

St George's

The Annual Report



Preach Jesus, Make disciples, Serve the city & Send out leaders



Dear Church Family

At St George's we have a vision to preach Jesus, make disciples, serve the city and send out leaders. We are so thankful for our wonderfully diverse and multi-generational church community, and for all the ways you pray, serve and give to enable our shared vision to become reality. As you read this 2023 Annual Report, we hope you will be encouraged to see that God is at work among us in a huge variety of ways. In the words of our Easter acclamation: Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Lizzy Woolf (Team Rector)

Eve Ridgeway (Clergy Lead for St George's)

Sundays & Special Services

Our Sunday services at 10.30 and 18.30 are central to life at St George's. Both services are livestreamed and include sung worship, biblical teaching, prayer and a lively sense of community. Most of our 10.30am services are translated into Farsi, prayer ministry is available after every service and we celebrate Holy Communion monthly. Sermon series included Growing on your Frontlines, Holy Spirit: Transforming the City, Amazing Children, and Mountains: Hope in God's Presence.

Highlights included:

- Vision & Gift Sundays (raising a fantastic £51,000)
- 45 baptisms including 4 infants
- 33 confirmations, with people from Iran, India, China & UK
- 4 weddings & 5 funerals/thanksgivings, including much loved congregation members
- Reflective services for Ash Wednesday & Good Friday, followed by joyful Easter services
- Pentecost worship in Mandarin, Farsi and English
- Crypt Sunday service including praying for all Crypt staff
- Over 100 diverse congregation members leading services, prayers and Bible readings
- 29 congregation members giving talks including squad preach
- Guest speakers: Ken Benjamin, Christian Selvaratnam, Bishop Arun Arora
- 28 stewards, who help our services run smoothly
- 60 worship & tech team, including 5 new youth
- Christmas services & assemblies involving a giant cracker, Barbie, a pop-up choir, and rapping camels connected with over 4,000 people.





Kids & Youth

In 2023, average attendance at our Sunday kids groups was 37 (16% higher than in 2022). One Sunday in June we had 53 under 11s! Most months we have 7 visiting children, but in October we had 19. Special events for 0-11s & their families were a focus for invitation. 101 people (52 adults & 49 kids) came to the Pancake Party. 131 people (67 adults & 64 kids) came to the Light Party, including 40 guests.

Our weekly Youth Night has games, worship, teaching, small groups and prayer. Average attendance in 2023 was 24 young people. On Sundays we averaged 9 at 10.30 youth group, and 6 at 18.30 Youth Zone. Youth Band ran 2 bands with 14 young people.



Highlights included:

- Ready Steps! This new group for children in Years 1 & 2, started in Sept 2023, with opportunities to explore the Bible & develop faith
- Wrigglers re-launched for under 1s and carers in the Community Room. This now operates on a stay and play basis, with a comfortable space to feed babies.
- Youth Weekend Away with 35 young people at Herd Farm Activity Centre. Activities included the Giant Swing & Crate Stack. Teaching focused on Peter walking on water.
- 4 Youth Socials including Glow in the Dark Night and the Big Summer Party.
- St G's Tots, our Tuesday morning toddler group, with toys, toast and singing, had an average weekly attendance of 10 (67% higher than 2022).
- 6 new kids team & 5 new youth team members over the summer, in answer to prayer
- Children and youth involved in services with prayers, actions, readings, worship band, squad preach, projection, Nativity, cameras, & PA.
- 480 children from 5 Leeds primary schools attended our Schools Nativity. The children loved the modern twists to the traditional story.
- 25 St G's youth & friends at Contemporary Carols, plus youth groups from 4 other churches
- Contemporary Carols and Easter assemblies for all year groups at Abbey Grange Academy, plus 2 Easter primary school assemblies

Thank you to our wonderful diverse and multi-generational team, including those helping with regular groups and special events, and our safeguarding officers who help us follow legislation and good practice.

Students

Around 70 undergraduate students engage with St G's from all 5 Leeds universities. We typically see about 40 students at Student Night on Thursdays, including 7 international students, and 30 at Student Teas (before the 1830 service in term time). Our Postgraduate Fellowship met twice with around 15 from the UK and around the world. 2023 highlights included:

- 6 student small groups led by 12 student leaders
- Student Weekend Away with 44 students. There was teaching on the book of James, and time to build community with games, walks, discussion and meals
- Student team growing to 10 volunteers offering time and wisdom
- Students serving across the wider church in kids, youth, welcome, stewarding, Nativity, worship & tech
- Summer Party with 42 students to celebrate the end of the academic year and thank the team
- Student Staycation in October with 40 students including karaoke and games
- Student Alpha with 8 students exploring faith together
- Growing involvement with interfaith work, including Jewish & Muslim student guests at Student Teas, interfaith student meals in the homes of congregation members, and a group of our students invited to a Jewish Society Friday Night Dinner on campus for the first time.
- Hosting Sofar Sounds gig with 100 guests hearing Christian artists perform and share stories.
- Exam support packs to engage with students around faith and mental health
- Journeying together through all areas of life and faith over many coffees





Small Groups

We have 22 small groups meeting regularly across Leeds, all of which are hugely valued as a space for both discipleship and community. These groups read the Bible together, get to know each other well, and pray for each other, sharing both good and hard times. Thank you to our 40 committed small group leaders, who we supported with team meetings and resources. In November, 31 young adults joined together for a weekend away on the theme of retreat, organised by one of our 18.30 small groups.

Corporate Prayer & Worship

In January, our Vision, Worship and Prayer night was attended by 110 people (in person and online). Subsequently, about 50 people attended our regular monthly prayer and worship gatherings. Our Creative Worship Morning in March was attended by about 40 people. In May, we joined Thy Kingdom Come global prayer movement, with our monthly prayer & worship gathering, a Breakfast Church for young families (attended by about 30 people), and a Pursuit Night (extended time of prayer and worship). Facebook Live prayers, which started in March 2020 as a response to lockdown, finished in December 2023.

Special Groups

Farsi Group met online during 2023, with an average of 25-30 people, and St George's gave financial assistance with bus fares to enable Sunday service attendance. The group supported each other through hardship, insecurity and personal loss. Many shared their faith with friends, and served the wider church, helping with hospitality and in other practical ways. We held a special event to mark Nowruz (Persian New Year) in March. This included food, poetry, live music and prayer for Iran. 92 people attended, and Bishop Arun gave a special blessing. Particular thanks to Ann Weir for her leadership in this important ministry.

Interfaith Group in addition to our vibrant student interfaith ministry, we attended various Jewish and Muslim community events, and wrote to support local Jewish and Muslim groups following events in Gaza and the subsequent rise in both anti-semitism and Islamophobia in the UK. The group's work was featured at the annual Licensed Lay Ministers' conference.

Extra Time connects with around 60 over 55s, who meet regularly for coffee, lunch, and a monthly midweek Holy Communion. The group supported each other through ill health, bereavements and other challenges. In 2023 there were 3 outings (Leeds waste disposal centre, Saltaire and a water treatment plant), a ministry in retirement day, and a musical Christmas Extravaganza.

Walking Group met monthly in 2023 with 11 different walk leaders and an average of 20-25 walkers (including some guests from outside St G's). The highlight was a weekend away in Whitby hiking the Yorkshire coastline and enjoying fish and chips.





Alpha

Alpha creates space for people to bring their friends for a conversation about faith, life and God. In 2023 we ran Alpha four times in different contexts, including one hosted by Holy Trinity Boar Lane. We welcomed 29 guests, of whom 4 have since been baptised and joined the church.

Courses

During Lent, Dan Hebden offered weekly reflections on an Exodus theme (following the 1830 sermon series) which linked to a contemporary worship song. These were posted on our social media. In May & June we ran prayer ministry training 4 times. In October, Thinking with Faith offered an opportunity to read and discuss excerpts from St Augustine's Confessions over 4 weeks. This was facilitated by Dr Joanna Leidenhag and attended by 18 people.

Summer Events

In June we held a small singing workshop and games afternoon. The popular church picnic took place in sunshine at Kirkstall Abbey in July. In August, about 40 people, including a group of youth, attended New Wine. Many served on teams such as kids, youth, site services, and radio.

Midweek Visitors

In 2023, St G's received about 6-10 midweek visitors per week. Some were visiting Leeds from all over the world. A few were in crisis situations. Others were curious about church, or wished to pray (especially international students sitting exams in St G's Centre).

Resource Church

St George's is a Resource church in the Diocese of Leeds. This means we have a city-wide vision, and are committed to church planting and giving away resources strategically in order to bless our city.

In June we hosted CCX Multiply, gathering church planters from across the North of England including the Archbishop of York and at least 3 other bishops. In October we participated in the launch of Faith in the North, a missional movement initiated by the Archbishop of York to help the church grow younger & more diverse, develop missionary disciples, and plant churches.

Our latest church plant to Bramley continued to thrive in 2023. By their first anniversary in October, they had grown from about 40 to 100 people, with monthly groups on Sundays for under 5s and youth. They engaged the local community with pop up events including 200 people at the first Churches Together Summer Fun Day in St Peter's Churchyard. The relationship with the local primary school flourished, including a trip to St George's Schools Nativity.

