, with particular expertise in parish-based community involvement. They are a valuable resource, adding both capacity and specialist knowledge to local initiatives and projects. By bridging connections between local, regional, and national efforts, Wellsprings Together informs and inspires at every level.

Wellsprings Together aims to nurture and encourage a movement of faith-driven social engagement that empowers individuals and communities to thrive.

# Three Cathedrals

In supporting our parishes, we are fortunate to have not one but three full cathedrals. Our three cathedrals make the Diocese of Leeds unique in the Church of England. They are ours in shared spiritual ownership, but each is excitingly individual in its history, location, architecture and church tradition. The contrasting, yet complementary, nature of contexts allows their ministry to be owned across the whole diocese and they project our Christian voices into the public square. The three Deans work closely together and also have regular joint meetings with the Bishop. The sense of shared endeavour is evident to all as they

welcome the Diocesan Bishop, each other and the area Bishops and Archdeacons regularly to each cathedral for services and events. The Deans are steadfast in their commitment to pray for, and support, the Bishop's ministry not just in their own cathedrals but across the diocese as a whole.

The ways in which the cathedrals work together and complement each other models the collaboration and team-working across the diocese, fruitfully extending the reach of the diocese in our diverse communities.



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## Wakefield Cathedral

Wakefield Cathedral stands at the heart of West Yorkshire's oldest city on a site where God has been worshipped for over a thousand years and its spire - the tallest in the whole of Yorkshire - is a regional landmark. Joyful, Generous and Inclusive, its vision and ministry are told in its strategic vision, *Firm in Hope* with its four goals: Building the Body of Christ; a Partner for Mission; Optimising our Assets for Mission; and a cathedral for the Whole Diocese. Wakefield Cathedral has a rich and distinctive pattern of liturgy and music, rooted in a broad Anglican Catholic tradition of the Church of England. The cathedral is a vital asset to the city and district of Wakefield as a place where challenging issues facing the nation, region and city can be debated; a convenor for organisations across all sectors; and a key partner in work with the vulnerable and those in greatest need. Located in its post-industrial context, the cathedral looks to be the focal point of a revitalised city centre whose buildings are available as an asset for the wider community, contributing to a sense of aspiration and growing confidence in the city; to ensure that God will be in evidence to all people using the cathedral, whatever their reason for doing so.

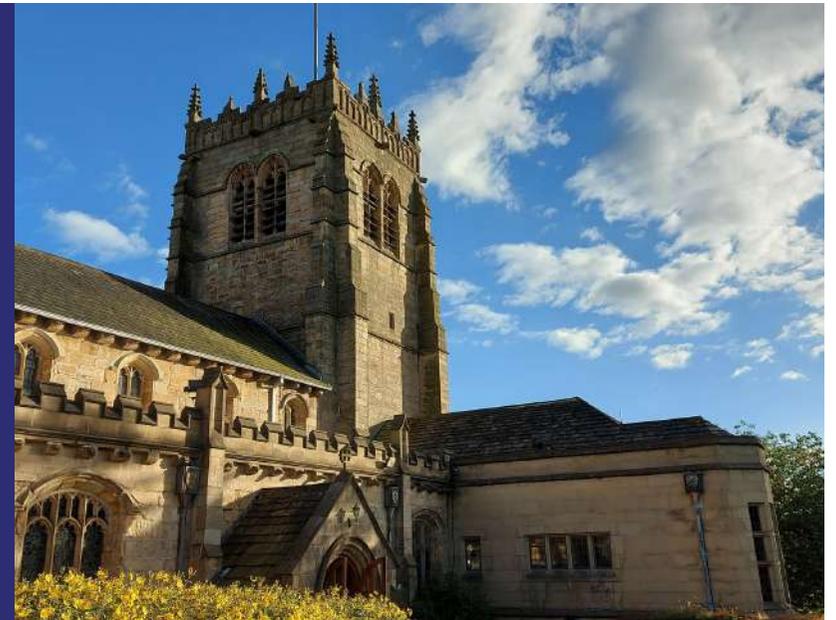


## Ripon Cathedral

Ripon Cathedral's stunning Anglo-Saxon crypt of St. Wilfrid's basilica, dating from 672AD, is the oldest built fabric of any English cathedral. It is still a place of prayer to this very day. Ripon Cathedral serves the whole diocese as a vibrant and happy centre of mission. It has been blessed with growth and development and has made significant strides forward with particular specialisms, including choral music, rural mission, and pilgrimage. Many new young people have joined the cathedral choir, which is enjoying a renaissance, whilst the numbers of worshippers, visitors and pilgrims are also growing. Always engaged with farming and country life, the Ripon Cathedral Rural Forum is an important space for major organisations in North Yorkshire to explore the challenges facing rural people and communities. The cathedral's mission has five main strands: growing the worshipping community; being a mother church for the diocese and proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom to the region; promoting, developing and conserving our spiritual and built heritage; responding to human need in loving partnership; and Carbon Net Zero – safeguarding the integrity of creation. A commitment to the future has seen major investment in ideas of how to grow worship and attendance, responding to the spiritual and physical needs of people.

## Bradford Cathedral

Bradford Cathedral brings together some 1,400 years of Christian witness on this site. It is a story of faith woven into the foundation and heart of the city born at the 'broad ford'. It is a developing story of change and ambition, of hard work and dedication, and is evidence of a God who is faithful, in whom all can trust. It is a place where lives and communities are seen to be transformed. Common threads form the values that define the character of the cathedral community, forming a foundation for its journey toward the calling it perceives from God—to craft its unique contribution to the wider Christian tapestry in the city and beyond for generations to follow. Interculturality is cherished: it is a community that is diverse and distinct, a place open to people from all corners of the globe. Rootedness shapes its outlook—realistic and humble, drawing on a deep tradition of Christian witness and mission. Innovativeness is evident as abundance is discovered even amid scarcity. Hospitality is a hallmark, fostering openness and a compassionate, welcoming environment for all. At the centre is Jesus, guiding an intentional way of life marked by daily prayer, devotion, scripture reading, study, and service.



# Education

236 schools, 64,000 young people, hundreds of committed staff and more than 2,500 dedicated governors make up the vibrant world of education within our diocese. Rural, urban, large or small, they all celebrate a Church of England foundation and a Christian commitment to transformational learning, deeply-rooted in the diverse communities they serve. Our primary schools provide 25% of all primary school places across the geographic area of the diocese and we have 12 large secondary schools.

