

Issue 3
Winter 2026

Cathedral Matters

News & Views from
Blackburn Cathedral



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GOVERNANCE

Eagerly Anticipating a Special Year Ahead

Interim Dean, Canon Andrew Horsfall offers thanks to all who help in the life and ministry of the Cathedral.



“ It has been a joy to be part of life here, on a part-time basis, as a secondment from my role as Head of Chaplaincy & Spiritual Care Services in our local hospitals in East Lancashire.

I am very much looking forward to coming to the Cathedral full-time as Interim Dean from the middle of February and have been thrilled with the warmth of your welcome as this news was shared.

It will be a privilege to work alongside the dedicated staff and volunteer teams and continue to lead the congregations in worship.

We have begun our adventure through the centenary year, and wait in eager anticipation of all that it holds, with many opportunities to celebrate the past. There are many events and special occasions so please do get involved!

As we approach the Season of Lent, we prepare to journey with Christ through the wilderness and towards the cross. This is a season of reflection and renewal - a time to examine ourselves honestly and draw closer to God.

All our efforts rest on His grace, and it is to Him that we look to in faith. I finish with a line from an old Lancashire Sunday School hymn: *‘we will praise Him for all that is past, and trust Him for all that’s to come.’*

With my prayers and warmest greetings. ”

The Revd. Canon Andrew Horsfall
Interim Dean of Blackburn

GET IN TOUCH

Contact Canon Andrew Horsfall via email:
interimdean@blackburncathedral.co.uk

Get in touch
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LAUNCH EVENT

Hundreds Gather to Witness Launch of Cathedral’s Centenary

The famous West Doors of the Cathedral were shut in anticipation as guests gathered on the Feast of Epiphany to mark the start of the Cathedral’s centenary year.

As the doors slowly opened, The Revd. Canon Andrew Horsfall, Interim Dean of Blackburn, was welcomed by two young choristers who helped to bring light into the building symbolising faith, unity and new beginnings.

Welcome prayers were said and the Cathedral gradually came alive with light and music as guests celebrated the start of a new chapter with great joy, warmth and anticipation for the year ahead.

The walls echoed to the sound of a brass fanfare, the choristers lit a centenary candle, which will stay alight throughout the year. Guests watched as details of a year of celebratory events - including worship, exhibitions, art installations and community involvement - were unveiled on a giant screen.

Ian White, Blackburn Cathedral's Chief Operating Officer, provided an overview of the ways to become involved and how our many communities can come together to celebrate the Cathedral's rich cultural heritage and support its importance to the region.

The finale was a memorable performance of the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah which was performed by a combination of choirs, including Blackburn Cathedral's Youth Choir, Blackburn Chamber Choir and members of The Blackburn Music Society. They were accompanied by Director of Music, John Robinson, on the Cathedral's iconic organ and Prince Bishop's Brass.

Speaking at the event, Canon Horsfall said: "Since becoming a cathedral in 1926, this building has stood as a beacon of faith and fellowship at the heart of our community in Blackburn and has cherished its standing within the local and wider community throughout all this time.



This centenary year offers a unique opportunity to honour our heritage while looking forward with renewed purpose to what lies ahead and I am so grateful to all those who joined us on what is a very special evening."

Amongst the guests were the Mayor of Blackburn with Darwen, Councillor Jacqueline Slater, Council Leader Phil Riley, and Chief Executive Denise Park who said: "This is Lancashire's cathedral but we're really proud that it's in our borough, and at the heart of Blackburn. It is a great asset, they've got a fantastic programme of events planned throughout the year and I look forward to coming to see many of the exhibitions and things that they have on offer."

LEARN MORE

Regular centenary updates and ways to get involved can be found at:
blackburncathedral.com/centenary

UPDATE

News in Brief

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

Hundreds Attend Carol Services

Throughout December we welcomed hundreds of guests to the Cathedral as we hosted a number of carol services including the return of Community Carols and charity events such as Derian House, NSPCC, and Lancashire Fire & Rescue.



In addition, schools from across the diocese visited for special lunchtime carol services.

Thousands Visit Cathedral for First Exhibition of 2026

We were delighted to welcome thousands of guests through our doors at the start of the year to enjoy the Longest Yarn II - 'Britain at War' exhibition.



We welcomed visitors from across the region and as far afield as London, Leeds, Glasgow, Wales, Cornwall and everywhere in between. The exhibition captured people's imagination and we received many delightful comments from guests who experienced all that Blackburn Cathedral has to offer.

We are extremely grateful to our wonderful team of volunteers who were widely praised for their help, kindness and the warmth of their welcome.

