

Issue 2
Autumn 2025

Cathedral Matters

News & Views from
Blackburn Cathedral



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GOVERNANCE

Rebuilding and Strengthening our Community

Interim Dean, Canon Andrew Horsfall speaks of the challenge of helping our communities regain confidence and trust as we lay foundations for the future.

“ When I took on the role of Interim Dean, the Cathedral was facing a difficult road ahead. My first task has been to try and bring a gentle, pastoral lead to a community in pain, helping us regain confidence and trust. This takes time and we must be patient with one another.



At the same time, we have begun to lay firm foundations for the future and this publication you will read of new members of the team who are helping to strengthen our safeguarding work.

I want to thank them personally for the ways in which they are already improving our ministry and care. But there is still much to do.

We remain a community in recovery, learning again how to listen, respect and love one another. I am heartened by those who are committed to this.

As we approach Advent and Christmas, we remember that Christ is Emmanuel - God with us.

Even in times of challenge and change, His presence brings light and hope. All our efforts rest on that promise, and it is to Him we look to in faith.

With my prayers and warmest greetings. ”

The Revd. Canon Andrew Horsfall
Interim Dean of Blackburn

GET IN TOUCH

Contact Canon Andrew Horsfall via email:
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Get in touch

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Connect

Join us online for the latest Blackburn Cathedral news, updates and be first to hear about events:

- @BlackburnCathedral
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- @BlackburnCathedralTV
- @BBCathedral

Sign up to our monthly email newsletter at:
blackburncathedral.com/newsletter

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IMPROVEMENT BOARD

Safeguarding Improvement Board Begins Journey Towards Cultural Shift

Following the Bishop's Review and the publication of the INEQE Audit, the creation of a Safeguarding Improvement Board is the first step on our journey to addressing "critical vulnerabilities" in the Cathedral's structure, operations and leadership.

The purpose of the Safeguarding Improvement Board is to work with the Cathedral Chapter and executive, providing challenge and support to achieve the aims of the Cathedral's improvement journey.

Barbara Peacock has been appointed as Chair of the Board. She is a social worker and senior strategic leader of children and adult services for different authorities. She has worked on improvement across children and adult services and has chaired boards for six years. She has worked in the voluntary sector, private sector and the NHS. She was also on the Jay Wilkinson reference group for the Church of England.

Other members of the Board are drawn from a professional community of interest including: The Cathedral's Interim Dean and Senior Non Executive Member of Chapter, The Church of England National Safeguarding Team, Diocesan Board of Finance, Bishop's Office, statutory bodies, local authorities and the charity sector.

The Board has confirmed their commitment to be intentional in their trauma-informed leadership as they embark on this improvement journey. They are committed to listening, hearing and engaging with the Cathedral community; congregation, victims and survivors, volunteers and staff to shape the future.

LEARN MORE

Updates from the Improvement Board can be found at:
blackburncathedral.com/improvement

To see safeguarding resources and to report a concern visit:
blackburncathedral.com/safeguarding

NEW

Safeguarding Adviser Appointment

Enhanced provision is an important step forward.

Lesley Hurst, a former police officer with extensive safeguarding experience, took up the role at the start of November.



Part of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, she will be in the Cathedral each Tuesday and Thursday.

Lesleys' appointment forms part of a service level agreement with the Diocese. This covers comprehensive safeguarding support including training for both staff and volunteers, the investigation of any concerns raised and identification of all ways to improve the culture and safeguarding practices across all our activities. This arrangement with the Diocese also provides us with greater access to a range of specialist partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors.

UPDATE

News in Brief

Here's what has been happening in and around the Cathedral community.

Lords Prayer Tour

In October we welcomed the **Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell** and hundreds of people from across Lancashire to the Cathedral to explore the wonder and beauty of The Lord's Prayer.

It was the latest leg of the Archbishops 'Faith in the North' Lord's Prayer Tour, during which he is visiting all 12 dioceses in the Northern Province of the Church of England to speak and share the importance and relevance of the Lord's Prayer to our world today.

