

Novena of Prayer

in thanksgiving for the Centenary of Blackburn Cathedral

13th - 21st
November 2026

'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'

blackburncathedral.com/worship

1926:2026

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL

Introduction from the Interim Dean

For a hundred years, people have come through the doors of this Cathedral to pray. They have come in joy and in sorrow, to celebrate and to grieve, to give thanks and to seek help, and here they have found a place to meet with God.

As we celebrate our centenary year, alongside our Diocese, we give thanks for all that this place has been: first and foremost a house of prayer and worship, and also the focal point of our Diocese and the seat of our bishop.

It is in that spirit of prayer that we offer this Novena booklet, as together we give thanks for the past century.

In our prayer and worship we are given a glimpse of the Kingdom of God, and so it is right and fitting that our celebrations conclude with a Service of Praise on the feast of Christ the King.

The reflections draw on two sources; The first is the words above our doors, 'This is the House of God and the Gate of Heaven'.

The second is the Eucharistic Preface for Christ the King, which describes God's Kingdom in seven different ways.

Each day offers a reading from the Gospel according to John, a reflection from one of the Cathedral clergy, and a prayer.

You are warmly invited to pray with us over these nine days, whether here in the Cathedral, at home, or wherever you find yourself.

My hope is that this will draw us all deeper into our calling as Christian people: to root all we do in prayer, so that we may have the courage and conviction to make God's Kingdom known to all who enter our doors.

As we mark our centenary year, let us do so in prayer, giving thanks for all that has gone before, and looking forward in renewed hope that many people will find this place to be the House of God and the Gate of Heaven, and so be made members of the body of Christ, which is nothing less than the Kingdom of God.

With my warmest greetings,



The Revd Canon Andrew Horsfall
Interim Dean of Blackburn

Friday 13th November 2026

House of God

Reading - John 2.13-22

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Friday 13th November 2026

Reflection and Prayer

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. (John 2.19)

It is Passover, and the Temple courts are busy: cattle and sheep, cages of doves, the clink of coins at the money-changers' tables. None of it was scandalous. Pilgrims needed animals for sacrifice and the right currency for the Temple tax. It was simply how things worked.

Then Jesus arrives with a whip of cords, and the tables go over. 'Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!'

The danger to a house of God is rarely wickedness. More often it is busyness: good arrangements that slowly crowd out the purpose they were meant to serve. A century on, we might ask what Jesus would find in our courts. What has become routine? What tables, honestly, need turning? But the story does not stay with the cleansing. Challenged for a sign, Jesus says, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' His hearers think of stone. John tells us he was speaking of the temple of his body.

That changes what a house of God is. The holy place is first a person: the crucified and risen Christ, in whom God dwells fully. And because we are made members of his body, the house of God is also us - living stones, built into a spiritual house.

This does not make these walls unimportant. They have held the prayers of Blackburn and Lancashire: baptisms and funerals, and the quiet prayer of someone who slipped in from the street with nowhere else to go.

But this house exists to point beyond itself, to the risen Lord who is the true temple.

Notice, too, that after he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered. Understanding came later, in the light of resurrection. That is what a centenary is for: remembering, and discovering that God was at work all along.

So we give thanks for this house of God, and ask to be made a house of God ourselves: cleared of whatever crowds out prayer, and open to all who come.

To this temple, where we call thee,
come, O Lord of Hosts, today;
with thy wonted loving-kindness
hear thy servants as they pray;
and thy fullest benediction
shed within its walls alway.

7th-century Latin, tr. J. M. Neale (1818–1866)

Let us pray

Almighty God,
you have made this holy place
to be for us a house of prayer and a gate of heaven;
grant that all who enter here may encounter your presence,
be renewed in faith, and strengthened in hope;
that, giving thanks for a hundred years of worship and witness,
we may offer all that we are and all that we do
for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Saturday 14th November 2026

Kingdom of Truth

Reading - John 17.6-19

“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them.

