

Chapter Annual Report 2024



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**BLACKBURN
CATHEDRAL**

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Message from The Dean

Our Annual Review offers an insight into the many blessings, achievements and causes for celebration which have marked a year of confident change and development in many areas of our mission and commercial activity.

Becoming a registered charity during the year marked a significant moment for us as a Cathedral. The process has enabled us to develop our governance structures and renew our policies and procedures to ensure that we are fit for purpose.

As the Mother Church of the Diocese, we continue to support the Bishop of Blackburn in his leadership and ministry. This involves the hosting of many diocesan services, ordinations and festivals together with active involvement by our clergy team in mission weekends, clergy training and episcopal support throughout the year.

Attention to safeguarding culture, processes and policies is an essential part of what it means to be a caring Christian community, as is providing a safe place where everyone can flourish.

In the coming year we will implement a number of changes highlighted by the INEQE Safeguarding Audit.



By God’s grace, it has been a positive and exciting year for Blackburn Cathedral, blessed with a clear strategy and commitment to be authentic, enterprising, welcoming and effective in our commitment to growing God’s kingdom in everything we seek to do. We look forward with hope and joyful expectancy to the coming year.

Peter Howell-Jones

The Very Revd Peter Howell-Jones
Dean of Blackburn

Worship, services and liturgy

The year began appropriately with the welcome to and installation of our new Canon Precentor, Revd Dr Jenny Gaffin, on 2 February, and in September we were delighted to welcome Revd Dr Joe Kennedy for his installation as Bishop of Burnley.

In the course of the year, the Cathedral hosted Diocesan ordinations, civic services including the D-Day commemoration attended by the Lord Lieutenant, Mrs Amanda Parker, the regional Mothers' Union service, the Prayerbook Society and a wide range of visiting choirs. We also took part in a BBC Radio 3 Evensong broadcast in October that elicited a record level of positive feedback.

The choir has built on a post-pandemic music programme to widen its repertoire for key moments in the Cathedral's liturgical cycle of prayer, praise and performance. Our Organist in Residence, Mr John Hosking is not only nationally acclaimed for his improvisations, the exemplar of the Cathedral's colourful organ, but gives outstanding choral accompaniment.

The choir's 6th form choral scholars have produced a healthy young sound and been able to rely on the experience of the paid singers and excellent volunteers. A particular pleasure was

the first graduating scholar through the ABRSM examinations, leading to UCAS points and a university place to read music. Saturday mornings are now focused on ABRSM music theory and singing examination preparation, supported by funding from the Mrs Waterhouse Trust. In addition, the Cathedral Music Trust has supported choral workshops for our choristers by leading vocal experts.



Revd Dr Joe Kennedy with Dean Peter Howell-Jones

Mrs Abigail Birch-Price has contributed her second outstanding year as Music Administrator, including successful events around International Women's

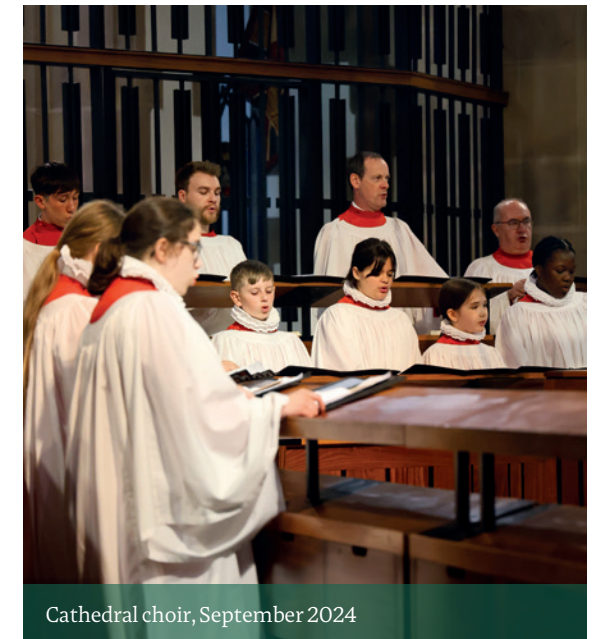
Day, taken on the department's social media, extending our reach and increasing audiences, and managed PRS payments. The Cathedral Youth Choir has continued to thrive under Ms Helen Davies and new singers are joining our ex-choristers, with teenagers making cathedral music their own. Efforts are also being made to recruit more girls into the choir. St Paul's Voices (the voluntary choir) has reached new heights under Mr Hosking's direction, although at times it has had to perform as a women's choir when insufficient tenors and basses were available.