Since their beginnings in 1811, church schools have been committed to inclusive education, especially in communities who need it the most, and the diocese is proud to be part of that history. The Diocesan Education Team gives professional support and extensive training to leaders, staff and governors and shares in life-changing teaching and spiritual encounters.

Working across nine local authority areas and within 12 multi-academy trusts, the team shares the common goal of seeing every school flourish in its unique context. Each year our schools offer more than 47,000 opportunities to explore beliefs and values through collective worship, more than 850,000 hours of religious education and daily conversations that enable our pupils and adults to flourish. The education team is proud to partner with clergy, lay ministers, wardens and congregations who dedicate many hours every year to work with children, young people and staff, providing activities, services and much more. Our education work is funded through income generation activities from services provided to schools and carefully stewarded use of existing resources, thus ensuring it is not placing a further financial burden on parishes.



# Diocesan overseas partnerships

The Diocese of Leeds celebrates its place within the vibrant and diverse tapestry of the global Anglican Communion. Deep connections with the worldwide church enrich our journey as God's people in the UK, opening up new perspectives and opportunities for growth in faith. Just as the early followers of Jesus shared the gospel across communities, languages, and cultures, so too do we find inspiration and challenge in our relationships with Christian sisters and brothers around the world. Every culture brings its own unique gifts to the body of Christ, and together we witness a fuller picture of God's love and purpose for all creation. These international bonds are not only a source of encouragement and mutual

support but are essential to our calling—to live out the mission of God in partnership with others, learning, serving, and being transformed as we share in Christ's story across boundaries.

We have companion links with several parts of the Anglican Communion:

- Tanzania (Dioceses of Mara, Rorya and Tarime)
- United States of America (Southwestern Virginia)
- Europe (Hannover, Skara, Erfurt)
- Sudan
- Pakistan

We are also exploring a new link with the Diocese of Hong Kong Island



## 2. Consultation

### What we asked: who we asked

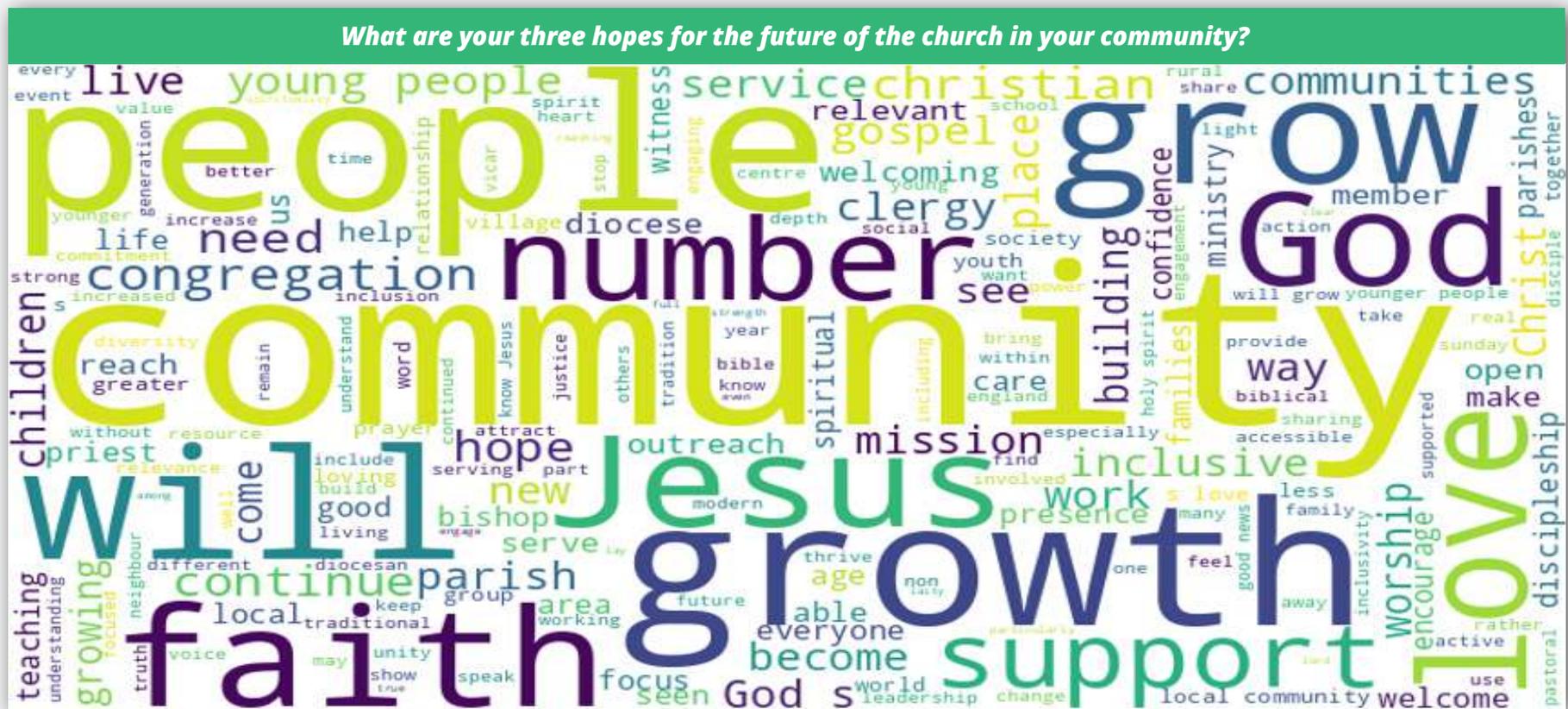
We asked people from all over the diocese three simple questions about their hopes for the future. Individuals were encouraged to respond digitally or on paper through the form of postcards which had been sent to all of our churches. Targeted communications were sent to clergy, churchwardens, headteachers, licensed lay ministers and retired clergy as well as wider encouragement through a whole range of communication channels.

We received nearly 800 responses from a wide range of people sharing their hopes and prayers for the future. There were clear themes which came up and we have tried to

represent these below through word clouds which ensure the most dominant words appear clearly.

One limitation of word clouds is that when similar or related words are expressed in varied forms by respondents, their combined significance can be visually understated, as each appears smaller than a single word that is used more frequently by everyone.

As the word cloud shows this is a diocese with real hope for the future and clarity on what it wants in a Bishop.







### 3. Diocesan vision, values, aims and strategy

At the creation of the diocese at Easter 2014 the vision articulated was: to be a vibrant diocese, equipping confident clergy to enable confident Christians to live and tell the good news of Jesus Christ. In time this dynamic became focused as: Confident Christians. Growing Churches. Transforming Communities.

