

St Nicholas Church Durham City

Parish Profile 2023



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
DIOCESE OF DURHAM

BLESSING OUR
COMMUNITIES
IN JESUS' NAME

St Nics

Durham





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Our Diocesan Vision (an Introduction from Bishop Paul)

At the end of 2019 we gathered representatives from every parish (including St Nics) for The Waymark Conference, to pray, talk, share stories and reflect on how we might best respond to God's call to us to be His Church. We reflected on our learning from our previous vision and priorities. We agreed to maintain our Vision:

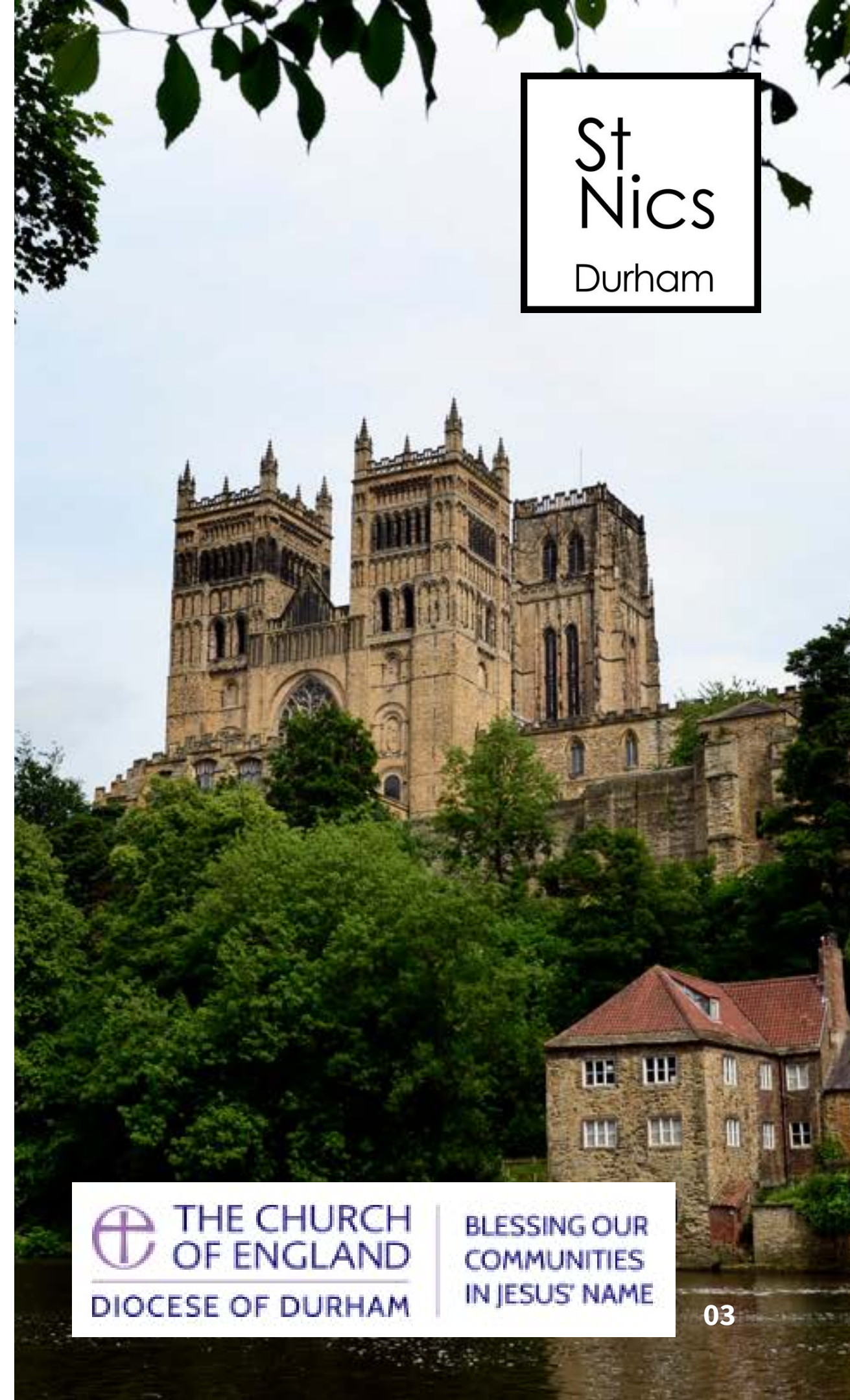
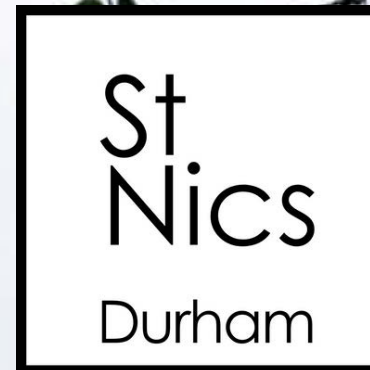
'From the Tyne to the Tees and the Dales to the Sea, blessing our communities in Jesus' name for the transformation of us all'

Through prayer, conversation and sharing our stories we began to discern maintaining, but sharpening, our three priorities. Through the voice of our children and young people we discerned that we should add a fourth, Caring for God's Creation. This was in response to the question, 'How shall we focus our energies, prayers and resources over the next five years?' Together we sensed this is God's call on us.

The result is our missional strategy which we describe as **Renewing Pilgrimage** – an opportunity and invitation for each of our parishes to step out in faith together, responding practically to the call to **Challenge Poverty, Energise Growth, Care for God's Creation** and **Engage with Children, Youth and Young Adults**. In this we are called to fruitfulness.

In making this a reality it will look different in every community. In some places it will come about in collaboration with others. Nobody is expected to do everything immediately or alone, but we are all invited and expected to find ways to respond relevantly.

In St Nics this feels particularly relevant. Energising Growth (in evangelism, discipleship and participation), Challenging Poverty, Engaging with Children, Youth and Young Adults and Caring for God's Creation are key to the vision of this church which has a unique place in the Diocese.



BLESSING OUR
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Our Diocesan Vision (an Introduction from Bishop Paul (continued)

In praying for a new Priest for St Nics we are looking for someone excited by and wanting to be part of this vision – able to take St Nics into the next phase of growth, enthusiastic to lead in evangelism and ready to respond to God. The Waymark Prayer sums up this hope -

Loving God, guiding the people of Durham Diocese faithfully through the years:

**We thank you for saints who have marked our path,
young and old, known and unknown, from all places and in all walks of life.**