The care of the organ has become a focus in recent months, as its avant-garde caselessness makes it particularly prone to dirt building up in the pipes. Restoration work to clean all the pipes and regulate the voicing is needed, and in independent review by Mr William McVicar, organ curator at the Royal Festival Hall, has clarified what is needed, and is leading to detailed project scoping and fundraising for the work.

Some special thanks are due. The first is to Dr John Bertalot, aged 93, whose renowned Music and More magazine has disseminated news and recollections about our music for decades, but who has at last had to call a halt. We also thank Mr Alan Taylor who has generously donated a lovely mechanical action organ that he has built himself for the newly restored Crypt, inspiring young musicians and adults for generations to come.

Behind the scenes the Virgers underpin all the worship by their efficient and committed ministry, and we are delighted to welcome Mr Yrene Lettan to the team, with his special brief to support our visitors.

The Wardens have worked tirelessly, and we offer particular thanks to Mrs Julie Eatwell, who has stepped down as Head Warden, and welcome Mrs Louise Hicks who has taken up the role.



Cathedral choir, September 2024

The Cathedral is supported by a growing group of willing volunteers who make many contributions to worship and welcome. They have been particularly patient as we have sought to resolve some technical challenges with our livestreaming that enable people to participate in worship from afar. Finally, we warmly thank our flower arrangers for the colour, variety and beauty they bring to the Cathedral's congregations.

The Ringing Master, Mr Roy Hutchings, is able to report another successful year of change ringing. Only four out of fifty ringings for the Sunday Eucharist were missed, and in addition there were one full peal and six quarter peals, including for the D-Day commemoration and for the wedding of local ringers. Thursday practices continued, and visits from neighbouring churches took place during the year.

Mission and outreach

The Canon Missioner, Revd James Lawrence, continued his ministry as chaplain at Blackburn College, holding services at Easter and Christmas and making regular pastoral support available to students.

For the Diocese he gave a keynote address at a training weekend for curates and had a curate working with him at the Cathedral for six weeks in the autumn. He joined the inspiring Children and Youth Committee and the Project Board for Making Disciples, and gave mission lectures on the Assistant Lay Minister training course.

With Bishop Jill he and others hosted a Diocesan Festival of Healing in October, while on the same weekend the Cathedral partnered with the Message Trust at St Luke's to host the 'No More County Lines' tour, with a week of visits to local school assemblies across Blackburn that culminated in a concert of rap and RnB artists attended by 300 young people.

The Cathedral was delighted to host two important exhibitions that emphasised Blackburn's connections with the textile industry. The first, 'Threads Through Creation' by Ms Jacqui Parkinson was held in the North Transept from early March to mid-April.



Message Trust concert, October 2024

The second, 'Festival of Making', combined art, manufacturing and the making of communities across the region. This giant exhibition happens annually in July and fills the Cathedral as well as the town.



Luke Jerram's Museum of the Moon, November 2024

The annual garden party and congregational barbeque took place at Whalley Abbey, and a new initiative was launched; WISCA teas (With you in Spirit but Can't always Attend). This initiative complements the regular and often unseen home visits by clergy and lay ministers, for which Canon Michael Wedgeworth makes a particularly important contribution.

The highlight of the year was of course the exhibition of the Museum of the Moon, a touring artwork by Mr Luke Jerram. Officially opened on 4 November, it brought some forty thousand visitors to the Cathedral during the month, with five thousand candles lit.

Planning for the event gave the Cathedral the opportunity to recruit and train additional volunteers, and

the team now numbers 120, with safe recruitment and improved volunteer administration. The exhibition also gave the opportunity to run a series of science and faith events, including a distinguished guest speaker, the Revd Professor David Wilkinson FRAS, to speak on the search for meaning and faith in our scientific world, while the Faraday Institute at Cambridge provided a special schools visit for 150 pupils.

Meanwhile at Easter the Cathedral launched its new website, the culmination of nine months' work that has brought about a substantial increase in online activity and outreach. Inside the Cathedral a new signage system was installed that aids visitors while also telling them about the story of the building and makes connections with the Christian faith.

Governance

The Cathedral made its historical move to become a charity registered with the Charity Commission in line with the Cathedrals Measure 2021 on 12 April 2024.

The Chapter's away day at Lancaster in July was used to explore the implications of this change, and Chapter members were celebrated as trustees at Evensong on 8 September. The full complement of revised committees has become operational and the Chapter welcomed Ms Janet Thomas as our Senior Non-Executive Member.

The reconstituted Finance, Audit and Risk Committee now has a strategic risk register of all the Cathedral's activities and assets, and the Nominations Committee has been active in searching out new members to replenish the Chapter's lay membership. The Chief Operating Officer is also the secretary of the Fabric Advisory Committee.