Fundraising Regulator Update

We are pleased to announce that the Cathedral has successfully registered with the Fundraising Regulator for England.



With increased fundraising efforts planned during the centenary year, and the appointment of two new fundraisers (see p10), we can now provide extra reassurance to donors. We have committed to fundraising in line with the UK's charitable fundraising standards.

Church of England Lent Theme

The theme for the Church of England's Lent season is **Draw Near**: Life-giving habits for Lent. At the heart of the theme is 'Rhythm of Life' - habits and patterns which help to grow as disciples of Christ day by day, especially as we prepare to celebrate the great mystery of God's saving love at Easter.



Reflections are centred around a summary of the Christian Way from Common Worship, which identifies six activities essential to our calling as disciples. Each week a different contributor will explore an aspect of Christian discipleship: worshipping together, praying, exploring the Bible, sharing communion, offering service and sharing the good news with others. Running alongside will be a 40-day challenge for families and children, who are invited to explore the life-giving habit of generosity in partnership with 40acts. More details can be found at: cofe.io/DrawNear

Lent and Easter

Joining us during Holy Week will be the former Archbishop of Canterbury **Dr Rowan Williams**.



Details of our Lent and Easter services can be found at: blackburncathedral.com/easter

Celebrating The Journey

It is 21 years since the powerful series of paintings known as The Journey was commissioned by Blackburn Cathedral.



To mark this anniversary a special Stations of the Cross service will take place on Tuesday 31st March at 6.30pm. It will be led by Dr Rowan Williams, with artist **Penny Warden** also in attendance. More details can be found at: blackburncathedral.com/stations

Checks & Greys Launch New Loyalty Scheme

A brand new loyalty scheme has been launched by the popular Cathedral café, Checks and Greys.



Allowing guests to collect points each time they visit, the scheme converts purchases into points that can be redeemed against food and drinks. It's easy to join - simply ask a member of the team to help you sign up.

Summer Flower Exhibition

We will host a special flower exhibition this August. Presented by the Friends of Blackburn Cathedral, **Parishes in Bloom** will showcase floral displays from churches across the diocese.



Exhibitors will bring their parish life and present their floral artistry in the Cathedral through the theme of 'Celebrating the Uniqueness of Your Parish'. More details and how to get involved can be found at: blackburncathedral.com/bloom

Racial Justice Sunday

Our annual service marking Racial Justice Sunday was held on 8th February. We affirmed our commitment to standing up to racism and discrimination in all its forms, through learning and growing together as a diverse community in Blackburn and beyond.



Guest preacher was **The Revd. Munawar Din**, who has pioneered intercultural ministry across the diocese and serves as Dean of Global Majority Heritage Ministry. He is also the Bishop of Blackburn's Advisor on UKME issues.

[LEARN MORE](#)

See our latest news at: blackburncathedral.com/blog

In Conversation with Lesley Hurst, Cathedral Safeguarding Adviser

Bringing a wealth of safeguarding experience, her recent appointment has significantly increased our capacity to listen and respond as we continue our improvement journey.



You're new to the Cathedral team, what drew you to the role?

I've worked in statutory safeguarding and education for 25 years and I discovered there were ways I could transfer my knowledge and experience from that sector into the Cathedral. As a Christian, I also believe my personal mission is to use my professional skills to help others feel safe. This opportunity felt like an ideal combination.

Why is safeguarding such a vital part of Cathedral life?

Safeguarding is a crucial part of Cathedral life and that's mainly because we're open to all. As part of our broader mission, we encourage everyone to come through our doors and for a wide variety of reasons.

We see people from every walk of life and as a result, we may have young people or adults who are at risk. It's imperative that our approach and our procedures are in place to protect them as well as our staff, volunteers and other visitors. Everybody should always feel safe and welcomed into our spaces.

Can you explain the role of a Cathedral Safeguarding Adviser?

I have a responsibility to ensure there is safe practise in terms of how the organisation operates on a day-to-day basis and this is covered by things like policies and procedures. Equally importantly, my role is to be a central, visible and available person that anyone can bring safeguarding concerns to. It is important to ensure that anyone interacting with the Cathedral feels safe, knows how to report a concern and that it will be always be taken seriously.

What does good safeguarding look like day to day?

I strongly believe that safeguarding is about relationships rather

than form-filling, so speaking and listening to as many people as possible about any concerns that may exist is an important part of my work. It's not just immediate concerns though. For example, I am also looking at safer recruitment processes to make sure we are recruiting and training staff and volunteers in the right way and doing so safely.

