

“In the quietness of their own home, people are quite generous,” says Revd Karen Rooms when discussing online giving. Karen is the Priest-in-Charge at [St Nicholas Church](#) in Leicester as well as Canon Missioner at [Leicester Cathedral](#).

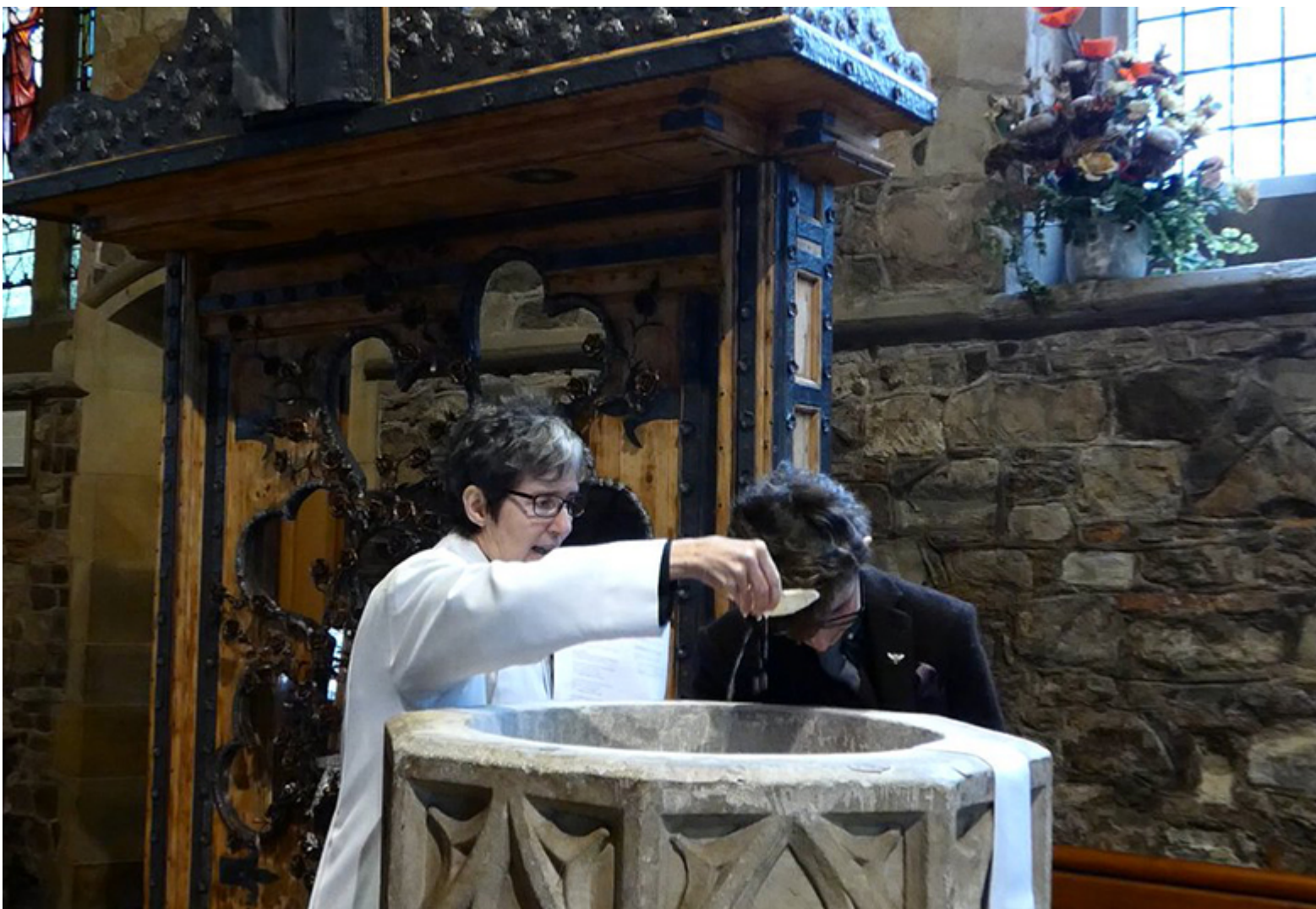
St Nicholas Church is an ancient building that has stood in Leicester for 1140 years. Although the building is old and steeped in history, the community at St Nicholas has embraced the digital age and adopted new ways to worship and give.

Before COVID-19, St Nicholas mainly relied on the collection plate for its income. Karen considered setting up online giving for several months and conducted a fair amount of research on online giving and the charity sector, “You need an online presence to connect with people,” says Karen. “I wish we’d set up online giving sooner. The barrier to setting up online giving is that people think it’s going to be complicated.”

However, it was a baptism during lockdown that gave St Nicholas the impetus to set up online giving. “The process of setting up [online giving](#) through [Parish Buying](#) was very straightforward with clear step-by-step videos,” says Karen. 24 hours before the baptism, the PCC had managed to set-up online giving and install giving buttons on their website and their A Church Near You page.

“The baptism candidate is a poet and LGBT+ rights activist with a worldwide Twitter following. His faith journey, and his love for Christ, our ancient church building, and inclusive community, meant scores of people lit candles in cathedrals and churches around the world as he was baptised.”

The ability to share a link to the online giving page meant it could be promoted on social media and shared with people around the world. An amazing 275 online donations were made to the church in the following week totalling £5,500, many with Gift Aid. St Nicholas’s total income for 2020 was £21,000 which meant that online giving for this baptism accounted for over a quarter of income. The first decision the PCC made was to set aside a Hardship Fund for others.



“This online tool and the generosity and faith story of this member of our Church have made our finances secure and helped us see that there is widespread joy and appreciation of inclusive churches and that God is at work in the world.”

There are a number of people connected to St Nicholas who live in challenging circumstances. “The Hardship Fund means we know we have enough to give away if we need to.”

Karen has also noticed the impact of online giving in her role as Canon Missioner at Leicester Cathedral. “We have become more proactive promoting online giving at the Cathedral. For free events we ask people to consider making a donation at the time of booking. If it’s a ticketed event, we ask if people would consider topping up their ticket price with a donation. It’s better to ask people to donate ahead of the event rather than at the end when they’re leaving.”

In terms of the future, the PCC at St Nicholas Church is looking at how to use online channels to tell a story and invite people to give. They’re also considering setting up a contactless giving unit for when the church building is open, enabling people to give in the quietness of the church too.

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