



Leeds Minster
Serving the City



Are you the person we are seeking as our Rector in our mission to serve the City of Leeds?

Leeds Minster is the civic church for Leeds, a privileged position with important links to the civic and political leaders of one of the largest cities in England.

We have a proud history of serving the city through changing times by means of well-resourced ministry, and more recently, a focus on hospitality to those attracted to the stunning building or in need of space for reflection and prayer. Finely crafted liturgy, strong preaching and choral music have traditionally been grounded by work with both the neediest and the most powerful as we seek to welcome all. This worship is seen by many here as core to both our spirituality and outreach. A clear hunger exists for that spirituality to deepen and grow as the basis for a better understanding of how we can serve our city and further our outreach within it. This is in line with the goal of the Diocesan Strategy to re-imagine ministry.

Nurturing lay discipleship is one of our key goals and we see a particular potential for growth among young adults. Much of the energy in Leeds Minster currently comes from the choir and in particular a group of young choral scholars drawn mainly from local universities. Along with recent demographic changes that have seen large numbers of young singles and couples move into the flats close to the Minster and across the city centre, this is an exciting focus for growth.

The Minster currently has a Ministry team of Lecturer, Curate and Lay Minister, who will all work closely with the Rector. In line with the Diocesan goal to build leadership pathways, there are signs of the emergence of lay leadership within the congregation. For example, a group was recently established to guide the redevelopment of the website and harness social media as a key platform

"The Minster is where I came to faith, and so it holds a very special place in my heart. It is where I discerned the beauty of the liturgy, the value of faith, and the good news of God's word. I have attended online and in person, and in July 2021 I was baptised and confirmed here.

The things that drew me to the Minster will draw others: an extremely talented choir and, in the Book of Common Prayer, the best liturgy in English."
Stephen, baptised and confirmed 4th July 2021

for outreach and communication, which we hope will lead to a growth in the numbers drawn to the Minster and making use of the services we offer. In summary, the tremendous work of the past few years has transformed the systems and functioning of the Minster to provide a solid foundation on which a new phase of ministry can be built. As we emerge from the pandemic we want to build on our strong choral tradition and the hospitality we offer to be a place that develops and nurtures confident and resourceful Christians who live out their faith and build the church. We recognise the importance of growing the church in order to transform the community we find ourselves in – both the geographic community of the Parish but more widely the city and episcopal area. This brochure seeks to introduce you to Leeds Minster and to set out our needs and hopes as we look, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to find the right person to be Rector of Leeds.

What qualities are we looking for in the next Rector of Leeds?

The Rector of Leeds, alongside the Bishop of Kirkstall, form the main point of contact in the city between the Church of England and those in positions of political, civic and charitable leadership. We have good working relationships with Leeds City Council, the Lord Lieutenant's office and other key civic roles across the episcopal area, so networking is a key aspect of the role. We are looking for someone who appreciates the formality necessary when carrying out civic duties but has a relaxed manner which is approachable and pastoral. You should find the opportunity to strengthen and develop existing links with local government, commercial and charitable organisations across the city an exciting prospect.

We are seeking to grow in fellowship, discipleship, spirituality and numbers with a desire to deepen the faith of the congregation. There is a good awareness that this needs to incorporate a gospel-enriched and deeper understanding of issues of social and climate justice in tandem with a growing commitment to prayer. This will appeal to people of all ages, but we hope this will be a particular spur to our young adults in their discipleship. Good preaching is widely expected of the Rector of Leeds, and we know that leadership in prayer may come best from committed example and practice.

"I remember the first Sunday when I came to Leeds Minster, the atmosphere was friendly and I was welcomed and made to feel like I belonged. Three Sundays later, it was as if I had been a long-term member. Everyone accepted me. I was convinced to become Server, something I am committed to and enjoy doing."

Stella, Server

High-quality music is at the heart of our offering, being integral to our liturgy and spirituality, while also generating footfall and attracting people into the building who might not otherwise come. Music often reaches where words fail, and for many people at the Minster provides religious expression, and a level of connection and assent that they may not otherwise be able to articulate. We hope the new Rector will love music. It is essential that he or she understands the choral tradition and the relatively formal style of worship that comes with it. We are fortunate that the music is predominantly funded from external sources.

Having a beautiful and historic Grade 1 listed building is a privilege and a challenge. We need a Rector who is strategic in fostering a commitment to continue to pay Parish Share and keep our finances secure.

