



— Diocese of —
Hereford

Proclaiming Christ ✦ Growing Disciples

Impact Report 2023/24



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Welcome from our Bishop

Dear Friends,

This is our fourth impact report, and I am delighted to share this update with you about our achievements over the last year. Our Year of Faith in 2024 follows on from the encouragement of the Year of Prayer in 2023. The feedback from the Year of Prayer has been very positive. Many events were organised, both centrally and all across the diocese in local churches. We had some fantastic outside speakers in Pete Greig and Bishop John Pritchard. In December we were encouraged by a visit from the Archbishop of Canterbury and a team from Youth With a Mission and the Community of St. Anselm. This was one of those 'God incidences' where the archbishop's programme wonderfully meshed with ours. To hear of his prayer life and commitment to daily prayer was inspiring. I hope it offered encouragement of all that we are doing here in the diocese. I am so grateful to the diocesan team for all they did to organise these events throughout 2023.

My hope at the beginning of 2023 was that it would contribute to raising the spiritual temperature. My sense is that it has done that, for which I thank the Lord.

Our Year of Faith in 2024 is not an excuse to stop praying but a reminder that prayer is one of the central components of our diocesan strategy. We are still facing many challenges and demands not least of which is the need to address issues of Net Zero by 2030.

As we look to the future, we are moving to a practical focus on our strategic goals while continuing to listen to and support local parishes. Our strategy proposal lays out some of the early implementation of the plan which is about investing in additional people, processes and systems of support. This is about trying to make a difference in parishes, relieving clergy and volunteers of some of the challenges of compliance, seeking to refocus people on the work of mission and ministry to the wider communities in which we live.



We continue to invest in ministry, both maintaining the number and paying for frontline clergy whilst also developing the number of lay and volunteer ministries. I am encouraged by the work we've already achieved in 2023, commissioning nearly 120 lay volunteers.

There are always challenges to growing the Kingdom of God, but God provides what we are called to do. I have faith that God will continue to do that beyond 2024.

