



Diocese of Hereford

Proclaiming Christ ✦ Growing Disciples

Impact Report 2024





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Welcome message

In line with the 'quiet revival' in the national Church, and despite significant safeguarding challenges nationally, our diocese has seen some encouraging renewal across a number of areas of ministry and mission.

This year we have sought to strengthen support for our archdeacons, creating and appointing assistant archdeacon roles. Our continuing commitment to growing younger congregations has gained momentum as our Youth Hubs have begun to flourish in Bishop's Castle and Leominster. This reflects our shared dedication to nurturing the next generation of faithful Christians.

Congregations in some areas of the diocese are starting to see growth; this quiet recovery demonstrates the resilience of our parish communities as they continue rebuilding following the disruptions of the Covid-19 lockdowns. It remains early days but the focus on missional outreach to engage the community in these parishes is evident.

Environmental stewardship is increasingly a focus in our approach to vicarage properties and we are grateful for the first tranche of national Church Commissioner funding which has enabled us to explore emerging energy technologies.

Central to our strategy remains the protection and maintenance of frontline ministry positions within parishes. This investment in pastoral leadership continues to be a cornerstone of our diocesan priorities alongside growing lay ministry involvement.

The growth in volunteer participation across diverse ministry roles represents one of our most encouraging achievements in recent years. This expansion of lay leadership not only strengthens individual parishes but also deepens the sense of shared mission throughout our diocesan community.

There remain significant opportunities and challenges ahead but we remain committed that in faithfully following the call to proclaim Christ we will transform lives in this diocese.



"This part of the diocese feels so wild and beautiful, young people are naturally drawn to the outdoors. They find a sense of something bigger there, something beyond themselves. It's a perfect opportunity to connect with young people, while they are experiencing that sense of awe and grace, and help them to link that appreciation for Creation back to God, through scripture and liturgy."

*Rev'd Luci Morriss, Priest-in-Charge,
Border Link Parishes*



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Church Schools

Throughout 2024 the Diocese of Hereford Multi-Academy Trust continued to grow and flourish, with three new schools joining this trust family. In early 2025 another school joined, taking the trust to a total of 19 schools serving 3,431 children and young people.

In 2024 the Diocesan Board of Education reviewed the Diocese of Hereford Academisation Strategy and supported the set-up and opening of 2 additional multi-academy trusts, providing options for Church of England schools in the diocese; the formation of the Orchard Multi-Academy Trust and Shropshire Church of England Academies Trust have expanded the options available to schools.

- ★ Increased opportunities for pupil engagement through the introduction of creative prayer events and Bible stories through drama workshops, in various locations throughout the diocese. In total, these events were attended by 420 children.



- ★ Expanded our offer to schools through the introduction of a school effectiveness support package, to include leadership and school improvement services. In addition, the training and support offer was expanded.
- ★ Embarked upon a new partnership between the Diocese of Hereford and the Diocese of Worcester, beginning our journey of shared education expertise across both dioceses to enhance the support available to schools.
- ★ The team successfully completed a NetZero Carbon pilot project with a group of 10 schools, the learning from which will inform plans to achieve our stated ambition of becoming NetZero by 2030.

"We are so grateful to everyone at St Laurence's Church for skilfully engaging all of our pupils in such wonderful activities. The children are learning so much through the programme and their knowledge of the liturgical calendar is growing every time they visit the church."

*Headmaster of St. Lawrence's,
Church Stretton, Alan Brannen*



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"Before all the changes, we would put the heating on in the church at 3 am, but the church always felt cold, and temperatures rarely reached double digits. These days we're getting to the heady heights of 12-15 degrees, and the church feels considerably warmer, helping us to offer a genuine 'warm welcome' each week. As to the big energy savings, we're no longer paying expensive bills for a cold church."

*Michael Dugdale,
Churchwarden,
St Barnabas Church in
Brampton Bryan*



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Creating a sustainable future for our buildings

Providing well-maintained, energy-efficient housing for clergy is one of the primary responsibilities of the Property team. Alongside this, we manage 1,235 acres of land which provide a steady income stream from agricultural tenancies together with potential development opportunities which we are actively exploring. Our housing portfolio extends to maintaining 116 properties where we are responsible for agents' costs, buildings insurance and when occupied by Clergy, council tax and water rates also.

