

LANCASTER PRIORY

THE PRIORY CHURCH OF
ST MARY, LANCASTER
PARISH PROFILE 2025

A welcoming and
inclusive
Christian Community
serving the people
of Lancaster



www.lancasterpriory.org

1. Introduction	4
2. Diocesan Vision	6
3. Clergy Care and Wellbeing	8
4. Executive Summary	10
5. Parish and Wider Community	11
6. Priory's Community, its Worship and Mission	19
7. Priory Music and Events	26
8. Priory Buildings	32
9. Priory Finances	35
10. Our Schools	37
11. Our Links into the Wider Community	38
12. Our Vision	39
13. What We Offer	42
14. Who is God Calling?	44

GOD OUR FATHER

You have welcomed each one of us in Jesus and called us
to be

His Body in this place;

Send us your Holy Spirit, at this time of uncertainty and
change, to fill us with vision, energy, and faithfulness in
prayer, that we may be true to our calling to bring new life
to our community.

Guide with your heavenly wisdom those who are to
choose a new Incumbent for our parish, that the person
whom we receive may be a wise and gentle shepherd of
your people: ready to serve us with joy, to build us up in
faith, and to lead us by example in loving obedience to
your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen



Thank you for showing an interest in a post in the Diocese of Blackburn.

The Diocese of Blackburn is passionate about the renewal of Parish life. Vision 2026 sets before the churches of Lancashire a profound belief in the power of the Gospel to transform lives and communities and expresses a firm commitment to maintaining clergy numbers and investing in the mission of the local church.

We therefore seek clergy with a personal faith fiery enough to make new disciples for Christ, with a sincere commitment to the Parish as the heart of the church's mission and with the resilience and courage to bring growth and renewal to local churches. We don't want superheroes. Rather we are seeking authentic, prayerful priests of all traditions who share our passion for confident proclamation and generous service.

Funding exists for a full time Associate Priest at Lancaster Priory to assist in the delivery of the Priory's mission across the Parish but especially in the Marsh area of deprivation.

What's more, you would be coming to the Diocese at a fascinating time as we look towards our centenary in 2026. We are in the midst of a major process of listening to God and listening to our County as we discern where God is calling us next, a process that will result in a new strategic vision that will last until 2033, the 2000th anniversary of the Resurrection.

We have also recently been successful in obtaining a grant of £25.5m from the Diocesan Investment Programme run by the national church.

This will enable us to:

- Offer a transformed pattern of ongoing training and support to clergy, including sabbatical leave as an expectation for all rather than a treat for the few.

- Deploy 30 'Ignite' youth and children's workers to parishes around the Diocese.
- Invest in urban areas through expanding the M:Power course for urban leaders, employing 18 Urban Pioneers and re-imagining Christian life in areas of particular challenge.
- Expand our Diocesan Renewal Programme which has led to an average of 6% growth in RWA in participating parishes.

We are a Diocese that is united in defying the declinist mindset that has taken hold of so much of Western European Christianity. Through a firm belief in the power of Jesus Christ to change lives combined with strong pastoral ministry and imaginative developments such as new local congregations, we are seeing growth in churches of all traditions. Strong relationships with our amazing family of 191 schools (95% of whom benefit from practising Christian Headteachers) provide another springboard for mission.

As a Diocese we do all we can to love and treasure our clergy. Our programme of Annual Conversations means that every licensed priest has a 90 minute conversation with a Bishop or an Archdeacon every year about their vocation, wellbeing and spiritual life. We have appointed an Assistant Archdeacon to advise on clergy wellbeing and we work hard to create networks that enable clergy to belong and find mutual support.

Those in their first incumbency are offered especially focused support. This includes participation in a two year Start of Ministry course, advice and care from a mentor and the oversight of our two outstanding Start of Ministry officers.

Lancashire has been described as 'England in miniature' and we can offer a vast diversity of parishes. We serve the most deprived communities in the United Kingdom on the Fylde coast and in East Lancashire as well as remote countryside. We are not immune from the particular challenges to ministry provided by an increasingly secular culture and a divided Church. But what brings us together is a profound

and shared love of Jesus Christ and a passionate desire that all should know him, and in knowing him find life.

We really hope you enjoy reading this profile and that it provides all the information you need. If this particular post does not feel quite right, please do get in touch about other parishes in the Diocese that are vacant.

Most importantly of all, please be assured of our prayers as you discern the will of God for the next stage in your ministry.



The Bishop of Blackburn
The Rt Revd Phillip North



The Bishop of Lancaster
The Rt Revd Jill Duff



The Bishop of Burnley
The Rt Revd Dr Joe Kennedy

2. Diocesan Vision



Vision 2026 is an agenda for growth agreed by the Blackburn Diocesan Synod in 2015. It challenges our parishes to be healthy churches that transform their communities as we look ahead to our diocesan centenary in 2026. It also lays out four ways in which this over-arching goal can be achieved: Making Disciples, Being Witnesses, Growing Leaders and Prioritising Children and Young People.