We especially value our close working relationship with the other city centre Anglican churches of Holy Trinity and St George's. Developing and furthering this collaboration is integral to the Church of England's engagement with the city. The Rector may be seen by others – particularly clergy - as a source for advice and contacts. The opportunities for inter-faith dialogue and cooperation are there to be explored as time and needs permit.

Safeguarding is essential to the well-being of everybody who comes into contact with Leeds Minster, and the Rector, while working with the relevant parish officers, is expected to lead by example in setting the appropriate culture.

This may sound like a daunting set of requirements. However, we know that nobody is perfect, and believe that there are willing resources within the Minster waiting to be harnessed and to provide leadership or support in a variety of areas. A collegiate approach to leadership will be greatly welcomed and productive in allowing the Leeds Minster community to flourish.



“We were recently married in Leeds Minster. We have lived opposite the Minster for 6 years and feel a real connection to it and the area, particularly as we often hear the bells throughout the week. When we first started exploring marriage, we started to attend Sunday services and were immediately made to feel very welcome and a part of the church community.

On the wedding day itself, the Minster provided a stunning venue with the sunlight drenching everything inside with wonderful colours through the beautiful stained-glass windows. The service felt incredibly personal which is credit to those who helped prepare and ran everything smoothly on the day. We were so pleased at being able to start our married life together in such a special place and amongst such special people - a real gem in the heart of the city. We're also looking forward to continuing to be part of that community.”

Russell and Micha, married in the Minster September 2021

Leeds and the Parish of Leeds City

With a population of 800,000, Leeds is a thriving commercial, professional and retail centre close to the beautiful Yorkshire Dales and at the heart of the Diocese. The parish covers the eastern part of the city centre and extends into the residential area of Lincoln Green.



The Minster lies in a recently rejuvenated and thriving commercial district, with notable retail attractions such as the Corn Exchange, the historic Kirkgate Market, bustling Briggate and Victoria Leeds. Modern riverside warehouse conversions sit alongside hotels, bars, clubs and restaurants, and comprise much of the residential accommodation near the Minster.

Lincoln Green, by contrast, is acknowledged as an area of urban deprivation. It sits on the eastern edge of the city centre and has a diverse and transient population.



Leeds has a flourishing airport and excellent rail and bus links. On foot, the Minster is only 2 minutes from Leeds bus station, 10 minutes from Leeds train station and 15 minutes from the Diocesan office.

Leeds is a cultural and sporting hub, home to Leeds Arena, Northern Ballet, Opera North, the Grand Theatre, Leeds Conservatoire, Leeds Playhouse and the City Varieties Hall, all within the parish boundaries. The city proudly boasts a Premier League football club at Elland Road, Headingley international cricket stadium and Leeds Rhinos rugby league team. It plays host to World Triathlon Championship races and is one of the venues for the Tour de Yorkshire cycling races. More information can be found at [Welcome to Yorkshire](#).

Within the Parish of Leeds City the main worship centre is Leeds Minster (previously known as St Peter-at-Leeds and Leeds Parish Church). St John's, New Briggate also falls in the parish and is a redundant church in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. Both are Grade 1 listed buildings and important landmarks in the city.

Leeds Minster

“Entering the building always fills me with awe as the sense of majesty and serenity fills me. I shed workday concerns and prepare to spend time in God’s presence either alone or with like-minded people. The familiar language of traditional liturgy, the praise and worship all serve as the glue which supports me.”

Jean, Welcomer

Christians have worshipped on this site since Saxon times, as we are reminded by the stunning 10th century cross located on the altar flats and the numerous monuments retained from the previous church on the site. The present Grade 1 listed building, dedicated in 1841 as St Peter-at-Leeds and later known as Leeds Parish Church, was built by Revd. Dr Walter Farquhar Hook. The church was rededicated as Leeds Minster in 2012. Hook’s vision was of a church welcoming all, not just the wealthy few; and for Leeds to have enough churches and schools to serve the whole city. The building was designed for a sacramental style of worship, with the focus on the altar. The sacrament remains the focus of our worship today.

The Minster has a tradition of being open every day and although COVID prevented this, we have now re-opened on four days per week. We are again attracting visitors drawn by both the beauty and the history of the church, which is an important part of our mission. Our welcomers are here to help visitors interpret the building and point to the faith that inspired its construction and that continues to inspire us today. The leadership shown by some of our lay people, who give their time and energy to keep the building open and make it a welcoming space for all, keeps Hook’s vision alive.