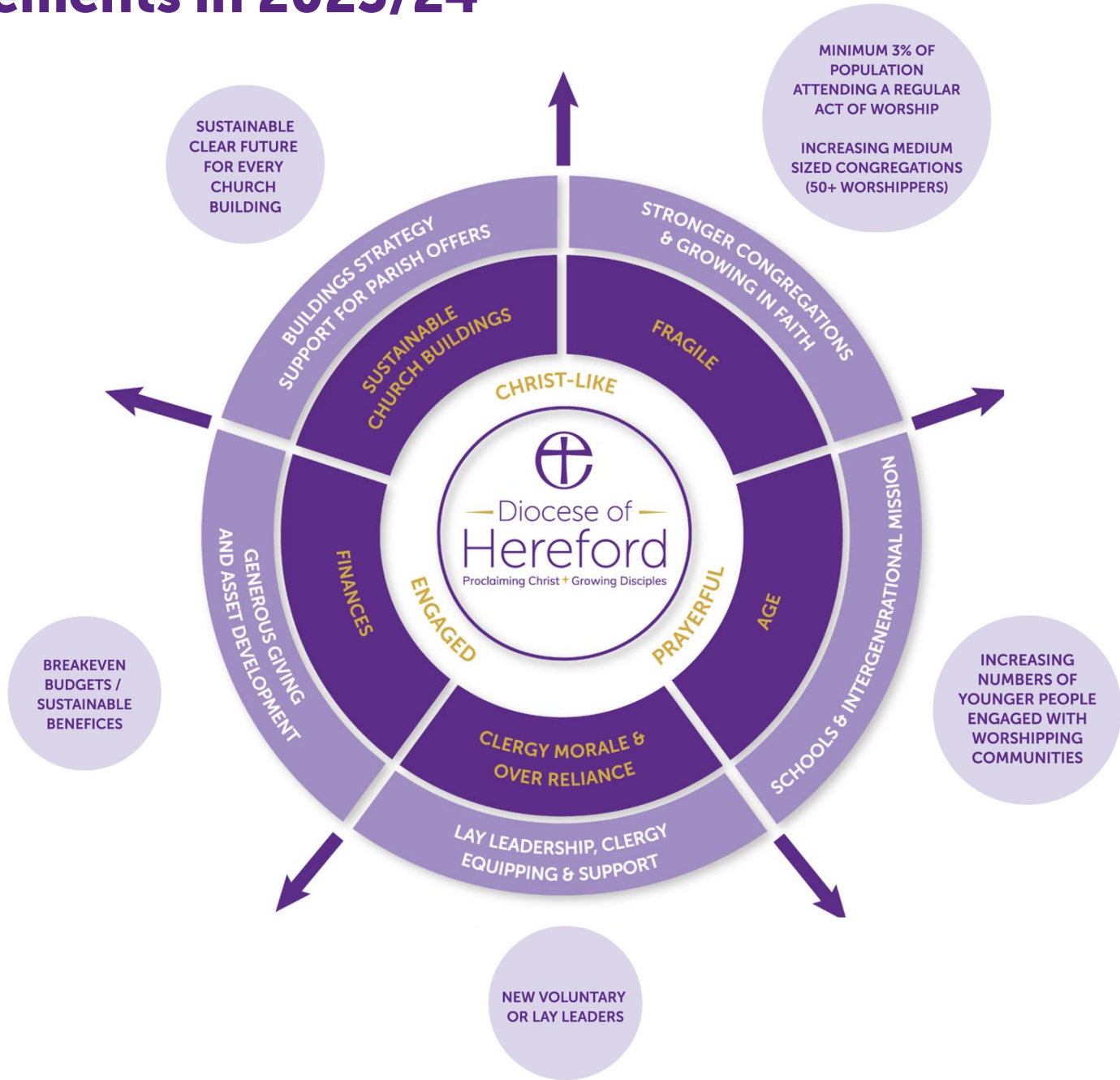
With best wishes,

Successes and achievements in 2023/24

A few words from our
Diocesan Secretary Sam Pratley



“
I am delighted to share with you some of our achievements and success, this is the work of our central diocesan team who quietly support the faithful ministry and work that happens in our many churches, schools and communities across our diocese. I hope that you enjoy reading this report.
”



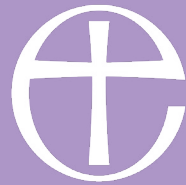
We are proud of our achievements: 2023 has been a year of challenge and opportunity but we have delivered a number of significant pieces of work and continue to strive for long term impact on land and property alongside our commitment to building a strong and sustainable central diocesan team.

This year, we have set out:

- 7 ambitions that we will aim to achieve by 2030 and started work to deliver on some of these goals.
- We continued to support our 344 parishes and 78 Church of England schools in the daily business of providing advice, encouragement and financial aid.
- We have made a number of key appointments to roles in our ministry and mission team alongside seeking national funding to create this additional capacity.
- We have successfully secured £457,630 from the national church for a pilot project in two locations which we will begin in late summer/early autumn 2024, depending on appointment to these new roles.

- Our Mission and Ministry team have developed a plan to deliver the diocesan strategy which is closely aligned to the national vision.
- Staff wellness events have contributed to a stronger sense of team with an excellent staff survey in 2023.
- We developed an exciting new arrangement for managing schools, created two new academies and are expanding DHMAT.
- Mission and ministry work is bearing fruit with an increase in the numbers of people exploring lay vocations.
- Our safeguarding team continued to provide good advice, deliver a high standard of training and handle case work extremely well.
- We secured and delivered the Faith New Deal project (£48k) supporting projects in South Wye, Peterchurch, Ledbury and Leominster.
- The diocesan approach to supporting Ukrainian guests has been outstanding. Large numbers of volunteers have been involved, and the local authority was delighted with our support. We secured another year of funding for this project.

Church Schools



The Diocese of Hereford Multi-Academy Trust has taken 4 schools out of Special Measures since January 2019 plus one school from Requires Improvement to Good

No CE schools in the Diocese of Hereford now have an Inadequate rating from Ofsted



DHMAT is growing from 15 to 20 schools this year and from

3000

to

3500

pupils.
More schools are set to join the diocesan trust in Autumn 2024



6

SIAMS inspections in the diocese since September 2023/24 academic year



“

Exciting new partnership work with the Diocese of Worcester education team, working together to provide further school improvement support options for our schools. Sharing expertise across both dioceses to the benefit of children, families and school communities on both sides of the diocesan boundary.

”



Schools explored prayer in different ways during our Year of Prayer across the diocese, with one school in Clun running a creative prayer workshop for families and three others actively engaged in events exploring Ascension and Pentecost



6 primary schools took part in a research project funded by the Growing Faith Foundation, that explored children’s views on prayer and then worked to develop activities to support their prayer in and outside of school



We appointed 2 school chaplains to our secondary schools in Hereford city and have developed plans to expand this to other non-Church of England secondary schools across the diocese



94%

of our 78 Church of England Schools in the diocese have a Good or better grading on their most recent Ofsted inspection

90%

of our 78 Church of England schools have a Good or better equivalent in their most recent SIAMS inspection



Generosity in our parishes

 **242 churches**
supported to improve giving and generosity

7 
Clergy Training Sessions

 51 contactless card readers distributed to churches,
which by the end of 2023 raised nearly
£36,000
additional income for parishes

Average weekly per person gifts via the
Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) increased by
5.5%
This is the equivalent of
£11.33 per person per week.