We have supplemented our vision with our values to use terms that make sense to those outside the church: Loving. Living. Learning. We love God and neighbours; We are incarnational, committed to the world as it is, but drawn by a vision of how it could be; We have the humility to know our failure and our need to learn. This triplet is the lens through which we see our ministry and mission.

As Christians living and worshipping in the diocese of Leeds we want to be faithful to our calling to follow Jesus, share the Gospel and serve with purpose the communities in which we live.

Over the next 10 years our aim is to be a diocese:

- **Confident in our mission** - supporting churches to become confident in their purpose, and able to use their buildings, finances and time to achieve this.
- **Confident in our future** - ensuring the diocese becomes sustainable, building on the work of the last few years to be efficient as well as effective.
- **Confident in our leadership** - giving support around leadership for everyone involved in serving in our churches.
- **Confident in our witness** - encouraging support for all to be confident in living and telling the good news of Jesus in a rapidly changing world, particularly reaching children and young people.



# Confident in our mission – maintenance collective

The maintenance collectives were initiated as a strategic response to the growing need for sustainable, collaborative care of church buildings across the Diocese of Leeds. Their core intention is to free up capacity for mission by empowering parishes to pool resources, expertise and support structures, ensuring routine and preventative maintenance takes place in a more coordinated and cost-effective manner.

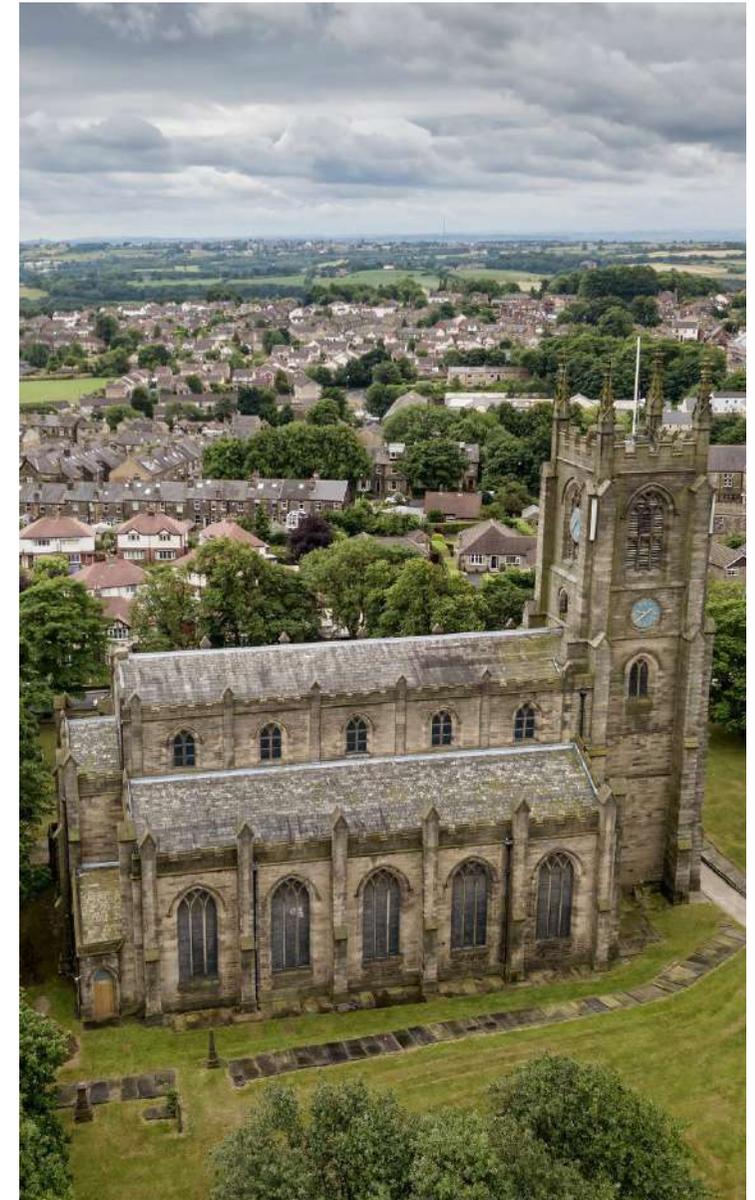
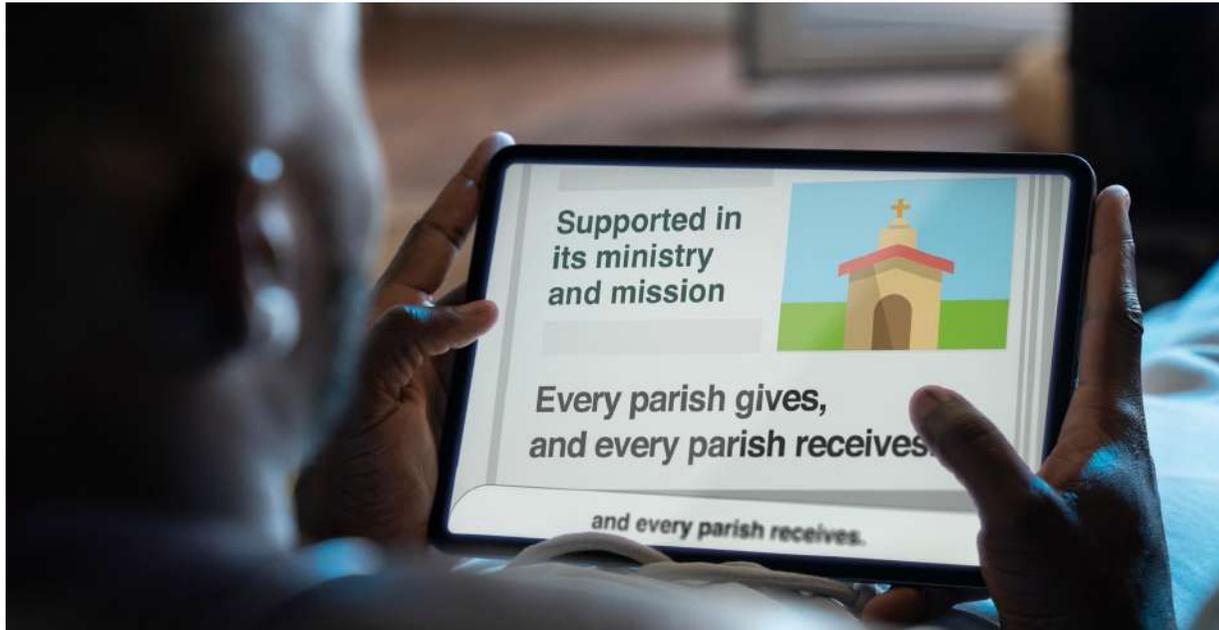
We want to reduce the burden on individual PCCs, especially those with limited capacity, by offering tailored levels of support based on each parish's confidence, skills and needs. This includes:

- Developing maintenance plans for participating churches.
- Coordinating annual contracts for services like gutter cleaning.
- Supporting procurement and tendering processes for small projects.
- Providing training and mentoring opportunities to build local capacity.