We are a diverse church in the mainstream of Anglicanism, embracing both Catholic and Reformed Anglican spirituality. Sir John Betjeman once stated, “There’s High Church, Low Church and Leeds Parish Church”. We are proud of our eclectic mix of churchmanship and, whilst we celebrate our traditional style with robes and an outstanding choir, we aim to offer a place of worship for all people, irrespective of their church tradition. The rededication as Leeds Minster reflects the vision to connect with the city through prayer, mission, service and hospitality as we reimagine ministry in the light of Hook’s legacy.

Leeds Minster is the civic church for Leeds and hosts an increasing number of services for the city, including a recent service to celebrate the life of the Duke of Edinburgh and the annual Oakleaf Service. The Rector also has a major involvement in the City’s annual commemoration of Remembrance Sunday. The Minster hosts services for the Diocese and episcopal area, including ordinations to the priesthood. During Advent and Christmas, we host a variety of charity concerts and carol services.

Baptisms at the Minster occur outside of the main Sunday service. Most of our baptisms are for infants, but in 2021 we were delighted to confirm three adult candidates (with two baptised) at the church. The Minster is a fantastic city centre location for a wedding and, with the conversion of office spaces and warehouses into flats nearby, we increasingly see parishioners enquiring about marriage.



Music

Leeds Minster has a long and glorious liturgical and musical tradition, with Samuel Sebastian Wesley and Edward Cuthbert Bairstow among our former organists. In 2015 a mixed-voice adult SATB chamber choir replaced the former boys' and men's choir. We have a healthy mix of student Choral Scholars from local universities and experienced volunteer adult singers. The Minster Choir sings three choral services each week: Evensong on Thursdays and Sundays, and the main Sunday morning Common Worship Eucharist. We have just over 30 singers, with around 20-25 voices for most services.

The choir is complemented by [St Peter's Singers](#), a high-quality chamber choir who enrich the musical life of both the Minster and Leeds. Whereas the Minster choir is predominantly liturgical, St Peter's Singers provide outreach in the city, giving concerts at secular and sacred venues, while increasing footfall at the Minster when giving concerts there. Much of the programme is related to the Church's calendar.

The Friends of the Music of Leeds Minster is a separate charity which supports many of the day-to-day running costs of the Music Department; and various grant-making bodies generously support the department's work. The choir's repertoire is as wide as any choral foundation, and the church possesses a fine library of music, as well as a spacious and airy choir vestry which provides an excellent rehearsal space. The Minster is a large space often used for concerts and recitals by external, hiring organisations. We are fortunate to be within a stone's throw of Leeds Conservatoire and it would be exciting to forge stronger links as some of Choral Scholars are from the Conservatoire.



"No matter where I go or what I do in the future, Leeds Minster will always hold a special place in my life as the place where I found my faith in Jesus Christ. At the Minster I have found a fantastic, open-minded, and varied community.

With so many of the youth directed initiatives in the Church of England today focussing on evangelical churchmanship, it is refreshing to find in the Minster a place where I can practise my faith in the tradition that I find spiritually enriching with other likeminded young people."

Thomas, confirmed 4th July 2021

The Minster Organ is a large and famous 1914 Harrison & Harrison instrument of four manuals and pedals. Weekly recitals on Friday lunchtimes showcase a range of in-house and guest players from around the country. In August, a Sunday evening recital replaces Choral Evensong. We are keen to build our audiences at these recitals so the retiring collections can allow us not only to break even but ideally turn a surplus to support other aspects of the department's work.

The Music Department is staffed by two professional musicians who work part-time for the Minster. Alexander Woodrow (appointed 2020) is Organist and Director of Music; he directs the Minster Choir, manages the organ recital series and takes charge of administration for the department. The Sub-Organist is David Houlder (appointed 2003), who plays for the three choral services each week.

Church fabric and finances

The financial situation of the Minster has improved considerably over the last five years. Finances are fairly stable in the short-to-medium term although our long-term financial stability is less certain. In the last few years, a major re-development saw two buildings in the Minster precinct converted into offices and apartments. The rent from the three offices is vital to the Minster's finances and, along with the hiring out of parking spaces, in a good year will cover our parish share. Therefore, after a long period of failing to meet our parish share obligations, we were able to pay the share in full in 2019. This was not possible in 2020 due to COVID, but we are on course to pay in full again in 2021. Our outstanding parish share deficit is around £295,000.

Much-needed roof works were performed in 2021, thanks mainly to a Culture Recovery Fund grant, but an application for a second grant was unfortunately declined, leaving us currently without funding for further much-needed roof works on the tower and City of Leeds Room (café). These works require a total budget of around £290,000 (excluding VAT).