Paul Cooper-James, the project lead at St Mary Magdalene Church in Leintwardine, Herefordshire explains the benefits of installing contactless giving in church:

“

Our new card reader is in our welcome area, along with leaflets explaining our Christian faith. The technology required us to install wifi in our church which felt a bit complicated. However, the benefits are clear; we now have a wide range of people who donate using their mobile phones, particularly at larger events such as weddings, funerals, exhibitions and concerts in church. It has also encouraged our regular Church members to sign up to Gift Aid using the contactless card machine.

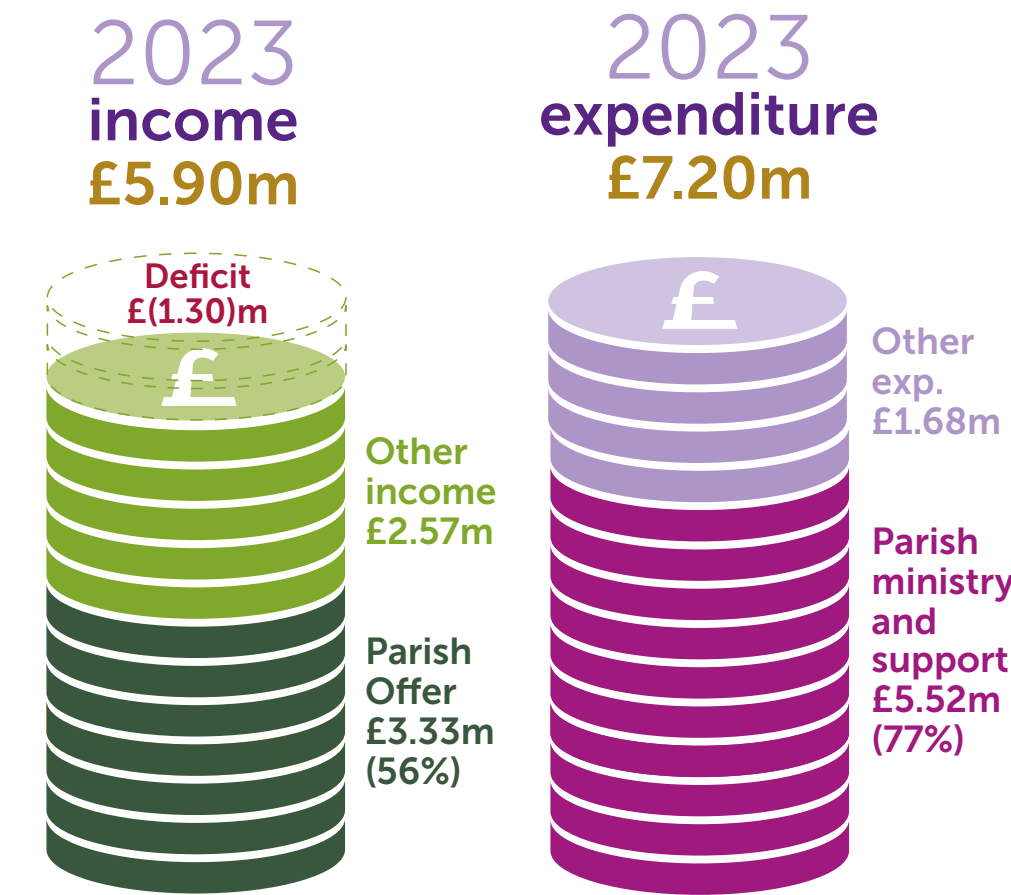
Using contactless giving has supported our fundraising efforts, contributing most recently to the repair of the turret clock and we are integrating giving online. This has even engaged people from other parts of the country to donate. We are starting to see growth and that’s good news.

