

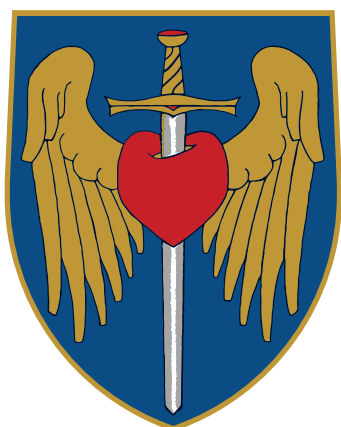
# Chapter Annual Report 2023



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# A sense of change and renewal at the Cathedral brought new vitality to the fulfilment of its vision during 2023.



We gratefully thank the Dean for his energy and determination to lead the Cathedral towards a strong future that will include registration with the Charity Commission and the Cathedral's centenary.

# Worship and services

The year began with the proclamation of Bishop Philip North as our 10th Diocesan bishop, and his installation took place with all due ceremony at a Eucharist of the Holy Spirit on 24 June.

He has stated that he is committed to continuing the growth of the church in Lancashire, to the church being an ever stronger voice for justice, and to placing children and young people at the heart of all that we do.

A procession of young mini-bishops during his installation, wearing individual paper mitres, was a lively symbol of this third objective.

Other special services included the Coronation Choral Evensong held on the Fifth Sunday of Easter and the day after the Coronation of HM The King, and a choral evensong on the Fifth Sunday after Trinity that was dedicated to Lord Shuttleworth. He and Lady Shuttleworth have been magnificent supporters of the Cathedral throughout his long Lord Lieutenancy.



The flower arrangers continue to enhance the beauty of the Cathedral and receive many words of encouragement by congregation members and visitors.

They are grateful for the donations they receive and for the discount by a local florist for displays that contribute to the Cathedral's offering of praise to God.

# Mission

In the Canon Missioner's first full year in post, the development of the Cathedral congregations' discipleship has been a priority, with home bible study groups held throughout the year and two study courses in the autumn.

Revd Canon James Lawrence also designed a sermon series for the clergy team on the Epistle to the Romans, chapters 5-8, and himself preached at parishes in Burnley and Accrington. There were three baptisms and five confirmations. A Refugee Week conference was hosted in the Crypt, and the Cathedral co-hosted a "Re-Imagining Living Well" conference with the town at Ewood Park football ground, with Bishop James Newcombe of Carlisle as a speaker.

One important aspiration faltered. Canon Lawrence had proposed that Church House be investigated as the location for a Community Centre that would serve the needs of the town and become a hub for social action in Blackburn. He garnered widespread support for this idea from local charities and local government, and thirty volunteers spent a summer's day cleaning and clearing the building in preparation. Unfortunately Church House presented structural problems that proved insurmountable and

the project stalled. Other initiatives fared better. The Cathedral worked with a local company, R52 at Burnley, to develop the crucially important website for a 2024 launch, alongside new interpretative signage designed to inform visitors better while provoking discussion about the Christian faith.

Another highlight was the development of a Christian chaplaincy at Blackburn College for the first time in years, in partnership with St Luke's at Blackburn. A Contemporary Carol service was held at the campus in December.



# Music and liturgy

The Music Department continues to grow from strength to strength under its Director, Mr John Robinson.

The Revd Canon Gary O'Neill stepped down from his role as Interim Precentor in the autumn, giving an opportunity to put on record his achievements in many areas of the Cathedral's musical life.

These include the choir's mixed top line with a broader and more demanding repertoire, a strong back row, changes in the positioning of liturgical furnishings to make music-making easier and less stressful, and successful live-streamed services.

With his help, the Lantern Music Trust also got off the ground as a significant legacy for a future that looks bright with the appointment at the end of the year of Revd Dr Jenny Gaffin as permanent Canon Precentor.



Canon O'Neill also led work on the Liturgical Plan, "*Gathering Round the Table*". The final report detailed all the liturgical arrangements during the life of the Cathedral and made recommendations about how they might work in the future, with a particular emphasis on the Sanctuary. The report was approved as work in progress by the Chapter in September.

The new music administrator, Ms Abigail Birch-Price, has brought both a Cambridge music degree and an MA in arts management. She is enthusiastic about women composers and organised events around International Women's Day from

a tiny budget, as well as increasing the audiences at major music events through her use of social media.

The junior choral scholars are increasingly assured, with one of them about to leave to read for a degree in music. The Cathedral youth choir continues to thrive under Ms Helen Davies, with new singers joining alongside ex-choristers. St Paul's Voices, the voluntary choir, has grown under the kind guidance of the organist in residence, Mr John Hosking, with people travelling significant distances to be involved.

Dr John Bertalot continues to produce *Music and More*, the envy of the music world, and he has welcomed the revolution in streaming with open arms. Overall, the Director of Music finds joy in directing music in a situation where it is supported so keenly and so expertly.