They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Saturday 14th November 2026

Reflection and Prayer

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17.17)

There is a moment of extraordinary irony in John's Gospel, when Pilate asks, "What is truth?", and the answer he is looking for is standing right in front of him.

A few chapters earlier, during his great upper room sermon, Jesus prays that the disciples will be made sanctified in the truth. But in this moment, Jesus isn't giving his friends a set of correct opinions about the world, it would be easy to misread the situation and think Jesus is saying "be holy by having the right answers."

Both with Pilate and with the disciples, Jesus is inviting us to be in relationship with a person who is the embodiment of truth: "be holy by aligning yourselves with me, I am the truth".

This means that for Christians, truth is relational before it is propositional.

We come to know truth as we come to know a friend, by keeping company with him until his ways become ours. So when Jesus prays to the Father, "your word is truth", he is speaking of the Word the Father has spoken, who is the Son himself.

And for us to be made holy in the truth is to be drawn into the Trinitarian life of the divine.

Celebrating a hundred years in this Cathedral is a celebration of a hundred years of relationships among us.

Relationships which have nourished and comforted us, and that have been held within our relationship with God. It is those relationships which will keep us 'true' in the next hundred years.

Let us pray

Almighty God,
you have made this holy place
to be for us a house of prayer and a gate of heaven;
grant that all who enter here may encounter your presence,
be renewed in faith, and strengthened in hope;
that, giving thanks for a hundred years of worship and witness,
we may offer all that we are and all that we do
for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Sunday 15th November 2026

Kingdom of Life

Reading - John 14.1-6

Jesus said to his disciples, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”.

Sunday 15th November 2026

Reflection and Prayer

Do not let your hearts be troubled.
Believe in God, believe also in me. (John 14.1)

As we celebrate one hundred years of worship, witness and service of our Cathedral Church, Jesus' words remind us that the life of the Church is rooted in something far greater than ourselves.

We are called to be people of hope, travelling together towards the fullness of life that God promises.

Jesus speaks of his Father's house, where there is room for everyone- indeed, he tells us himself that there are many rooms. This is of course a vision of heaven - nothing less than the Kingdom of Life: a place of welcome, belonging, love and peace, where every person is valued and all are invited to share in the abundant life of God himself.

For a hundred years, this Cathedral has sought to make that Kingdom visible in our community - first and foremost through prayer and worship, but also through acts of kindness and generosity, through the sharing of faith and through the welcome offered to all, as well as being the focal point of our Diocese and the seat of our bishop.

As we give thanks for all that has gone before us throughout the last century, we are also challenged to look forward with confidence - confidence in the Kingdom of Life which God brings, and which he calls us to continue to share in the years to come.

Jesus tells us that it is he who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

May we have the confidence to continue to follow him faithfully, becoming a community where hope is nurtured, love is shared and the life of God's Kingdom can flourish for generations to come.

This is what it means to be a faithful Cathedral community in the 21st century - and this is the responsibility we hold in bringing that glimpse of God's kingdom to the people of our town and county, as we continue to be a place where the Kingdom of Life is made manifest for each and every person who comes through our doors now and in the years to come.

Let us pray

Almighty God,
you have made this holy place
to be for us a house of prayer and a gate of heaven;
grant that all who enter here may encounter your presence,
be renewed in faith, and strengthened in hope;
that, giving thanks for a hundred years of worship and witness,
we may offer all that we are and all that we do
for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Monday 16th November 2026

Kingdom of Holiness

Reading - John 5.1-17

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.' Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.' At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, 'It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.' But he answered them, 'The man who made me well said to me, "Take up your mat and walk."' They asked him, 'Who is the man who said to you, "Take it up and walk"?' Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, 'See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.' The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is still working, and I also am working.'

Monday 16th November 2026

Reflection and Prayer

My Father is still working, and I also am working. (John 5.17)

We tend to picture holiness somewhere clean and quiet. This reading takes us somewhere else. Beside a pool near the Sheep Gate, under five porticoes, lie crowds of the sick waiting for the water to stir.