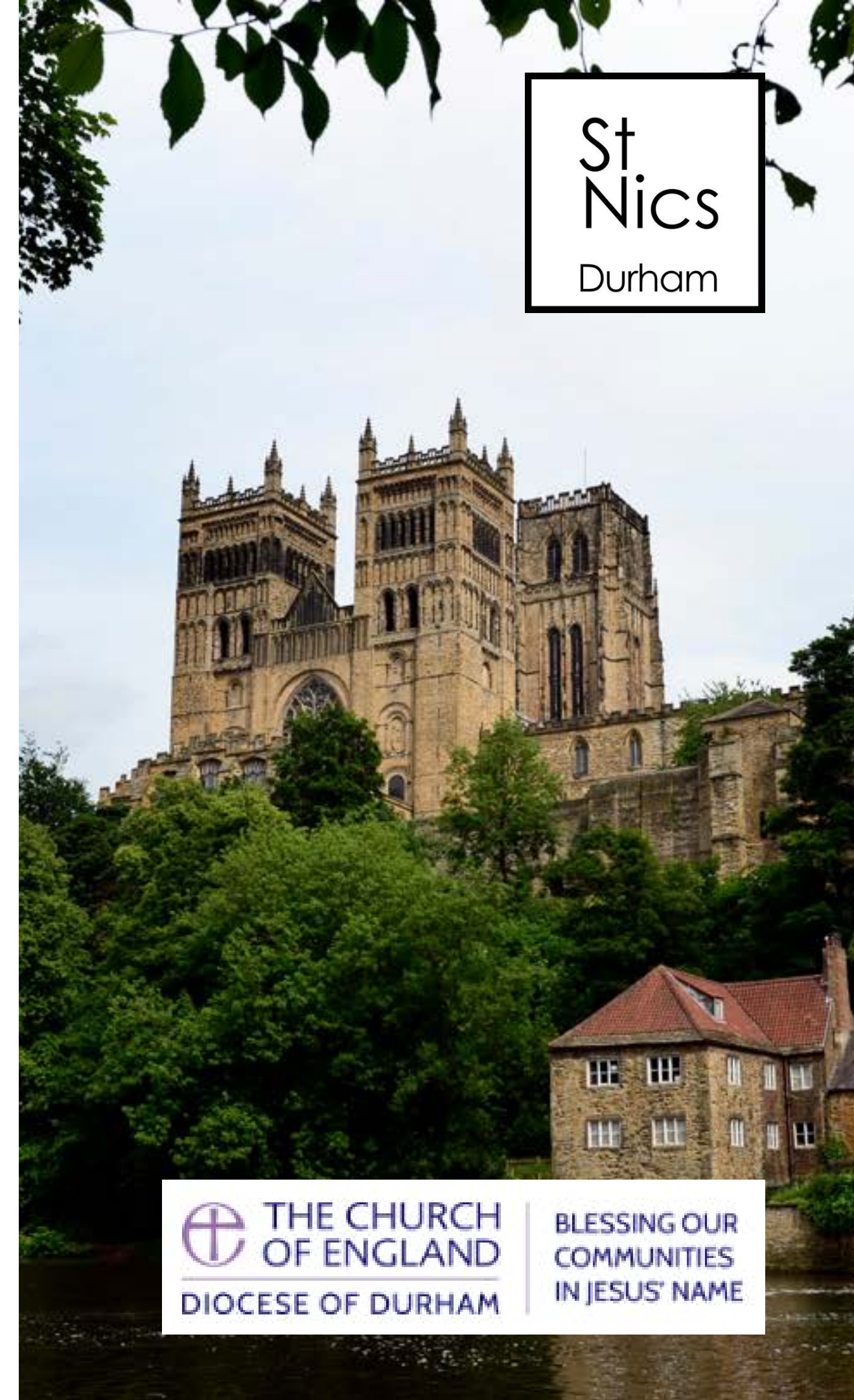
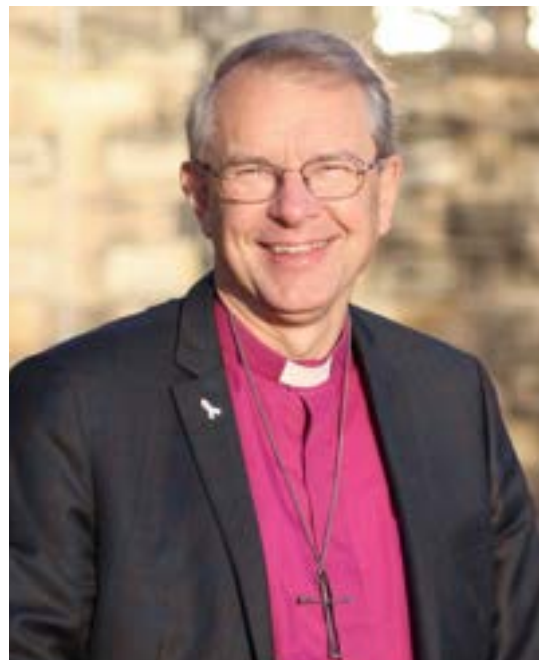
**Help us to find your way in our generation:
transformed by your truth, sharing your life, blessing our communities.**

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen

We look forward to meeting together and sharing in this with you. In Christ,

+Paul
Bishop of Durham



 THE CHURCH
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BLESSING OUR
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Our Vision

St Nics is a lively evangelical church located at the heart of Durham City. Shaped by a fourfold vision of discipleship, evangelism, justice, and service, we are committed to loving God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving our neighbours as ourselves.

Our Sunday worshipping community comprises 250-300 regular attendees (in person), across several services, and of all ages, with 50-100 online attendees most weeks. We are a designated 'resource church', part of the Church of England's vision for growth, which has enabled us to develop exciting new areas of mission and ministry over the last few years.

At our core, we seek to be a 'Church for Everyone': a safe space in a complex world that allows people to explore faith and encounter Jesus.

A Church for Everyone

In a small city with a large population of students and other transitory residents, St Nics seeks to offer a warm welcome and sense of belonging to a wide range of people from different backgrounds, views and understandings which is further represented in the church organisation.

A drive to embed social justice in the church has informed decisions such as the creation of the social justice hub/café and the feeding families project. In seeking to be a Church for Everyone, St Nics believes and practices the centrality of Jesus and His transforming love as the foundation on which all can come to faith and enjoy worship in community.



"I love being at St Nics because it is like a family to me. It's like coming home."

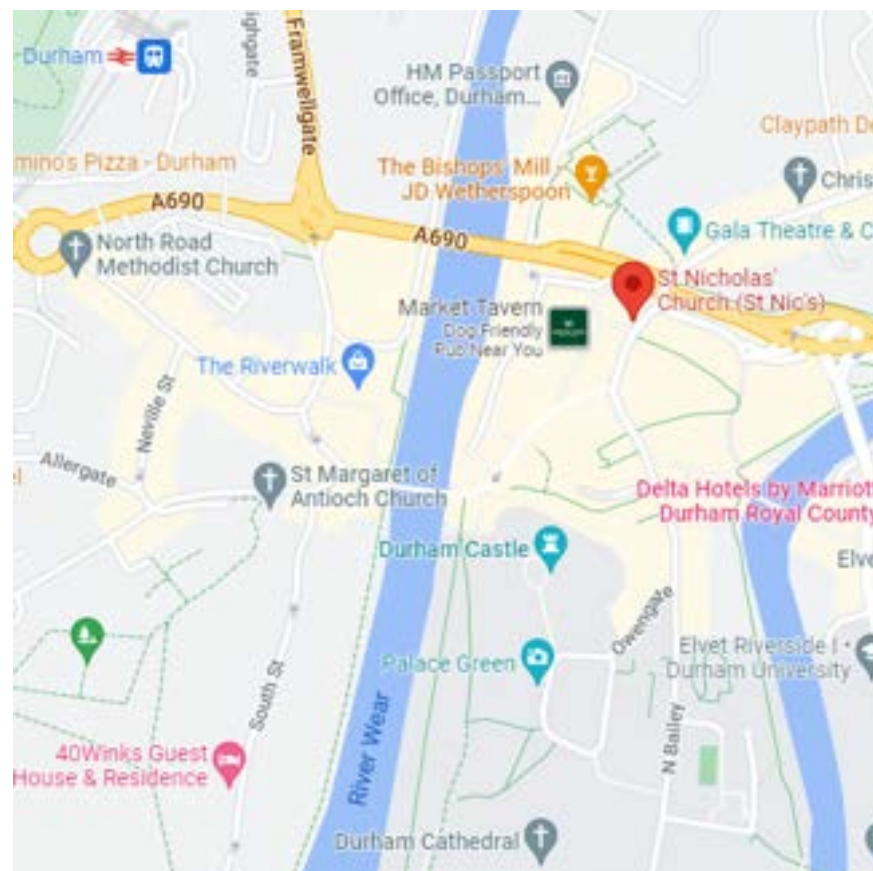
1- Context

Parish Setting and Description



Durham is a small but lively University city with a distinguished history and a rich cultural heritage. The magnificent Norman cathedral and castle constitute a UNESCO World Heritage site, which are also major tourist destinations.

