

United Benefice of Bamber Bridge St Aidan and Walton-le-Dale St Leonard



Parish Profile March 2024

**St Aidan's Church, Station Road, Bamber Bridge PR5 6QR
St Leonard's Church, Church Brow, Walton-le-Dale PR5 4BH**

www.aidanleonard.co.uk

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1. Introduction

Dear Sister or Brother,

The Diocese of Blackburn is passionate about the renewal of Parish life. Vision 2026 sets before the churches of Lancashire a profound belief in the power of the Gospel to transform lives and communities and expresses a firm commitment to maintaining clergy numbers and investing in the mission of the local church. We therefore seek clergy with a personal faith fiery enough to make new disciples for Christ, with a sincere commitment to the Parish as the heart of the church's mission and with the resilience and courage to bring growth and renewal to local churches. We don't want superheroes. Rather we are seeking authentic, prayerful priests of all traditions who share our passion for confident proclamation and generous service.

Lancashire is a wonderful place to minister, without doubt the most diverse and beautiful county in England. We can therefore offer an extraordinary range of contexts for ministry: from areas of great opulence to the most income deprived communities in the UK, from remote countryside to densely populated former industrial communities and from brightly lit coastal towns to elegant university cities.

We have the most wonderful and precious family of church schools (95% of our headteachers are practising Christians) which offers both an evangelistic opportunity and the best possible start for clergy children.

People in Lancashire have high expectations of their priests who play a key role in the communities they serve. Ministry can therefore be hard work and so this is a Diocese which will offer all the support it can to its parish clergy. Bishops, Archdeacons and Area Deans do their best to know their clergy well, we offer supportive programmes such as our new five year Start of Ministry Course and the Parish Renewal Programme and there are close friendships and strong networks between clergy of all traditions.

We really hope you enjoy reading this profile and that it provides all the information you need. If this particular post does not feel quite right, please do get in touch about other parishes in the Diocese that are vacant.

Most importantly of all, please be assured of our prayers as you discern the will of God for the next stage in your ministry.



*The Bishop of Blackburn
The Rt Revd Philip North*



*The Bishop of Lancaster
The Rt Revd Dr Jill Duff*

2. Diocesan Vision

Vision 2026 is an agenda for growth and change agreed by the Blackburn Diocesan Synod in 2015. It challenges our parishes to be healthy churches that transform their communities as we look ahead to our diocesan centenary in 2026. It also lays out four ways in which this over-arching goal can be achieved: Making Disciples, Being Witnesses, Growing Leaders and Prioritising Children and Young People.

All that we do as diocese is focussed on the delivery of Vision 2026. To make disciples we are raising levels of prayer, helping regular patterns of bible reading to be established and encouraging generous giving of time, talents and treasures. To be witnesses, many parishes are setting up new local congregations at different times and in different places to reach out to new groups of people as well as showing God's love in action through projects that meet a local human need. New leaders are emerging as we seek to enable and equip those God is raising up in our midst for lay and ordained ministry. And our focus on children and young



people is enabling creative thinking to raise up a new generation for Jesus Christ.

Over 85% of our parishes have a 'Vision Champion'. This is usually a lay appointment and the Champions' role is to encourage and support their parish leaders in pursuing the goals of Vision 2026 in a way that is appropriate for their local community.

In the Diocese of Blackburn we are inspired by confidence in the Gospel and are ambitious in our desire to make new disciples for Jesus Christ. We are committed to mutual flourishing, to maintaining clergy numbers and to investing in training for new curates.

Through prayer we see the grace and power of God who can alone bring renewal and growth. Our Diocesan Vision Prayer is:

***“Heavenly Father, we embrace Your call for us to make disciples, to be witnesses,
 to grow leaders and to inspire children and young people.
 Give us eyes to see Your vision, ears to hear the prompting of Your Spirit
 and courage to follow in the footsteps of your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen”***

You can find out more by visiting the Vision 2026 pages on our website:

www.blackburn.anglican.org

We Look After You



Director of Vision Delivery

If you come to Blackburn Diocese we will look after you...

- We have a great property department, who will do their best to ensure your house works for you and your family and is well maintained.
- All clergy are entitled to an uninterrupted rest period of 24 hours in each period of seven days and one additional rest period of 24 hours in each month, and in the remaining weeks of the month to take a rest day and a light day.
- We have a beautiful diocesan retreat house in the grounds of a ruined Cistercian abbey, where clergy are welcome to have personal reading days without charge (bring your own lunch).
- We offer a Clergy Assistance Programme to all our Stipendiary and Self Supporting Clergy, more information about this can be found on our [website](#)
- We encourage all parishes in vacancy to consider how they will 'pastor' and support their new priest. The diocese has an anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy.
- We offer an Annual Conversation in which every licensed priest spends 90 mins with a Bishop or Archdeacon discussing ministry and wellbeing.
- If you are looking for a spiritual director or a mentor we have an excellent Warden of Spiritual Direction and have networks of people with whom we can put you in touch.
- We are always looking for ways for clergy to mix apart from work – including reading weeks, regular hospitality, a cricket team and a clergy walking group. Further suggestions are welcome.
- We offer first incumbents a mentor and participation in our 5 year Start of Ministry Programme.