All that we do as diocese is focussed on the delivery of Vision 2026. For example:

- To make disciples we have 'Fruitful', our Diocesan Discipleship app and distribute 10,000 devotionals at Lent and Advent which enable people to study the scriptures. We also encourage greater generosity in the giving of time, talents and treasures.
- To be witnesses, many parishes are setting up new local congregations at different times and in different places to reach out to new groups of people as well as showing God's love in action through projects that meet human need.
- New leaders are emerging as we seek to enable and equip those God is raising up for lay and ordained ministry. Our M:Power course is a nationally innovative resource for forming leaders from working class backgrounds.
- Our focus on children and young people is enabling creative thinking to raise up a new generation for Jesus Christ. This is supported by our family of church schools, teams to support children and youth work and our Youth Forum.

In the Diocese of Blackburn we are inspired by confidence in the Gospel and are ambitious in our desire to make new disciples for Jesus Christ. We are committed to mutual flourishing, to maintaining clergy numbers and to investing in training for new curates.

As we look to 2026 and the completion of the current Vision, the Diocese has embarked on a major programme of listening to God and our communities as we discern when he is leading us next. This is being supported in prayer as we observe a Year of Prayer for Growth and Renewal in 2025.

Our Diocesan Vision Prayer is:

Heavenly Father, we embrace Your call for us to make disciples, to be witnesses, to grow leaders and to inspire children and young people. Give us eyes to see Your vision, ears to hear the prompting of Your Spirit – and courage to follow in the footsteps of Your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen

You can find out more by visiting the Vision 2026 pages on our website:
www.blackburn.anglican.org

3. CLERGY CARE AND WELLBEING

- Clergy are invited to participate in an 8 year annual programme to keep ministry fresh and vital. This includes periods of sabbatical and regular retreats.
- We offer an Annual Conversation in which every licensed priest spends 90 mins with a Bishop or Archdeacon discussing ministry and wellbeing.
- Ongoing theological training and teaching is offered through our partnership with Emmanuel Theological College. Clergy receive free access to a theological library of 22,000 books and regular seminars.
- Annual Diocesan Clergy Study Days and an occasional clergy conference seek to provide opportunities both to keep ministry fresh and to build relationships with colleagues.
- We offer first incumbents a mentor and participation in our Start of Ministry Programme.

- All clergy are entitled to an uninterrupted rest period of 24 hours in each period of seven days and one additional rest period of 24 hours in each month, and in the remaining weeks of the month to take a rest day and a light day.
- We offer a Clergy Assistance Programme. More information about this can be found on [our website](#).
- We have a great property department, who will do their best to ensure your house works for you and your family and is well maintained.
- We have a beautiful diocesan retreat house in the grounds of a ruined Cistercian abbey, where clergy are welcome to have personal reading days for a modest charge (you can book in for lunch or bring your own).
- We encourage all parishes in vacancy to consider how they will ‘pastor’ and support their new priest. The diocese has an anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy.
- If you are looking for a spiritual director or a mentor we have an excellent Warden of Spiritual Direction and networks of people with whom we can put you in touch.
- We are always looking for ways for clergy to mix apart from work – including reading weeks, regular hospitality, a cricket team and a clergy walking group. Further suggestions are welcome.
- We offer free counselling to clergy and their families through the Inter Diocesan Counselling Service and our own Diocesan counsellor.
- Clergy Wellbeing is overseen by the Assistant Archdeacon for Clergy Wellbeing, Canon Neil Kelley. In addition our Dean of Women’s Ministry, the Revd Lucie Lunn, offers support and care to female clergy in the Diocese.



Whalley Abbey Retreat and Conference

4. Executive Summary

Lancaster St Mary (The Priory) is more commonly known as Lancaster Priory and is the Parish Church of St Mary, with St John and St Anne. It is one of England’s major churches situated on a historic site overlooking Morecambe Bay and the mountains of the Lake District. The church is beautiful, built on a site where Christian worship has taken place for at least a thousand years. It receives a steady stream of tourists and pilgrims across the year who appreciate the special prayerful atmosphere. We offer richly catholic worship, traditional choral singing with a large, robed choir and an excellent organ, which attracts worshippers and enhances the civic role of the Priory.

The Priory community is inclusive and aims to offer a welcome to all irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, or sexuality. The previous two incumbents have enjoyed building excellent relationships with local the LGBTQ+ community. There is a faithful core congregation with extensive abilities all supported by licensed lay ministers and hard-working employees. Many opportunities are available for nurture in the faith and growing in discipleship, including prayer groups, Bible study and groups focussing on theological

discussion. These are mostly led by lay people, who, in recent years have been encouraged to 'have a go' and have gained greatly in confidence as a result.