Building on a legacy that extends back over 900 years, St Nics is located in the Market Place at the heart of the city. We consider our location a privilege in that it creates unique opportunities for mission and outreach amongst those who live in the parish, and also shoppers, tourists, students and businesses.



The geographic parish is relatively small - approximately 1,200 houses lying within 1.5 miles of the church – comprising professionals and students, together with some retired and long standing residents. The parish includes a substantial proportion of the commercial centre of Durham. Major redevelopments close to the church have provided new student flats and accommodation, a library, theatre and cinema, restaurants, pubs and night clubs. The main employers in the area are local government, the Passport Office, the Prison Service, Land Registry, National Savings and Durham University.

St Nics congregation is a gathered congregation drawn mainly from an area within a radius of approximately 5 miles from the church, including the colleges of Durham University, large areas of private housing, and a number of the older established mining communities from the villages surrounding Durham City.

The relative affluence of the city is in marked contrast to many of the surrounding villages. House prices in Durham City are relatively high compared to the rest of the county, and accommodation near the historic centre is mostly student accommodation or privately owned housing.

Durham has excellent transport links: the A1(M) lies 3 miles from the city centre and the East Coast main line station is within walking distance of the church with direct links to all parts of the country.

Recent Significant Events



Covid

As with most churches, the Covid-19 pandemic had a huge impact on us as a worshipping community. In a matter of days our activities were moved online and we became a virtual community with online services, meetings and a full timetable of social activities.

The pastoral care team stepped up and were in regular contact with all church members. These were challenging times, but with God’s grace, strength and enabling, we managed to hold the church family together and even attracted some new members, although re-establishing in person numbers to those seen in 2019 has been a challenge.

However, whilst we are still recovering from the physical isolation of those times and the impact that it had on peoples’ lives and well-being, there have been some blessings along the way.

Service	Average weekly numbers October 2019	Average weekly numbers October 2022
9am	64	59
11am	140	93
6:30pm	106	54

Recent Significant Events

Resource Church

In 2019, St Nics was designated as a Resource Church (funded through the Strategic Development Fund, SDF) enabling us to employ five new members of staff: the Prior of St Cuthbert who oversees our Spiritual Growth Groups; a Church Planting Curate; a Youth Missioner; Social Justice Enabler; and a Communications Co-ordinator (now divided between a Media Co-ordinator and a Tech Co-ordinator). Our Youth Missioner has focused on working both with our Youth at St Nics and also serving the local Sixth Form Centre where we now have a very good relationship.

Our Social Justice Enabler has primarily led the recent project of opening a Social Justice Café /Hub in what was the lower hall of the main church building. This opened in August 2022 and allows access to support services for those in need, as well as a warm space offering hot food and beverages. We are genuinely excited at seeing God move in these new areas of our ministry and service to the city and are keen to build momentum.

Online Resources

During lock-down we produced two weekly services (morning and evening) that consisted of members of the church recording the different parts of the service in their own home. These videos and contributions were then edited into hour long services which were streamed on at the usual time of the service. We continue to stream one of our Sunday services each week and provide a weekly podcast of sermons from the services.

We also developed a weekly online service for children and families called 'pyjama church', which proved very popular, especially when schools were closed.



2 - Blessing our Communities in Jesus Name

1 - Energising Growth

At St Nics we are committed to growth in multiple ways – not for its own sake, but because we are convinced that growth can transform, change and build God’s community. Our previous incumbent emphasised that “Growth in discipleship leads to growth in service, leads to growth in numbers.” Although the pandemic has undoubtedly impacted on our recent activities, we firmly believe that we have all of the ingredients for major growth over the next few years, as described below.

2 - Growth in Discipleship

St Nics has a long tradition of emphasising the importance of high quality teaching and preaching in our Sunday services. Nonetheless, excellent sermons do not necessarily lead to growth in our discipleship, and we have recently invested in a major reorganisation of our small group structure. This has seen a transition from semi-independent groups of 10-12 pursuing their own patterns of meetings, to a church-wide structure and format that forms the basis of the Community of St Cuthbert, under the oversight of our Prior. Community of St Cuthbert groups are called Spiritual Growth Groups (SGGs) and are typically 5-8 people meeting for 1-2 hrs each week, some of which are held online. The key shift has been from a more traditional Bible study and prayer group to a more holistic approach to discipleship that continues to draw from the bible in terms of teaching and inspiration, but also includes seven ‘rhythms of grace’: prayer and Bible study; worship and hospitality; justice and service; and rest. Indeed, we envisage that the missional element of these groups will also result in growth in discipleship for those in the groups. The change has been costly for some, but energising for others. Including students, we now have over 220 individuals actively involved in SGGs on a weekly/fortnightly basis

“Over the years I have been supported in my faith journey and encouraged in various ministries I have been involved in”.



3 - Growth in Service

Up until the pandemic we were served fairly well for volunteers and people are now slowly re-engaging across all areas of mission and ministry, although there remain some gaps. Two notable developments in this area post-Covid are changing roles for leaders and small groups (see SGGs, above). With an increase in our staff team, we have recognised that many of our ministries and activities are now led by staff, rather than volunteers. We are having to attend to making sure that such leaders are enablers and encouragers, seeking to involve a wide range of people. Our SGGs include a focus on acts of service as one of their ‘rhythms of grace’. We try to offer a range of practical examples each month for groups to get involved in serving. There has been some development in this area, but more could be done.

4 - Growth in Numbers

Overall, our services are slowly recovering in numbers, aided by our new monthly Sunday afternoon service for families and young children called ‘The 4’. However, we are aware that many people joining our church are Christians who have moved to the area from other parts of the country or indeed the world. Our passion is to see those without a faith being blessed by what God is doing in and through our community and then developing a sense of belonging with our community, and then coming to their own faith (believing) and growth through discipleship.

Follow the URL to view our Parish Profile video - <https://www.stnics.org.uk/jobs>

St Nics at a Glance



On the Electoral Role



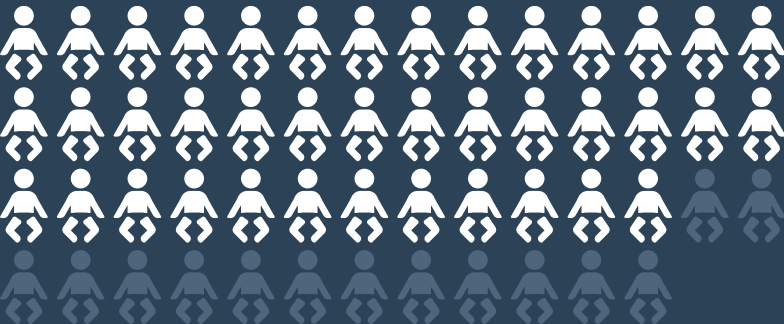
Increase in attendance at the 4 Service



15 Volunteers on the Social Justice Cafe Team



11 Ministry Experience Volunteers since 2010



40 Children attending children's groups



Average Sunday attendance



People attending Spiritual Growth Groups



Incumbents since the year 1267



18 Members of the PCC



People gone on to train for Ordination in the past 5 years



People attended 2022 Christingle Service



Services streamed online since lockdown



People on the Church Directory



Musicians involved in Leading Worship across 3 services



Red onions used each week on Student Night



7 International Mission Partners



Engaging with Children, Youth and Young Adults

Engaging with Children

“The “4” service
is brilliant. I
love the food!”