Whalley Abbey Centre for Christian Discipleship and Prayer



Bishop Philip leads a clergy walk

3. Executive Summary

Our Parish Profile for the United Benefice of Bamber Bridge St Aidan and Walton-le-Dale St Leonard has been developed during a time of vacancy, and after a period of time when we have grown spiritually and in terms of helping our Benefice to strengthen our links with our own and wider communities. The key points are as follows:

The **Parish and Wider Community** section describes the location of our Benefice including opportunities for employment, shopping and use of our local amenities. It also outlines how we link to local schools and how we can provide support to our communities through our facilities and resources.

The **Church Community** section outlines the various ministerial activities which we provide as well as activities which reach out to our wider community.

The **Church Buildings** section describes the current state of our churches and their buildings including the vicarage and community hub.

For **Our Schools** we are very proud of our teachers and children at our local primary schools and of the strong links and relationships we have built up with them through those volunteers who go into the schools on a regular basis to share the Word of our Lord.

Our Links into the Wider Community describes the work of our Pastoral Team and community outreach work with our Community Larder and the warm space provided for our coffee mornings.

The **Church Finances** section gives a good idea of each of our parishes' finances, including income and expenditure and how these have been managed during the Covid pandemic and more recently the financial burden which we have all felt in recent times. There are some challenges ahead as we hope to increase giving through growth.

What We Offer is a warm and friendly welcome to all. We offer our support to our new incumbent so that they will be better able to focus on mission and ministry for our local communities.

Our Ministry Team



Michael Johnson
Reader Emeritus,
St Aidan's



Dr Belinda Hornby
LLM



Bob Barnes
Reader Emeritus,
St Leonard's

Our Authorised Lay Ministry Team



Tony Dunne



Lynda Hulme



Audrey Jackson



Heather Thomas

4. Welcome to the United Benefice

The Benefice consists of two parishes on the outskirts of Preston. These are the churches of Bamber Bridge, St Aidan and Walton le Dale, St Leonard. The Parishes are situated in the Leyland Deanery in the Diocese of Blackburn. The infrastructure of the locality is well served by rail via Preston, which is only two miles away, and a smaller station on Station Road, Bamber Bridge, and easy access to the M6, M61 and M65 motorways giving links across the county and beyond. The distance between St Leonard's Church and St Aidan's is approximately 1.4 miles; five minutes by car.

We have supportive Church communities with active PCCs which meet jointly and an enthusiastic group of volunteers. Both churches have a robed choir with two experienced and capable organists to lead them. We have a Lay Licensed Minister (LLM) and four Authorised Lay Ministers (ALMs). We also have a Verger at St Aidan's. We hold joint services regularly and a lot of committees are joint, enabling us to work together on our communications and social events. This closer working has brought us together and developed closer working and Ministry. Each month, under the leadership of our LLM and a group of volunteers, we hold Messy Church, alternating between the two churches. This is well attended and the informal environment enables families with young children to enjoy an act of worship, be creative and share a meal together.

A group of us are taking Puppets Praise and Open The Book into both of the primary schools (one in each parish) each half term. We have a good relationship with our two church schools and want to build on this. Both of the primary schools took part in the Diocesan initiative of Choir School. Regrettably the appointed professional accompanist at St Leonard's School left before the initiative started and the replacement also left. Consequently this has dampened the enthusiasm to take part. However, the same cannot be said for St Aidan's primary school. The Choir School has continued with a small, but very keen number of children, led by the professional accompanist and supported by two lay members of the church. Each week we hold two sessions of Explore The Word, one on Monday evenings, the other on Friday mornings. We choose a book with lessons to work through. This generates a lot of discussion.

Both churches have a family area, which is a safe space designed for families with younger children to sit with various books, toys, etc. This enables them to take part in the service.

Within the parishes there are also an Independent Methodist Church, a non-denominational Evangelical Church and two Roman Catholic Churches. Our previous incumbent said this "Whoever follows me will be privileged to join you, and I know that you will give him or her the same love, support and encouragement as you have given me." Of this you can be assured, enabling him or her to focus on the key issues of worship, ministry and pastoral care.

We have a vision to grow the Church, both numerically and spiritually and will work hard to make "Making Disciples – Transforming Lives" a reality.

Who's Who



Arthur J Fish and Ross G Kinder,
Churchwardens, St Aidan's

Alison Leadbetter,
Verger, St Aidan's

Lester Metcalf and Heather Thomas,
Churchwardens, St Leonard's



Our PCCs of the United Benefice



The congregation at St Aidan's at Sunday Worship in the Hall (Mothering Sunday)



The congregation at St Leonard's at Sunday Worship (Mothering Sunday)

5. The Parish and Wider Community

The Benefice of St Aidan's Bamber Bridge and St Leonard's Walton le Dale is situated 2 miles to the Southeast of the City of Preston in the Borough of South Ribble. The parish of Walton le Dale is semi-rural while the parish of Bamber Bridge is more suburban in character, and both lie within the Parliamentary boundary of Ribble Valley.

Up until the latter half of the 20th century the main employment was in Cotton and Heavy Industry however the major employers are now light industry, retail and leisure. Employment within the Benefice is limited. To the north lies the Capitol Centre, which consists of major retail stores, a cinema, a supermarket and a gym. There is a Park and Ride facility offering regular buses into Preston city with free parking.