”

How we spend our money

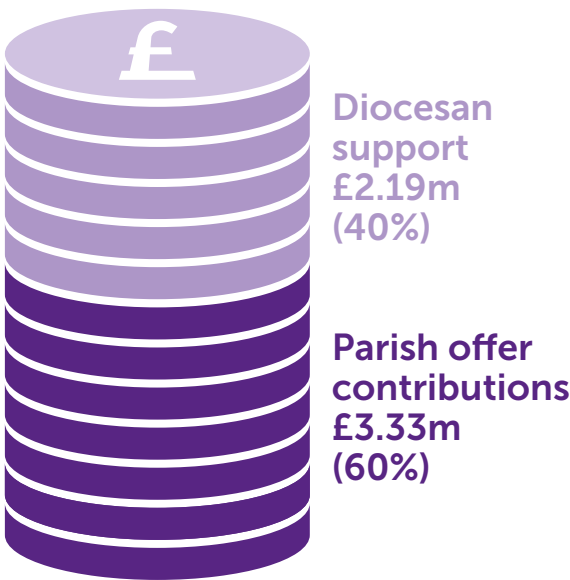
As in previous years, Hereford Diocesan Board of Finance reported a significant operating deficit in 2023, which raises questions about long-term sustainability.

These figures are published in our full set of accounts.

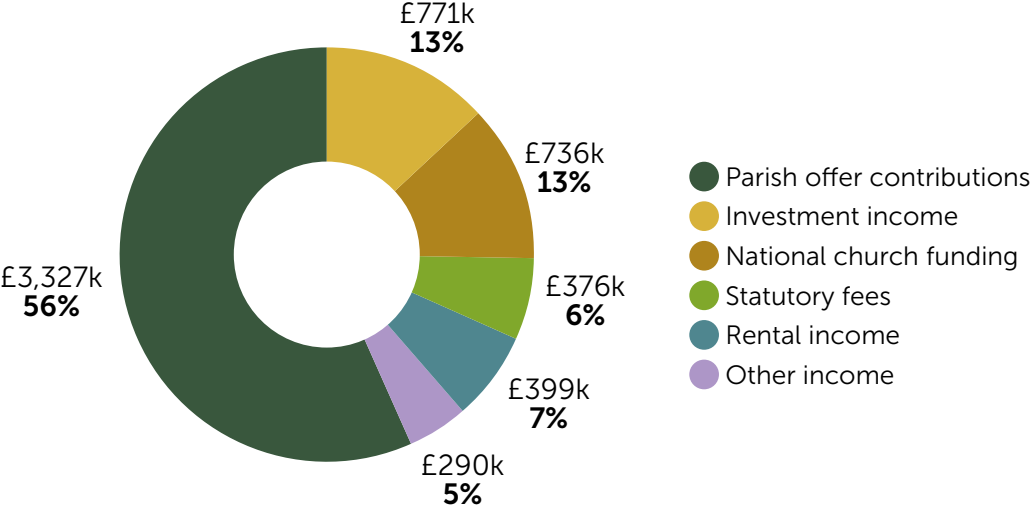


How did we fund parish ministry in 2023?

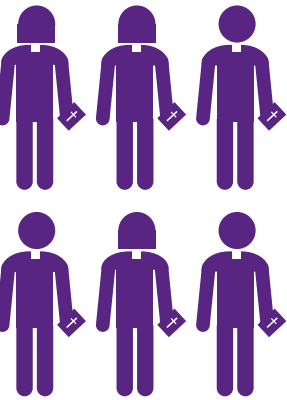
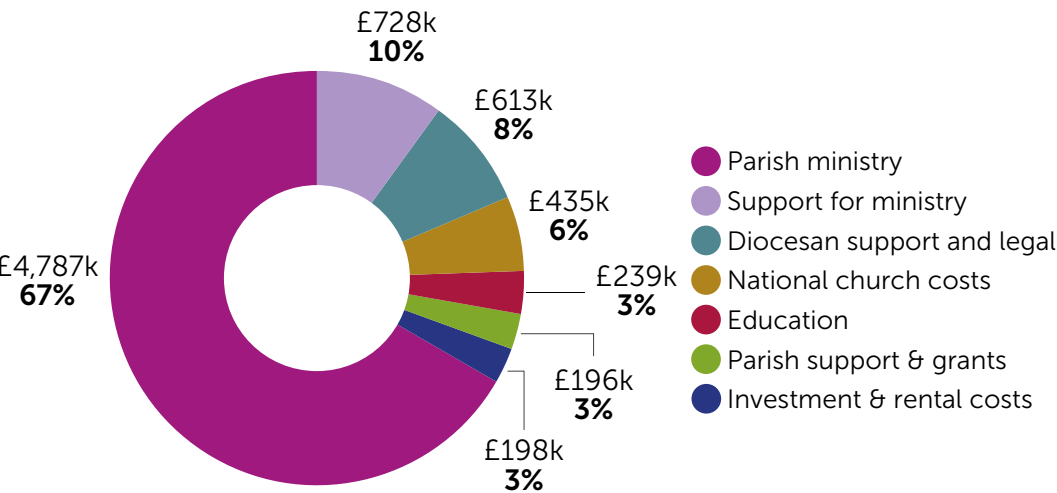
Parish ministry,
mission and support
£5.52m



Income



Expenditure



We deployed an average of
75
Stipendiary Clergy
(incl. 16 curates) in 2023
(down from 78 in 2022)



We rent out approximately
25% of our properties
on long-term lets and
have a number of other
short-term lets for
properties not currently
required for clergy use.