Are there any misconceptions about safeguarding?

Oh absolutely! I think the most common misconception revolves around the fact that many people think it's just about abuse against children. In fact, my work involves wider contextual issues such as what's going on outside the Cathedral not just inside it.

It impacts all of our users whether that's people who are here to work, worship, visit, volunteer or attend events. Plus it covers a multitude of areas - actually, we have far more issues revolving around adults at risk then we do around children, so it's about helping people understand exactly how safeguarding fits into their life within the Cathedral and how to keep us all safe because we firmly believe that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility.

How can you encourage people to speak up if something doesn't feel right?

I would really hope that by continuing to build relationships with everyone involved with the Cathedral, that people will feel able to speak up if something doesn't feel right.

I want to stress that you don't need to have evidence you just need to feel that something doesn't seem right. Come and have a conversation, drop your concerns in an email or fill in a concern form - it's really, really important because sometimes those small pieces of information

that you might think "I don't really know" or "I'm probably wrong" it could be the last piece of the jigsaw that we're waiting for. It could be that somebody is desperate for support and by us noticing and engaging with them, we can put support and help around them. I think it's really important to stress that if you feel something just isn't quite right, you share your concerns, because you will be heard.

Finally, what will success in the role look like to you?

Success to me would be that after the impact of the INEQE report, we get to a place where we know that our processes and procedures are where they need to be and people are empowered to speak up when they think things aren't right.

We want people to feel safe to communicate openly with each other. It is important that everybody feels safe to come and raise concerns - to know who to go to and when to raise them, and having no fear around doing so, knowing that they will be dealt with efficiently and effectively. Our place now within a wider network of organisations - which includes local authorities, agencies, charities and the voluntary sector - greatly strengthens the Cathedral's safeguarding provision.

But success in safeguarding is never found at a single point or moment in time. It is a continuous journey that we must take together. It isn't a job I can do in isolation - and only by everybody working together will we get to where we need to be.

GET IN TOUCH

Contact Lesley Hurst via email:
lesley.hurst@blackburnecathedral.co.uk

CONGREGATION

Interim Dean Praises Progress

As part of our ongoing commitment to regular, open dialogue, the latest congregation meeting took place on Sunday 25th January.

Held in the Builders' Yard, the meeting was attended by many members of our congregations along with Chapter members **Naomi Healey**, **Jayne Jenks** and **Keith Roberts**. A range of issues were discussed and valuable feedback given.



The session also saw attendees hear from - and raise questions with - Cathedral Safeguarding Adviser **Lesley Hurst**. This ongoing approach to engaging closely with our congregations enhances our commitment to open and honest dialogue.

Speaking after the meeting, The Revd. Canon Andrew Horsfall, Interim Dean of Blackburn said:

“I am pleased to say that we have begun to embed some of the excellent work that our Safeguarding Improvement Board has done. We have started to listen well to each other, to be open and honest in where we find ourselves, and to work hard to make sure that everyone feels valued and an integral part of our life here together. I am grateful for the ongoing discussions we have with our congregations and these meetings are a valuable part of our journey. It is important to share and discuss our progress and whilst there is much more to do of course, this is matched by a deep desire to bring about further change.”

CONGREGATION

Future Meetings

The dates for congregation meetings to be held during the rest of the year are as follows:

SPRING

Sunday 10th May at 12pm (APCM)

SUMMER

Sunday 19th July at 12pm

AUTUMN

Sunday 18th October at 12pm

Each meeting follows The Cathedral Eucharist, are held in the Builders' Yard and all are welcome to attend.

For more information, please speak to James Lawrence, Canon Missioner, either in person or email:

missioner@blackburncathedral.co.uk

OPPORTUNITY

Serving at the Altar at Blackburn Cathedral

Have you ever felt called to serve God more closely in worship? We warmly invite confirmed members of the Church of England of all ages to consider becoming part of our altar serving team.

Altar Servers play a valued and visible role in the life of the Cathedral, helping to support worship that is reverent, prayerful, and joyful. Most serving takes place on Sundays at the main Cathedral Eucharist, with additional opportunities throughout the year on feast days, ordinations, and other special services.



Serving at the altar is more than fulfilling practical duties - it is a ministry rooted in prayer and humility. By serving, you help create a space where the whole congregation can encounter God more deeply. As Jesus reminds us,

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Mark 10:43).

Altar serving is a quiet but powerful way of living out this calling, offering your time and care in worship to the glory of God. Whether you are experienced or completely new to serving, you will be welcomed, supported, and trained as part of a friendly and dedicated team.