The main road through Bamber Bridge consists of the Church of St Aidan's, a local shopping area with a Morrison's supermarket, a bank, a post office and several smaller retail shops. At the south of the village are an employment area containing a central heating firm, several distribution firms, the railway station, two hotels and a Sainsburys Supermarket.

Due to its good motorway and rail transport connections to other areas of employment the village has become a dormitory village for the wider area.

The area is well served by both faith and secular Primary, High schools and Sixth Form colleges, all Ofsted reported as good, as well as several children's nurseries.

Social/fund raising events for the community are arranged by the Social Committee and are held in both church buildings and the Hub at St Aidan's. These can be organ recitals, quizzes etc.

Our United Benefice has embraced the opportunity to bring the local Community Larder to St Aidan's in order to provide support for people in our community in times of financial hardship and a warm space for coffee mornings.

There is good potential for growth due to new housing in Walton-le-Dale and Walton Park.

6. Parish Demographics

	St Aidan's 2022	St Leonard's 2023
Population		
	8,941	6,092
Age Spread		
0-4	5%	4%
5-19	18%	16%
20-64	58%	60%
65+	19%	19%
Ethnic Mix		
British	94%	93%
Minority ethnic	6%	7%
Other Faith Mix		
Christian	66%	61%
Muslim	1%	2%
Education background of population		
Have no qualification	17%	13%
Degree level or above	29%	36%
Employment		
Managerial, administrative and professional	32%	38%
Small employers and own account workers	23%	24%
Lower supervisory, technical and routine occupations	33%	26%
Never worked/long term-unemployed	7%	6%
Full-time students	5%	5%
Major Employer(s)		
	None	None
Deprivation Index		
Households not deprived in any dimension	51%	58%
Main Issues		
Housing Conditions	No	No
Local Amenities	No	No
Housing Mix		
Owner Occupied	74%	86%
Social rented Housing	11%	2%

7. The Church Community

In our Benefice we have a few groups which meet together.

At St Leonard's we have:

- **Mothers Union**

There are about 15 members that meet on a monthly basis. They also meet for lunch on a regular basis, and support the Church with Baptism cards and events. They meet with other branches and have a yearly wave of prayer.



Mothers Union making some red roses for Valentine's Day

- **Rainbows**

There is a very active group of girls aged 5-7 years that meet at our local community centre. Our Brownies and Guide Groups have amalgamated at St Aidan's

- **Scout Group**

There are Beavers, Cubs and Scouts that are affiliated to the church. They meet in a hut near to the Church.

At St Aidan's we have:

- **A Music Group**

- **Rainbow, Brownie and Guide groups.**

- **The Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts** meet in a hut within the church grounds. They are affiliated to the Church.

Our Sunday services are always Eucharistic, following Common Worship Order 1. There is also a monthly Book of Common Prayer Communion Service. We sing traditional hymns, with a few modern worship songs. The robes used for Services are usually an Alb, Stole and Chasuble. We have conducted Alpha Courses in the past which were very well attended.

Our joint ventures are:

Messy Church - This group meets on a monthly basis, alternating the venue between each church. They are following the lectionary of the year and have themes on the bible reading. The session usually consists of prayer, craft and a meal.



The Cross on the Hill



Busy making parachutes



Looking very busy



How very colourful



Interesting work going on here



Making baskets to fill with delicious chocolates

Bible Study Group - The group meets on a Monday evening and Friday morning and read and discuss passages from the bible, using reference books.

Coffee Morning - This supports the Community Larder on a Monday morning, providing drinks, toast and cakes for all the community. There are volunteers from each Church that help.

Baptism Team - We have a group of people who liaise with any enquiries for Baptism, taking group meetings with parents and children to inform and advise about dates and the meaning of Baptism, visiting their homes and attending the Baptism services in Church.

Visiting Team - The team visit mainly our older parishioners who are unable to come to church. They stay and chat and hold a service of Holy Communion.

8. Parish Statistics

	St Aidan's	St Leonard's
Patron		
The Bishop of Blackburn, The Dean		
Electoral Roll		
Year	2022	2023
Number	82	97
Age Profile of the Church across all services including Messy Church		
0-17	17%	30%
18-69	36%	51%
70+	48%	19%
Occasional Offices, Celebrations etc		
Baptisms and thanksgivings	14	9
Weddings	0	0
Confirmation adult candidates	2	0
Confirmation under 16 candidates	3	0
Funerals in Church	5	5
Funerals at Crematorium	2	0
Average weekly attendance adult	68	37
Average weekly attendance under 16	3	4
Festivals		
Easter Communicants	58	48
Easter Attendance	62	69
Christmas Day Communicants	113	33
Christmas Day Attendance	160	51

9. Our Services

Regular services are held on:

Sundays at 9.15am at St Leonard's Church

Sundays at 10.45am at St Aidan's

Wednesdays at 10.00am at St Aidan's

Wednesdays at 7.00pm at St Leonard's

Every 5th Sunday a joint Benefice service is held at alternating churches

Messy Church is held once per month at 4.00pm on Sundays at alternating churches

10. The Church Buildings

St Aidan's Church



The Church was originally built in 1895 to serve the needs of a growing community between the parishes of St Leonard to the north and St Saviour to the south. It is able to seat up to 200 people, with sixteen rows of pews in the nave, on either side of a central aisle. Part of the south transept has been altered to form a children's crèche area, and a central nave altar is used for most Sunday morning services.