The Chapter, after many months of focus on the shift to the new Measure, was able to turn attention to its strategic objectives, in the context of preparation for the Centenary of the Cathedral in 2026.

In January Mr Daniel James joined the staff team as the Centenary Campaign Manager, and his expertise in design, website and social media content has made a significant impact on the quality

of all aspects of the Cathedral's visual presence and hence its engagement with all sections of the local and regional population. At most Chapter meetings throughout the year, the Chapter received a section of the strategic plan on rotation and was able to interrogate its progress.



Janet Thomas, OBE

The College of Canons met twice to discuss a range of matters relating to the Cathedral and the Diocese.

As far back as November 2022 the Chapter had been informed that a BBC investigation into the Church of



80th Anniversary of D-Day, June 2024

England's handling of an historical safeguarding issue relating to a senior member of clergy at Blackburn Cathedral was taking place. Preparatory steps were taken with the Diocese and the National Church, including a communications plan, to plan for a broadcast, and a Serious Incident Report was filed with the Charity Commission on 7 August 2024.

When the broadcast finally took place on 13 August, including an interview with the Dean on local television, the planned arrangements ensured that Cathedral, Diocese and National Church actions all dovetailed. A virtual meeting with the Charity Commission on this compliance case took place on 22 August, and additional documents were subsequently supplied as requested.

The Cathedral's IT systems had been known to require remedy for some time, and during the year a substantial

upgrading took place. The transfer of data into the Cloud has improved data security and over time will save money on infrastructure. A rolling programme to replace aging hardware and to standardise equipment is in place to make future maintenance easier.



Cathedral Eucharist, April 2024

Safeguarding

The Cathedral continued to follow the Church of England's policy, 'Promoting a safer church' and to follow its guidance.

Safeguarding remains the responsibility of the Dean and Chapter, assisted by the Safeguarding Management Group (CSMG), and overseen on a day to day basis by the Cathedral's safeguarding volunteers, the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer and the Chief Operating Officer (COO).

The CSMG consists of Ms Carolyn Johnson (in the chair), the Dean, the COO, the Canon Precentor, the Director of Music, and the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (Ms Cath Smith), and membership has remained constant. Five meetings took place in 2024, in February, April, June, September and November.

The committee is grateful to have the expertise of its independent chair, Ms Carolyn Johnson. She attended a Chapter meeting in September and reported back that its members were engaged, challenging to and supportive of the work of CSMG. The Chapter reviewed and approved the CSMG terms of reference and resolved to invite its chair to attend the Chapter annually.

The group has completed the following actions: an agreed and signed Memorandum of Understanding with the Diocese; a Low Level Concern policy document for the Chapter

that was adopted by them; a three-year safeguarding strategy that was signed off by the Chapter in July; a final SCIE action plan; and approval of a lone working policy. The group received a safeguarding risk register and resolved to review it twice a year, and job descriptions for the Cathedral's safeguarding volunteers were updated.

Group discussions took place about the following: preparations for the independent audit in February 2025; Cathedral access to link and support people; consultation on the IICSA pilot; NST consultation on a draft of the new Learning and Development framework; an update of the Cathedral's Safeguarding Handbook; and the new Safeguarding Standards and their implications for Cathedral safeguarding.

The national redress project was introduced, and will be further considered at future meetings, with the aim of raising awareness amongst victims and survivors.

Education

The Education Department exceeded all previous records in 2024, with 2,918 visitors and a significant income stream.

This result was achieved by Mrs Sian Howell-Jones on only two days a week, working with a team of dedicated volunteers.



Threads Through Creation, March 2024

Visitors range from infant school pupils to post-school students, including specialist schools, as well as adult care groups. During Lent there was a display of the remarkable textile exhibition, 'Threads Through Creation', by Ms Jacqui Parkinson, that proved to be a great success both with general visitors and school groups.

The annual GCSE religious education conference in November coincided with the Museum of the Moon exhibition, and accordingly the opportunity was taken to work with the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion at Cambridge.

This collaboration included a keynote speech on 'How do we know what we know?' that was accompanied by a series of workshops on scientific topics, and brought in additional schools as well as science teachers.

The regular trails and workshops continued, tailor made to the particular needs of individual schools, with the new website attracting additional visits.

The level of visitor feedback has risen, with 100% approval for what the department is providing to allow visitors and pupils to engage with the essence of Christian faith and what it might mean in their lives.



School visit, June 2024

Finance

The new Finance, Audit and Risk Committee began its work in May, with Canon David Gascoigne in the chair and the COO as its secretary.

Particular thanks are due to Mrs Maureen Wood for her many years of commitment to its predecessor body.

