

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of Leeds

Loving. Living. Learning.

YOUR DIOCESE



From Richmond to Barnsley, Huddersfield to Wakefield and Bradford to the Dales, our clergy reach out into the hearts of the diverse communities served by the Church of England in every parish.

Our unique diocese has three cathedrals, three minsters and 440 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 237 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 West Yorkshire, the west of North Yorkshire, some of South Yorkshire and parts of County Durham, Cumbria and Lancashire.

In 2023 our Area Bishops were the Rt Revd Tony Robinson (Wakefield), the Rt Revd Smitha Prasadam (Huddersfield), the Rt Revd Toby Howarth (Bradford), the Rt Revd Arun Arora (Leeds) and the Rt Revd Anna Eltringham (Ripon).

FOREWORD BY BISHOP NICK



Our diocese entered its tenth year in 2023 and as always, remarkable people continued to be bold in embracing change to help us grow worship, prayer and service.

I am deeply indebted to all colleagues – clergy and lay – for their proven commitment to our still young diocese and to the parishes, which are the bedrock of our service.

This report focuses on the work of dedicated staff in a wonderful diocese, with wonderful places and people, and in 2023 we were joined by two significant new arrivals, the Rt Revd Smitha Prasadam, Bishop of Huddersfield and the Rt Revd Anna Eltringham, Bishop of Ripon.

Each of them brought unique gifts, experience and expertise which are benefitting their Episcopal Areas and the diocese as a whole. I would like to repeat my welcome to them and also note our fond farewell to the Ven Peter Townley, former Archdeacon of Pontefract, who moved from that role of 15 years, to become an Assistant Minister in the Diocese of York. We have not let Peter go entirely, as he remains an Archdeacon Emeritus of our diocese.

Since day one, our shared vision has been to build confident Christians, who are part of growing churches and transforming communities. In 2023, this took a major step forward with the receipt of national church funding for Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence - our strategic and unifying programme to support mission and ministry in the coming decade.

I began by referencing the need to be bold in the face of change and challenges and, as the world was still recovering from the impact of the Covid Pandemic, 2023 brought new and shocking conflict and strife, be that in Ukraine, Gaza or Sudan. Sudan is one of our link dioceses and we hold its people, and all those caught in the horror of war, very much in our prayers.

We know the future, at home or abroad, will always hold challenges as we seek to be faithful to God and the Church, sacrificially serving our communities and reaching out with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Yet, we look forward to the next ten years with joy, confidence and anticipation. For Christ has risen; the Spirit has come; and together we are his Body.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Baines'.

Rt Revd Nick Baines

BISHOP OF LEEDS

STRATEGY

The Diocese of Leeds has a vision for confident Christians, who are part of growing churches and transforming communities. We want to be faithful to our calling to be good news, share the Gospel and serve with steadfast purpose the communities in which we live.

In 2023 Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence became the strategic priority for the Diocese of Leeds, providing a strong framework to support our progress. Whilst the majority of the important work within the diocese sits outside of the small Barnabas programme team, this new approach enables us to drive forward significant change, while maintaining progress towards our vision.

As we seek to live as confident Christians we want to:

- **Be confident in our mission** - support for churches to become confident in their use of their building, financial and time resources; creating more opportunities to be good news in our communities.
- **Be confident in our future** - the Project enables us to make deployment decisions in a mission led way that can give clergy and churches the confidence that the Diocese is committed to their thriving.
- **Be confident in our leadership** - giving significant and specific support around leadership and mentoring in the church, both for clergy in their roles, but also for church teams moving forward in mission.
- **Be 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.

In 2023 the diocese received initial funding of £3.9m from the national church for the first stage of Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence. A core team was established and is now building the key parts of the programme, including personal support through coaching and mentoring, courses and peer support through learning communities.

That funding contained £1m for Every Good Work (EGW), a Wakefield-based project to boost the number of young Christian disciples in the city. Three youth workers have been recruited and everything is on track. EGW starts with working with young people in schools and encouraging their discipleship, alongside church-based community engagement.

Barnabas also received funding to grow projects in Leeds, Huddersfield and Ripon, as part of our commitment to deliver diocesan strategy over the next 9 years. We anticipate further bids from 2025 on to support this important work on behalf of our people and parishes.