Among them is a man who has been ill for thirty-eight years: long enough for hope to wear thin. Jesus sees him and knows how long he has been there. Before anything is done, he is noticed.

Then comes a question that sounds almost strange: 'Do you want to be made well?' The man does not say yes. He has no one, he says, to help him into the pool. That may be the most important sentence in the passage for a Cathedral Church. Our towns are full of people who could say the same.

Jesus does not wait for a better answer. 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.' At once the man is made well.

But it is the sabbath, and the reaction is not joy but objection: carrying a mat breaks the law. Here are two pictures of holiness side by side. One guards the boundaries and asks whether the rules have been kept. The other stops beside the one who has waited longest and makes him whole.

The preface for Christ the King speaks of a Kingdom of Holiness and Grace, and the two belong together. The man did nothing to earn his healing. Holiness comes to him as grace.

Jesus answers his critics simply: 'My Father is still working, and I also am working.' God's holiness is not static. It is active and restless, at work wherever people are waiting.

For a hundred years people have come into this Cathedral carrying long illnesses of body and spirit. The Father is still working among them. May they find here not only beautiful worship, but the attention of Christ, given through his people: someone, for those who have no one.

Thy touch has still its ancient power;
no word from thee can fruitless fall;
hear, in this solemn evening hour,
and in thy mercy heal us all.

Henry Twells (1823–1900)

Let us pray

Almighty God,
you have made this holy place
to be for us a house of prayer and a gate of heaven;
grant that all who enter here may encounter your presence,
be renewed in faith, and strengthened in hope;
that, giving thanks for a hundred years of worship and witness,
we may offer all that we are and all that we do
for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Tuesday 17th November 2026

Kingdom of Grace

Reading - John 1.1-5,9-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Tuesday 17th November 2026

Reflection and Prayer

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1.14)

When John begins his gospel by declaring that the Word "lived among us" he is inviting the reader into a vivid picture. The word that John uses literally translates as "pitched his tent".

For the original readers this would have evoked the Old Testament tabernacle of Israel in the wilderness filled with the glory of the Lord. The tabernacle was the tent at the centre of Israel's camp, the place where God dwelt with his people as they travelled through the wilderness. Now, John says that tent is the human body of Jesus and the same glory can be seen in him.

The tabernacle was the place where Israel did business with God as he dwelt in the centre of their community. In Jesus that same glory comes close enough to touch as he sits and eats with sinners, or even kneels to wash the feet of his friends.

This is grace. God meets us where we are before we have found our way to him. He does not wait for us to make ourselves a place worthy of his dwelling. Instead he makes his home in flesh, and "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

To celebrate a cathedral centenary is to celebrate a building.

Our stunning Cathedral, with its many changes and developments over the last hundred years, and with all its beautiful idiosyncrasies, is for us a place of encounter with God's glory.

It is also a place of grace in which we meet with Jesus and discover that he has pitched his tent with us.

Let us pray

Almighty God,
you have made this holy place
to be for us a house of prayer and a gate of heaven;
grant that all who enter here may encounter your presence,
be renewed in faith, and strengthened in hope;
that, giving thanks for a hundred years of worship and witness,
we may offer all that we are and all that we do
for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Wednesday 18th November 2026

Kingdom of Justice

Reading - John 9.1,6-9,13-17,34-41

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.'

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.' Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.' He said, 'He is a prophet.'

They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out. Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him. Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.' Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, 'Surely we are not blind, are we?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see", your sin remains.

Wednesday 18th November 2026

Reflection and Prayer

He said, 'Lord, I believe.'
And he worshipped him. (John 9.38)

In this story of the man born blind, Jesus challenges the assumptions and prejudices of those around him. While others may only see his disability, Jesus sees a person worthy of dignity, compassion and love.

He restores his sight, but in doing so, also opens his eyes to a deeper truth: that God's Kingdom is a place where justice and mercy belong together.