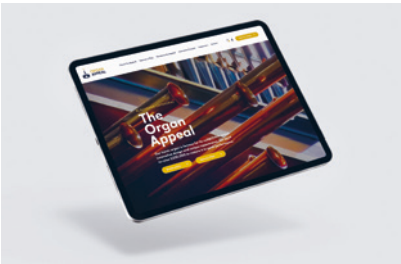


Those in attendance heard what the Lord's Prayer means to young people across the region; listened to the Cathedral Youth Choir perform an incredibly moving musical version of the Lord's Prayer; watched a series of inspirational videos; participated in discussions about their own experiences of using and saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Appeal Update

We give our grateful thanks to all those that have so generously supported the **Organ Appeal** since its launch earlier in the year.

Our iconic organ is famous for its remarkable sound, innovative design and unique appearance and the Appeal aims to raise £250,000 to restore it to peak performance.



The restoration will involve cleaning the organ's 4,000 pipes, regulating the stops, and replacing worn components. These repairs aim to recover the organ's original, exciting sound and reliability, reduce ongoing short-term maintenance costs, and to preserve our unique musical heritage for generations to come. To show your support, please visit **organappeal.com** where you can donate online or sponsor your choice of pipes from just £1.

British Textile Biennial

The Crypt at Blackburn Cathedral was once again a host venue for the **British Textile Biennial**.



Throughout October, guests from across the country enjoyed work by Lucy + Jorge Orta ranging from intricate pieces in embroidery appliqué, to sculpture and immersive video installations.

The work crossed continents from the Antarctic to the Amazon, reflecting on humanity's impact and relationship with the planet, telling the story of a world drastically altered by climate change.

Launch of New Cathedral Gin

Ahead of our forthcoming Centenary and forming part of the expanding range of Cathedral merchandise, we're delighted to introduce a new product to complement the existing - and ever-popular - Cathedra Gin.



Centenary Gin is a limited edition, small batch gin, that has been expertly crafted in the heart of our county using the finest hand-selected regional botanicals to deliver an intensely smooth taste. It celebrates the rich heritage of Lancashire's Cathedral and is available to purchase from the Cathedral café, Checks & Greys.

Blackburn Cathedral Features in New Book

Blackburn Cathedral is featured in a new book by Janet Gough OBE, acclaimed author, lecturer and advisor on historic churches and cathedrals.



Her latest publication - '**Divine Light**, the Stained Glass of England's Cathedrals' - tells the remarkable story of stained glass in each of the country's cathedrals. Our entry details the story, beauty and impact of Linda Hadfield's stained glass in our iconic lantern.

'Divine Light' is available now from all good bookshops.

Church of England's Advent and Christmas Theme

The theme for the Church of England's Advent and Christmas season is **Joy!** The big idea is to celebrate what brings joy at this time of year. People will be encouraged to share their joyful Christmas memories, what they're most excited about this year, or theological meditations

on the joy that Advent promises and Christmas brings using the hashtag **#JoyOfChristmas**

Christmas Invitation

Visiting the Cathedral is the perfect way to start the festive celebrations and we want everybody to feel encouraged to experience the joy of Christmas with us - whether you visit regularly or have never been before - we're open to all and you'll always be warmly welcomed. Our updated festive calendar which includes carol services, worship, festive concerts and live music can be found at **blackburncathedral.com/christmas**

Progress Towards Net Zero

As part of our ongoing work towards achieving Net Zero 2030, we had a visit from committee members from the Cathedrals Fabric Commission who encouraged exploration into the addition of **solar panels** to the roof of the Nave.

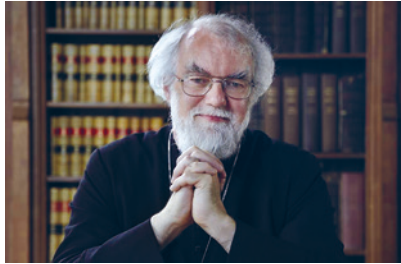


We subsequently commissioned a structural engineers report

which confirmed the roof is suitable and helpfully provided us with estimates of likely energy generation once in place. Siting proposals are now being drawn up ahead of submission to CFCE for approval.

Guest Preacher Confirmed

We are delighted to confirm our guest preacher for Easter 2026.