Active PCC groups are engaged with prayer and spiritual growth, fabric repair and maintenance, resources, environmental issues, and world & community issues. There are Delegation groups: Environment, Evangelism, Property and World and Community.

The congregation draws (50%) from the parish and (50%) from other parts of the city and villages on the periphery. The parish itself is diverse, including new housing developments which offer an opportunity for growth, and deprived sections of the city, which pose a challenge for Christian witness. These two areas constitute one third of the parish population and the numbers from them coming to church are small indeed. The Priory employs a part time Community Outreach Worker.

5. Parish and Wider Community

Lancaster is situated in the northwest of England and stands on the banks of the River Lune. To the west lies Morecambe Bay, to the east the hills of the Forest of Bowland and Yorkshire, to the south Preston, Blackpool and the Fylde and to the north the Lake District.

Lancaster's magnificent castle and the ancient Priory church command a prominent position overlooking the River Lune, set among fine Georgian buildings and Roman and Saxon remains.

This conservation area has stunning views across Morecambe Bay to the Lakeland hills from the church Grounds.

Transport links are good – the West Coast main line offers easy travel to Manchester, London and Glasgow etc., and the M6 connects us north and south. The nearest airports are Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds.

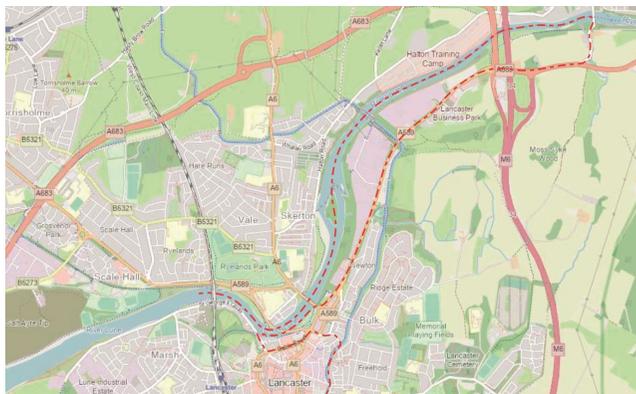
The city of Lancaster and its surrounding villages has a population of around 146,038. Its main employers are education and health, especially the Royal Lancaster Infirmary and Lancaster University, one of the UK's top universities. There is also the main campus of a second university, the University of Cumbria.

Lancaster boasts a very popular Church of England Academy within the parish, two highly rated single sex state grammar schools and outstanding primary schools.

The presence of large numbers of students in the city creates a vibrant and lively atmosphere.



Lancaster Priory site from above



The red dotted line indicates the parish boundary

The shopping centre, bus and railway stations are within a short walk of the church and a network of cycle paths is easily accessible.

Culturally, Lancaster has a thriving music scene spanning the spectrum of classical through folk, jazz and rock. There are two theatres, a cinema and art house cinema. Annual festivals of literature, jazz and Light up Lancaster are well attended.

The Priory is a Grade 1 listed building standing on a site which has seen Christian worship since Saxon times. The carved 13th century Gothic choir stalls with their misericords are nationally famous. As one of England's Major Churches it is one of the most frequently visited parish churches in the Northwest and, particularly during the summer months, we welcome many visitors to our services.

The position of the Priory as a Grade 1 listed building on a historic site adjacent to the castle makes it an obvious tourist attraction. This is potentially an important source of income with opportunity for growth. More could be done to engage visitors with the building as a sacred space and not merely as a historic monument. This was demonstrated by the Museum of the Moon from 1-20 November 2019 and Gaia Festival in June-July 2022. This attracted 20,000 visitors to the Priory. Throughout these three weeks one of a team of lay and ordained chaplains was always present to talk to visitors and to answer their many questions. However, it is still surprisingly easy to find residents who have never entered the building.



The congregation worshipping during Festival of the Earth



Princess Proms July 2024

The Priory plays a significant role in the larger cultural life of the city. As described in more detail in section 7, it offers a substantial programme of concerts, recitals, lectures and other cultural events. The Christmas Spectaculars organized by the Music Department are regularly sold out as is the annual visit of The Sixteen. On a more modest scale the weekly coffee concerts on Saturday mornings are well attended and provide a performance space for young and local musicians. To make all this happen the church employs a dual role Vicar's PA/Events Lead for 21 hours per week.