We continue to make efforts to reduce the carbon impact of our properties by replacing older heating systems, upgrading insulation and replacing windows and doors. We have completed a whole house retrofit project, predominantly funded by central Church and will undertake further projects of this type as additional grant funding becomes available. The challenge to provide quality housing which aligns with our NetZero Carbon aspirations is expensive to achieve and places increased pressure on budgets.

The team continues to support a variety of activities in parishes offering advice and guidance. We have seen the direct impact of the cost-of-living crisis which has led to substantial increases in costs for building work and insurance, utility bills and water rates. We recognise the pressure these increases place on Parish budgets tasked with maintaining our heritage estate of 400+ church buildings where over 90% are either Grade I or Grade II listed. Grants are available to support churches seeking to embrace decarbonisation and we hope to see increased take up of renewable technology in our Churches in future years.

75 Faculties recommended by the DAC and **125** List B certificates issued (archdeacons' consent) for works on churches



6 new electric heating installations (replacing oil or gas boilers)



Provided advice to **92** churches, **73%** of queries were funding related



Minor Repairs and Improvements Grant funds to **16** churches, totalling **£73,028**. (The average grant was **£4,564**)



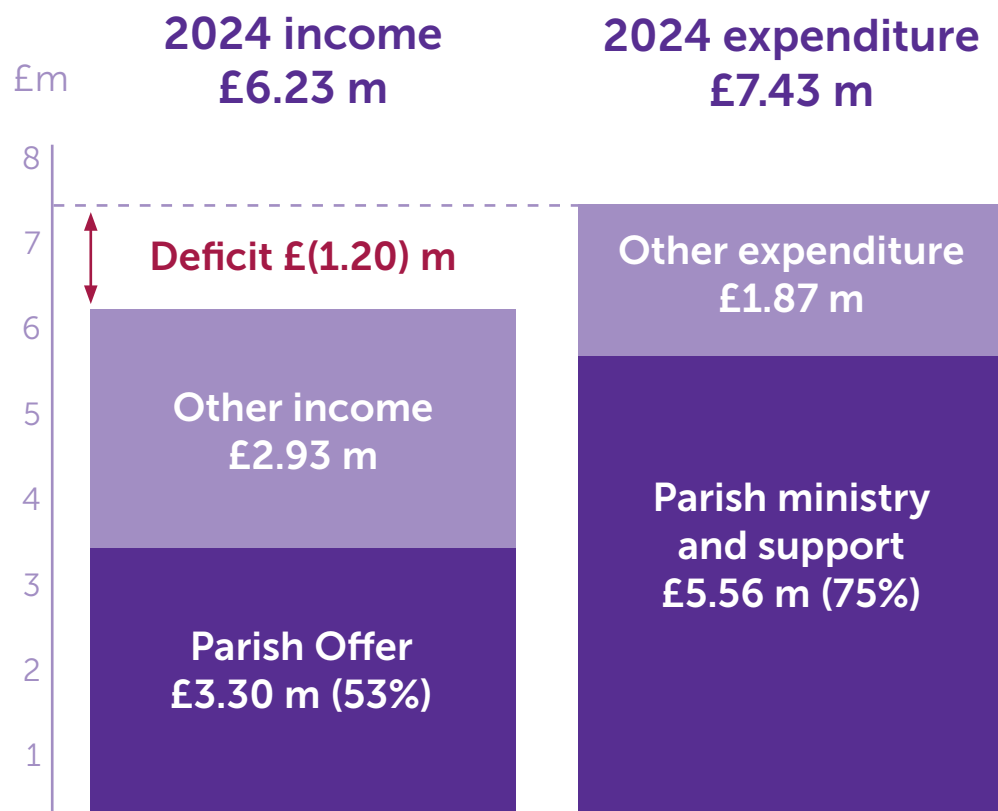
How we spend our money

Our 2024 income and expenditure before one-off gains and losses.

These figures are in our published accounts:



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How did we fund parish ministry in 2024?

- ★ We deployed an average of **73** stipendiary clergy (including **13** curates) in **2024**
- ★ **117** properties maintained, renting out those not used by Clergy.