Former Archbishop of Canterbury **Dr Rowan Williams** will join us for the following services:

Maundy Thursday Eucharist at 8pm, Good Friday Liturgy at 12pm and the Saturday Easter Vigil at 8pm. He will also preach at the Cathedral Eucharist on Easter Day at 10.30am, at which the Bishop of Blackburn will preside.

LEARN MORE

See our latest news at: **blackburncathedral.com/blog**

In Conversation with Sian Goggins, Enterprise Development Manager

She is the driving force behind the Cathedral's commercial development, responsible for the expanding events calendar and growing merchandising operation whilst also running the Cathedral's popular café, Checks & Greys.



A lot has changed in the three years you've been here, what's pleased you the most in this time?

Three years ago I walked into the Cathedral with a massive challenge ahead of me. The café was on it's knees, it was losing money and only serving around 30 customers a day and there was so much to do on the events front too.

Fast forward to today and you're lucky to get a table at lunchtime without pre-booking! Through all our activities like the events, the café, online delivery, catering and venue hire, we're now making significant contributions towards the Cathedral and that's really pleasing, as is the fact that we are able to provide real jobs with prospects, to people in the area.

What has been your proudest moment so far?

There's two that stand out for me:

Firstly, from a business point of view, booking the Museum of the Moon last year. There was a considerable up-front cost that we didn't know if we were going to get back and that was a big risk. But to see all our hard work bring in more than 40,000 guests in just four weeks and selling out every event we staged... was great!

And from a personal perspective, I think back to the Dean's Banquet in 2023. It was the first time I'd done something of that scale or importance before and it was the first time Head Chef Laura Palmer had cooked for that many people. The pressure was really on us but the three course, black tie dinner we delivered was a tremendous success and something that I look back on with great pride.

How do you ensure your team are ready for the challenges they face?

I find the key thing is planning. People like to know what's expected of them and having a day plan for the café or an operational plan and pre-briefings before a

big event really helps make sure everybody knows what they're doing. Having the right people in the right place with the right leaders looking after them makes all the difference. It's all in the preparation!

What motivates you?

Coming from a commercial background, what motivates me might differ from others in the team. But it's really simple - bringing in worthwhile financial contributions to the Cathedral.

When the Cathedral is packed for a concert or full of guests at an exhibition for example, and we've exceeded expectations, it's really rewarding. Seeing our beautiful Nave when there's 600 people at a concert or we're hosting 250 guests enjoying a gala dinner - you can't beat that feeling when the team's hard work comes to fruition.

But as soon as it's over, there's no time to dwell, though, I'm already planning the next one!

What have you learnt along the way as you have developed our standing into one of the leading events venues in the region?

To be organised and stay on top of everything, all the time. We're a small team and know that being able to trust each other's expertise and ensure we communicate properly is key to the success that we've had. We work very closely with external partners too and that's really important.

We have some great relationships - be they suppliers to the café or event production companies. We know we have an iconic building but there's more to it than that. We've always been fair, open, honest, and flexible and are committed to being as accommodating as we can be, and that is one of the many ways we stand out against some other venues, both nearby and right across the region too.

How pleasing is it to see your team develop?

It's great and I take so much pleasure from it. In fact, a really good example is Ben - one of our café supervisors. He joined us at 16 as casual Saturday staff and has worked so hard to learn the ropes, he's really pushed himself into all aspects of the role. When I think back to his early days when he would walk around with his head down, barely speaking and then to look at him now when he's leading a team of sometimes eight to ten people on a shift. It's really satisfying. He's nearing the end of his Level 3 Hospitality Supervisor Apprenticeship and will soon be starting his Level 4 in Hospitality Management. I really hope to be able to put more people through apprenticeships to support them and encourage them to grow within the business.

Finally, what excites you about the future? What are you most excited about?

Obviously next year is a big one... with plans for a wide variety of events for our Centenary. But not just that, we'll continue to build growth in the business by focusing more on the catering side of things and hosting more external events. The newly refurbished Crypt is a very special place and we're looking to expand our offering there too, with things like hosting wedding receptions and more private functions.

We'll continue to take calculated risks as we look to expand into new markets. It'll be important to continue building awareness in our offering as we develop the business further. This will allow us to take advantage of the growing demand for premium venues.