In delivering our work, diocesan staff hold to our values – and commit to acting in the following ways:

- **Loving** – we will celebrate success and appreciate the commitment of colleagues. Leaders will remain accessible and visible.
- **Living** – we will be present and personally engaged in our work and the work of others in Church House.
- **Learning** – we will be open to exploring new ideas, to listening to feedback and to learning from things which go well, and not so well.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIOCESAN SECRETARY



2023 saw significant progress as we built our capacity to deliver our priorities for the diocese in the next decade and beyond.

Against a backdrop of significant financial pressure shared by society as a whole, officers of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) worked hard to find funding streams, deliver savings and maximise income by making the best use of our resources.

A major step forward was made with a successful bid for national church funding to support our Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence project. Barnabas is the exciting new way we are putting our diocesan vision into practice and is part of our common and constant effort to support and encourage everyone in our 450 parishes during testing economic times.

We recognise the tireless efforts of clergy and the many volunteers who give huge amounts of time to serve the church and their local community. We are here for them and we could not do anything without their commitment, for which we are very grateful.

This report highlights just a small amount of the work what is undertaken by both those who work for the DBF and the wider diocese in either a paid or voluntary role.

Across every DBF team staff do their very best to support the delivery of the diocesan vision and strategy. I am enormously grateful for all their efforts, and all those who look to support the work of the diocese. Particular thanks go to those who serve as Trustees and who sit on a number of important committees which scrutinise and oversee our work. Without them we could not function effectively.

2024 will be when much of the planning moves into implementation and I am confident we will meet the challenge.

JONATHAN WOOD

DIOCESAN SECRETARY

PROGRESS

2023 saw many diocesan initiatives take shape and strengthen in a year marked by new faces, new ideas and forward-looking action. Here are some achievements driven by our vision of Confident Christians, Growing Churches, Transforming Communities.

Children, Young People and Families

Special events to thank and encourage those working with children, young people and families in our parishes took place in each of our three cathedrals. These TEND events attracted 117 people in a year which saw the launch of a new mission toolkit to help grow young worship which was supported by well-attended training sessions.



Environment

Saving Creation: A Net Zero Carbon Action Plan, was approved by Diocesan Synod to provide an inspiring schedule of improvement works for clergy property, schools, churches, diocesan offices and land management. Work continued towards becoming a Silver Eco Diocese and 28 individual Eco Church awards were achieved with St Mary's, Embsay, gaining the first Gold Award in the diocese.

Ministry and Mission

A record 25 people signed up for our Spiritual Directors Training Course. 14 people were mentored in their third year, and graduated to serve on the Diocesan Spiritual Directors team. Journeying with Jesus, the online diocesan Rhythm of Life Lent Course, proved very popular. People newly arrived from Hong Kong in 2023 were warmly welcomed, thanks to dedicated parish-based mission.



PROGRESS



Communications

A new diocesan website was created in 2023 to support the growth of our online presence. Built with our users in mind, its design and navigation have gained positive feedback from our parishes and beyond. There was also positive media engagement with the announcements of the new Bishops of Huddersfield and Ripon, the Rt Revd Smitha Prasadam and the Rt Revd Anna Eltringham.

Education

Education Relationships with our 237 schools reached a high with 99 per cent signing up for our service level agreement. That agreement generated an income of £230k in 2023. The Education Team were advisers for more than 80 headteacher appraisals, which generated income of £32k. The team is privileged to support some 64,000 young people in our schools, working with thousands of talented people who transform lives.



Property

In accordance with the resolution passed by Diocesan Synod in 2017 regarding the use of vacant houses, the diocese has continued to work with two organisations to make available up to three vacant houses that support refugees and others in crisis. Fixflo, a new reporting system in 2023 for repairs to diocesan properties has been well received by clergy due to its simple efficiency.

PROGRESS

People

The People Team continued to support a number of parishes, ranging from straightforward queries to complex cases. The People Team have managed to assist multiple parishes in avoiding detrimental outcomes. As part of the parish support work, the team have expanded the resources on the HR section of the diocesan website, and plan to continue to develop them.



Safeguarding

Significant changes regarding training processes were introduced in 2023 to increase effective results in this important aspect of church life. Hard work improved our training offer and as a result the team ran an increased number and variety of courses. The diocese also piloted the MyConcern system for the National Safeguarding Team, demonstrating our commitment to using technology for safeguarding initiatives.