Parish Demographics	
Population	
11450	
Age spread	
0-4	5.5%
5-15	9.5%
16-64	71.3%
65+	13.7%
Ethnic Mix*	
British	92.2%
Minority Ethnic	7.8%
Other Faith Mix**	
Christian	53.9%
Muslim	3.5%
Education background of population	
have no qualification	15%
degree level or above	28%

Employment	
lower managerial	20%
administration professional	10%
small employers	5%
own account workers	Included in above figures
Major Employer(s)	
Morecambe Bay NHS Trust, Universities of Lancaster and Cumbria	
Deprivation Index	
least deprived 8917 th of 12382*** Where 1 is least deprived	
Child Poverty	
20%	
Main Issues	
Housing Conditions	Mixed
Local Amenities	Good
Housing Mix	
Owner occupied	55%
Social rented housing	20%

*Full breakdown: 92.2% White (may not all be British), 5.4% Asian, 0.9% Black, 1.2% Mixed, 0.3% Other

**A fuller breakdown is: 53.9% Christian, 0.7% Buddhist, 0.5% Hindu, 0.1% Jewish, 3.5% Muslim, 0.2% Sikh, 0.7% Other

***This means that of 12382 Church of England parishes, 8916 are less deprived than ours.

The part of the parish known as The Marsh (see map of the Parish), one of the deprived areas referred to in the Executive Summary, was previously served by a daughter church, St George's. This church, in an

increasingly deteriorating condition, was closed some years ago. When this happened some former members of St George's became faithful members of the Priory family. However, the Priory's links with The Marsh are still small and we understand there is a long way to go before our ministry to this area of the parish is of a good quality. We employ a Parish Community Outreach worker who has carried out some valuable work and there is a group who meet on a weekly basis to express solidarity with the Marsh in prayer and action. A Marsh prayer walk is a regular feature of this.

The Priory Church as a Civic Church located next to the castle on the hill above the Marsh has little shared culture with the people of a significant part of the parish. Nevertheless, it is host to many well attended baptisms, weddings and funerals from the area, which provide valuable points of contact.

The position of the Priory as the civic church of the city and county of Lancashire provides opportunities for engagement with the local community. The vicar is responsible for leading many civic services and the Priory hosts the annual Mayor's Service, the Shield Hanging of the High Sheriff and the Holocaust Memorial service. The Priory Chapel of the King's Own Royal Regiment gives a continuing link to the armed forces. Royal visits have happened in the past and are anticipated to happen in the future as links with the Duchy of Lancaster are strong.

The Duchy of Lancaster has developed the castle as a major tourist attraction, not least because of its history in the imprisonment and hanging of the Lancashire Witches and has supported several projects at the Priory.

The 'Black Lives Matter' movement has recently reminded us of the sad historic association of the church with the C18th Atlantic slave trade – and there are memorials to slave traders in the church and churchyard, sometimes a focal point for tourists. Facing the Past, an arts and research programme to reflect, reveal and redress omissions in the way

Lancaster has commemorated its role as the fourth largest slavery port in the UK, was developed in response to this, and Lancaster Priory, partner and stakeholder, and hosted several well attended events.

A major piece of research was commissioned by Lancaster Priory which revealed facts behind the role played by the Church of England at this time.

The photo below shows one of the Three Sophias, life-sized cardboard sculptures reflecting poses from creative online workshops by schoolgirls in Sierra Leone. The schoolgirls were inspired by Sophia Fileen, herself a young enslaved African, baptised at the Priory in 1799. The installation was part of phase 2 of Lancaster's Facing the Past project. Facing the Past is an arts and research programme to reflect, reveal and redress omissions in the way the City of Lancaster has commemorated its role as the fourth largest slavery port in the UK.



*Sophia Fileen as envisaged by the children of
Maronka School in Sierra Leone*

6. The Priory Community, its Worship and Mission

Worship of the gathered Priory community is at the heart of our life and mission, and we rejoice in the rich catholic style of the liturgy and its musical expression. Our worship is focused on a Sunday Sung Eucharist, with Choral Evensong, early Sunday morning and weekday eucharists attracting their own particular congregations. Holy Week, Easter and Christmas celebrations, with a devotional focus and splendid liturgy, attract large numbers of townspeople and visitors.

Average weekly attendance figures for October 2024 reported to Statistics for Mission		
Patron Three Patron Trustees plus ex officio Bishop of Blackburn and Bishop of Lancaster		
Electoral Roll		
Year 2025		
Number 107		
Age Profile of the Church		
0-17	28%	
18-69	47%	Average age is 66
70+	25%	
Occasional Offices, Celebrations etc in 2025		
Baptisms	13 up to September	
Weddings	5 up to September	
Confirmation	Adult candidates	5
	Under 16 candidates	nil

Funerals	in church	10
	at Crematorium	1
Normal weekly attendance across all services	Adult - 177 under 16 - 40	
Festivals		
Easter 2024	Communicants - 167	
Christmas 2024.	Lessons and Carols – 400, Midnight Mass – 250, Christingle – 450, Crib Service – 50, Christmas Morning Eucharist - 172	
Average figures for Sunday and weekday services		
8am BCP 24		
10am Communion 120		
4.30pm Choral Evensong 30		
6.30 pm – Taize Service – monthly 35		
Tuesday – 10am communion 28		
Thursday - 12.30pm Healing Service 6		

The Priory congregation comprises a wide range of church traditions and is noteworthy for its commitment to mutual flourishing and inclusiveness. The congregation makes every effort to welcome newcomers and visitors. There is a substantial group of members whose commitment is longstanding, although attendance of younger people with families is less consistent. Some come for a time with children who are choristers or servers, or who seek to qualify for entrance to Ripley St Thomas CE Academy by church attendance. There is an opportunity to build on this by encouraging people in this group to long-term commitment.

