

Leader of Fountains Church Bradford Bishop's Statement

Our Diocesan vision is about confident clergy equipping confident Christians to live and tell the good news of Jesus Christ. For all our appointments we seek clergy who have a joyful and confident faith which has inspired a track record of church growth. Here, we are looking for a leader who can take Fountains Church Bradford into the next stage of its young life, continuing its pioneering role as a city centre resource church in, of and for Bradford.

The new leader will need to operate on a city-wide stage, working with the Bishop and Archdeacon of Bradford as well as the other leaders of Fountains to continue realising the vision set for the church since its inception. (S)he will therefore be an experienced and strategic leader of leaders, who can enable each person and each worshipping community to play their part in such a way that the overall team is much greater than the sum of its parts. (S)he will also be comfortable with the governance and accountability demands related to a church of this size and complexity.

The Bishop's Mission Order and associated CIO for Fountains Church Bradford were set up in May 2019. Initial Strategic Development Funding (SDF) for the church of £3,116,623 was awarded in November 2018, split approximately 50:50 between money to refurbish premises and funds for salaries, stipends and running costs. The identified property was a large building (c30,000 sq. ft.) of modern construction located in Bradford city centre. It had been built in 2002 as night clubs, comprising main units on 4 levels and a separate kiosk. The church was launched in September 2019, with the hope and expectation that it would subsequently plant or revitalise other churches every 2-3 years. However, the intention was not simply for Fountains to grow and plant, but to ***raise the spiritual temperature of Bradford*** as a whole.

The key stated goals in the initial SDF bid were that by the end in 2024 there would be:

- Worship and prayer 7 days a week and a worshipping community of at least 500;
- One plant or revitalisation fully established and a second started;
- Multiple, successful social enterprises, engaging with a widening fringe of people;
- Fully covered operating costs, including Share paid to the Diocese, and surplus being generated to allow the purchase of the building lease;
- Good reputation with the district council, police, civic, business, faith and education leaders.

The pandemic had a significant impact on the type of growth the young church experienced, which was primarily among more marginalised communities who were accessible at that time. It also caused significant cost increases for the planned refurbishment works of the church building. Hence, in 2022 a new bid, named "Mountains into Roads", unlocked a further £3 million in SDF, of which £2,196,538 was for building works to refurbish the rest of the property. These were successfully completed in September 2024. The remaining monies enabled the funding window for staff and running costs to run two years longer to the end of 2026. The goals for Fountains and its network churches were updated for this bid, and the end date moved to 2027. These included a further 4 new plants or revitalisations (now reached), increased numbers of worshippers and new disciples

(currently behind target), new lay leaders (already surpassed) and ordination candidates (on track). Fountains has therefore made good progress against its agreed SDF objectives, although at a slower pace than had been envisaged in 2018. Hence, the last annual review for the SDF reporting was Amber/Green. The Bishop's Mission Order was unconditionally renewed in 2024.

The church is developing a good track record in supporting church revitalisation and starting new worshipping communities, not least Saturday Gathering and Wrestling Church. It has a strong leadership team, comprising ordained and paid staff as well as mature and experienced lay people. In particular, the church is blessed with several very gifted worship leaders in its Sunday afternoon congregation.

Fountains has continued access to Church Commissioners' SDF this year and next year to support its planting and revitalisation work in the city. This funding is providing a contribution to the employment costs of the Operation Manager, three Mission Apprentices, and a Creative Director role, as well as covering rent payments to the Diocese of Leeds. In return, Fountains is committed to support church planting and revitalisation within the Bradford Episcopal Area, sharing resources generously with other churches and sending people graciously to revitalise and plant churches. Income from congregational giving, as well as rental and event income from the building, are enabling positive growth towards financial sustainability, but these income streams need to keep growing for that aim to be achieved.

The main missional challenge for the next leader of this young church is to enable renewed growth in the Sunday afternoon congregation, both numerical and also in corporate missional discipleship, so the church can inhabit more fully its role as a Resource Church. Alongside this, working with a Business and Operations Director, is the financial challenge of ensuring adequate sustainable income streams to resource the church's mission and ministry. Hence, I see the following goals for the new Leader:

- To refresh the church's strategy, building from its original vision and progress to date, ensuring the vision, values and strategy are widely understood and owned by individuals and groups from the different congregations as well as wider stakeholders;
- To strengthen and enlarge the church's core membership, setting a culture of strong corporate and personal discipleship in the church, and to continue to identify, encourage and develop new lay leaders and potential ordinands;
- To lead and manage the staff team, ensuring it is cohesive and mutually supportive with shared vision and values, and each member can play to their respective strengths.
- To consolidate and continue the church's mission, outreach and church planting work (in particular through the Fountains Network Churches in Frizinghall and Shelf with Buttershaw) so that the gospel is shared with more of Bradford;
- As current SDF support ends, to work closely and collaboratively with the person appointed as the church's Business and Operations Director to ensure ongoing financial sustainability for Fountains CIO and to ensure mission initiatives are focused ("do less, and do it better") on agreed priorities, such as:
 - mission and ministry in and from the City Centre;
 - growing missional capacity, particularly with the 4:30 pm congregation;
 - work with children, youth and families.

Most of the parishes of the Deanery of Inner Bradford are experimenting with mixing new approaches to worship and mission alongside inherited patterns. The new post-holder will therefore find a group of entrepreneurial, creative and supportive colleagues in the Deanery chapter, all of whom will be familiar with the joys and challenges that each other faces. We expect the new post holder to work with a spirit of generosity in sharing wisdom and insights about ministry within the Deanery of Inner Bradford, and across the Episcopal Area.

+Toby Bradford,
19 July 2026