Parish ministry, mission, supprt
£5.56 m

Diocesan support
£2.26 m (41%)

Parish Offer
£3.30 m (59%)

Resourcing the local church through



2,549 donors gave
£1.80 m including Gift Aid through Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) to their local parishes in 2024
last year: 2,507 donors gave £1.73 m



£11.84
The average PGS donation, per person, per week before Gift Aid
national average £18.97



246 churches
received donations via the PGS during the year.
last year: 259



“Almost two-thirds of churches in the diocese have already signed up to the Parish Giving Scheme, which also makes it easy for people to support their local church even if they are not regular attenders. We will be continuing to encourage the 120 churches in the diocese who are not yet part of the scheme to sign up over the coming year. It is free to join, and since the start of 2025 it is funded entirely by the Church Commissioners on behalf of every parish.”

Mark Simmons,
Parish Giving Advisor,
Hereford Diocese



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Hereford Diocese remains the lowest in the table of English dioceses signed up to the Parish Giving Scheme based on average weekly donation, despite extensive missional communications about generosity.



Mission & Ministry

In our year of Faith, the Mission and Ministry team has focused on enabling growth in faith as well as community engagement. We have also continued to expand the breadth of training provided especially for those working with younger age groups.

The team has established regular vocation events alongside encouraging discipleship and outreach in local parishes. We developed stronger community partnerships, including new initiatives around homelessness and the environment, culminating in two successful environment events. The Support for Ukraine team, funded by Herefordshire Council, has continued its valuable work, including work on racial justice with the regional team.

The diocese remains committed to supporting our full complement of clergy across the parishes and is working hard to overcome difficulties in filling some vacancies. We recognise and value the hard work of our clergy, and are investing in integrated training for lay and ordained ministry, enhanced supervision schemes for curates and clergy, expanding our Accompanying programme for new incumbents, and continuing our mission-focussed conversations with church leaders.

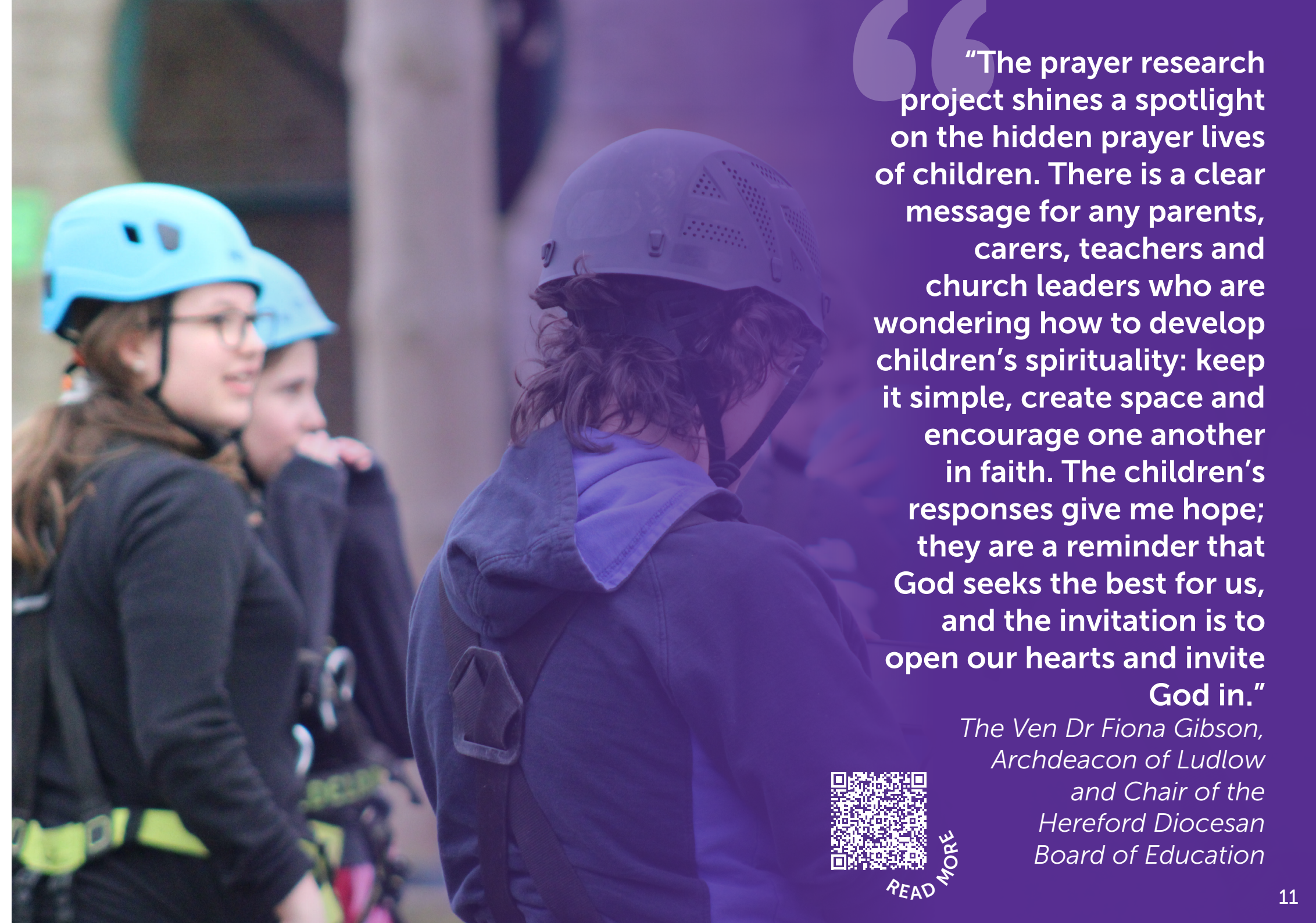
Our work with children, young people and families has made significant progress, with two new Youth Hubs opening in Bishop's Castle and Leominster, made possible through national funding from the Church Commissioners, supporting contributions from our diocesan strategic funds. Additional funds for youth work have come from Benefact Trust, helping the excellent work of our clergy and parishes to grow our congregations younger. We continue to provide training for intergenerational work, including mental health first aid, and specialised youth ministry programmes. Our team also supports Messy Church, Muddy Church and outreach ministry in schools. 145 people took our Open the Book trainings in 2024.