The Priory is a member of Churches Together in Lancaster, and we are keen to nurture our ecumenical and inter faith relationships. This has been particularly welcomed for services such as Holocaust Memorial Day and International AIDS Day.

Services include:

Sunday – 8am and 10am Communion Services
 4.30pm – Choral Evensong
 6.30 pm – Taizé Service – monthly

Tuesday - 10 am Communion Service followed by coffee and cake

Thursday – 12.30 Healing Service



Annual service with Benediction

	2023	2024	2025
AGE PROFILE OF THE CHURCH			
0-17	22%	25%	30%
18-69	55%	45%	40%
70+	23%	30%	30%
OCCASIONAL OFFICES, CELEBRATIONS etc.			
Baptisms	14	21	13 to Sept
Weddings	8	3	5 to Sept
Funerals	18	10	10 to Sept
Normal Weekly Attendance			
Adult			195
Across all services			
Under 16			30

The two churchwardens enjoy the support of a 20 strong PCC and between them participate in most of the church’s activities and committees. The following table shows the staff employed by the Priory and the various groups which meet in normal times.

THE PRIORY AND ITS PEOPLE

A) STAFF ON PAYROLL

- Operations Manager/Head Verger (FT)
- 1 Assistant Verger (zero hours contract)
- Vicar’s PA and Events Lead (PT)
- Director of Music (PT)
- Organist (PT)
- Community Outreach Worker (PT/50%)

B) TASK GROUPS

NAME	PURPOSE	FREQUENCY
Vicar/Wardens/Head Verger	Senior Leadership Team	weekly
Standing Committee	Overseeing PCC Agenda	monthly
PCC	Executive Team/Leading the Parish	monthly
Management Team	Co-ordinating the diary	monthly
Eco Church Group	To encourage and support our congregation in the care of God's creation	regularly
Discipleship	Overseeing opportunities for growth in prayer and the deepening of spiritual life.	monthly
World and Community	Overseeing our response to need locally and in the wider world	regularly
Property Group	To manage day to day issues regarding our church	regularly
Layers of Time Group	To run and coordinate funds and work programme for our large project including liaison with specialist consultants	regularly

C) PARISH GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

NAME	ACTIVITY
Tuesday Group	Fellowship for women of all ages
East Meets West	For women from the Priory and from the worldwide community to enjoy fellowship through shared activity.
Junior Choir	Opportunity for children from local schools to meet after school each week and discover joy of singing.
Monthly Prayer Group (zoom and in person)	Monthly
Men's Fellowship	Meeting quarterly for fellowship, a guest speaker and a meal
Mothers' Union	Fellowship for women of all ages; men also welcome
Priory Voices	An informal choir of all ages, providing cover for the Priory Choir on Sundays across the year and taking part in concerts.
Priory Choir	Leading worship at Eucharist, Evensong & special services
Sanctuary Guild	Caring for the vestments and sacred cloth of the church; undertaking new commissions
Knit to Pray	Meets once a month with an emphasis on knitting (or other crafts), praying and meditation.
Priory on the Marsh Prayer and Mission Group	Meets once a week to pray and express solidarity with the Marsh.

Young Person's group	Group for 18 – 30-year-olds who meet on an informal basis to give new young people contacts in the congregation and signpost to other activities.
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SAFEGUARDING

We have a Safeguarding Team who follow a robust proven process and who ensure compliance of the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy.



Sanctuary Guild working on a new project

Members of the Priory are active in supporting those in need in the local community through the inter-faith women's group East Meets West which now has a role in welcoming and supporting refugees who come to Lancaster as a City of Sanctuary. A growing number of volunteers are choosing to participate in a unique initiative whereby refugees visit them in at home. This promotes further community cohesion, mutual support and enhanced cross cultural understanding during a time of increasing polarisation. Lancaster Priory prides itself in maintaining a global

outlook and supports several world charities; the needs of the wider world are kept in view by the Priory World and Community Group.

Across the year there are many opportunities for nurture in the faith. These include Coffee and Theology, discussion groups, as well as Lent and Advent groups. There are also occasional quiet days, either in church or at a venue outside the parish including at a nearby RC Bernardine Cistercian Monastery. In addition, there are preparation classes that precede baptism and confirmation.