God's Kingdom of Justice is one where everyone is valued; where prejudice gives way to understanding, exclusion to welcome, and indifference to compassion. In order to reflect that Kingdom here on earth, Jesus challenges us not simply to see the world as it is, but also to recognise how it can be transformed and transfigured by God's love.

As we celebrate one hundred years of this Cathedral Church, let us give thanks for all who have worked for justice and stood alongside those who are marginalised or overlooked. But let us also remind ourselves of our responsibility to continue that work in the years to come.

Our Christian calling is to be a community whose eyes are open to the needs of others, and whose actions reflect the justice of Christ.

May we have the courage to see, the faith to believe and the compassion to act, so that the Kingdom of Justice may be seen in the world of today.

Let us pray

Almighty God,
you have made this holy place
to be for us a house of prayer and a gate of heaven;
grant that all who enter here may encounter your presence,
be renewed in faith, and strengthened in hope;
that, giving thanks for a hundred years of worship and witness,
we may offer all that we are and all that we do
for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Thursday 19th November 2026

Kingdom of Love

Reading - John 13.31-35

When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

Thursday 19th November 2026

Reflection and Prayer

Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. (John 13.34)

The setting matters. It is night. Jesus has washed his disciples' feet. Judas has taken the bread and gone out into the dark. At that very moment, Jesus says that now the Son of Man is glorified.

Glory, in John's Gospel, is not triumph as the world measures it. It is love shown in its fullest form, revealed at the point of betrayal, on the road to the cross.

Then Jesus gives his friends a new commandment: love one another, just as I have loved you. The command to love was not itself new. What is new is the measure. The disciples have just watched their teacher kneel with a towel and wash their feet, including the feet of the one who would betray him. Love that serves. Love that stoops. Love that does not first check whether it is deserved.

And this love has a purpose: by this everyone will know that you are my disciples. Not by our buildings, our liturgy or our history, precious as they are, but by our love for one another.

That is a searching word for a centenary. What will be remembered of the Church in Blackburn in another hundred years? Perhaps the music and the great services. But the Kingdom of Love is built in less visible ways: a meal taken to a neighbour, a quarrel healed, a newcomer welcomed, people who keep turning up for one another.

The preface for Christ the King speaks of a Kingdom of Justice, Love and Peace. This reading shows us what kind of King reigns over it: not one who demands to be served, but one who kneels with a towel.

As our celebrations draw towards the feast of Christ the King, we are invited to bow before that King, and then to rise and do as he has done, until all who enter our doors can see in us something of his Kingdom.

My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me;
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.

Samuel Crossman (1624–1683)

Let us pray

Almighty God,
you have made this holy place
to be for us a house of prayer and a gate of heaven;
grant that all who enter here may encounter your presence,
be renewed in faith, and strengthened in hope;
that, giving thanks for a hundred years of worship and witness,
we may offer all that we are and all that we do
for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Friday 20th November 2026

Kingdom of Peace

Reading - John 14.25-31

‘I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, “I am going away, and I am coming to you.” If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

Friday 20th November 2026

Reflection and Prayer

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. (John 14.27)

On the night before he died, Jesus gave his friends a gift: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." Of course there was nothing peaceful about that night the men who were with him would, within hours, fight, run away, and deny him. And yet, knowing that, he still gives them his peace.

For a hundred years this Cathedral has been a place for chaotic, beautiful, painful, and sometimes hilarious moments. Babies and adults have been brought for baptism; couples have made their vows to one another; people have knelt before the bishop to be confirmed; deacons and priests have been ordained here to serve the parishes of the diocese; families have given thanks for the life of a loved one and commended them to God.

And at every one of these services, joyful or grievous, the risen Christ has stood among his people, and said, "Peace be with you."

Many of us carry our own memories of this place: the moments of our livea that are special and personal to us. Many of us have stood in this cathedral and experienced a peace which surpasses understanding.

What a gift it is to receive the peace of Christ.