FIND OUT MORE

To learn more about what is involved, please speak to Alex Barnes, Head Virger, either in person or email: **alex.barnes@blackburncathedral.co.uk**

Why Volunteer?

Our volunteering opportunities aim to be fun, sociable and beneficial to experiencing new things. There are many other benefits to volunteering at Blackburn Cathedral including:

- Gaining experience of working in a unique heritage environment
- Contributing to the ongoing success of the Cathedral and individual events
- Hands-on experience that provides transferable skills
- Meeting people from a wide variety of locations and walks of life
- Working alongside knowledgeable staff
- An opportunity to showcase your unique talents
- Supporting us as we make a difference to our guests
- Be part of our story, discover your own and have fun!

We fully recognise the value volunteers bring to our organisation and the time and commitment they give to all areas of our operation and for which we are extremely grateful.

APPOINTMENTS

Changes at the Cathedral

We welcome a new fundraiser and detail the latest changes to the Cathedral team.

Canon Andrew Takes Role Full Time

Canon Andrew Horsfall takes up the role of Interim Dean full-time in February. His final day as Head of Chaplaincy & Spiritual Care Services at East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust will be 13th February and The Bishop of Blackburn will collate Andrew into his new role on Saturday 14th February.



Canon Jenny Supports Parish Ministry

Aware of the Cathedral's mission to serve the diocese, Canon Jenny Gaffin, with the full support of the Interim Dean, asked the Bishop if she could spend time supporting parish ministry within the diocese. For this purpose Jenny will live in the parishes she will be serving but will retain her home in Cathedral Close.



New Fundraiser Joins the Team

With support from the Cathedral Sustainability Fund to kick start a major period of fundraising activity, we are delighted to welcome the first of two new members to the team. Experienced fundraiser Nudrat Mughal will manage applications to foundations and trusts to help drive a number of landmark capital projects.



Departure

John Hosking, our immensely talented Organist in Residence, has announced he is to leave the Cathedral. Over the last three and a half years John has enthralled us with his improvisations and glittering playing.



He has spearheaded the Cathedral's popular organ concerts featuring some of the leading musicians on the international scene and instigated a series of new liturgical repertoire for the organ through his composition competitions.

We thank him for his contribution to the Cathedral during his time with us and wish him well as he embarks on new projects and opportunities.

Vacancies at Checks & Greys

Due to continued growth, Checks & Greys are on the lookout for dedicated, enthusiastic individuals to join their team. Whether you're an experienced kitchen professional or new to hospitality, if you're committed to working hard and delivering fantastic customer experiences, they'd love to hear from you.

See details of current vacancies at: blackburncathedral.com/vacancies

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 April:



Elvis by Candlelight

Fri 13th Feb 2026 | 7.30pm

blackburncathedral.com/elvis



Bell Ringing Open Day

Sat 14th Feb 2026 | 10am - 3.30pm

blackburncathedral.com/bells



TIME by Luxmuralis

Tue 24th - Sat 28th Feb 2026 | Various

blackburncathedral.com/time



Frankie Valli by Candlelight

Fri 6th Mar 2026 | 7.30pm

blackburncathedral.com/frankie



80s Anthems by Candlelight

Sat 7th Mar 2026 | 7.30pm

blackburncathedral.com/80s



David Briggs Film Improvisation

Sat 14th Mar 2026 | 7.30pm

blackburncathedral.com/briggs



Blackburn Symphony Orchestra

Sat 21st Mar 2026 | 7.30pm

blackburncathedral.com/symphony



Tom Bell Organ Concert

Wed 25th Mar 2026 | 12.15pm

blackburncathedral.com/concerts



Blackburn Chamber Choir

Sat 28th Mar 2026 | 7.30pm

blackburncathedral.com/passiontide



Colin Walsh Organ Concert

Mon 6th Apr 2026 | 11am

blackburncathedral.com/concerts



Taylor Swift by Candlelight

Fri 17th Apr 2026 | 7.30pm

blackburncathedral.com/taylor



The Sixteen Choral Pilgrimage

Sat 25th Apr 2026 | 3pm

blackburncathedral.com/sixteen

TURIN SHROUD EXHIBITION

This life-size replica of the Turin Shroud invites you to explore its striking image to reveal how its details align with Gospel accounts. It offers an experience described by many as powerful, moving and highly significant for their understanding of the story it represents.



**Mar 23rd
to Apr 12th**

Learn more at:

blackburncathedral.com/shroud



**BLACKBURN
CATHEDRAL**