St Nics has always had an active ministry amongst children and young people, often attracting families from outside of parish and those who are only in Durham for a short time (e.g. training for ordination or studying at the university).

Our vibrant Sunday morning provision takes place during the 11 a.m. service and we regularly have about 30 children (ages 0–11) attending. We are incredibly blessed by having a strong team of volunteers who are passionate about helping our children grow in faith and connect with each other and with God. Once a month we have an ‘All Age’ service at the 11 a.m. with regular features including interviews, games and a worship band that includes young people. Our current preaching series at the All-Age service is looking at various characters from the Bible and what we can learn from them about being a follower of God .

On the fourth Sunday of each month, we have recently started a new 4 p.m. family service called ‘The 4’, which provides an opportunity for our children to invite their friends along to a fun and interactive seeker-friendly service followed by sharing a meal together. This has been popular amongst all our families, but particularly amongst those whose children play sport on a Sunday morning. It has clear potential to develop into its own worshipping community. Our Children and Families worker has run several holiday clubs, which have proved popular, and we are looking to develop more opportunities to equip parents who are supporting their children’s faith development at home as well as in church. With respect to early years, we have paused our mid-week toddler group as we reassess our 0–5 year-old provision during the week and on a Sunday morning. Children and young people are at the heart of ministry and, as we look towards the future, we look forward to seeing God move amongst them and use them to build His kingdom in our city

Engaging with Youth

"Youth group is really good. I like it a lot. Hannah fits games into everything we're doing. It's fun when we go to Patisserie Valerie"



St
Nics
Durham



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(i) Our Youth in Church

At St Nics, we are passionate about the discipleship of young people. We want to see young people stepping out into the fullness of life with God. Currently, we have a core group of about 25 young people aged 11-18. Younger Youth (11– 14s) meet for Bible study during our 11 a.m. service. Our older Youth (14– 18s) meet on Sunday evenings for pizza and Bible study ahead of the 6:30 p.m. service. Most recently, our older youth have done Youth Alpha. Our youth meet mid-week on Wednesday nights for social time, with many bringing their friends along.

We have recently begun a monthly youth worship night, called 'Anointed', which includes games, messy leaders' challenges, worship, a short talk, prayer responses, and a time of prayer ministry led by older members of our congregation. We are exploring possible developments in inter-generational discipleship as an area to develop.

(ii) Youth in Durham

In addition to our internal youth work, St Nics has recently developed a real heart for outreach and mission amongst young people in Durham. Durham Sixth Form Centre is within the parish and on the doorstep of the church. Around 1800 students attend the sixth form every day, with most of them walking by the church into town to buy their lunch. St Nic's has spent significant time and energy over the past few years praying for the sixth form and aiming to build relationships there.

We have done a range of outreach to the sixth form including handing out welcome bags at the start of term, Easter outreach, and lunch-time drop ins. Last year, we launched the St Nic's Mentorship scheme where volunteers from the church go into the sixth form to mentor students through their studies. As our relationship has developed, our Youth Missioner now spends two days a week as a chaplain at the Sixth Form Centre. This involves mentoring, chaplaincy drop-in hours, and running an after-school club entitled 'The Big Questions of Life'. We are very much in the early days with our relationship with the sixth form centre but are continually seeking the Spirit's leading and are excited about this work.

Engaging with Young Adults

The majority of younger people in the 18-30s age bracket with whom we engage are, or have recently been, students at undergraduate or postgraduate level, although by no means exclusively. Durham City is home to Durham University, which has a population of around 20,000 students. This presents an obvious chance to engage with young adults and St Nics has a long-standing commitment to student ministry.

Currently, we have a community of around 30 students, ranging from first year undergraduates through to final year Ph.D. students. The main avenues of discipleship for those who decide to join our church are via our Student Night and student-specific Spiritual Growth Groups. Student Night takes place every Thursday during term time and consists of a meal eaten in community with other students, before hearing from God's word with a brief talk on the passage, followed by a time of prayer or discussion about a spiritual practice. We finish with a time of sung worship. Spiritual Growth Groups are small groups of around 3-5 students, who commit to meeting once every week (or sometimes every other week) to discuss scripture and any challenges students are facing in their lives.

Similar to those groups for other members of the congregation, these groups revolve around the rhythms of grace: prayer and Bible study; worship and hospitality; justice and service; and rest. Additionally, St Nics has a ministry to reach out to international students in Durham, whether short or long term. This ministry is called Amigos and is a social space for people who come from other countries to meet together and learn about British culture, whilst also being given a space to share their own. Amigos is a space of hospitality rather than primarily an evangelistic ministry, though we are open about the fact that it is hosted by St Nics and Christian volunteers run it.



Caring for God's Creation

Caring for God's creation is an important aspect of St Nics mission to seek God's kingdom on earth. We have had a very active 'Eco Group' for many years that is now called our 'Creation Care and Climate Justice' group. In line with the fifth mark of mission of the Anglican Communion, we believe that loving Jesus leads to a transformation in how we respond to injustice and creation.

We seek to raise awareness of climate justice through prayer, teaching and through taking action; and St Nics was registered as an A Rocha Bronze Eco Church in 2016. We have an aspiration to gain Silver status in the next few years. We actively engage with church-wide social justice initiatives, energy auditing (with the CofE and Durham University), fossil fuel divestment strategy (in partnership with the Diocese), and churchyard clean-up and re-wilding (with the local community).



Challenging Poverty

We are deeply engaged in the work of seeking justice in response to the social and practical challenges of our time and our area. For example, we are engaged with the work of 'Safer Women at Night' that operates out of our church Café. Embracing the Diocesan priority of challenging poverty has been a major emphasis of our church life and justice work in recent years.

Pre-pandemic St Nics would offer hospitality by way of the midweek coffee lounge, a safe space for people to stop by for light refreshments and conversation coupled with some support services such as bereavement counselling.

Over the last 12 months, since restrictions began to ease, we have moved away from the coffee lounge service and instead offer a broader range of hospitality and support in our new Social Justice Café (advising, advocating, supporting, resourcing and enabling) as an expression of our corporate discipleship. This has seen us grow and develop the role to enable growth in discipleship, service and numbers; as part of our wider vision to be a growing community who bless the city which we have been called to serve. This has enabled us to work in partnership with other agencies/organisations and with a passion for justice, enabling cross-generational service, and equipping St Nics to become a growing justice and discipleship hub for the city.

Indeed, we are now developing a range of client-facing services in areas such as food poverty, debt advice, job club and addiction recovery services – using models provided by Christians Against Poverty or similar organisations. Our Social Justice Café acts as a gateway to service for those in need and is open 5 days per week.

With the cost-of-living crisis and increases in energy bills taking hold we have recently opened the café as a warm space and are looking to develop and pilot a 'community fridge' that provides food (supplied to us for free by local supermarkets) for people to take away. In addition, we have introduced monthly lunchtime 'well-being walks' around Durham City centre. These hour-long walks start from and end at our café, where walkers stay for refreshments.

We are actively considering a range of further developments, such as a St Nics Kitchen – a space where people may gather to learn basic cooking skills, through which we will seek to help build God's Kingdom and grow in discipleship.



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3 - Our Ministry and Mission

Current Pattern of Services

On Sundays, we have three services, each of which has evolved (and continues to evolve) its unique character and identity and which might currently be described as follows:

9am	A positive and uplifting traditional Church of England service, which often includes Holy Communion. The sermon is normally available to listen to on our podcast later in the week.
11am	A more lively and contemporary service, which varies between a Service of the Word and Holy Communion (both of which are live-streamed) and All-Age celebrations once per month. Children and youth groups meet during the services, unless it is an All-Age celebration.
6:30pm	A more informal contemporary service, sometimes reflective, sometimes lively, but with more space to respond to the Holy Spirit. It includes Communion once a month. The service is streamed on the first Sunday of the month and there is an informal social time at the pub afterwards

“I love being part of St Nics because of the space it creates for different worship styles at each of the three main services - the variety supports inclusivity and the means all can feel welcome and valued.”