Lancaster Priory has been among the pioneers in Creation Care in Blackburn diocese. We have an 'A Rocha' Bronze EcoChurch award for the ways in which our worship and prayer, our buildings and land, our community engagement and lifestyle acknowledge the generosity of God in his Creation and our responsibility to care for the environment and our fellow creatures. We are fully committed to the General Synod 2030 net zero carbon target, use the Energy Footprinting Tool and Parish Buying Energy Audit. One of our Ministry Team is the Diocesan Environmental Officer, chair of the national Diocesan Environmental Officers' Land & Biodiversity group and a consultant to the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

Priory People also enjoy relaxing together. Coffee after morning service (and, on festive occasions, wine) is always popular. Several times a year we enjoy Pudding parties or Cheese and Wine. The Choir Association is particularly active with picnics and meals out for choir members, their families and other friends from the congregation – a substantial proportion of the congregation.

7. The Priory Music and Events

Music is at the heart of all that we do at Lancaster Priory. Choral music performed to a high standard serves to enrich our worship and plays an important part in the weekly pattern of services. The choir aims to raise the roof of the Priory, fill the church with glorious music and help to lead the congregation in worship.

The Music Department currently comprises two part-time salaried posts – a Director of Music (Nicholas Hurdall Smith) and an Organist (Ian Pattinson FRCO). The Director of Music is responsible for the Priory Choir and Children’s Choir. The Priory Voices - a choir made up of volunteer members of the congregation - is led by the Priory Organist and sings during school holidays, when the Priory Choir is on holiday.



The Priory Choir is made up of local school children, volunteer adult singers, both men and women, and choral scholars drawn from the local universities. The treble line is made up of both boys and girl choristers, and the back row of altos, tenors and basses. The Children’s Choir functions as a training choir before its members join the treble line of the Priory Choir. There is capacity for three organ scholars at any one time, all funded by the Duchy of Lancaster, and the organ scholars are taught by the Priory Organist. The Priory Choir rehearses every Wednesday evening, as well as before each service.

Personal development and education are a high priority for all involved in music making at the Priory. Funded by grant making bodies to the PCC, choristers and choral scholars receive regular lessons from experienced opera singers, Christopher Steele and Sarah Jillian Cox. The Choir are always pleased and proud that the young people who join from primary school grow in both musicality and faith; they frequently stay until they go to university and, choristers have often gone on to win prestigious

choral and organ scholarships as well as studying music in universities nationwide. It is wonderful that so many of our alumni return to sing whenever they are back in Lancaster for university holidays.

The choral repertoire is varied, ranging from plainchant and renaissance polyphony through to modern works by living composers. Organ voluntaries are planned in advance to complement Mass and Evensong settings.

With the goal of increasing the number of choristers, the music team is currently focusing on recruitment and is running several events in the autumn, such as Chorister Day, and a Come and Sing Messiah, as well as striving to build and maintain relationships with local schools.

The Priory frequently hosts visiting choirs for services and concerts throughout the year.



Choir photos rehearsing in the Song School and in the Choir Stalls (above)

Each year we welcome the wider community to attend the popular ‘Carols by Candlelight’ concert which also acts as outreach to local primary school children who love to join in. To celebrate the Priory’s Patronal Festival in September, a period of ‘Festival of Song’ features Saturday morning concerts showcasing vocal talent from individual artists and local choirs, alongside participatory events such as Gospel Come and Sing and our own Come and Sing Messiah events. A few times a year, Priory takes music into town and performs in other venues. This is

most successful when working with partner organizations such as Lancaster Music Festival and Lancaster BID.

Marketing and publicity for events is done in-house and budgeted for from door revenue. Concerts and events are planned carefully with costs clearly listed on individual event spreadsheets. After discussion, if an event seems like it won't do well at the box office or through donations, then sadly it won't be scheduled in the diary.

Audience figures are monitored; for example the Saturday Coffee Concert series has a well-established core audience of around 50 with more joining from individual artist's own networks on the day. We frequently count 80-95 each Saturday morning at the free-to-attend concerts which generate a steady income from donations.

Lancaster Priory is recognized by the City Council as a main visitor attraction. There are just three Grade 1 listed buildings in Lancaster with Lancaster Priory being at the heart of various heritage trails. We have nurtured very positive working relationships with Visit Lancaster, Visit Lancashire and Lancaster BID.

The Events Lead looks after outside bookings from local and national music groups such as choral societies, schools and individual artists. Outside hires are a source of income and happen regularly throughout the year. Should groups opt for this, concerts and paid for events can be managed wholly in-house using Trybooking and our own Press and Publicity. Artists have the option of a unique tailored approach through use of a flexible booking system.

We are currently growing relationships with touring groups such as The Telling and Wild Arts. During recent national budget cutting, some of our annual touring groups have had to severely curtail their reach but we are finding that this is opening up opportunities for other groups.

As well as local groups, large-scale events can be catered for. The most recent being Luke Jerram's Gaia in 2022, with Facing the Past, a £250,000 NLHF partner project, in 2023.