An Ainscough pipe organ sits to the south of the Chancel, adjacent to the choir pews. The organ has undergone previous refurbishment and is played occasionally.

During the previous Incumbency a Phoenix digital organ has been installed in the south transept, with speakers in the organ loft. This instrument was previously installed in Liverpool Anglican Cathedral and Liverpool Philharmonic

Hall. *The organ builder has received £2,000 to date towards the full cost of £8,000 required to acquire full ownership of the instrument by the PCC.*

The Church has been re-carpeted, and a new gas fired boiler / radiator heating system was installed eleven years ago. New inner entrance doors were installed five years ago, constructed in oak with glass panels to admit extra light.

Two large television screens have been installed at either side of the entrance to the Chancel, to allow congregation members to follow Sunday services without traditional service sheets.

The upper section of the west wall was secured and tied back to the roof structure six years ago, in line with the requirements of the Quinquennial report and as specified by a structural engineer.

Lighting fittings in the Nave and Chancel are industrial units, but have recently been fitted with energy saving LED bulbs.

The building was completely re-wired with modern pyro wiring and fittings some twenty eight years ago.

The building is in a good state of repair, with no major works of alteration or maintenance under consideration in the near future. Minor roof leaks have occurred from time to time but have been repaired in a timely manner. A Fabric and Finance committee meets regularly to review maintenance needs and priorities.

A portable steel ramp provides for disability access, both at the main entrance and the chancel steps. A full CCTV system has recently been installed which can be remotely monitored.

Five years ago the PCC agreed that the Church should remain open during the day for individual prayer and quiet time.

Current policy is to keep the building locked during winter months to minimise vandalism and weather damage. For the last two years the PCC has agreed that regular Sunday and Wednesday services should be moved in to the Church Hall during the winter months, due to the significant increase in energy costs of heating and lighting the church building. When in use the Church and its brass work are cleaned weekly by dedicated volunteer teams. The Church gardens are maintained to a high standard by a volunteer team who enjoy their work. There is no graveyard at St Aidan's, but a small Garden of Remembrance is sited to the south of the nave; the ashes of many loved ones are interred here.

The Church sits in its own grounds, just off Station Road in Bamber Bridge. There is off road parking for 20-30 cars. Within the grounds there are two Halls, which are regularly used during the week by the local Community. There is also a Scout Hut, which is used by a scout group affiliated to St Aidan's.

Within the last three years, the Community Larder, which serves the local community has been relocated to the grounds of St Aidan's Church. South Ribble Borough Council funded the acquisition of a custom designed shipping container which is located alongside the larger of the two Halls. The Community Larder operates two mornings per week from this facility, and the main Hall (now renamed the Community Hub) provides a warm space with refreshments at the same time. Volunteers from both parishes of the Benefice provide this service on Monday mornings.

All Health and Safety measures have been put in place. The church is inspected on a regular basis.

St Leonard's Church



The Church St Leonard's is a Grade II* listed building. A chapel belonging to the church at Blackburn is mentioned in the deed of Henry de Lacey of c1166, and in 1228 was among the lands in Blackburn parish transferred to the Cistercian monks of Stanlaw Abbey. Walton church was already dedicated to St Leonard, possesses its own churchyard, lands and tithes, although it was only to be created as an independent parish in 1837. It is steeped in local history as captured by Dr David Hunt, local historian, in his book "St Leonard Walton le Dale". Little of the pre-reformation building survives away from the chancel and the tower. The nave has been rebuilt on a number of occasions. As early as 1503 Ralph Langton bequeathed 20 marks towards its rebuilding. In 1798 it was pulled down, transepts were added in 1816, with further work in 1855, before an extensive rebuild in 1904-06. It is probable that the chancel contains burials of the early Lords of Walton and there is a gravestone in memory of Samuel Crook, who was killed in a fight cum duel, which can still be seen.

The North Transept has now been developed into a more usable area to encourage families with children to join our services and generally improve our facilities as part of our Mission. This has been designed to keep families part of our worship whilst being located in a more child friendly and relaxed space for all the family. Although it still needs some finer touches, it is used regularly by families. We have also created a robing area for our choir, which is more accessible for them, and a cupboard designed specifically to store the altar cloths.

The tower has a peal of bells, which are rung on Sundays and can be requested for weddings. We have a group learning to ring the chimes and one person, who can not only ring the chimes but is learning to ring the bells, which more of us hope to do later in the year. The tower also houses our church clock. A new mechanism was fitted to the clock in June 2018 and it now adjusts itself in the Spring and Autumn when the clocks go forward and back respectively. We were plagued by birds nesting in the tower and causing a lot of damage, however, in April 2019, netting was fitted to deter and prevent further nesting, which appears to have been successful.

In October 2017, we had to replace the central heating boilers. We held various fund raising events. The most successful was a 'talents' scheme whereby everyone in church was given £10. They could keep it, return it or 'grow' it. The response was amazing and we raised more money than was needed.