On the 4th Sunday of the month at 4 p.m. we hold an informal invitational service with lots of fun and games for families. It is especially for those whose Sunday mornings are impacted by sporting activities. There is a meal straight afterwards that provides an important social time



On the 1st Friday of the month at 7.30 p.m. we have an exciting Youth worship event called ‘Anointed’. This recently-launched service involves a range of interactive worship, prayer, fun and games, as well as practical teaching on discipleship for youth.



On Wednesdays, we have a lunchtime Communion service at 1.15 p.m. – a simple ‘said’ service that attracts a small and faithful group each week. We have short prayer services every weekday (which currently include the Morning Prayer Daily Office from Tues–Fri); and a whole church prayer meeting at 7.30 p.m. on the first Monday of the month

Occasional Offices

Due to the nature, location and dynamic of our church, our occasional offices are relatively few and far between. On average, we conduct two or three weddings, two or three funerals, and seven or eight baptisms per year. They are organised by our Operations Manager alongside members of the clergy and in conjunction with the families.

Mission

The mission of St Nics Church may be summarised relatively simply in three aspirational statements with Jesus as the central theme. Firstly, we want to introduce people to the redeeming love of Jesus to the point of them making a personal commitment to Him.

Secondly, we want to facilitate individual growth and relationship with, and knowledge of, Jesus whilst supporting them to work through the impact that has on their lives. We do this in a variety of ways as we seek to build and nurture our worshipping community.

Thirdly, and completing the circle, we want to challenge, encourage and enthuse all towards evangelism at a personal and corporate level.

Introducing People to Jesus

We have a number of positive ways of introducing and demonstrating the love of Jesus. We hold regular Alpha courses and are well-positioned in the very centre of Durham with good links within the local community. We have a great resource of mature Christians in the church who are keen to share knowledge and provide a warm welcome.

We have a recently established café/social justice hub, we support the local international community and we have a strong on-line presence. To move the church forward, we aspire to provide more relational support for newcomers and other opportunities for seekers beyond Alpha.

We want to develop a stronger and more intentional culture of invitation, looking in and beyond friendship groups and by providing age and culturally appropriate engagement opportunities.

We need to be more determined with following up newcomers and visitors, keeping them connected and inviting them to make a commitment to Christ and then building a personal relationship with him.



” I have found the opportunities available to grow and serve to be a real blessing.”

Growing in relationship with Jesus, living out the impact

We are fortunate to have strong teaching presented on a weekly basis from the front facilitating growth in knowledge and understanding of scripture. We have a well organised infrastructure of Spiritual Growth Groups (SGGs, see above).

We also have well established Children’s, Youth and family work based in the church. A strong commitment to social justice in the church helps and supports our efforts to live out the gospel and to give people an opportunity to serve and reach out at the same time.

However, we would like to develop more opportunity for one-to-one discipleship with new Christians and to develop more tailored teaching for Christians at different stages of their walk with Christ. We would like to develop a more challenging and supportive approach to how we live as disciples, and to develop a stronger focus on the application of the gospel in personal lives and in the life of the church.

Encouraging and supporting evangelism

Our corporate evangelism is focused on specific key events such as Alpha courses and seasonal events such as Easter, Christmas and other key services throughout the year. We have also recently encouraged the sharing of testimonies through the recording of Faith Stories available online (see our website).

A number of initiatives have been tried to reach out to people outside of the church with various degrees of success. We are now looking for a sharper focus on evangelism, growth and the development of greater outreach and engagement. We are perhaps too comfortable and introspective – some are ready for more of a challenge and to look towards our non-members within the parish and those passing through the city.

We want to develop more opportunities for practical and daring evangelism at a personal and corporate level. Growing our activism on matters of social justice will also help demonstrate commitment to our community and provide a ‘shop window’ on our faith.

International Mission

Supporting the spread of the Gospel around the world has long been an important part of our ministry at St Nic’s and we offer support in prayer and financially. The PCC makes regular donations to the mission agencies supported by St Nic’s, details of which are on our website. A prayer meeting for our mission projects is held each month where everyone is invited to join us in praying for our mission partners. On the second Sunday of each month, two of our overseas projects are included during the intercessions at each service. For more details please visit <https://www.stnics.org.uk/international-missions>



4 - Practical Matters

Finances



The finances of St Nics are well-monitored and presented clearly to the PCC on a monthly basis. The PCC are aware of the key issues and their obligations as Trustees. We always endeavour to meet the parish share, although some of the issues described below have made this difficult over the last two years. The PCC understand the wider context of its financial offer.

St Nics has a faithful base of regular givers, many of whom are signed up to the Gift Aid scheme, and the church makes full use of this extra source of income. During the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, these givers remained faithful, although one-off giving through collections suffered during this period. We have had varying success with an annual Gift Day – some exceeded budget expectations, while others fell short. A new strategy has been developed during the vacancy to publicise the day more widely and well ahead of time, and to refresh our teaching on giving. We are seeking to develop a new vision for giving as part of our discipleship. In particular, our approach to Gift Day is switching from making up budget deficit to being a healthy part of funding new ministry developments.

During the last two years, the church has experienced an unprecedented and unexpected level of essential building maintenance which has put pressure on finances. In 2022 alone, this has taken the church £51k over budget to the end of October. This has included work to the roof, bell tower and replacement of lights inside the church and at the youth Centre

In the year to October 2022, the church spent £88k of SDF funding which was primarily on the new Social Justice Café and staff salaries. This funding is due to taper off in the next couple of years. A financial plan to sustain the ministries which have been developed is in progress. The church has some healthy reserves, but the PCC is mindful that these should be spent on some of the activities above and as we seek to resource new ministries. A longer term plan for finances is something that needs to be looked at and developed.