Regular donations stood at £28,694 in 2019, a figure we wish to see improve. We have benefitted from joining the Parish Giving Scheme, which makes regular giving considerably more predictable.



Conferences and Events



During the year the Minster hosts several civic and charity events. Christmas is a particularly busy time, with a number of organisations choosing to hold their carol services with us; for example, the Yorkshire Evening Post service which regularly attracts hundreds of people. We also host regular organ recitals showcasing talent from around the country, as well as concerts by St Peter's Singers, the Leeds Guild of Singers and groups such as the Mediæval Bæbes.

In September 2021 we hosted a conference entitled *Leeds Minster: "Noblest of the Noble" of Early-Victorian Churches*, a hybrid event organised by the Ecclesiological Society, Leeds Civic Trust and Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. Papers examined both old and new churches, Hook's liturgical innovations and his ambition to build additional churches and schools, and the Minster's musical tradition.

The Minster works with the Leeds Church Institute and the School of Philosophy, Religion and the History of Science at the University of Leeds to host the annual Hook Lecture. The 2021 lecture focused on Faith and Climate Change, aiming to widen the discussion post-COP26.

Environment

Our parish environment officer is passionate about moving the Minster forwards in our efforts to reduce our carbon emissions and to explore how our faith and discipleship relate to caring for God's creation. We are building a team of people to develop this work and be part of the network of organisations and faith groups in the city who are working to prevent climate change, seeking to listen to and learn from each other. As a parish we want to affirm our faith that through Christ, God has created a majestic and awesome cosmos; that Jesus redeemed the whole earth through his death and resurrection; and that we recognise our special responsibility to care for the Earth, so that all life, both human life and all God's creatures, may be sustained in harmony.

Leeds Church Institute

For many years the Rector of Leeds has chaired [Leeds Church Institute](#) (LCI), a charity with a focus on learning to equip churches in Leeds to play a distinctive role in the life of the city. Their activities include learning and dialogue through events, publications, social media, the arts and research. In 2021, the LCI moved into one of the offices owned by the Minster.

St Peter's Primary School

[St Peter's C of E Primary School](#) is a vibrant and exciting school with high expectations of the inner-city families it serves. There is a very close relationship with Leeds Minster. Members of the clergy and ministry team are involved in school through the governing body, leading worship in assembly and Sunday café church (pre-COVID), as well as attending events and celebrations. Pupils attend the Minster for key events in the year such as Shrove Tuesday pancake races, the Christmas service, workshops linked to faith and festivals, and the Diocesan leavers' service.



Mothers' Union

The new organisation of the Mothers' Union areas from 2016 has benefitted and re-kindled the profile of the MU in the Minster. We act as the main meeting location for all the Leeds area MU branches. Before COVID, we hosted MU prayers, Coffee & Chat and Knit & Natter. In 2019 the Province of York requested permission for the Minster to host the visit of MU Worldwide President, with members travelling from far and wide and filling the church. It was a wonderful honour for the rebirth of MU in the Minster.



Bell Ringers

The history of ringing at the Minster goes back to the period when the present art was being developed. The first peal ever rung in Leeds – and, no doubt, one of the earliest in Yorkshire – was on the newly augmented eight on 30th June 1742. Re-founded in July 1998, St Peter's Society of Change Ringers aims to ring for the two principal Sunday services, on mid-week festivals and on Holy Days, as well as practising on a Thursday night. Although COVID has caused some towers to struggle for ringers, the demanding but rewarding bells of Leeds Minster have drawn ringers back for our regular services and practices; and for our monthly "Advanced Practice" which regularly draws ringers from the surrounding area.

A Message from the Bishop of Leeds

In recent years the Anglican churches and parishes in Leeds City Centre have been reconfigured so that all have a unique role to play in delivering the Diocesan Strategy of Reimagining Ministry, fostering lay discipleship, growing leadership pathways and focussing on young people.

Holy Trinity, Boar Lane - previously in the Leeds City Parish, but now in St. George's, has had a significant refurbishment and we have appointed a City Centre Missioner to work in the commercial and retail sectors using an SDF grant. Excellent working relationships exist between the clergy in the three churches and there is a strong desire to work together in providing a comprehensive Anglican menu across the City Centre.

It is noticeable that Leeds Minster is increasingly attracting young people in the choir and in the congregation who are either students or 20s/30s who live in the city centre. The post of Rector of Leeds Minster is a great opportunity to focus on congregational growth through a strong musical tradition, teaching, pastoral care and civic engagement.