Each Sunday we hear the same gift offered again: "The peace of the Lord be always with you." As we come to the end of a hundred years, we give thanks for every life that has been held in that peace here.

Let us pray

Almighty God,
you have made this holy place
to be for us a house of prayer and a gate of heaven;
grant that all who enter here may encounter your presence,
be renewed in faith, and strengthened in hope;
that, giving thanks for a hundred years of worship and witness,
we may offer all that we are and all that we do
for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Saturday 21st November 2026

Gate of Heaven

Reading - John 1.43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

Saturday 21st November 2026

Reflection and Prayer

You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. (John 1.51)

When Nathanael encounters Jesus, he discovers that the person standing before him is far more than he first imagined. Jesus promises him a glimpse of heaven opened, a reminder that in Christ, heaven and earth are brought together and God's presence is made known among us.

As we enter this Cathedral Church, we walk under the words: 'This is the House of God and the Gate of Heaven.' These words are a powerful reminder that our Cathedral is much more than a building. It is a place where heaven touches earth; where people encounter God through worship, prayer and fellowship; it is a place where lives are changed and faith is nurtured.

For a hundred years as our Cathedral, this place has been a place of welcome, sanctuary and encounter. Countless people will have passed through our doors, bringing their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears, and finding here a place to meet God. Many of them we will have come to know, to understand their stories, and been able to foster friendships.

Some will have chosen to remain anonymous (this is the beauty of being a Cathedral Church of course). And yet, they are known to God, created in his image just as each and every one of us is, and loved by him. They too find their home in our sanctuary, which is for them, as it is for you and me, nothing less than the Gate of Heaven.

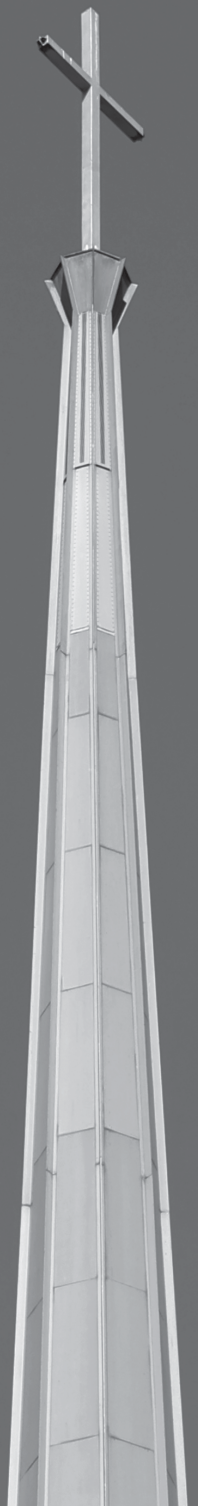
As we celebrate our centenary, may these doors continue to be a gateway to faith, hope and love, inviting all who enter to discover the presence of God and the transforming love of Jesus.

May they prove to be the gateway to the Kingdom of Heaven for each and every person who enters our Cathedral Church, so that many people may come to glimpse the living god, and see the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus, to see 'the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

Let us pray

Almighty God,
you have made this holy place
to be for us a house of prayer and a gate of heaven;
grant that all who enter here may encounter your presence,
be renewed in faith, and strengthened in hope;
that, giving thanks for a hundred years of worship and witness,
we may offer all that we are and all that we do
for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL CENTENARY SERVICE



Our Centenary Songs of Praise Thanksgiving Service takes place on Sunday 22nd November, at which the Rt. Revd. Sam Corley, Bishop of Stockport, will preach.

Friends old and new are warmly invited to join us as we celebrate our centenary together in worship.

This relaxed and joyful celebration will bring together favourite hymns chosen by members of our congregations and memorable moments to mark this once-in-a-lifetime occasion.

Sunday 22nd November, 4pm

Learn more at:

blackburncathedral.com/thanksgiving

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THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF BLACKBURN DIOCESE
All for Jesus

THE DIOCESE OF BLACKBURN
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN LANCASHIRE

1926:2026

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL

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