Tight control of expenditure continued, but a renewed emphasis on income generation was highlighted. This work included the production of an appeal brochure, '2026 Centenary Projects', with targets for work on the Crypt, choir endowment, West Door replacement, new lighting, organ maintenance and additional artwork.



The Cathedral was greatly helped in its endeavours by the growth and innovation of Blackburn Cathedral Enterprises under the leadership of Ms Sian Goggins.



At a time of challenging trading conditions she and her team achieved a 35% increase in income over the previous year, as well as supporting two members of staff through Level 3 and 4 apprenticeships. Outside catering contributed to this success, including for Whalley Abbey, Blackburn College and the Blackburn Mayor's Office.

Internal commercial events in support of concerts and exhibitions, especially the Museum of the Moon, brought in welcome additional revenue, while building up a track record on which to build for future years.

During the year some difficulties were faced because of delays in payments due to the Cathedral, but it is a particular pleasure to report a year end that is expected to show a significant positive balance.

Blackburn Cathedral Partners

Blackburn Cathedral Appeal Trust

The Trust exists to support the Cathedral to ensure it continues to provide an outstanding environment, not only for worship, but also for hosting a range of diverse activities.

Since 2015 it has worked closely with communities across Lancashire and the prime aim during this period has been to support the refurbishment of the Crypt into a multi-purpose space for entertainment, exhibitions and events. Once completed it will become a central resource for the town and the wider region, forming an important part of the Cathedral's commercial strategy.

The Trust raises funds in a variety of ways and holds a lively programme of events throughout the year including literary lunches, garden parties, talks and a popular annual golf day, held at Clitheroe Golf Club.

The Trust also hosts the High Sheriff and Dean's Banquet and this year over 200 guests from across Lancashire gathered under The Museum of the Moon to enjoy a formal dinner in the company of choirs from the Cathedral. The keynote speaker was Sir Tim Smit KBE, co-founder of the Eden Project.

The Friends of Blackburn Cathedral

The Friends completed the year with 243 members, under the continuing leadership of its chair, Mr David Thornton, and its Council trustees.

Four meetings were held, including an AGM in July at which Mr Ian White gave an interesting illustrated talk on his role and responsibilities at the Cathedral. Advent Sunday was celebrated by a reception for all members of the congregation who were present at the service.

The Friends donated £8,000 to the Cathedral during the year, that covered: sponsorship of an organ composition competition; flowers for the Cathedral; engraving a commemorative plaque; and a mobile merchandise cabinet.

The Friends will also purchase a display board to show the contributions made to the Cathedral since 2012, currently totalling £147,495.

Grateful thanks are due to the Dean and Mr White for their input and to the executive officers and trustees of the Friends' Council for their continued support.

Fabric

Under the watchful eyes of our Cathedral Architect, Ms Louise Priestman, the good condition of the main Cathedral structure is a cause of pleasure, although repairs to the interior of the bell tower are required, as well as the refurbishment of the West Doors.

After testing many options, Church House is partly let to two small businesses and a concept for a business centre is being developed.

The major infrastructure development has been the renovation of the Crypt. Work began in the summer, with an expected completion by Easter 2025.

The aim is to create a multi-purpose space in the former Builders' Yard as a venue for educational meetings, concerts and exhibitions, and revenue-

generating events managed by Blackburn Cathedral Enterprises.

The £400,000 investment has been funded by The Blackburn Cathedral Trust, the Benefact Trust, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and The Garfield Weston Foundation, and all the work is being undertaken by local contractors and craft workers.

We are delighted that the Changing Places facility formed part of the plans and is now operational.



Blackburn Cathedral Crypt redevelopment work, August 2024

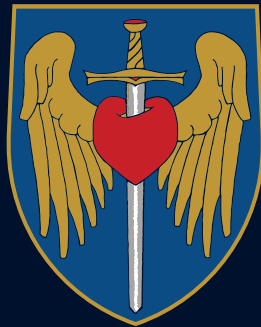
The Cathedral was able to move forward with confidence to implement a strategic plan that fulfils its mission of Christian witness and service as we prepare to celebrate the Centenary in 2026.

Chapter members

The Very Reverend Peter Howell-Jones
Janet Thomas, OBE
The Reverend Dr Canon Jenny Gaffin
The Reverend Canon James Lawrence
Canon David Gascoigne

The Reverend Canon Andrew Horsfall
Marion McClintock, MBE
Keith Roberts

Ian White - Chapter Clerk



Blackburn Cathedral Chapter

Blackburn Cathedral
Cathedral Close, Blackburn, BB1 5AA
01254 277430 | info@blackburncathedral.com

blackburncathedral.com



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