Care of our buildings

Our Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) supported churches with their many varied plans to restore, repair or improve church buildings. It also organised a conference to launch the Churchyard Toolkit, as developed by the Diocesan Environment Group with input from DAC staff. The conference was a significant success, with high attendance and positive feedback.



PROGRESS



Stewardship

The Stewardship Team grew the Digital Giving project in 2023 when 82 contactless devices were allocated to churches all across the diocese. This helped parishes set up and manage a contactless giving device in their church, enabling everyone to contribute easily. The project has been a success, with £82,470 raised by contactless devices and £14,568 through online giving.

Barnabas

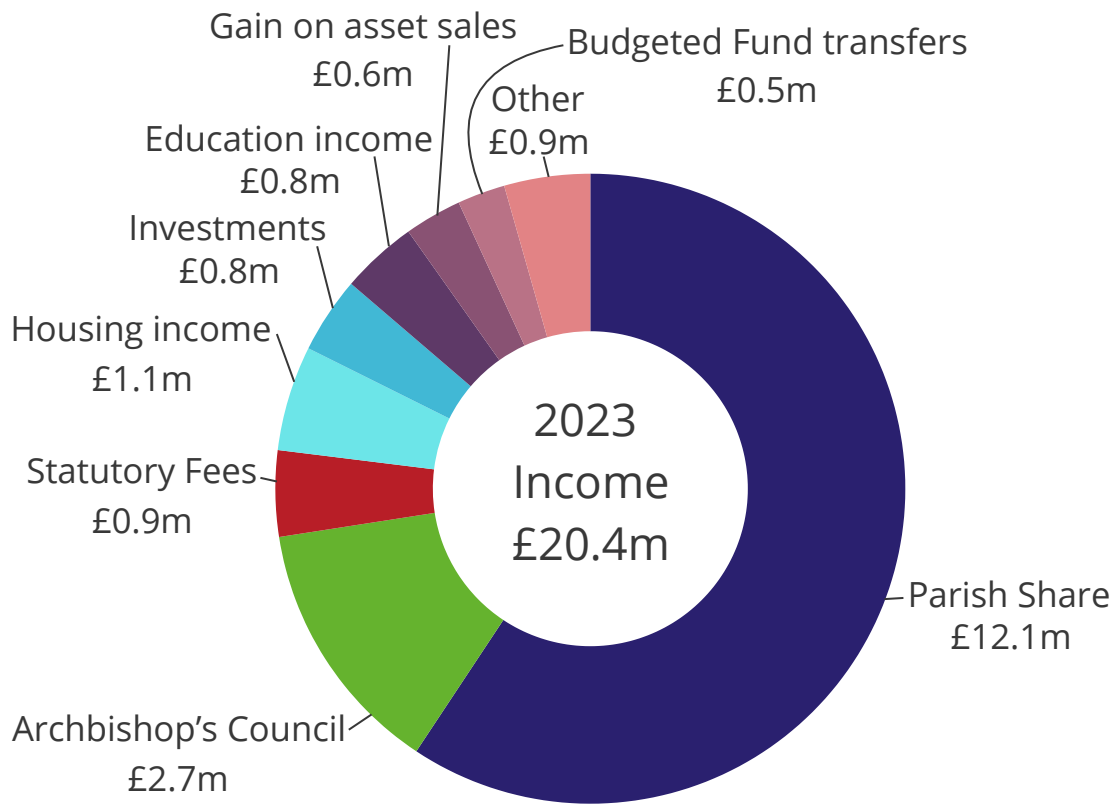
In the first year of Barnabas a number of early pieces of support were developed. The Bradford-founded Personal Growth and Leadership Course began its first diocese-wide pilot with over seventy participants. Over twenty clergy were encouraged in their leadership of mission through one of the first Barnabas-funded courses. Churches that receive national funding, along with churches starting new congregations, were nurtured through learning communities.