The pilot phase, launched in the rural Wensley Deanery and expanding to a more urban setting in Huddersfield, is backed by national grant funding and aims to serve as a model for wider diocesan adoption.



# Confident in our future – Parish Share Agreements



The development of three-year Parish Share Agreements represents a shift in how we approach financial stewardship and relational engagement with parishes. Rooted in our commitment to encouraging confidence, this initiative seeks to foster trust, transparency and sustainability in the way parishes contribute to shared ministry costs.

The intention is to move beyond annual requests toward negotiated, multi-year commitments that reflect each parish's capacity and aspirations. This will offer predictability for diocesan budgeting and create space for intentional conversations about giving, mission, and ministry.

The diocese has committed to a rolling programme of local hub meetings, supported by dedicated staff including a Parish Support Officer and Stewardship Officer.

The agreements are designed to:

- Strengthen the link between parish mission and diocesan support.
- Improve diocesan forecasting and resource allocation.
- Build a culture of shared responsibility and generosity.
- Support parishes with tailored guidance and stewardship resources.

This approach is an important investment in our future sustainability and has been met with great enthusiasm in the parishes.

# Confident in our leadership – PG&L

## The Personal Growth and Leadership Programme

Personal Growth and Leadership development are very much linked. Over the past four years, a training team in Bradford has created a space for clergy and lay church teams to explore these areas together, out of the rush of church life and parish ministry, to learn, share and put into practice some key principles around growth and leadership, encouraging confidence among lay and clergy teams. So far, over 300 people in the diocese have taken part in the programme. Personal Growth and Leadership is not just for people who are already leading; it's about people who have the potential to lead but perhaps lack the confidence.

## What people say about Personal Growth and Leadership

“It has made me reflect, analyse and re-evaluate how I spend my time and energy. It has inspired me to join the mission group and try and be more proactive in the congregation. This in turn has led me to read and try and understand the Bible more and relate it to my life. I feel more relaxed about my faith and sharing it with others who say they have no faith.”

“I really feel the plans we have made on this course will support the church's vision and growth. Hopefully it has given the leadership team more people to support and be of use to them and to relieve the burden a little.”

“Renewed my sense of calling as a leader and increased confidence, and responding to God's call to do this in our parish. Built stronger relationship with the group from our church. Given me a desire to encourage others to lead by example.”



# Confident in our witness – Every Good Work

## **Every Good Work helps young people meet God and serve their community.**

Young people in the Wakefield area have been learning about the Christian faith and helping out in their community, as part of a course run by the Every Good Work project.

The Acorn Course has been specifically designed by the Every Good Work project as a discipleship course designed for unchurched young people to participate in social action projects and learn more about the Christian faith.

Over a six-week period eight young people recently took part in the course, followed by a weekend away. Each session included the young people volunteering at a social action event, followed by a time of learning and reflecting together.

Over the course the young people helped at community allotments; served food and washed up with Refugees and Asylum seekers; helped with the Community Awareness Programme in Wakefield, which is a charity that supports those struggling with homelessness, addiction or chaotic lifestyles; worked with Christians Against Poverty; worked in an elderly care home; and worked in the Food Pantry at St Swithun's Community Centre, helping in the area of food poverty.





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***Six members have now formed their own worshipping community, and we will be running the course again next term with a new group of teenagers.***

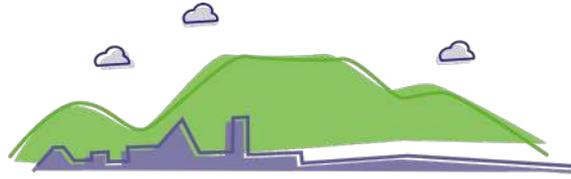
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After volunteering the young people would then have a time of reflection and learning.

The six weeks covered topics including creation, Abraham and the people of God, Jesus' ministry, Jesus' death and resurrection, the Church and the new creation.

Each topic had activities, a video input and a time of discussion together on the topic. The evening also included prayer together.

This was all followed by a weekend away at Bolton Abbey. This included fun activities, but also had time for the young people to think through how they might help their communities, and invited them to make their own response to Jesus and to plan what their own worshipping community might look like.



# Barnabas

- **Confident in our mission** - supporting churches to become confident in their purpose, and able to use their buildings, finances and time to achieve this.
- **Confident in our future** - ensuring the diocese becomes sustainable, building on the work of the last few years to be efficient as well as effective.
- **Confident in our leadership** - giving support around leadership for everyone involved in serving in our churches.
- **Confident in our witness** - encouraging support for all to be confident in living and telling the good news of Jesus in a rapidly changing world, particularly reaching children and young people.

**These four strategic pillars provide a structure and a focus for our vision. The pillars ensure we can align efforts through effective communication and implementation of our priorities.**

Our strategy, rooted in the idea of encouraging confidence, is known in the diocese simply as **Barnabas**, and is funded in partnership with the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB). The programme has clear missional objectives with a designated programme team in place to oversee delivery.

Our strategy framework gives us an approach which allows parishes to do what works in their context, and which also gives space for the

integration of further ideas. This is not a fixed plan; rather, it is a clear direction and framework which allows for innovation, discernment and for the Holy Spirit to move. The next Diocesan Bishop will have a key role to play in taking this forward, building on and encouraging the work God is already doing.

# 4. Our hopes and challenges

## Missional

The Diocese of Leeds serves a population of approximately 2.6 million people, yet our worshipping community numbers around 32,000. This stark contrast highlights both the scale of our mission field and the urgency of our calling: To bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to far more people across our diocese. The need to reach beyond our current congregations is evident, and we are committed to supporting parishes and communities in discovering fresh ways of sharing Jesus within their local contexts.