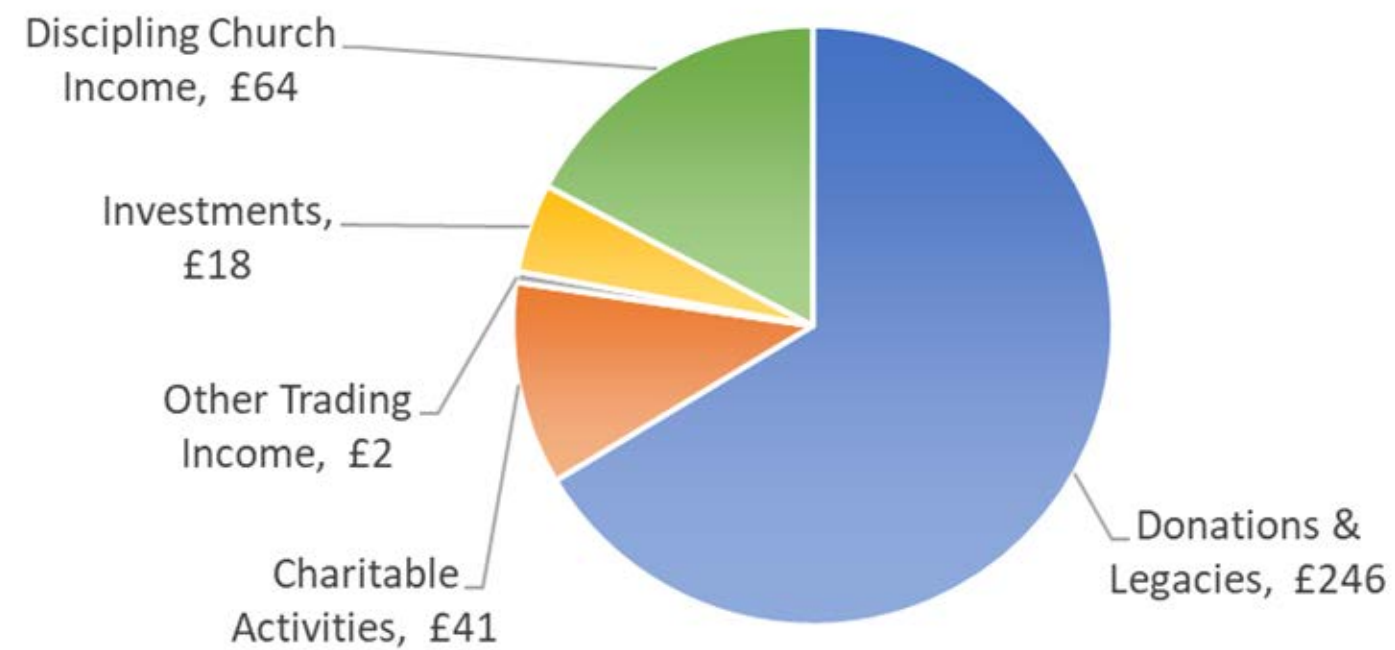
The church employs seven members of staff (excluding SDF staff): an Operations Manager; an Administration Assistant; a Student Worker; a Children and Families Worker, a Worship Coordinator; a Café Supervisor; and a cleaner. Payroll is one of our largest costs sitting at £52k from January to October 2022 and it is important to the PCC that our staff members are appreciated and remunerated appropriately. Therefore, there is a commitment to pay above the Real Living Wage. All the roles at St Nics are now fully staffed, which enables the mission and vision of the church to be carried out effectively.

Looking to 2023, the budget includes further maintenance, but the PCC are confident in the ability to improve giving through the strategy mentioned above.

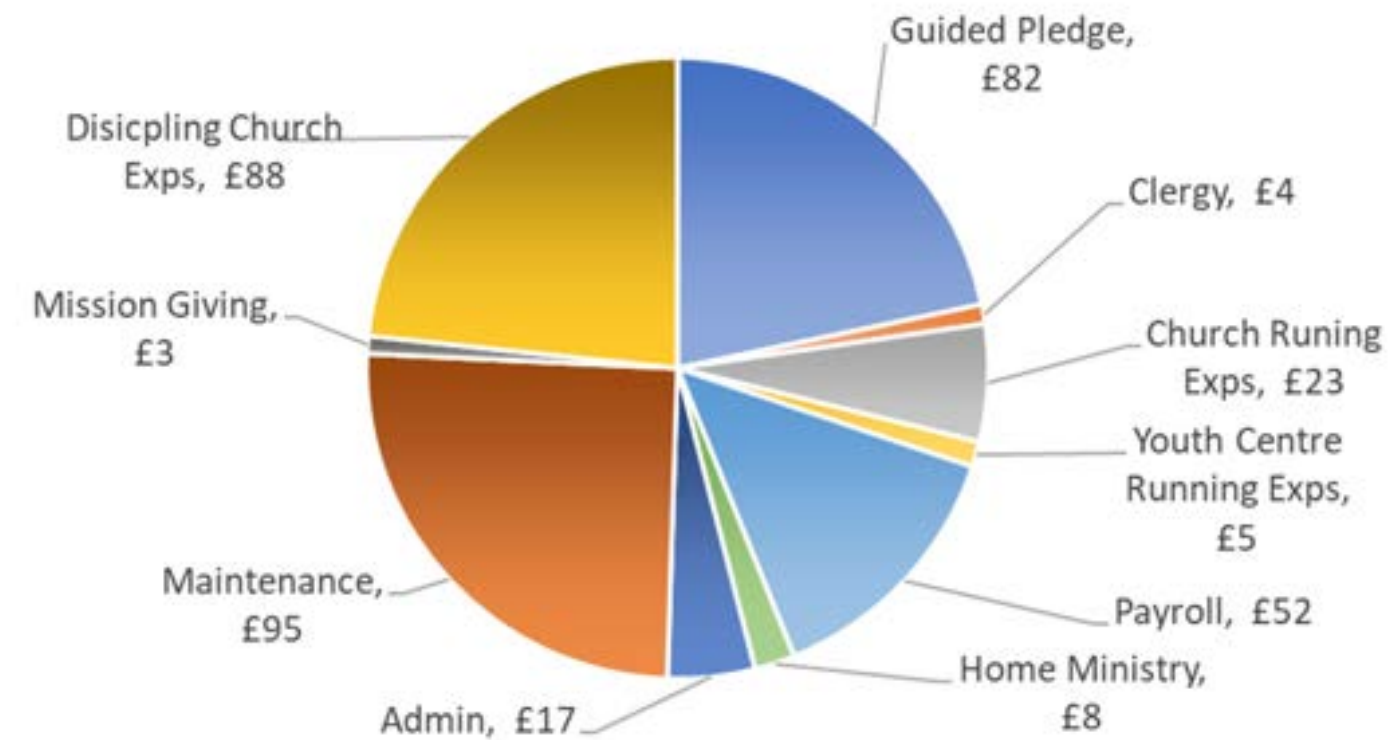


Finances

Sources of Income (Jan to Oct 22, £k)



Expenditure (Jan to Oct 22, £k)



Buildings

The church is a Grade II listed building and seats approximately 200 people, with some space for extra seating in the Chapel. We have recently reorganised the orientation and seating arrangements with the specific aim of improving our welcome to newcomers.



The church complex is managed on a day-to-day basis by our Operations Manager from our church office, with administrative support. This office and the smaller office in the former vestry have a number of 'hot-desks' that are used by all the staff team.

In addition to the new Social Justice Café, the church has long been the home of the Gateway World Shop, an independent Fair Trade Business.

Our Sunday morning children and youth groups take place in the café space and the upper hall, with occasional use of the Town Hall buildings in the Market Place, immediately adjacent to the church.

The AV and PA system has been in place for some years and probably need upgrading in the near future.



Buildings



A separate purpose-built Youth Centre is situated about 10 mins walk from the church, adjacent to the Old Cemetery Chapel and Churchyard.

The Youth Centre is used for mid-week youth activities, Sunday evening youth, PCC meetings and occasionally let for other uses. It is in very good condition and the PCC are keen to explore other activities for its use, including those that may generate further income.

One of the Church Wardens, assisted by two Deputy Wardens, together with the other member of the Property Committee, oversee the work recommended in the latest Quinquennial Inspection and any other work which may arise from time to time.

In the Churchyard, there is an old Cemetery Chapel, which has not been used for many years. However, it is now being renovated by the Orthodox Church of St. Cuthbert and St. Bede, Durham, who have recently become the owners of the chapel. The Churchyard needs some amount of work and expenditure to make it fit for purpose, for which we are applying for funding via our Churchyard Group. We have recently had plans drawn up showing how the Churchyard could be used for a green open space for the benefit of the community, as referred to in the section on Caring for God’s Creation. It is an asset that we can use as an opportunity for outreach to the local residents.

Our buildings present many opportunities for mission and hospitality, in a pivotal location in the City centre. St Nics is keen to grow and this would present pressures, given our building size. Therefore, church planting is a serious consideration and one which we have been praying about and seeking God’s guidance on for a number of years. Past PCC discussions have looked at questions of when and where to plant and who might be released. More recent reflection on starting new worshipping communities, in response to Diocesan encouragement, has sensed that this may be a good time to be proactive in pursuing this area.