Parcevall Hall

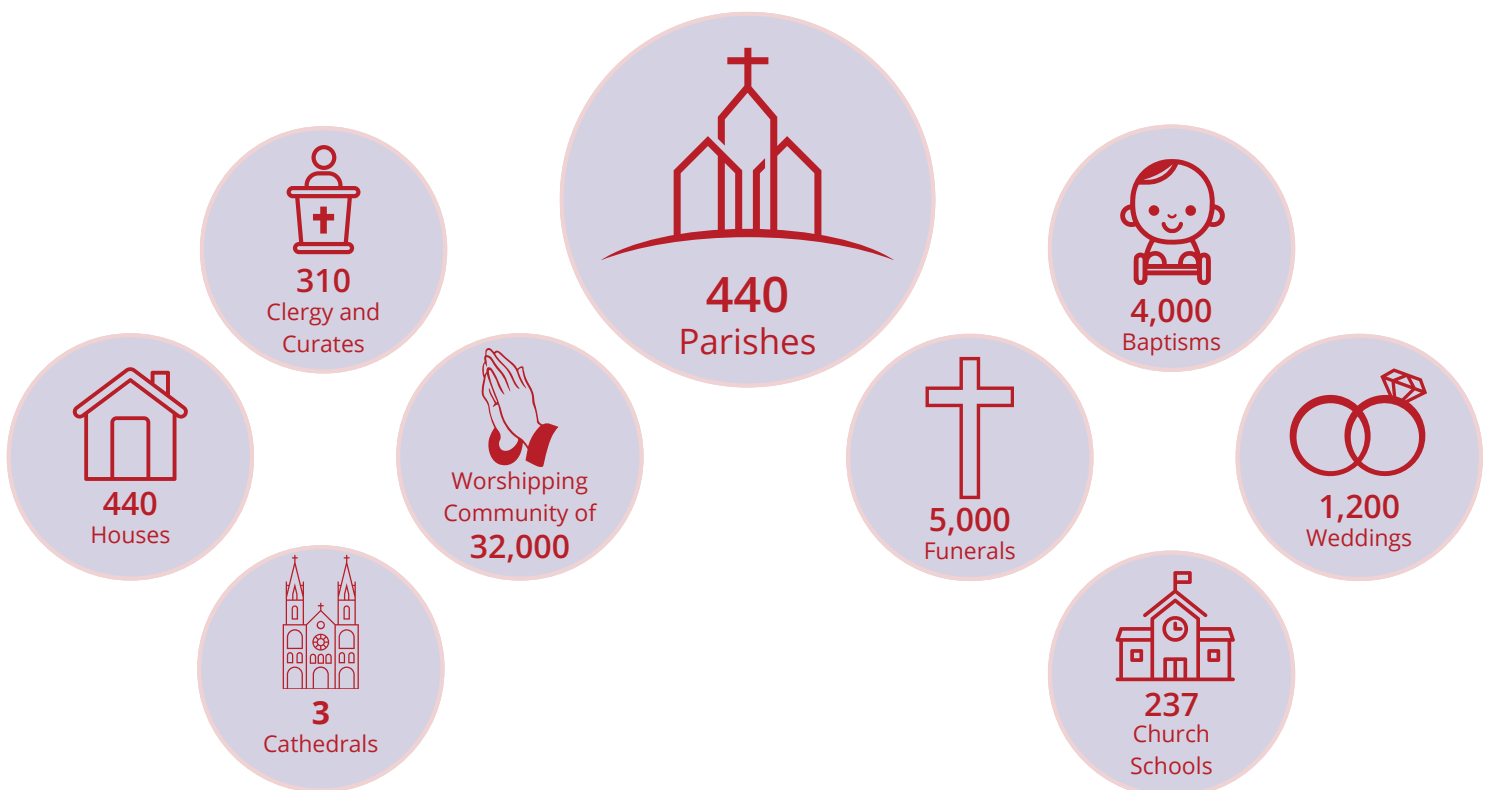
Parcevall Hall is the diocesan retreat house, set in 24 acres in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales. Dating from the 16th century, it has 17 bedrooms and beautiful public room and is ideal for silent retreats, study groups and holiday guests who can all enjoy the stunning gardens as well as the surrounding countryside. The hall also offers open events for those who prefer to be in new company in a relaxed setting.