Whilst the overall challenge remains consistent, the reasons and the responses of churches can vary widely as they adapt to the challenges of their own particular contexts: Rural isolation; declining and ageing communities; urban centres with transient populations; comfortable suburban boroughs; or places where Christianity is a minority faith. Nevertheless, we remain full of hope.

We recognise that many churches are eager to proclaim the gospel and serve their neighbourhoods, but often face administrative and practical burdens that limit their capacity for mission. Our strategic aim is to lighten these loads and remove obstacles, enabling local church communities to release their energy and creativity for outreach.

By improving systems (for example safeguarding dashboards and access to funding portals), providing practical help and offering training and development, we seek to empower parishes to focus on their core calling—bearing witness to Christ and nurturing faith in everyday life.

A significant focus for us is on children and young people. We believe that nurturing the next generation is vital for the future health and growth of the church and there is much for us to do to increase the reach and depth of both our activity in the parishes and support from our diocesan teams. Investment in youth and children's work and training has already produced positive outcomes in several areas, with emerging leaders, growing church attendance among younger groups, and innovative ministries taking root. We are committed to building on this momentum and look forward to seeing even greater transformation in the years ahead as we seek ongoing strategic investment. We are working closely with the Growing Faith initiative as well as supporting a number of learning communities. We are successfully running both Intern and Mission Apprentice schemes which are bearing real fruit in both discipling young people but also in raising up the next generation of leaders.



### Supporting those who work with children and young people

Over 50 people who work with children and young people gathered at Christ Church Skipton recently for the first TEND event of 2025. TEND events are run by the diocesan Children, Young People and Families Team, and aim to **thank** those involved in ministry with children and young people, **equip** them in that work, provide opportunities for **networking** and set people up for what they will **do** next. The events aim to encourage those involved in this important area of work, building confidence to support their ministry.

[Read the story - click here](#)





## Sorted: A church for young people goes outdoors

### Outdoor fun in the Dales

Archery, climbing and night walks were among the activities for a group of young people who have spent four fun-filled days in the Dales. Sorted, which is a BMO Fresh Expression of church in North-East Bradford, had a successful residential at Scargill House just before school restarted.

There was slip-and-slide in the sunshine and karaoke laughs in the evening giving everyone a chance to shine and feel involved.

It meant that some who would not be able to get away in the summer had a great adventure and for others an opportunity to be away from home for the first time.

Sorted's leader, Revd Canon Tracy Milne, said: "It's been a fantastic few days and lots of time for fun and conversations while we were on walks or playing games or round the bonfire. We kept them busy with lots of activities and lots to choose – something for everyone. We also had teaching from the Sorted team every day helping our young people to consider God moving in their lives and how they might respond."



Across the diocese, we have witnessed growth in a number of areas (68 new worshipping communities were formed in 2024), each a testimony to faithful ministry and targeted investment. For example, previous funding streams such as the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) and our current partnership with the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board have enabled new projects and revitalised existing ones. We have planted a brand new church in the centre of Bradford, turning a number of nightclubs into a thriving place of worship.

### Fountains Church: Transformation from nightclubs complete | Bradford Telegraph and Argus

We have also intentionally planted and grafted in a number of locations across the diocese and we continue to plan and pray about many more. The stories emerging from these investments reflect lives changed, communities engaged, and new disciples made. We are collecting and sharing these accounts both to inspire and inform future strategy, ensuring that best practice and effective models are replicated where possible.

St John's Bowling is one of our resourcing churches in the heart of Bradford. With a vision to see Bradford transformed by the love and power of Jesus they provide support in a wide range of areas, including partnering with Narcotics Anonymous.



### *A second chance at life*

*Addiction had a dark grip on my life; I could never seem to break free from it, and something was always missing. I tried to fill that void with drugs, women, money, people-pleasing, etc., but nothing worked. I was homeless on the streets and in and out of prison for around 27 years of my life, I started drugs at the age of 13. At 40, I realized I needed to do something different, so I gave my life to Jesus. It was at this point I knew He had always been right there with me, and He is the reason I am alive today. I am now 20 months drug-free, studying at university to be a counsellor, and living with a second chance at life.*

Danny – part of the church family at St John's Bowling

We are committed to growth in every context, whether that be in a busy multi-cultural parish, a suburban town, or a smaller rural community where the church is the one place where people can gather. We hold all of these differences together as an opportunity to provide witness across the whole spectrum of the Church of England.

Alongside these missional opportunities, we are deeply committed to the pursuit of racial justice. We acknowledge the need for intentional action to address inequalities and to model the reconciling love of Christ in every context. Our vision is for a diocese where every person—regardless of background or ethnicity—can find belonging, affirmation, and opportunity within the life of the church. By embedding racial justice into our missional priorities, we seek not only to reflect the diversity of our wider community, but to witness to the inclusive nature of God's kingdom. We have ambitious plans, underpinned by national church funding (over £750k) and the appointment of a Racial Justice Officer to work in a number of areas. This includes partnership with the University of Leeds as well as working with schools.

In summary, our mission is both broad and focused—broad in its ambition to reach the millions

who have yet to encounter Christ, and focused in its determination to support those on the frontlines, invest in future generations, learn from our successes, and embody justice.

In addition to these priorities, we recognise the profound missional opportunities and challenges posed by the call to environmental stewardship. As a diocese, we are committed to the Church of England's carbon net zero strategy, seeking to care for God's creation as an integral part of our discipleship and witness. Our journey towards net zero carbon emissions is both a spiritual and practical undertaking: It calls us to model sustainable living, inspire change within our communities, and advocate for the flourishing of all creation. This work brings its own challenges—requiring investment, creative adaptation of our buildings and practices, and a willingness to learn together. Several of our churches, some with support from national funding, are well on the way to net-zero carbon emissions, as are many of our schools. We are committed to the A ROCHA eco church campaign, with 215 of our churches actively working towards an award. Of these, 110 churches are already at Gold, Silver and Bronze level. We have a network of environment champions who ensure the missional opportunities are not lost.



### **Gold Eco Church - St Mary's**

Our diocesan desire to combat climate change is well illustrated at St Mary's, Embsay with Eastby. One of our first Gold Eco Churches, St Mary's earned that award in May 2023 based on people's commitment to protecting our God-given planet. Diana Linford, its Parish Environment Officer explained "creation and the environment are strongly embedded in our Worship, including in our prayers and sermons. Services throughout the season of Creationtide have an Eco theme. We have a strong Eco Group and an active Parish Environment Officer and our church newsletter always includes an Eco Tip."