Primary School Children from across the NW rehearsing in the Refectory for their afternoon concert



NW Youth Band rehearsing for their June concert



Further Further photos of the online workshop with the school in Sierra Leone and the Three Sophias installation

Lancaster Priory Gaia Festival Legacy

24 days, 181 public openings	3 low sensory sessions enjoyed by 66 people
1 press launch, 3 radio features, 2 TV features, 1 online church service	11 speakers, 3 public lectures, 1 conference event
1000 children from 17 schools	10 community groups at Outdoor Festival Information Stands
60 volunteers	6 Yoga sessions, 135 participants
90 hand crocheted globes	2 Tai Chi session, 30 participants
9 Gaia Chaplains, 400 prayer cards taken away, 60 reflections shared	80 musicians, 17 concerts, 3 artists, 6 actors, 1 quizmaster
50 letters to the earth, 500 sticky note prayers for the world	125 visitor messages, 1000 children's drawings
1500 votive candles lit to remember departed souls	478 hot drinks, 210 pieces of homemade cake, 134 bottles of beer
£6500 from 4 sponsors	20 swift boxes will be created from the temporary floor for Lancaster Swift City
Supported by 10 partner organisations	

**FESTIVAL OF THE EARTH
LANCASTER PRIORY**
www.lancasterpriory.org

8. Priory Buildings

The ancient Priory Church is acclaimed by everyone who comes. Its walls have absorbed generations of prayer and its atmosphere quickly evokes an awareness of the presence of God. It comprises nave, chancel and 3 adjacent chapels – one of which is the King's Own Royal Regimental Chapel. Here is an extensive collection of colours some of which were carried at the Battle of Waterloo. The two other chapels at the east end of the church are dedicated to St Thomas and St Nicholas. There is a gallery at the west end of the nave and the church can seat 550.



The PCC has embarked on an exciting major 5 to 10 year project 'Layers of Time' to develop The Priory as both a flexible worship hub and a heritage centre. This is an extremely challenging project requiring considerable resource and vision. However, a small Project Team has been established to coordinate and drive this restoration project; to make recommendations on both key professional appointments and also

on critical grant fund applications. This Group has now appointed (in support of the existing Church Architect) Archaeology Consultants, Oxford Archaeology, Structural Engineer, Clach, and a Project Consultant/Fundraiser, 84 Solutions. The Group is focused on both making a major stewardship impact as our 'layer of time' in the history of the Priory and also developing in harmony the position of The Priory as both a faith community and a heritage centre, while at the same time meeting the demands of our 2023 quinquennial report.

In recent years we have invested in a new sound system and we have completed Phase 1 of a new lighting scheme (narthex, nave and military chapel). Phase 2 (chancel) will be planned when finances become available. We have invested in studio-quality cameras and microphones. All this infrastructure significantly improves the quality of our worship, as well as enhances the experience we can offer the many thousands of tourists who visit us each year. It also enables us to present concerts, recitals and lectures in a professional ambience, and it is no surprise that we receive many requests for such events.



Ringers in the belltower during training

The church is equipped throughout with fixed stalls and pews – the east-end chapels alone afford flexible seating. Fixed seating has the advantage that it increases our capacity, but it does inhibit experimental and informal worship. The possibility of replacing pews with chairs is something we might seriously wish to consider in the future. The regiment responsible for the regimental chapel are also interested in creating an exhibition space for their own memorabilia. The refectory provides a useful space for meetings but is in need of some refurbishment. The adjacent toilets require updating, providing opportunity for further refurbishment.

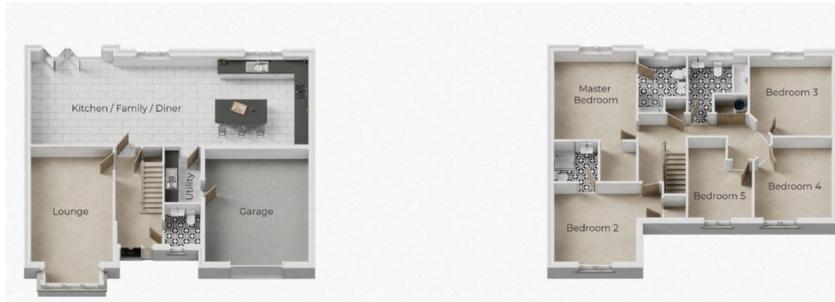
Above the refectory is a well-appointed song room, with a small clergy robing room adjacent to it. Above this is a small room which also houses a large photocopier.

The church is open 9 – 4 each day with a verger on site throughout.

A new vicarage was purchased by the diocese in 2024 on a modern, energy efficient development just south of Lancaster. It is a five-bedroom spacious property providing ample space for work and recreation.



Priory Vicarage with internal layout shown below



9. The Priory's Finances

Current financial status:

At 31.12.24, cash and investment balances totalled £698,802 comprising:

£579,495 restricted & designated funds

£2,632 Marsh funds

£116,675 general funds

Restricted grants and donations income in 2024 included £350,000 received for the purpose of providing a community space for use by the church community and beyond.