INCOME

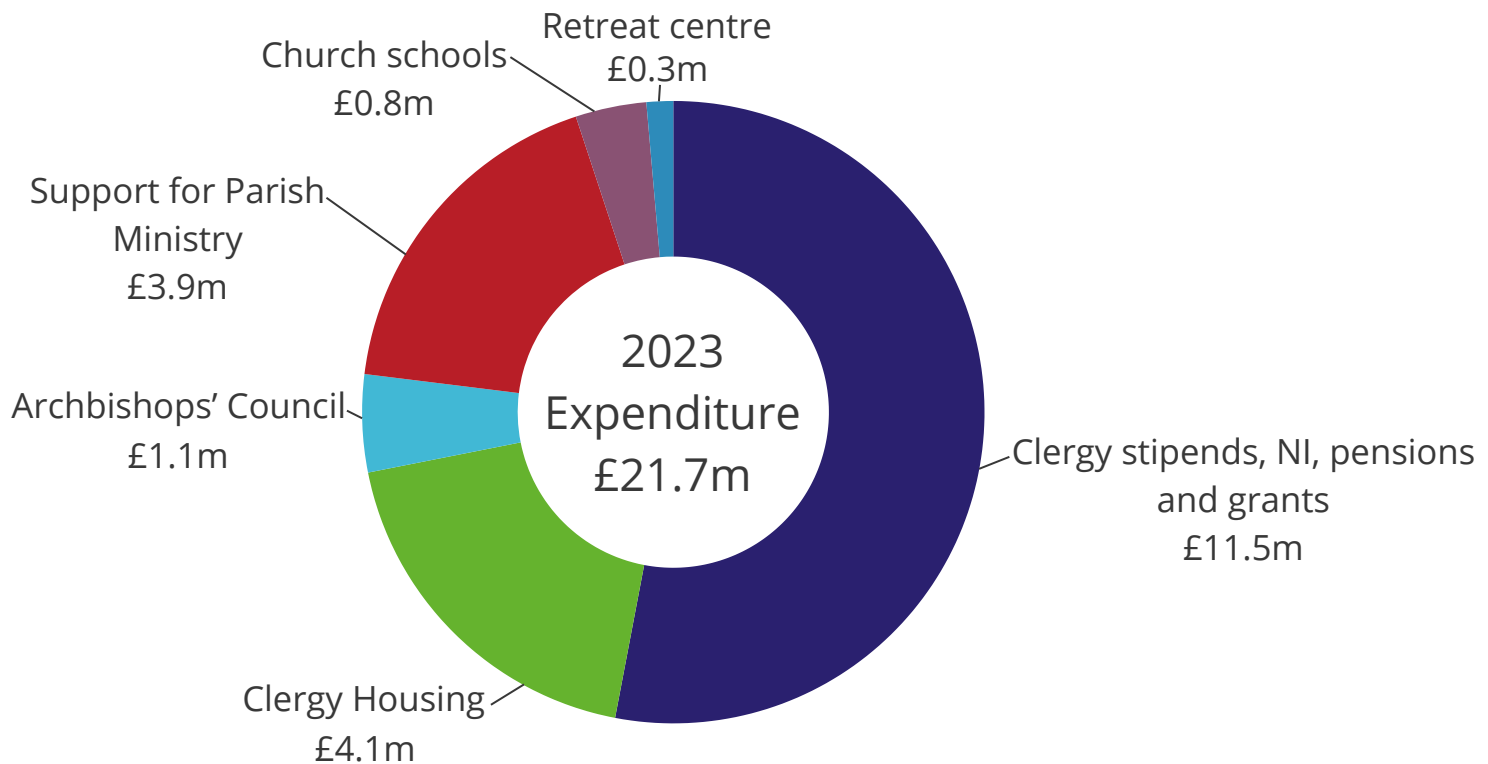


Our income comes from a variety of sources, but the largest by far is Parish Share. In 2023, share provided 60% of our income but remains £1.8m below 2019. We received £2.7m from the national church to support ministry in the most deprived communities.

Our income supports:



EXPENDITURE



For every **£100** of income, **£55** is spent on ministry in parishes, **£16** on clergy property, **£6** on ministry and mission, **£10** on parish and schools support, **£2** on retreat and outdoor centres, **£6** on shared central support costs and **£5** on national church and grants.