The previous Quinquennial Report of May 2015, mentioned that 17 of the 22 stained glass windows were in need of repair. The PCC decided to repair and protect them or at least those most exposed to the elements. The electrical consumer units were replaced in early 2023. The wiring was inspected at the same time.

There is evidence of water ingress and there have been attempted break ins. It was estimated that we would need to raise a substantial sum, c£79,000. In order to raise this we need to engage with the community therefore, it was agreed to form the Friends of the Church of St Leonard (FOCSL). FOCSL have organised various events such as musical concerts with local bands and musicians, guest speakers, local historical walks and talks and plays by a local theatrical company. The work was stalled by Covid, however, the windows in the south transept, where the water ingress was severe were repaired and protected in 2023. Whilst undertaking this work it became evident that the water ingress was not only due to the windows, but the entire elevation needed repointing. The next phase is the windows in the Chancel and this work has been started.

All Health and Safety measures have been put in place. The church is inspected on a regular basis. We have two mobile ramps from the car park to the path, and from the path to the church in order to provide access for people with disabilities. We have a team of 6 volunteers who clean weekly. The church is open Monday to Friday, all day for private prayer or just to look around.

St Leonard's Building

The large Old School is also a Grade 11 listed building. Unfortunately, the building was in very poor condition partly due to being the subject of criminal activity, such as break-ins and lead theft, which caused severe damage, and partly due to general wear and tear. The PCC took the decision to sell the building and a buyer has been found and the sale went through earlier this year. This does mean that we have lost our meeting area, therefore it was suggested to create an area within the church by replacing the pews in the south transept and installing a more practical form of seating. However, this has not been progressed as yet.

St Leonard's Churchyard

The 'old' churchyard is closed and responsibility for the maintenance now falls to the Local Council. They come twice a year to mow the grass and tend the area. However, our team of groundsmen also maintain this area weekly during the summer months. The perimeter wall had fallen down in part and was bulging. In addition to this the pathways around the church were uneven, cracked and a health and safety risk. The Local Council accepted their responsibility to rebuild the perimeter wall to the south and west of the church and this work together with replacing the pathways was completed in 2016. The 'new' churchyard, including the Garden of Remembrance, is the responsibility of the PCC. As it is reaching capacity, we have approached the Diocese for additional land in order to extend the Garden of Remembrance.

The Benefice Vicarage



This property, which sits in its own grounds, consists of the following:-

First floor: three large and one small bedroom and a family bathroom.

Ground Floor: lounge, dining room, kitchen, hall, toilet and study.

The Vicarage building is situated in Longworth Street, a small cul-de-sac on the opposite side of Station Road to St Aidan's Church building. It is a detached family sized property sat in its own grounds with parking space for two or three cars in front of a single detached garage with a steel up and over lockable door.

Ground floor accommodation consists of :- a study area immediately off the entrance lobby which can be used for consultations away from the living areas; lounge; dining room; fitted kitchen; toilet; utility room.

First floor accommodation :- Three large bedrooms and one smaller bedroom; bathroom with toilet, bath and electronic shower.

The property is in a good state of repair and was inspected by the Diocese at the start of the Vacancy. The grounds are extensive, with grass lawns and perimeter bushes and trees. During the previous Incumbency the kitchen, bathroom and downstairs toilet have been modernised and refitted. The appointed Vicar of the United Benefice of St Aidan with St Leonard will be based at this Vicarage building whilst serving the two parishes.

The Community Hub (Parish Halls based at St Aidan's)



The older and smaller of the two halls dates from around 1930, it is clad in asbestos cement sheeting and roofing. It has been extensively modernised and maintained over the years. There is an entrance lobby, toilet and small store room, wooden floored meeting space, and an adjacent larger store room and fitted kitchen. A new gas fired boiler/radiator heating system was fitted eleven years ago, and an old roof vent has been capped off and weather sealed. Although old, this hall is in a good state of repair. It is in use several times a week by the affiliated rainbow and brownie groups and rented out to local community and parish groups.

The larger hall (recently renamed the Community Hub) was built in the 1970s, and is of contemporary modern brick built construction. There is an entrance lobby, which also provides access to the Church Vestry and car park. Male, female and disabled/baby changing toilets are accessed off the lobby. The main hall is a single space, capable of seating over 100 people around small tables for quiz nights and other similar events. There is a fitted kitchen and water boiler, which is used for post-service refreshments on Sundays and for regular weekly coffee morning / community larder meetings. Adjacent to the kitchen is a bar and storage area. This is licensed to a Members Club, who meet in the hall on Friday nights. Bar facilities can also be made available by Club volunteers for other parish events during the year. This Hub building is also in a good state of repair, with no major works thought necessary in the near future.

Both of the Halls are cleaned weekly by a professional cleaner.

In addition to the Community Larder, the Hub is used most evenings and many times during the day by parish and community groups – craftwork, dancing, exercise, Pilates, Guide group etc. It provides a valuable and much needed secondary income for the Church, as well as a much-loved community resource.