In 2023 we became a New Wine Minster for Rising Generations. This is a pilot project where churches with strong children's ministry support local churches who want to start engaging children. We are currently working with 2 local churches.





St George's Team

St George's is part of a team of 3 churches: St George's, Holy Trinity Boar Lane, and St Augustine's Wrangthorn. The churches are very different, but share values of relationship, generosity and creativity, and work together to facilitate mission.

Holy Trinity Boar Lane

Holy Trinity is a church with a midweek ministry to love and serve workers in the heart of the city. In March 2023, After Work Worship started (monthly), alongside the 3 weekly services at breakfast and lunchtime. In May we were delighted to celebrate our first 3 baptisms. At Christmas over 300 people attended services, including 3 carol services for local organisations. 2023 brought significant leadership change, but the team continued strong relationships with Trinity Leeds shopping centre, Leeds BID and local businesses. Work was also completed to improve the acoustics, making the beautiful building much more useable.

St Augustine's Wrangthorn

St Augustine's is a parish church of about 65, serving its local community in various ways including Park Run hospitality and Space, a weekly warm community space. It is also the base for Church@Hyde Park Corner (hpc), a student church for unchurched students, which is a partnership between St Augustine's and St George's. In the autumn term 2023, the coffee cart went out twice a week on the main walking routes to uni, giving away 100 cups of coffee each time. 730 students attended special events in the church grounds and 48 welcome bags were given out to nearby student houses. Sunday Lunch grew to around 30 unchurched students weekly (biggest week 55). 10 students and about 6 young adults started regularly attending the morning service at Wrangthorn. 86 unchurched students came to the hpc Carol service.

Mission Partners

St George's works with 2 closely affiliated charities who minister to those on the margins of society:

St George's Crypt

St George's Crypt provides 21 single rooms plus a 6 bed room at the Care Centre below St George's church. In addition, residential projects across Leeds provide a range of accommodation, from emergency shelter at Kingston Hotel to 24 flats for individuals/families in a community setting at Don Robins House in Armley. The overall positive 'move-on' rate for all Crypt accommodation is an amazing 95%. In 2023 the Crypt provided 62,500 hot meals at the Care Centre. Growing Rooms, a residential drug & alcohol recovery project for men, had 13 clients successfully complete the 15 month programme, and in 2023, Growing Rooms Ladies was started, the only such holistic residential project in Leeds. A full time Chaplain was also appointed in 2023. New chaplaincy initiatives included facilitating a staff wellbeing group, leadership team away days, informal prayer groups, and a Messy Church at Don Robins House. In December, Nick Bishop stood down as chair of trustees after many dedicated years of service.

Lighthouse (West Yorkshire)

Lighthouse is a community that reaches out to those battered and bruised by the storms of life. Around 70 vulnerable adults are actively engaged with Lighthouse. In 2023, Lighthouse met for worship services and meals at the Crypt, Christian day centres at St George's (with Bible studies, healing workshops, and games in a safe warm space), and days out to the seaside and Chester Zoo. In 2023, St George's PCC worked with Lighthouse charity trustees and Leeds Diocese to enable Lighthouse to operate as a fully independent charity.





Local mission partners

In 2023 we continued to support Kidz Klub and Leeds Faith in Schools in a variety of ways including money, prayer, trustees, volunteers and hampers.

Overseas mission partners

We continued to support 4 overseas mission partners doing inspiring work in Ethiopia, Japan and Central Asia. All visited Leeds during 2023.

St Hild Theological College

St George's is a founding church partner, and some of our clergy are associate faculty members. Lizzy Woolf chairs the St Hild Centre for Church Planting, which cultivates imagination and ambition for church planting, and trains church planters across the North of England.

Resourcing the Ministry

Staff team

Our wonderful staff team includes clergy, ministry and operations staff, plus interns. A key focus is supporting and equipping our many volunteers. In 2023 we sent out 3 clergy: Josh Cockayne to be Director of Mission, Evangelism & Centre for Church Planting at Cranmer Hall Durham, Joanna & Che Seabourne to Nottingham, where Joanna is now Rector of St Giles West Bridgford and Che is finishing his curacy. Our curates, Hannah Jones, Richard and Jasmine Barber were priested in June and we welcomed several new staff members during the year.

Interns

Our interns live in community houses, receive weekly teaching and supervision, and serve in a ministry area. They also attend weekends away to connect with interns across the country. 4 St George's interns and 2 Holy Trinity interns graduated in summer 2023. Their next steps included jobs in youth ministry, prison service, and retail management. In September we welcomed 5 interns to St George's, 1 to Holy Trinity and 2 to St Augustine's. These interns are part of the wider diocesan intern programme, with 29 interns serving churches in Leeds, Bradford & Harrogate.