The future matters, and St Mary's goal is to be Net Carbon Zero by the end of 2025 and has changed from gas to electric heating. It has already ensured its roof and windows are sound. The simple things of church life are also ecofriendly, such as buying only recycled toilet paper and non-harmful cleaning products. The churchyard is managed sensitively with bird and bat boxes, a bug hotel and hedgehog shelter. Swathes of wildflowers are left uncut. St Mary's also looks beyond its boundaries and is a Fairtrade Church with its toilets, taps and bins twinned with global partners, and more locally acting as a Food Bank collection point.

## 2026 Diocesan Budget

The 2026 budget estimates income of **£20.2m against expenditure of £22.4m**, with the deficit funded by the use of diocesan reserves and property sales. Other Income includes £4.0m from the National Church.



## How each £100 is spent across the diocese



In common with many dioceses across the country, we face the ongoing challenge of operating with a deficit budget. In this part of the country there are macro-economic challenges resulting from historic underinvestment and the social challenges that this has created. However, we are resolute in our commitment not to let this define us or give us excuses not to take action. We recognise that we must be both prudent and imaginative in our approach to financial stewardship. In recent years we have made significant savings across the diocese, carefully reviewing our expenditures and identifying areas where efficiencies can be achieved without compromising the quality or reach of our ministry.

Even as we have tightened our belts, we have also been intentional about increasing our revenue streams. We are focused on ensuring our property assets are used well to generate returns in both the short and medium term, as well as using education generated income to cover support costs. Central to our approach has been the need to act as good stewards. Alongside this there are positive conversations about giving: Recognising that generosity within our congregations is the primary driver of our financial health. We continue

to encourage open, honest dialogue about giving, ensuring that it is rooted in discipleship and a shared vision for the future of our church.

Our Parish Share Agreements remain a cornerstone of our financial model, underpinned by a commitment to fairness, transparency, and partnership. By working closely with parishes, we strive to ensure that each community understands both their responsibilities and the support available to them, enabling sustainable ministry at the local level.

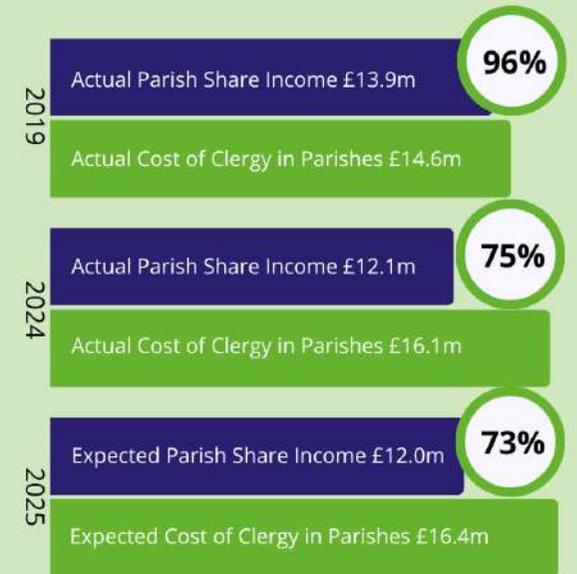


The scale at which we operate presents real opportunity. It allows us to operate with professional competence and capacity as we seek to share learning from the wide range of contexts in which we work. This extends across areas like property, church buildings and safeguarding into other areas of mission like racial justice, climate action and Interfaith. Seeing what works well and promoting this whilst using our size and resource to leverage wider benefits through economies of scale is something we actively encourage. Far from being a limitation, the scale and complexity of the diocese drives innovation and enables us to collaborate effectively to solve challenges. We are a positive voice for change with the national church, seeking to use our people's skills and experience to make a difference both now and in the future.

Nationally, we benefit from substantial support, particularly through initiatives such as LInC, which provide a vital lifeline for ensuring ministry can flourish across the whole Diocese. This funding not only augments our own efforts but also brings fresh opportunities for innovation and growth, allowing us to pilot new models of ministry and resource areas of greatest need.

A key focus for us remains the careful deployment of our resources—ensuring that every decision is made with discernment and a long-term perspective. Our ongoing commitment is to face these financial realities with faith, transparency, and a readiness to adapt, confident that wise stewardship will unlock new possibilities for the flourishing of our diocese.

In 2019 Parish Share contributions covered 96% of the cost of clergy in our parishes. The lower level of Parish Share received post COVID-19 means that income alone, even with additional revenue from Diocesan investments and property sales, is insufficient to cover clergy costs. Therefore, to deliver the level of ministry we desire, we are increasingly reliant on utilising our limited reserves and proceeds from property sales to bridge the gap each year.



## 5. The next Bishop of Leeds

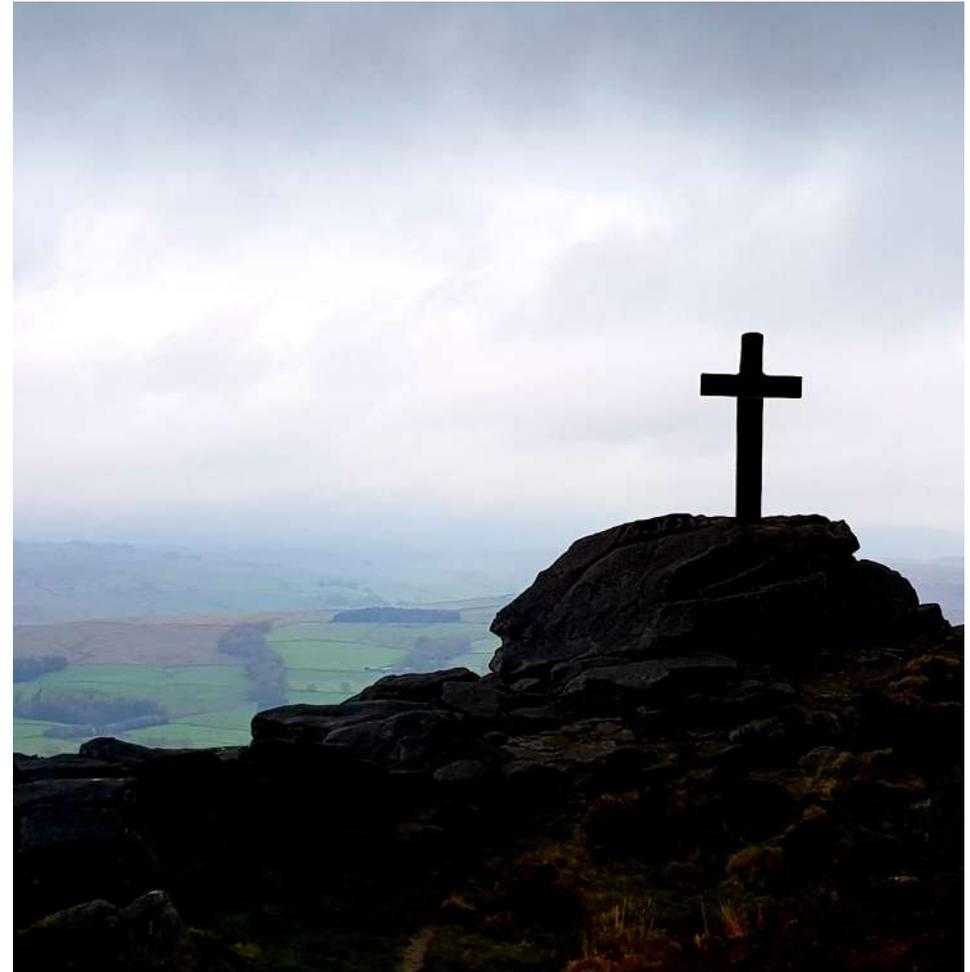
As we look ahead, the diocese is shaping its future around several foundational priorities. Vision for growth remains at the heart of our mission, with a particular emphasis on reaching a new generation. Recognising the importance of engaging with those who have not traditionally found a home within the church, we are committed to fostering spaces that welcome and nurture younger people and those from a wider array of backgrounds. This holds true regardless of whether the church was built last year, last century, or 1,500 years ago.