LEARN MORE

Find out more at:
blackburncathedral.com/events

BEHIND THE SCENES

Culinary Excellence: 'From Palm to Plate'

Head Chef Laura Palmer has been an integral member of the Cathedral team since November 2017 and in that time has overseen the dramatic growth of our catering operation.

As she runs the busy kitchen in Checks & Greys, the Cathedral café, and manages every aspect of our venue and events catering provision, Laura takes multitasking to a whole new level.



Each day she can be found serving up her famous Lancashire breakfasts to the delight of her many loyal café customers, while simultaneously finishing a lunchtime buffet or preparing hundreds of canapés ahead of an evening function.

As the catering arm of our business has grown, so too have the demands on Laura, and her ability to manage both the variety and volume of work is remarkable. Committed to the quality of the food she produces and to training those in her team, she is one of many unsung heroes at the Cathedral.

So next time you visit the Cathedral and see guests happily dining in the café or eating in one of our function spaces, spare a thought for Laura. As she will, no doubt, be planning the menu for the next event, while leading her team through another busy service.

OPPORTUNITIES

Catering and events is a rapidly growing area - and that means we're looking for dedicated, enthusiastic individuals to join our team including Cooks, Hospitality Supervisors, Food, Beverage & Events Assistants and Kitchen Porters.

Find out more at:
blackburncathedral.com/vacancies

Venue Hire

Proudly combining historical elegance with modern facilities, Blackburn Cathedral is the region's most iconic venue, and any of the spaces within our estate are available for hire.

From the splendour of the listed Cathedral and our contemporary conference facilities, to the newly refurbished Crypt and the modern interiors of our popular café, Checks & Greys, every space helps make your event as unique as it is memorable.

We host a range of cultural events, including classical and popular music concerts, theatre performances, panel discussions, art installations, and exhibitions. The Cathedral also provides the perfect setting for ceremonies, presentations, conferences, and formal banquets. We are equally at home with intimate gatherings and large-scale special occasions.

Whether for daytime or evening hire, every event is matched by an outstanding catering experience. So whether you're planning a working lunch, a glamorous canapé reception, an intimate, informal buffet, or a grand multi-course banquet, our expert team is ready to curate catering options perfectly suited to your requirements.

CENTENARY

New Vestments For Centenary Thanks to Friends' Support

An exciting project to design and produce a complete set of new clergy vestments to mark the Cathedral's Centenary is well underway.

Following the four liturgical colours, the new vestments will explore themes from the Bible whilst weaving together ideas of community, unity, and the Trinity. Blending contemporary artistry with the traditional craft of hand weaving, they will be both beautiful and symbolic as they are worn during Cathedral worship throughout the year.

The vestments are being designed and woven by **Margo Selby**, the acclaimed British textile artist and designer whose work unites innovation and colour in striking ways. Many will recall Margo's project - *Breathing Colour* - which was displayed in the North Transept during The Festival of Making in 2024, and we are delighted that she will now bring her expertise and distinctive artistic vision to this significant collaboration.



Due to be completed in early 2026, the vestments will be unveiled as part of the Cathedral's Centenary celebrations at a special launch event planned for March. There will also be an exhibition called *'Fabric of Faith'* celebrating the history of our vestments over the last century - details of which will be announced soon.

This is a wonderful way to mark our Centenary and we extend our grateful thanks to the Clergy team for their inspiration and input, Margo Selby Studio for their creativity and craftsmanship and most importantly, **The Friends of Blackburn Cathedral** for their generous support that has made this project a reality.

JOIN

The Friends of Blackburn Cathedral

For more than fifty years the Friends have supported the Cathedral through gifts combining beauty and practicality.



The Friends is a dedicated group of supporters who raise funds to support projects that enhance the fabric and facilities of the Cathedral. Their core aims are:

1. To stimulate and maintain public interest in the Cathedral.
2. Maintain, beautify and improve the fabric, fittings, ornaments, and music of the Cathedral.
3. Provide a means whereby people who have the wellbeing, mission and purpose of the Cathedral at heart, can be kept in touch with its life and work.

As an independent charity, their funds are derived from membership fees, donations and legacies and they are always keen for new members to join them. Find out more at: fobc.info

COMMUNITY

Do You Have a Story to Share?