In 2024, there were **17** clergy vacancies across the diocese.



Commitment to clergy wellbeing through the diocesan Accompanier Programme for a further **8** new incumbents. Trained **5** new Accompaniers.



“The prayer research project shines a spotlight on the hidden prayer lives of children. There is a clear message for any parents, carers, teachers and church leaders who are wondering how to develop children’s spirituality: keep it simple, create space and encourage one another in faith. The children’s responses give me hope; they are a reminder that God seeks the best for us, and the invitation is to open our hearts and invite God in.”

*The Ven Dr Fiona Gibson,
Archdeacon of Ludlow
and Chair of the
Hereford Diocesan
Board of Education*



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Safeguarding

Over the past year, the Church of England’s safeguarding practices have faced significant examination, prompting challenging discussions about future improvements. Our diocesan Safeguarding team is committed to embedding safeguarding as a fundamental priority throughout all diocesan activities and ministries. It has continued to deliver extensive training and support to parish safeguarding officers (PSOs) and lay and ordained leaders, alongside improving information and communications. The team launched a newsletter for PSOs at the end of 2024 and is now seeking to develop a range of new roles to support the increasing workload that is required to ensure we operate a safe church for all.

- ★ 62 Safeguarding Training Sessions delivered by the team
- ★ 1118 people completed Safeguarding Training
- ★ 540 DBS Applications
- ★ Domestic Abuse Awareness was completed by 210 members of Clergy



Peter Holding

“The leadership of the diocese, lay and ordained, has discerned that we need to be communities that are Christlike, prayerful and engaged. We need to be places where we individually cultivate the character of Jesus Christ and relate to one another in the loving, humble way he told us to. We need to recognise in all humility that strategic thinking alone is not going to cut it. That should drive us not to despair but prayerful dependence. And we seek to be communities that are engaged with those around us, serving their needs and acting as conveners and catalysts to join with others in that service of community transformation. Above all we seek to grow for the sake of those who don’t yet know Jesus Christ themselves.”

+ Peter Holding



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