Our structure, though large and appearing complex, is carefully designed to keep us grounded in local realities. The area scheme empowers local teams, who, while operating within the broader diocesan vision, retain the ability to respond creatively and effectively to the unique needs of their communities. This balance between unity and local autonomy is essential for maintaining coherence and fostering innovation at every level. The diocese is not simple and we believe the next Bishop of Leeds will need to be someone not only with the sense of God's call but also with the practical experience of working at scale across complexity. We seek someone who has the skills and knowledge to ensure the diocese can meet its potential. This is not a small or comfortable role.

Welcoming all is not merely a value, but a living practice woven into the fabric of our diocesan life. We recognise the richness that comes from engaging a wide spectrum of perspectives, especially in conversations inspired by Living in Love and Faith (LLF). Our aspiration is that every member, regardless of background or viewpoint, feels heard, respected, and integral to the shared journey of faith.

Safeguarding and the pursuit of justice are central to our ethos. We are resolutely committed to creating safe and nurturing environments for all who participate in the life of the diocese. Alongside this, the commitment to racial justice and continuous improvement in our practices stands as a testament to our desire for a more just and equitable church.

Environmental stewardship is increasingly integral to our mission. Recognising our responsibility to care for God's creation, we are actively engaged in working towards Carbon Net Zero. This commitment permeates our decisions and aspirations, ensuring that our actions serve both present needs and the wellbeing of future generations.



# Key attributes

Against this backdrop, the next Bishop of Leeds will be called to provide visionary leadership. The Bishop will be someone who not only embraces the complexity and richness of our diocese but also possesses the courage and creativity to guide us through strategic change. As we continue to build on the foundations already laid, our hope is for a leader who will inspire, unite, and equip us as we journey together towards 2030 and beyond, ever focused on growth, renewal, and faithful service. In discerning the next Bishop of Leeds, certain qualities emerge as essential to the flourishing of the diocese in the years ahead.

- First and foremost is the capacity to create and share vision—an ability not only to perceive the broad landscape of change but to inspire hope and confidence in God for people in every context of our diocese - rural, urban, dynamic city-centre, post-industrial, outer estate and suburban. Such vision must be accompanied by accessibility and approachability: a wholehearted embrace of diversity that welcomes every voice, especially those historically underrepresented or on the margins of church life. The Bishop must embody a generous spirit, acting with humility and integrity to cultivate spaces where every person can feel seen, valued, and engaged in shaping the church's future.
- This is a diocese where a range of views are held on issues of sexuality as well as church tradition. All are valued and the diocese is stronger as a result of people feeling able to express their views and to still remain in relationship with one another. Our new Bishop should build on this, ensuring that the diocese remains united and not divided.
- Equally important is relational wisdom. The Diocese of Leeds is a tapestry of urban, suburban, and rural communities, each with unique character and challenges. The Bishop's presence must be felt in every setting, marked by a commitment to listening deeply and responding compassionately. Collaborative working, humility, and the nurturing of others' gifts—both lay and ordained—are vital in forging a culture of shared leadership and trust.
- The next Bishop must also be courageous, ready to guide the diocese through complex and sometimes contentious conversations with grace and conviction. Our hope is for someone with a steadfast commitment to acting in a way which speaks to the church's integrity and its witness in the wider world.
- We believe the Bishop should be a pastor who cares for their flock, and nurtures resilience, adaptability and hope. This should be rooted in their own discipleship journey, with their commitment to self-care, prayer and study being evident. We would love them to prioritise well-being and supporting others in their vocations, whilst sharing God's love and the message of his Kingdom right across our diocese. We desire a bishop who will help equip the diocese to thrive amidst uncertainty, fostering a community ever attuned to the call of faithful service and renewal.
- Support for women in ministry remains a significant commitment within the Diocese. We have 175 female members of clergy (132 who are stipendiary). Advisors dedicated to women's ministry are present in each area, and family-friendly working policies for all clergy are actively supported. The next Bishop must be ready to ordain both women and men, honouring the Five Guiding Principles and supporting the flourishing of parishes that seek extended episcopal oversight. Working hospitably and constructively with Bishops who provide extended episcopal oversight to the 26 resolution parishes will be essential, ensuring that the diocese continues to be a place of mutual respect and collaboration.
- Alongside these qualities, the next Bishop will be called to serve as a public advocate, able to represent the Diocese of Leeds with clarity and compassion on both local and national stages. This role requires not only theological depth but also the communication skills and capacity to engage thoughtfully with contemporary issues, offering leadership that extends beyond church walls to embrace the wider community.



# Support

We have spoken much about the joys and challenges of this diocese and we do not underestimate the challenge for anyone who is called to lead us. What we can assure you is that we have built a culture where all who come and work with us are well supported from the outset. Both relationally and professionally this is a place where support is real and timely.