11. The Church Finances

St Aidan's

Over the last nine years the parishes of St Aidan and St Leonard have shared the cost of a joint Priest in Charge. In that time St Aidan's PCC have been able to fully finance the maintenance and upkeep of the Church building, Halls, and the shared cost of Vicarage charges.

Up to 2018 finances have permitted the full payment of the Parish Share allocation. The Covid pandemic and associated extended lockdown periods resulted in a drastic reduction in income, from which the parish finances have not fully recovered. For the years 2019 to 2022 St Aidan's PCC have accumulated a parish share shortfall of £33,406. The Parish Share for 2023 was set at £38,431, and by the end of December 2023 approximately 73% of this figure will have been paid.

At a Parish Share meeting with Archdeacon Mark in January 2024 the Diocese agreed to provide a grant of £15,000 to St Aidan's, on the understanding that the PCC would undertake to pay the 2024 Parish Share allocation in full.

Income raised through regular freewill offerings and donations has been insufficient to pay the Parish Share for some considerable time, but the PCC is fortunate to have the benefit of additional income, principally from rents generated by the hiring out of Hall facilities; also from an active Bonus Ball Number Club which contributes annually to Church funds and from a good level of gift aid tax relief from HMRC. Other income comes from summer and Christmas fetes, and from fund raising events which are held regularly throughout the year. PCC members are regularly updated with the parish financial position, including the shortfall in regular planned giving.

A stewardship campaign was initiated in early 2023, but was put on hold during the previous Incumbent's tenure.

As the Church building is currently in a good state of repair, there are no major repair works required at present. The PCC are currently considering the means by which the outstanding £6,000 needed to acquire ownership of the Phoenix digital organ can be raised.

The PCC's of both parishes undertake to share the cost of the Incumbent's expenses, vicarage council tax, BT landline / Wi-Fi and water utility charges. Previous Incumbents have been responsible for the payment of gas and electricity charges incurred at the vicarage.

Both parishes have successfully applied for a contactless giving machine from the Diocese, and are in the process of setting up digital giving through the Benefice website.

Financial assets of St Aidan's PCC at 31st December 2022 are as follows :-

Unrestricted general funds £ 12,827

Restricted funds £18,344

Diocesan investments £19,399

Finance Returns	
Year	2022
Description	Amount
Parish Income	£71,062
Tax Efficient Planned Giving (16nr)	£8,990
T/E Amount per person per week	£10.80
All voluntary giving APPWk (RWA 50)	£7.52
Parish Expenditure	£66,727
Parish Share Assessed	£35,161
Paid Share Paid	£26,250

St Leonard's

Over the last nine years St Leonard have shared the cost of a joint Priest in Charge, with St Aidan's St Leonards PCC have been able to fully finance the maintenance and upkeep of the Church building, the shared cost of Vicarage, and stood the costs of the Old School House which hasn't produced any income since March 2019, the building was finally sold for £ 200,000 in July 2023. The funds received from the sale after sale expenses have been restricted and placed on 95day Deposit account at RBS Bank. The sale of this building will reduce annual expenditure at St Leonards by approximately £ 6500 per annum which can then be utilised by the PCC.

At the year-end 2019 finances permitted the full payment of the Parish Share allocation. Then Covid appeared and the associated extended lockdown period resulted in a drastic reduction in income, and numbers returning after lock down, and as such like St Aidan's the parish finances have not fully recovered to pre Covid levels.

St Leonards Parish Share assessed and paid since Covid

Year Ending	Assessed Share	Paid	Shortfall	Diocese Grant	Running Shortfall Balance
2020	£ 38552	£ 17500	£ 21052		£ 21052
2021	£ 38872	£ 25000	£ 13872	£ -13872	£ 21052
2022	£ 39469	£ 11000	£ 28469		£ 49521
2023	£ 38715	£ 28500	£ 16215	To clear Qtr1	£ 49521

After a meeting with the diocese St Leonard's PCC have agreed to clear the 2023 debt of £ 16215.00 in full from reserve interest earned from the sale of the Old School House this will be paid in April 2024 once the 95 day notice has been served.

Income raised through regular freewill offerings and donations is currently insufficient to pay the Parish Share in full alone; this situation started from the onset of Covid. A stewardship campaign was initiated in early 2023, but was put on hold during the previous Incumbent's tenure.

St Leonards is a Grade 11* listed building (Entry Number: **1074102**) dating back to 1162 if not earlier and as such has various issues that need remedial work, currently the Friends of the Church of St Leonards (FOCSL) are raising money to repair and protect all the church windows. The Lady Chapel has had some work completed in 2022 costing in excess of £ 29000. We are starting on 3 windows in the Chancel in qtr1 2024 (this is now underway) the electrics are also going to be attended to in 2024.

The PCCs of both parishes undertake to share the cost of the Incumbent's expenses, vicarage council tax, BT landline / Wi-Fi and water utility charges. Previous Incumbents have been responsible for the payment of gas and electricity charges incurred at the vicarage.

Both parishes have successfully applied for a contactless giving machine from the Diocese, and are in the process of setting up digital giving.