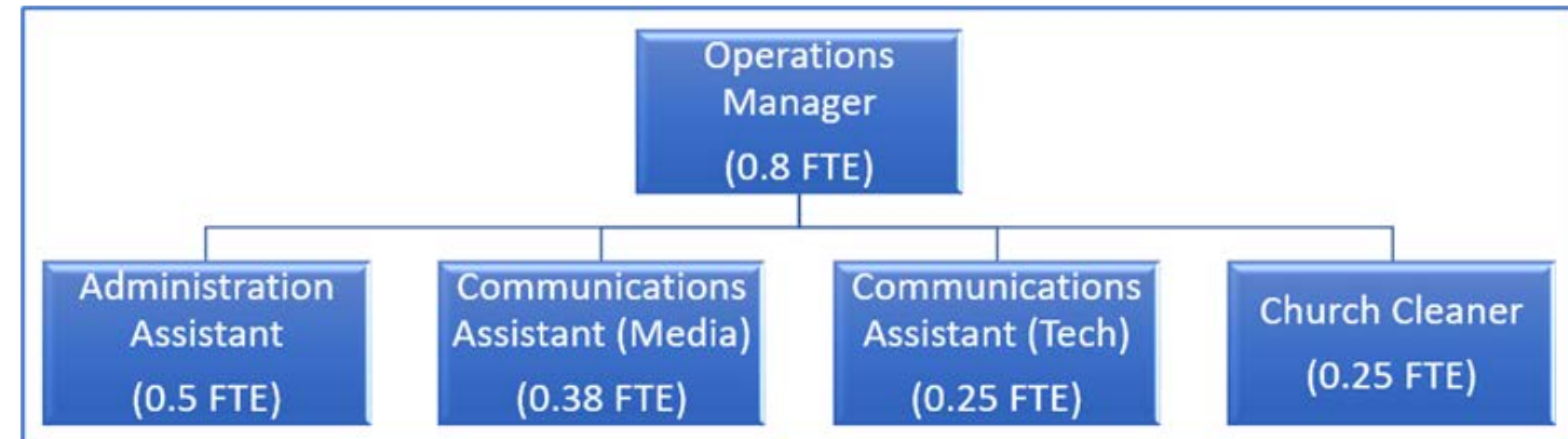
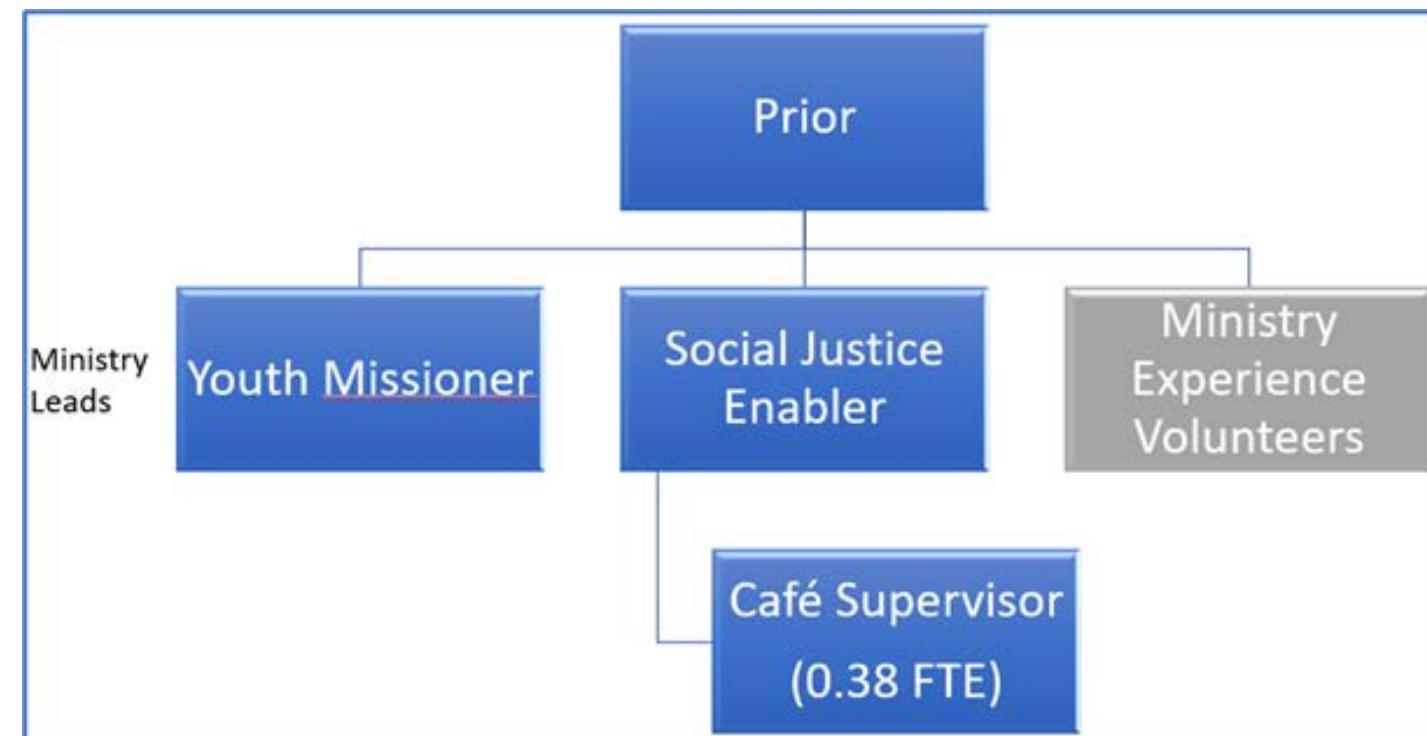
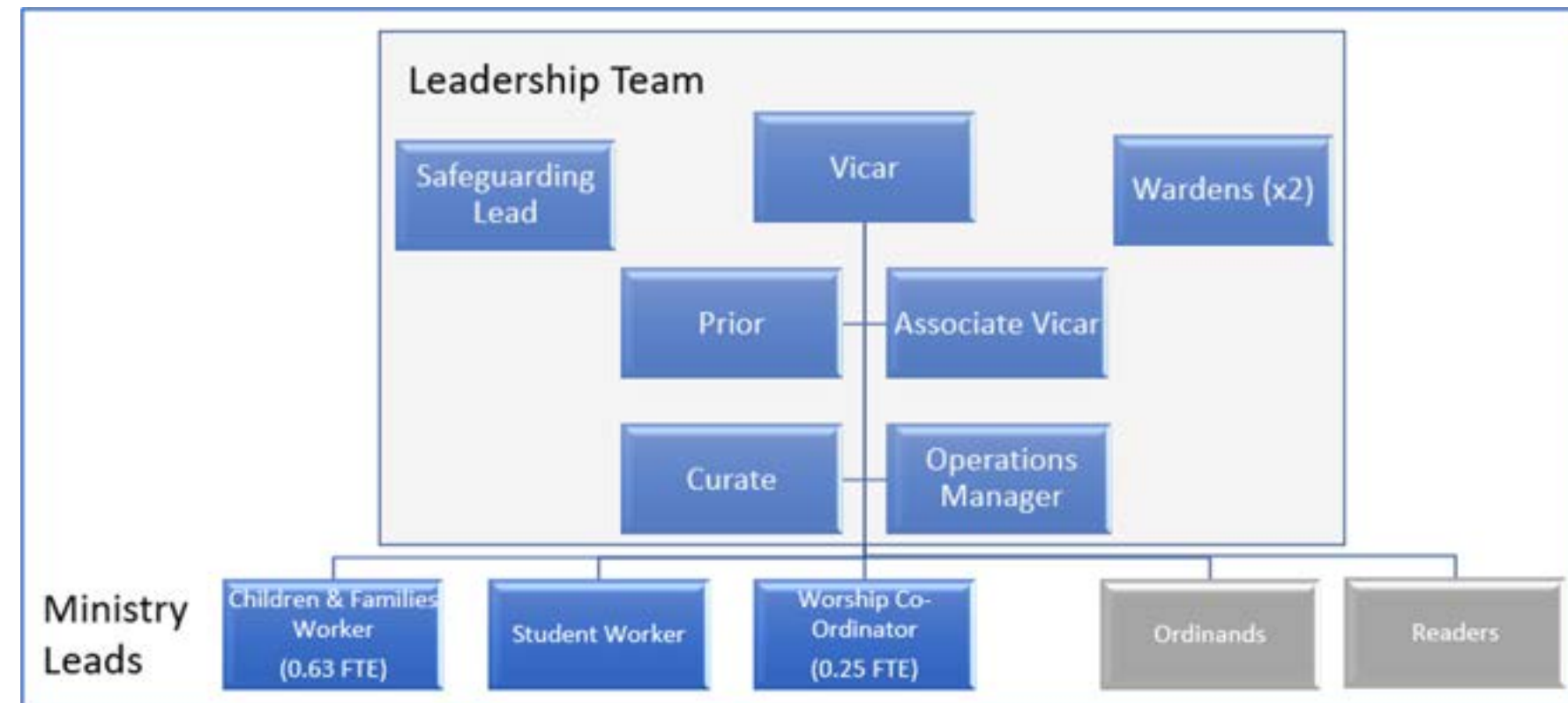
Building Timeline