There is a significant range of experience, both from within the church and outside, across the senior teams with a real sense of a team working together for the good of the Kingdom. We have invested significant effort into designing structures and processes that are truly functional, ensuring they serve the needs of our clergy and congregations effectively. This commitment is ongoing; our teams consistently review and refine these frameworks so that they remain adaptable, robust, and responsive to the evolving needs of our diocesan community. The Church House team is well regarded and has a clear focus on supporting parishes and the work of the Bishop. There are skilled and competent individuals across every team and a commitment to continuous improvement and effectiveness. We are consequently able to provide the Bishop with professional support in depth. The size of the diocese also means that the Bishop can benefit from the richness of sharing and support through senior colleagues on a scale that few dioceses can offer.

Safeguarding is a collective responsibility throughout the Diocese of Leeds, with clear commitment made at senior levels to prioritise this in terms of time and resourcing. Our resolute commitment is to cultivate environments where everyone, especially children and vulnerable adults, experiences safety and care.

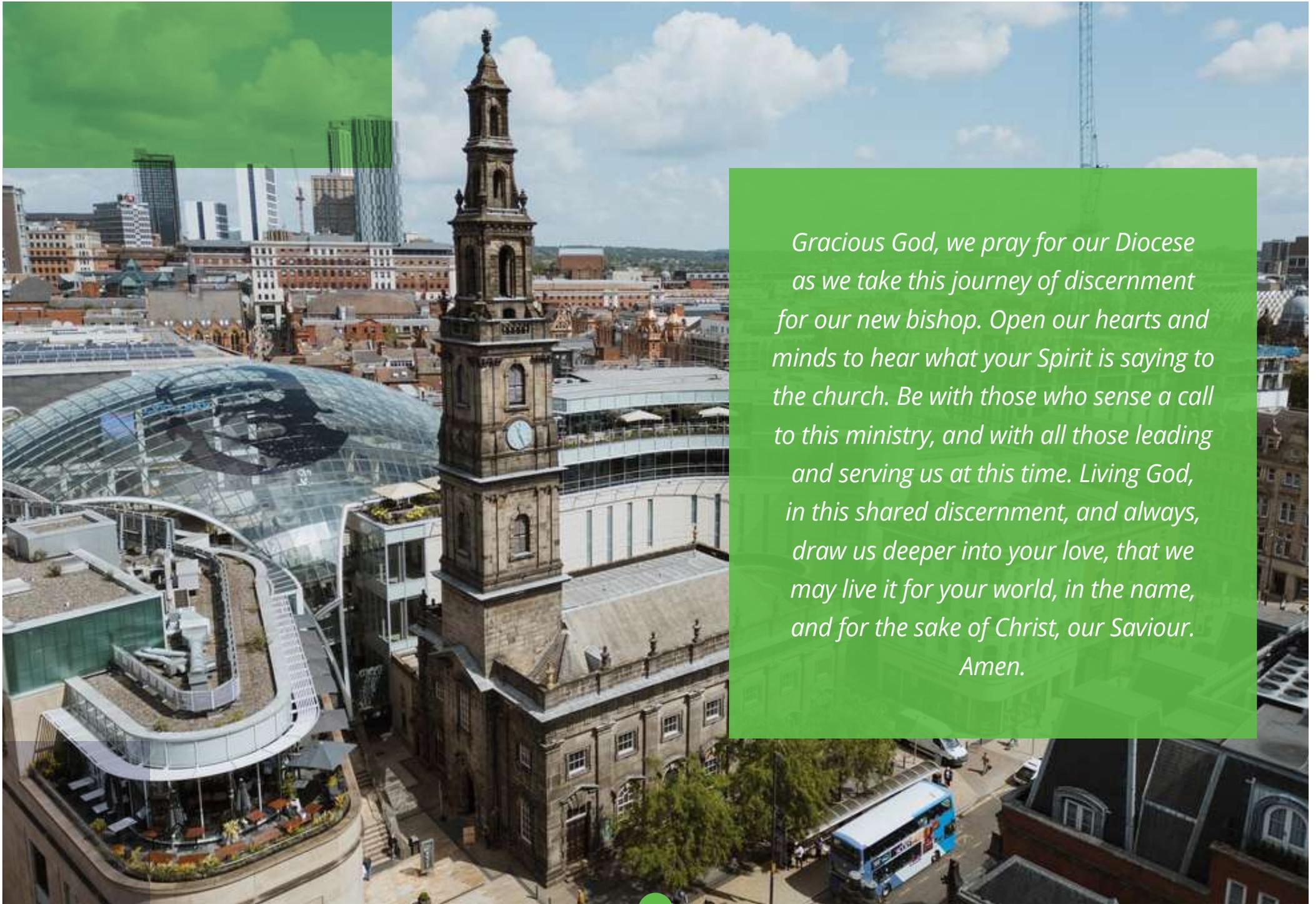
To support the Bishop in their specific responsibilities for safeguarding is the Safeguarding Team which comprises of dedicated and experienced professionals. Their

work includes handling casework, managing safeguarding agreements and delivering comprehensive training across the diocese. Our team is made up of the Director of Safeguarding who is the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, four Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers, an assistant adviser and administrative support.

Safeguarding leadership is woven into the fabric of our senior team's culture and practice. It is a standing agenda item at Bishop's Staff meetings and is reported regularly to the Diocesan Board of Finance. We closely collaborate with the National Safeguarding Team through the Regional safeguarding lead, embracing continual learning and the pursuit of best practice.

To ensure transparency and accountability, our safeguarding work is scrutinised by the independent Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, whose members are drawn from statutory and voluntary agencies.

In addition to diocesan structures and safeguarding teams, the Bishop is supported with their day to day administration by a dedicated team based at the Bishop's residence, Hollin House, in north Leeds. This highly experienced group provides invaluable administrative assistance, manages the Bishop's diary, and offers support for events. Their professionalism and commitment ensure the smooth running of the Bishop's engagements, allowing the Bishop to focus on leadership, ministry and representing the diocese at every level.



*Gracious God, we pray for our Diocese as we take this journey of discernment for our new bishop. Open our hearts and minds to hear what your Spirit is saying to the church. Be with those who sense a call to this ministry, and with all those leading and serving us at this time. Living God, in this shared discernment, and always, draw us deeper into your love, that we may live it for your world, in the name, and for the sake of Christ, our Saviour. Amen.*



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

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Diocese of Leeds