Financial assets of St Leonards PCC at 31st December 2023 are as follows :-

Unrestricted general funds	£ 2,499.00
Restricted funds	£ 211,816.00
Diocesan investments	£ 24,862.00

Finance Returns	
Year	2023
Total Parish Income	£ 256,069.00
One off Sale of the Old School House	£ 200,000.00
Parish Income	£ 56,069.00
Tax Efficient Planned Giving	£ 20194.30
Amount per person per week	£ 12.13
Parish Expenditure	£ 32,496.00
Parish Share Assessed	Yes
Parish Share Paid	£ 38,715.00 balance of £ 16215 in qtr2 2024

12. Our Schools

St Aidan's Primary School



Working together, we aim high to achieve. Through faith, we care, show respect and succeed.

St. Aidan's Church of England Primary School is a small primary school for boys and girls aged four to eleven years. It is situated in Bamber Bridge on the outskirts of Preston. The school has approximately 134 pupils on roll.

The Ofsted inspection in March 2023 gave the school an overall classification of 'Good', and noted that 'There is a warm and caring culture at St Aidan's Church of England Primary School. It is a nurturing environment for pupils. Staff forge strong relationships with pupils and know their families well. Pupils describe the school as a 'family'. Through their attitudes and behaviours, pupils demonstrate the Christian values of the school, such as truthfulness, forgiveness and compassion.'

The school endeavours to provide children with an education that allows and encourages them to achieve their true potential. They provide an atmosphere in which children feel happy, valued, safe and secure. Each child is treated as an individual and skills and talents are recognised. High standards of behaviour and manners are encouraged throughout the school in order to prepare children to take their place in an ever-changing society.

The school offers a broad, balanced and creative curriculum and a variety of interesting learning opportunities are offered to the children within a structured framework of discrete subject areas all of which are underpinned by British values. The school has a highly committed, professional group of staff who work hard to ensure that individual pupils' needs are met at all times and provide a range of extra-curricular activities to enhance pupil experiences.

The 'Before and After School Care Club' called Stay 2 Play, provides an excellent standard of provision and service to working and busy parents. The school operates an open door policy and parents are always welcome to visit the school. The successful running of the school is very much dependent on a partnership and parents are

regarded as an integral part of this.

The school maintains strong links with the parish and church of St Aidan's on Station Road, Bamber Bridge. The church provide an 'Open the Book' team and a 'Puppet Ministry' team, who bring bible stories into the school assembly twice per term, with the help of some of the older children.

The recent Choir School initiative is supported by church volunteers once a week, and has a small but enthusiastic group of choir members who are led by a professional accompanist. It is jointly financed by the school, church and Blackburn Diocese.

St Aidan's church welcomes children and parents from school to special services at Christmas, Easter and Harvest Festival, and also to an end of school year service which is run by the teachers and children.

St Aidan's Primary School has a Foundation Governor, Elizabeth Bowman.

St Aidan's Primary School Website: <https://www.staidansprimaryschool.co.uk>

St Leonard's Primary School



A Journey in Faith, Love and Learning

St Leonard's School prides itself on being a family. There is a strong belief in a partnership between home and school. There are 280 pupils with approximately 10% having special needs.

They are extremely proud of all their achievements at school ranging from academic success to a variety of sporting awards. Most importantly they are proud of the children who leave the school as confident, well-rounded people ready to go to High School. This is all achieved through an excellent relationship with parents and the Parish community.

There is a before and after school child minding service for pupils. The clubs are run by qualified and experienced staff who offer the children a wide range of activities. The club is based in the school hall where there are the following facilities: board games, ball games, Lego and other construction toys, singing, dancing, reading, jigsaws as well as a television, video and DVD. Children can also use the outdoor play equipment which is closely supervised by a member of staff. Food is available at both sessions.

The school’s current overall effectiveness is “good” based on the last Ofsted inspection which was carried out in September 2019. Key strengths highlighted by the last inspection are as followed:- “Staff and governors are rightly proud of the family feel that they have embedded across the school.” “Pupils have the opportunity to visit museums and places of interest. This opens their eyes to life outside of their local community.” “In the Reception class...children benefit from a well-resourced classroom and outdoor area.” “Pupils of all ages flock to the Madagascar room to read with each other at breaktimes.”

This is the school’s Vision and Mission: We will be inclusive, inquiring and inspirational by:

- Encouraging each other to be the best we can be, working together as a nurturing, Christian family.
- Asking questions so that we grow in mind, body and spirit, embracing God’s wondrous, diverse world.
- Following Jesus’ example, making a positive difference in the lives of others through love.

‘A new commandment I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.’ John 13:34

With their Mission Statement being: A journey in Faith, Love and Learning. The school hold services in church at Easter, Harvest and Christmas,. Classes go into church to learn about the various structures within the church such as the Lectern, Pulpit, the representation of the stained glass windows, etc. There are daily assemblies and volunteers go into school to present bible stories through Puppet’s Praise and Open the Book with members of Year 6 helping. The latest Ofsted Report stated: ‘A strong Christian ethos is at the heart of this school.’ We are keen to build on this by working with the school.

St Leonard’s Primary School has a Foundation Governor, Jane Bickerstaff.



Here are some photographs of recent school activities with some very proud work from our school children at St Leonard’s Primary School.