The Ringing Master, Mr Ray Hutchings, was pleased to welcome new recruits to the tower. Three existing learners all scored quarter peals, and there were regular visitors from St Silas and Oswaldtwistle.

A Cambridge S Major was rung for the Candlemas Eucharist and as a celebration of the life of Mr John Halliwell, former chorister and Ringing Master from 1957 to 1967, while a Plain Bob Major marked Mothering Sunday and the memory of Mrs Jean Barnes.

There was open ringing for the Coronation in May and Steadman Doubles for the installation of Bishop Philip in June. These are just a few of the highlights of a year in which there was ringing on 45 Sundays, with well-supported Thursday practices.

# Governance

A key task for the Chapter throughout the year was to undertake the work necessary for the Cathedral to fulfil the Charity Commission provisions for the purposes of the Cathedrals Measure 2021, and to become the sole governing body of the institution.

This endeavour included intensive discussion of the template constitution and statutes provided for the Chapter's consideration, with valuable guidance and facilitation from Mr David Bilton of Newcastle Cathedral, followed by a re-consideration of major policy documents and the establishment of a new committee structure.

The Council held its final meeting on 16 November, at the conclusion of which its chairman signed a document that laid it down, and the full and final submission for Charity Commission registration was completed by the end of the year.

The Chapter was delighted to welcome Mr Ian White in February as the new Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk. Not only has he set high standards of effectiveness and efficiency across all areas of Cathedral operations and governance, he is also welcomed as a world-class singer in the choir, with a passion for choral music that he passes on to younger singers. Other staffing changes included the resignation of Mr Mark Pickering, a



well-known face to many as the Head Virger for over twenty years. External advertisement and interview led to the appointment of Mr Alex Barnes as his successor.

Mr White's arrival allowed various initiatives to move forward with renewed energy. He facilitated the Chapter's away day on 5 July that was spent in an examination of the Cathedral's strategic vision in the context of its approaching centenary in 2026. Every facet of the Cathedral's mission and operations came under scrutiny, with a consequential Strategy Plan for 2024-27, discussed and



approved by the Chapter, that sets the agenda across all the areas of its business. The Church Commissioners agreed to fund a campaign manager to work up the funding and support for the centenary, an appointment that was approved by

the end of the year. The Cathedral and the Diocese were able to share their approaches to a centenary that marks the foundation of both Diocese and Cathedral, with the intention that the events for this special occasion will be jointly agreed and synchronised.



# Education

The Education Department maintains a focus that reflects its important place within the missional life of the Cathedral.

Visits are made from every educational level and age group. Mrs Sian Howell-Jones is in touch with Mr Iain Parkes, the new Diocesan Head of Education, and through him to the advisors.

A contact has been made with a second mosque, and the floor was shared with a Jewish colleague from Manchester at a Blackburn primary school panel.

The total number of visits and visitors has remained steady, while income has almost doubled.

Feedback is strongly positive; for example, gratitude from one visit recalled the warm welcome and ideal introduction that led to an excellent trail, and to “tangible generosity in terms of the resources invested and the kind volunteers who staffed the activities”.



# Safeguarding

The report of the Lessons Learned Review, commissioned by Bishop Julian Henderson, was issued in October 2022.

Procedural issues delayed consideration of its findings but, following a meeting at Bishop's House with Bishop Philip North on 5 October, the Chapter was able to discuss its findings and make a response, jointly with Bishop Philip, that was approved for publication.

The statement apologises unreservedly for the pain and distress of failures in safeguarding practices across Blackburn Diocese and at Blackburn Cathedral over an extended period, and makes recommendations about:

(1) commitment to robust whistleblowing; (2) strengthening of Chapter governance structures, policies and procedures; (3) cultural change towards more effective and efficient safeguarding; (4) contributions towards work within the Church of England leading improved national policies; and (5) investment in partnerships with relevant statutory and other organisations.

The statement concludes by a renewed commitment to the Seven Principles of Public Life and to making the Cathedral a safer place for all and the joyful proclamation of the good news about Jesus Christ. The full text is on the website. Ms Carolyn Johnson took

on the independent chairing of the Cathedral Safeguarding Management Group, with Ms Jenny Price continuing as Cathedral Safeguarding Officer. Ms Catherine Smith, the new Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and a member, with the Dean, of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, was welcomed. Items on the group's agenda, besides the Lessons Learned Review, have included the development of national safeguarding standards, the updating and completion of the contract for Cathedral Safeguarding Advisers, and the drafting of a Low Level Concerns policy.