Governance

Alongside the Incumbent, Associate Vicar and current Curate, there are 10 members of staff, in a mixture of full-time and part-time roles.

Line management responsibilities are divided between the Incumbent, Prior and Operations Manager. Weekly staff meetings are held, and away days provide an extended period for the staff team to make longer term plans.



St Nics has a PCC which meets monthly, with Standing Committee meeting a fortnight beforehand to set the agenda. Recently, additional time has been set aside on PCC and Staff 'away days' to allow extended time to listen to God and discuss the calling of St Nics to particular ministries and mission. Property and Finance committees support the work of the PCC. A Safeguarding Committee supports the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Governance



Committee/Group	Led by	Purpose
Standing Committee	Vicar	To prepare the business of the PCC
Finance Committee	Treasurer	To oversee financial business and report to PCC
Property Committee	A Warden	To oversee buildings and fabric and report to PCC
Safeguarding Committee	Vicar	To take responsibility for safeguarding
Mission Group	A volunteer	To liaise with and support international mission partners
Creation Care and Climate Justice	A volunteer	To co-ordinate the church's involvement in 5th mark of mission
Fun/Social Group	A staff member	To support an intentional programme of social interaction for church members and others

Recently, members of the PCC have attended a CPAS-led ‘PCC Tonight’ session. The smooth running of PCC meetings is assisted by those in the role of lay-Chair and Secretary. A habit has been made of setting aside time in the middle of each meeting to pray.

The age of PCC members ranges from the 30s to 70s, with recognition that those from the younger ages could be more strongly represented. The PCC recognises the importance of avoiding ‘group-think’ and ensuring everyone is comfortable to voice a range of opinions or thoughts on any given subject. A recurring theme in PCC discussions is the challenge posed by the ‘busyness’ of the church.

There are many ongoing activities and projects, and lots of ideas for different events, but not always the volunteers and resources needed to sustain activities. The PCC is perhaps more aware than ever that we may have to let go of some activities to focus on our strengths that allow God’s Kingdom to grow.

Deanery and Inter-Church Links

Durham Deanery covers the city and several outlying communities, which include a range of small towns and villages. The Deanery Chapter meets monthly for support and sharing of ministry updates. It is common to have more than one vacancy in the deanery (for example there are three at present).

The Diocesan Synod meets termly. We have four lay member places, with two others ex officio as they are on General Synod. There has been considerable re-organisation over the last few years with the reduction of incumbents and we are just settling down from that and the impacts of the pandemic.

There have been good relationships at clergy level with several neighbouring churches of various denominations but limited working together at a church level. There is an ecumenical prayer meeting for Durham church leaders, but relationships have not been strong.

One area of cooperation has been Street Lights – the Durham Street Pastor service. With Durham Churches Together, we have a Good Friday act of witness around the Market Place and a Procession from St Nic's to the Cathedral for the New Year's Eve service.

The Vicarage

The Vicarage is a spacious, modern 5-bedroom detached property, situated a mile and a half away from the church in a quiet residential area. It has pleasant gardens and a separate downstairs study. It is not in the Parish and was not purpose built as the Vicarage. It is approximately 5 minutes driving distance and 30 minutes walking distance from the church. It is located within the catchment area of Durham Johnston Comprehensive School and is conveniently situated for either Neville's Cross Primary School or St Margaret's Church of England Primary School.



Particular issues that St Nics is facing



There are various issues that St Nics faces as we look to the future and here we briefly highlight four particular issues:

- (1) As mentioned above, we have various areas of our ministry that are currently being funded by the national SDF funding. This funding will begin to taper off in the next couple of years, which puts progression of some key missional areas at risk.
- (2) We are seriously thinking about how we respond to the Diocesan priority of church planting and are beginning to devote time and energy in staff meetings and prayer evenings to exploring the next steps in this area.
- (3) We began discussions around Living in Love and Faith (LLF) in March 2022. However, due to the previous incumbent's departure, it was not possible for those discussions to be completed. It will be important for the next incumbent to encourage and support those ongoing conversations.
- (4) As a church we also have important questions about how we develop further our engagement with both our city and our parish.

Related to these issues, an external consultant from the Diocese, who has been assisting the PPC during the vacancy and our search for the next Incumbent, recently concluded that *'there is a need for some really focussed missional decision making [particularly to consider the place of evangelism] as well as some robust thinking about what elements of the church's life should be energised or pruned. SDF alone will not be sufficient to deliver the lasting growth and impact the church longs for without other supporting decisions or examining the systems, culture and roles which might need to change in order to become (and sustain life as) a larger missional and planting church.'*

Looking to the future



St Nics has a wonderful past, but we are more excited about the future God is calling us to. The shape of this future will be determined by the success of how we navigate the following opportunities and challenges:

As a PCC, we endorse this view and believe that the new vicar will need to have the skills and experience to lead us as we face the challenges and make the most of the opportunities ahead of us. We therefore believe that the next vicar will need to have the following key priorities:

1

Discerning and communicating a clear vision, and able to live this out in strategic decision-making;

2

Teaching the Bible and witnessing to the Christian faith in compelling and attractive ways; and

3

Leading and developing a staff team who are enablers and encouragers of everyday missionary disciples

Person Specification

Essential	Desirable
Proven ability to discern and communicate a compelling vision, and follow this through with strategic decision making	Previous experience as an incumbent and/or training incumbent
Demonstrable passion for teaching the Bible and witnessing to the Christian Faith in creative and attractive ways to all ages	Postgraduate theological qualification
Experience in Leadership in growing a church numerically and spiritually	Experience of working in a larger church
Experience of building, nurturing and leading teams which are effective and fruitful	Experience of church planting
Deep grounding in prayer with a heart for enabling, encouraging and equipping people to live Christ-centred lives in the day to day	
Tested experience in following the leading of the Holy Spirit, and supporting people in discovering and using God's gift for their lives	
Proven ability to relate pastorally to people from a range of backgrounds and ages	
A strong level of self-awareness and ability to serve in a collaborative and resilient manner, including handling diversity in a complex organisation with love and sensitivity	
A mature understanding of, and commitment to, the relationship between discipleship and social action/justice	
Demonstratable commitment to financial and organisational management	





a church for
everyone

January 2023