We're collecting the memories, stories and moments that have helped shape a century of life at Blackburn Cathedral - and we'd love to hear yours.

As we approach 2026, our plans to mark this important milestone in the rich history of our Cathedral are well underway. In addition to celebratory events, thanksgiving and civic services, exhibitions and special projects, we are keen to put real life stories at the heart of the year.

Get Involved

We want to hear your memories and stories of what the Cathedral has meant to you and your family over the past hundred years.

Whether you have interesting memories, artefacts, memorabilia or personal anecdotes, we're calling on our Cathedral family and the wider community to share their stories.

Perhaps you or a family member were baptised, married, or confirmed here? Did you sing in the choir, come to a special service, civic event or even attend a royal visit that left a lasting impression?

Was a relative employed in the construction of the building or did you watch on as our iconic Lantern Tower was hoisted into place?

Have you helped behind the scenes and have a tale to tell? Maybe you have a memento that helps shape a part of the Cathedral's story?

If you have memories or something to share, please do get in touch - as each one helps tell the story of a Cathedral at the heart of its community.

Please email centenary@blackburncathedral.co.uk or speak to a member of the team at the Cathedral.

Your memories will help us celebrate the people, moments, and memories that have shaped your Cathedral over the past 100 years.

GET INVOLVED

Find out more and submit your story at:
blackburncathedral.com/centenary



Major Exhibitions to Kickstart Centenary Year

We are delighted to announce details of a number of high profile exhibitions and art installations that will provide a bumper start to our Centenary celebrations.



JANUARY

The Longest Yarn II - 'Britain at War'
Opens on the 7th January until 7th February

FEBRUARY

TIME by Luxmuralis
Runs from 24th - 28th February

MARCH / APRIL

Turin Shroud
A replica of the Turin Shroud and an accompanying exhibition will be displayed.

'Fabric of Faith' - A Century of Vestments
A Cathedral vestments exhibition and a new art installation by acclaimed textile artist and designer **Margo Selby** will also be unveiled in March and April (see p9).

See full details:
blackburncathedral.com/events

DIARY DATES

Highlights This Season

We host a wide range of events that bring people together and we strive to offer something for everyone. Here are some highlights between now and January:



A Christmas Carol
Mon 24th Nov 2025 | 7.30pm
blackburncathedral.com/christmas-carol



The Christmas Orchestra
Fri 28th Nov 2025 | 6.15pm & 8.45pm
blackburncathedral.com/orchestra



Handel's Messiah
Sat 6th Dec 2025 | 7pm
blackburncathedral.com/messiah



G4 Christmas: Live in Concert
Thu 11th Dec 2025 | 7.30pm
blackburncathedral.com/g4



A Baroque Christmas
Sat 13th Dec 2025 | 7pm
blackburncathedral.com/baroque



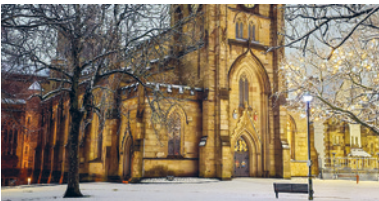
Christmas Musical Treasures
Sat 20th Dec 2025 | 7pm
blackburncathedral.com/treasures



Nine Lessons and Carols
Tue 23th Dec 2025 | 7.30pm
blackburncathedral.com/nine-lessons



Carols Around the Crib
Wed 24th Dec 2025 | 4pm
blackburncathedral.com/crib



Christmas Day
Thu 25th Dec 2025 | 10.30am
blackburncathedral.com/christmas-day



Epiphany Carol Service
Sun 11th Jan 2026 | 4pm
blackburncathedral.com/epiphany



Tina Turner by Candlelight
Fri 23rd Jan 2026 | 7.30pm
blackburncathedral.com/tina



Pink Floyd by Candlelight
Sat 24th Jan 2026 | 7.30pm
blackburncathedral.com/pinkfloyd

The events calendar, which is updated daily and includes all worship, can be found at blackburncathedral.com/events

TIME

CREATED BY LUXMURALIS

Astonishing,
immersive
light and sound
experience
spanning the
beginning of
time to the
present day.



Learn more
and book tickets

blackburncathedral.com/time

24-28 Feb

Tickets on
sale now