Because part of the group's work included the national Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, it explored the impact of Recommendation 8, about the strengthening of Cathedral Safeguarding Advisers to become officers, independently supervised by a member of the National Safeguarding Team. The group also looked at Recommendation 1, that proposes the Church of England should continue its programme of independent safeguarding audits. The Cathedral's last audit was in 2019 and preparation of a Safeguarding Strategy Plan for the next audit in 2025 has already begun.

# Finance

The Cathedral's Finance Committee held regular meetings throughout the year with reports to the Council that enabled careful discussions of key issues to take place.

Because some long-standing debts have been discharged, the level of interest payments has shown a welcome decline, and while the generation of income remains as a major issue, the institution's finances are stable and no longer prone to unwelcome surprises.

Checks and Greys achieved a full year of bookings by external organisation for the first time, a milestone that together with internal event income gave additional confidence and provides a base line for further growth.

Overall café revenue increased and challenging budgets were reached, with ongoing efforts to increase profitability further.



Funding was secured for an outdoor courtyard development that includes a canopied area, bicycle racks and a small playground, giving back to the community as well as drawing in more customers.

# The Friends of Blackburn Cathedral

The Friends of Blackburn Cathedral held six meetings, including an annual general meeting in July that concluded with a choral evensong.

At the October Council meeting Bishop Philip was presented with a copy of a 1695 map by Robert Marsden of the area covered by the Diocese, and on Advent Sunday the Friends hosted a reception for all the congregation who attended.

The Friends donated over £27,000 to the Cathedral during the year, including further funding for the restoration

of 'Healing of the Nation', streaming equipment and improvement of the public announcement sound and loop system, the purchase of banqueting tables and chairs for use in the Crypt, and donations to the flower arrangers.

A display board that will show all the Friends' donations from 2012 onwards is being organised.



# Fabric

Considerable progress was made during the year on the Cathedral's fabric, and the Chapter was pleased to welcome Ms Emma Birkett in October to chair the Fabric Advisory Committee.

Ms Louise Priestman, Cathedral Architect, undertook a thorough quinquennial inspection of the main Cathedral and Crypt, leaving Church House and Cathedral Court still to follow. She has been working with Purcell and John Turner Construction to resolve the remaining defects in Cathedral Court.

Church House remains empty, with attempts to find tenants hampered by rental market conditions and the need to upgrade the premises.

Works undertaken during the year included biocide treatment to improve the safety of the ledger stone paving in the Garth, steps taken to manage the damp and water ingress in the Columbarium, clearance of long-accumulated rubbish to allow better assessment of fabric condition and future opportunities, and study by a part-time voluntary archivist of the Cathedral's records and their condition.

The Chapter made an on-site visit to the area of the Crypt known as the Builders' Yard and plans for its future use as a flexible space for entertainments, events and exhibitions have been drawn up.

CBG Lighting Perceptions made proposals for improved internal and safer LED lighting that were signed off in principle by the Chapter, subject to funding.

A specialist inspection of the Corona resulted in some immediate pointing repairs to the pinnacles and a recognition that a fuller programme will be needed over the next five years.

The Cathedral achieved Eco Church Bronze status in September, and a sharp increase in energy prices has necessitated an overhaul of the Cathedral's management systems to improve efficiency.

At the end of the year the Chapter welcomed the financial support by the local council for the installation of a Changing Places facility. The Cathedral is thus poised for a programme of forthcoming works that will bring the Crypt more fully into the life of the institution, complete a liturgical re-ordering that includes improved lighting and sound, and bring the Cathedral to a high standard of renewal and repair for a sustainable future.

# Message from The Dean

The Cathedral has continued its recovery from the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic and as evidenced in this report, is making significant strides.

The Cathedral aspires to be a place of welcome for all and has begun a series of concerts and events which reach out to new audiences and visitors across Lancashire and the North.

Commercial development is critical to the long-term sustainability of the Cathedral both in terms of finance and its continuing relevance in today's society.

The transition in governance to the Charity Commission in partnership with the Church Commissioners is a reflection of the new civic environment we now exist in. I am grateful to all colleagues and supporters of the Cathedral for their continuing efforts.



A handwritten signature in gold ink that reads "Peter Howell-Jones".

**The Very Revd Peter Howell-Jones**  
Dean of Blackburn

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## Chapter membership

The Very Reverend Peter Howell-Jones

Elizabeth Alton

Canon David Gascoigne

The Reverend Canon Andrew Horsfall

The Reverend Canon James Lawrence

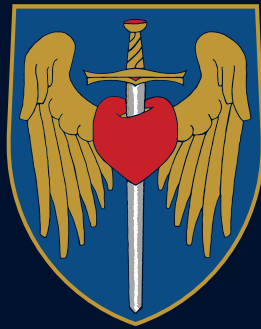
Marion McClintock, MBE

Paul Mason

The Reverend Canon Gary O'Neill

Keith Roberts

Ian White - Chapter Clerk



# Blackburn Cathedral Chapter

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CATHEDRAL**