PCC

The Parochial Church Council consists of churchwardens, clergy, elected and co-opted representatives of the congregations. They work prayerfully with the Rector to oversee all our ministry and mission, with a focus on finances, buildings and HR. In 2023 the PCC also discussed our leadership values and Lighthouse governance structures. In May 2023 an Archdeacon's Visitation found all areas of church life healthy, with administration, buildings, finance and safeguarding all well managed. 109 people attended the lively & informal ACM in April to celebrate God's work, pray and vote.





Behind the scenes

Many volunteers worked tirelessly behind the scenes to enable St George's ministry. This included managing our buildings, DIY, gardening, translating, treasury team, and carbon net zero group.

Social media and online presence

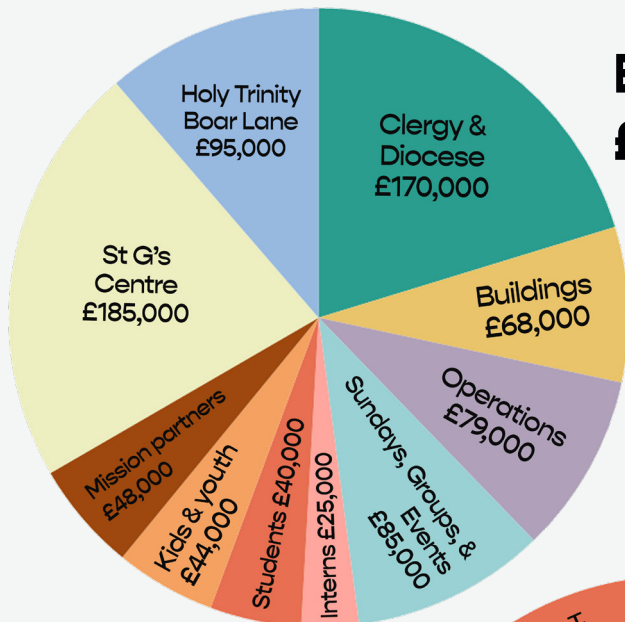
Our social media provides a window into church life, aiming to share faith in an accessible way. In 2023, our Instagram reached 157% more people than 2022, with 100% more people interacting with our content, and 6,000 (13% increase) more profile visits. We had 86% more Facebook visits (people coming to our page rather than just seeing our content). In 2023, people spent 5,200 hours watching St George's on YouTube, with our Christmas services being the most popular livestreams. We also reached 1,000 subscribers.

St George's Centre

St George's Centre provides venue solutions, with well-equipped meeting rooms thoughtfully designed for collaboration, creativity and production. We hosted a wide range of events, but overall 2023 was a difficult year for room hire income. In December, we re-launched our Events Board with several congregation members offering relevant expertise to invest in overseeing this area.

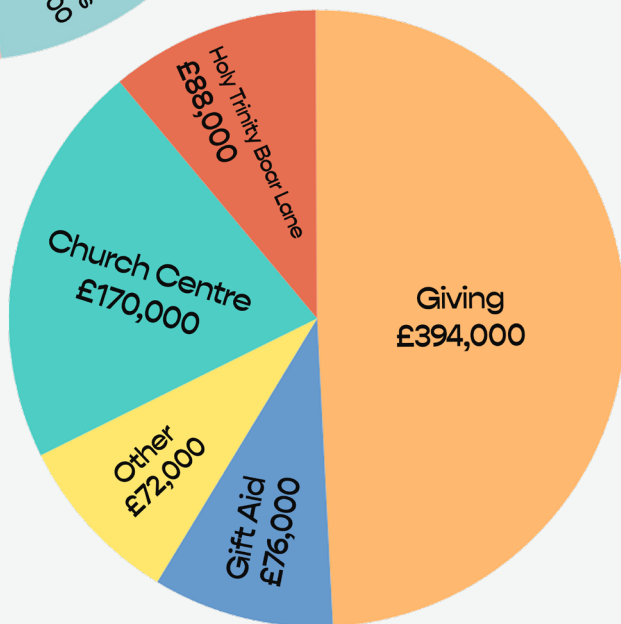
Financial Summary for 2023

(all figures have been rounded to the nearest £1,000)



Expenditure
£839,000

Income
£800,000



Deficit
£39,000

(£32,000 for St George's Church & Centre combined, £7000 for Holy Trinity Boar Lane)

We are so grateful to everyone who gave financially to support our mission & ministry in 2023

St G's Church Bank Account No: 20178242 Sort Code: 60-83-01