In order to support clergy and staff with a rising cost of living, we increased stipends and salaries by 5% in April 2023 and 6% in April 2024. The proportion of our budget spent on stipends, National Insurance, clergy pensions and housing has increased from 65% in 2018 to 71% in 2023.

In a tough economic climate, parish share, as in many dioceses, declined in real terms in 2023. As a result, our underlying deficit was £1.3m.

We continued to balance the books by selling properties, using reserves and reducing operating costs. This is not a long-term sustainable approach and we need to encourage generosity to shape parish ministry positively for the future.

“We look forward to the next ten years with joy, confidence and anticipation.”

Bishop Nick

STRUCTURE

The Church of England is the established church and HM The King is the Supreme Governor. It is organised into two provinces (Canterbury and York) and 42 dioceses. Each Diocese is a separate legal entity with a clear responsibility for a specific geographical area. The Diocese of Leeds, under the spiritual leadership of the Rt Revd Nick Baines, is divided into 21 deaneries, each with its own Deanery Synod. Within each parish there is a Parochial Church Council, which shares with the parish priest responsibility for the mission of the church in that place, in a similar way to how the Diocesan Bishop shares responsibilities with the Diocesan Synod.

Parochial Church Council (PCC)

The PCC is the elected governing body of an individual parish which broadly is the smallest pastoral area in the Church of England. Typically, each parish has one parish church. The PCC is made up of the incumbent as chair, the churchwardens and a number of elected and ex officio members. Each PCC is a charity and, in compliance with the Charities Act 2011, the majority of PCCs are currently exempt from registration with the Charity Commission.



Parishes

A benefice is a parish or group of parishes served by an incumbent who typically receives a stipend and use of a parsonage house from the Diocese for carrying out their duties. A deanery is a group of parishes over which an Area Dean has oversight and an archdeaconry is a group of deaneries for which an Archdeacon is responsible. The Diocese of Leeds has five Archdeacons.

GOVERNANCE

The Diocesan Synod, the statutory governing body of the Diocese, is an elected body drawn from across the Diocese with responsibility for setting the vision and strategy of the Diocese, guided by the Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance (LDBF). The Diocesan Synod membership is elected every three years, the last general elections having been April – June 2021. The Synod elects six of the 21 Trustees of the LDBF, and ratifies the nomination of a further five members. The Chair of the House of Clergy and the Chair of the House of Laity of the Diocesan Synod are ex-officio members of the Leeds DBF. The LDBF is a separate legal entity and has clear responsibilities under both company and charity law. Additionally, the LDBF is subject to the direction of the Synod in all its activities, unless such direction is not in accordance with the governing documents or statutory regulations.



Decision-making structure

The Board is the Standing Committee of the Synod and addresses the issues of strategies, policies and priorities (including all financial aspects) needed to implement the overall vision. It is accountable directly to the Synod and includes all the functions of the traditional statutory boards.

Each Episcopal Area Bishop is accountable to the Diocesan Bishop for the delivery of Mission and Ministry within the Area in line with delegated responsibilities laid down in Instruments and other formal measures.

The Diocesan Secretary is accountable for the functions of officers and employed staff in supporting parishes and Area Teams.



SHARING



Janet Edmond

Senior Stewardship Officer



Beth Vickers

Stewardship Officer



Jennifer Robinson

Parish Support Accountant

Thank you for your generous giving, which helps churches develop sustainable ministry, grow worship and transform communities.

Our Stewardship Team supports the wonderful diverse ministry and mission within the Diocese of Leeds. Strong Christian presence, love and care are possible thanks to gifts of time and money from those in our parishes. In turn, what is given financially is shared across the diocese fairly, meaning those who are able to give more, support those in greater need.

The team will help you in your journey towards building a generous church and deepening Christian discipleship.

To learn more, please scan this QR code to find how the team can help your church to move towards greater generosity and a deeper understanding of Christian stewardship.

Loving.
Living.
Learning.



VISION



The Diocese of Leeds has a vision for confident Christians, who are part of growing churches and transforming communities.

Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence is a fresh way in which the Diocese of Leeds is supporting churches to move forward in sustainable mission and ministry, underpinned by prayer.

Barnabas will provide dedicated help wherever it is needed, to people, parishes and communities across our diocese.

Please scan the QR code below to find out more.



Barnabas

ENCOURAGING CONFIDENCE