13. Our Links Into the Wider Community

There is a total seven care homes in the Saint Aidan's and Saint Leonard's area. When we learn that a parishioner has become a resident in one of these, the pastoral team will arrange visits, including communion. There are two hospitals, one in Preston, the other in Chorley. As with Care Homes, if we learn that a parishioner is in hospital, the pastoral team will arrange visits.

Our Community Hub is regularly used by the NHS to provide community support facilities.

Both churches have a very strong, well-established relationship with a local 'food bank' which we call the Community Larder. The benefice has engendered a strong relationship with the Local Council. The council provided a large container, so that chilled and frozen foods could also be offered to our customers. Local counsellors frequently attend the regular coffee mornings. Every Monday and Friday, a warm community atmosphere is developed by running a coffee morning from 9 am to 11.30am. No charges are made for coffee, tea, juice, cakes, biscuits, fresh fruit, toast, with jam, or marmalade. Dietary needs are catered for. There is a donations dish available for those who wish to contribute. Local supermarkets have been very supportive and make regular contributions to our stocks of food.



We have very busy volunteers who manage our Community Larder

14. Our Vision

Our vision for creating a healthy church that is transforming our community is taken from our recent Mission Action Plan (MAP), which is appended to this document. We aim:

- to be a vibrant, confident Benefice family caring for each other and the parish communities generally through Ministerial and Lay leadership
- to provide a safe and understanding environment for those in need of spiritual nurture and support

We have recently reviewed our MAP and identified some of the strengths and weaknesses across our Benefice, drawing on them to develop some priority goals and some long term goals for the future.

We have a Vision Champion, Max Iddon at St Aidan's

Our key immediate priority goals for this next year are

- to improve internal and external communication
- to increase awareness difficulties with Stewardship, for example by introducing contactless giving

Our longer term goals for years 2 to 5 are

- to grow spiritual awareness
- to build up a Lay administration team
- to build up existing congregations

The Role of our new Incumbent

We are looking for a priest who will:

- lead on our vision towards having 'Healthy Churches Transforming Communities' according to the Diocesan Vision for 2026
- provide leadership and support to our PCCs in terms of our MAP and its goals
- build and grow on existing relationships with our schools, children and the community
- support our teams as we grow in terms of spiritual awareness and congregation numbers
- be willing to take risks to develop some modern worship styles in order to achieve the above

There are no civic duties required of the incumbent.

15. What We Offer

We offer a warm and friendly welcome to all, with teams who provide support and a shared leadership in the areas of Baptisms, Ministry including Authorised Lay Ministry, Messy Church, Bible Study Explore, a Reader and a Safeguarding Officer.

We are fortunate to have a part time Ordained Minister who has retired and has Permission to Officiate. He provides support on a voluntary basis. The two parishes of our United Benefice are working closely together, with several joint sub-committees reporting to our PCCs which meet jointly.

One of our goals is to grow our congregation numbers. This should also help us to become more financially sustainable into the future.

Our administration team will continue to assist and work with the new incumbent by taking on routine tasks so that the incumbent will be better able to focus on essential ministry and mission work. We do need more people who can share the work of administration. We have recently been exploring how we can create office space for the administration team, Incumbent and all who provide leadership and support to the various functions of the Benefice.

We have strong links with the two local Church primary schools. We have lay led teams who take 'Open the Book' bible stories and Puppets Praise into both school assemblies twice per term, with full participation from the school children.



Some of our Puppets Praise team putting on a performance at Messy Church

We are blessed with a compliment of volunteers in both parishes, who assist with weekly preparation for Eucharistic services, cleaning duties, church hall letting administration, garden and general building maintenance, and preparation and distribution of the joint church magazine. Both PCCs have developed safeguarding policies, and have appointed a Safeguarding Officer for young children and vulnerable adults.

We have an LLM and Reader Emeritus at St Leonard's and a Reader Emeritus at St Aidan's who are active in Ministry of The Word, and keen to work alongside the new Incumbent and existing SSM priest.

16. Who is God calling?

We are praying for a priest who will be a 'Heart in Heaven and feet on the ground' person. Who is a person of spirituality and resilience, full of energy and enthusiasm. We need someone to lead and guide us by:

- Preaching the Gospel and helping the congregation to live it;
- Practising a Collaborative Ministry, appreciating the work and variety presented by our two parishes ensuring that we work together in our United Benefice;
- Being a strong leader and team worker, willing to delegate, with good communication and listening skills, able to relate to churchgoers and nonchurchgoers alike;
- Making use of their life experience and pastoral skills to engage with the community at large, in particular building on the active relationship with our local schools and younger people;
- Being able to reconcile differing views, recognising and utilising the skills and knowledge of others;
- Their commitment and enthusiasm in their calling conveyed by enjoyment, a sense of humour, having fun, being friendly and approachable;
- Being willing to take risks in the development of new worship styles within our traditions, whilst taking the time to explain and gain support for the changes that they seek to introduce.

Our Benefice Prayer

Almighty God, Father of all,
hear us as we pray,
that during our vacant benefice
a leader send our way.

Someone full of faith and love
who can guide both young and old
and join together our benefice
with your vision to unfold

We pray for strength to help us through
this difficult time, and then
Your love will have guided a leader to us
In Jesus Christ's name.
Amen

The link to our video can be found here: <https://youtu.be/xsvb8vXU3cE>