Resourcing the local church through the Parish Giving Scheme:



259 churches
received donations via the Parish Giving Scheme in 2023



Compared to 253 in 2022

£11.33

The average PGS donation per person, per week before Gift Aid. This is the lowest level of regular giving to parishes across the 35 English dioceses using PGS



Compared to £10.74 pppw in 2022

2,507 donors gave
£1.73m
including Gift Aid through PGS to their local parishes in 2023



2022 had a total of 2,510 donors

Gifting a total of £1.71m in 2022



Mission and Ministry

Contributing to a wide range of areas and activities across the diocese, our mission and ministry team have supported delivery of work in leadership, ministry and caring for our many communities. We have delivered training continuing to support our intergenerational mission programme. The team are working locally supporting parishes as well as working strategically to support the wider aims and objectives of the diocesan strategy. This has included submitting a proposal for our youth hub pilot project and contributing to parish vision days. Our headline successes and achievements include:

Delivered

12



Year of Prayer events plus Messy Church and Youth Community prayer events

Nearly

500 people



engaged in activities and events

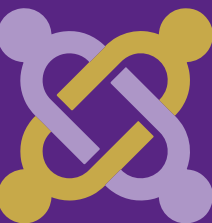
Commissioned over

120



volunteer Local Ministry roles with 60 more in training

The diocese was awarded the



We continued to work with agencies to support community links that serve the vulnerable; foodbanks, street pastors, mental health, asylum seekers and Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Safeguarding

Creating safe churches and communities is at the heart of all aspects of our work. Staff changes have not stopped the focus on high quality training, advice and policy guidance. We have strengthened our partnership arrangements with Hereford Cathedral, delivering training to staff and volunteers alongside wider work supporting our parishes.

- ✦ 79 – Leadership Training
- ✦ 57 – Permission to Officiate Pathway
- ✦ 469 – Foundation Training
- ✦ 35 Safeguarding training provided online and via face-to-face sessions.



Our focus as we move towards our goals for 2030 is to become more intentional in supporting victims and survivors of abuse, listening to their voices and learning how we ensure we provide and maintain safe and caring environments.



Caring for our buildings

Our 406 churches stand as testament to the rich history and culture of our diocese but sadly are supported by fewer volunteers. Over 90% are either Grade I or Grade II listed buildings which require special care and considerable resources. In our ambition to achieve carbon net zero by 2030, we are exploring how we can create better systems and invest in people who can support us with maintenance and compliance requirements to help us to care for our many buildings.

Supported **76** churches with 121 queries

- ✦ 54% building fabric repairs
- ✦ 36% improvements
- ✦ 11% conservation of historic fittings



59 queries included request for advice on grants and funding



“ We have closed one church (All Saint's Berrington) in 2023 and successfully completed the sale of St Mary, Kenderchurch to the Friends of Friendless Churches, who will repair the building and keep it open to the community and visitors. There are still 18 churches who are at varying stages of closure, some began prior to 2023, but have either not completed or chosen to pause for further consultation. ”

Supporting and engaging our communities

The diocese continued to work with Herefordshire Council and Citizens UK to find hosts for people fleeing the war in Ukraine. In recognition of the contribution the Diocese has made, Herefordshire Council has continued to fund the project for a further year (£90,000) with four part time posts to carry out the work of direct support to Ukrainians and their hosts. Over the past 12 months we have worked and supported 544 Ukrainians, (343 adults and 201 children). In addition we have offered direct support to 180 hosts, working through a network of volunteer hub co-ordinators across the Diocese.



“ We supported nearly 200 Asylum seekers in Leominster and Hereford working in partnership with the Council and local organisations from the voluntary sector to offer assistance, advice, basic clothing and befriending services.



THANK YOU

It is only with the generous giving of all of our parishes that we are able to share a message of hope and love with individuals and communities across our diocese.

The communities and churches of our diocese are full of people who give generously of their time, skills, money and spirit and we are hugely grateful for all of this support.

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