General fund cash and investment balances increased to £152,933 by 30.06.25 – due to annual phone mast rent and Gift Aid tax reclaim totalling £39,044 received in the early part of the year.

Deficit budget of £45k for 2025 based on best estimates of potential income and expenditure. Annual reports are available on the Charity Commission website. Lancaster Priory has been running at a deficit for several years which has been addressed and this current year has been reduced.

Stewardship:

In spring 2025 we conducted a light touch appeal for an increase in regular planned giving. The outcome was to raise the 2025 budgeted planned giving by 13.2%

The Priory Congregation has responded very generously to recent special appeals for financial support, including one to help bridge the gap post covid impact and a later one encouraging a review of existing giving or to consider electing for planned giving. We continue to encourage responsible stewardship via planned giving with regular reviews. We are also reviewing Diocese support for increasing use of legacy.

Other money raised from:

Visitors – church boxes, votive candles

Offertories

Sundry donations

Gift Aid tax reclaimed

Hire of church building to outside organisations for concerts and events

Coffee shop – opening limited to Saturday morning coffee concerts and licensed bar / refreshments for events

Rent from telecommunications mast in church tower

In house Christmas concerts etc

Wedding & funeral fees

Grants for specific projects & expenditure

Expenses

Incumbent's expenses paid on claim:

Telephone, mobile phone & internet

Travel expenses

Any other working expenses

Vicarage expenses paid direct by PCC:

Council Tax

Water rates

Cleaner (if required)

Gardener (if required)

Lancaster Priory Full Accounts

CHURCH FINANCES

Finance Returns

Year	2024
Description	Amount £
Parish Income	Unrestricted: £267,755 Restricted: £406,207
Tax Efficient Planned Giving	£99,269
Amount per person per week	£17.68
Parish Expenditure	Unrestricted: £272,657 Restricted: £42,400
Parish Share Assessed & Paid	£90,752

10. Our Schools

There are 2 primary schools within the parish, Dallas Road CP and Willow Lane CP, and a Steiner School. The church enjoys good links with both primary schools – children from them have taken part in ‘sing-along’ events in church in previous years. Our Community Outreach Worker is cultivating links with Willow Lane CP as part of her outreach work on the Marsh Estate. Lancaster has a high achieving and successful church

secondary school – Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy. The incumbent is a Trustee, and the PCC also appoints two school governors. Many Ripley children attend the Priory and end of term services and Awards Evening are also held in the church. Places at Ripley are in great demand and many families attend the Priory in the hope of securing admission. This presents us with great missional opportunities.

We continue to develop our relationship with the two universities – Lancaster University and University of Cumbria – and as well as hosting regular services and events for them, we also have a presence on their sites during Freshers’ Week.

11. Our Links Into the Wider Community



Choir procession during Remembrance Service

Because the Priory is the civic church, the incumbent is expected to be involved in leading all the civic services and the links with County and City are strong.

The Regimental Chapel is greatly loved by the Duke of Lancaster Regiment, and this connection leads to several other services. The High Sheriff and Judges services, the Mayor's Sunday and Remembrance Sunday, all provide us with opportunities. But these services have no elitist feel – they involve people we know and who feel at home with us. Over Christmas the Lord Lieutenant, the High Sheriff, The Mayor, the RC Bishop of Lancaster and the Vice Chancellor of Lancaster University often worship with us.

12. Our Vision



We are greatly blessed to be entrusted with a beautiful ancient church situated on a site which has seen Christian worship for over 1000 years. We are keen to ensure that in our generation the Priory will grow in influence and significance as a beacon of the Good News of God's Kingdom as it has been throughout the preceding centuries.

We believe we are at a very exciting moment in our story. Our Priory family is committed, supportive and friendly. We value difference and encourage mutual flourishing. There is a real dynamic to grow in faith, mission and service.

Above all, our commitment to our faith is expressed in our rich, catholic, choral tradition and this makes us unique amongst the churches in the northern sector of this large diocese. We want to use this distinctive tradition to resource and support other churches to develop our mission to those parts of our parish which have been relatively untouched. We firmly believe that music can be used to develop new communities of worshipping families, and we are keen to seek ways to grow this outreach. The Choral Mission and the Church's Mission are in clear focus.

The city of Lancaster – though attractive, well situated and culturally rich – has its fair share of social and economic deprivation, not least within the boundaries of our own parish in the old estate of the Marsh. As has been said, this estate, along with the neighbouring new Luneside development, comprises almost one third of our parish population and remains a challenge for outreach by the church. There is an opportunity to plant new congregations in this part of the parish. We are also committed to making our own contribution to solving the many social problems which are thrown up and made more acute in the current times. Supporting families and young people will continue to be part of our mission together with offering friendship to the many elderly people who reside in this part of the city.

To spearhead our work in this we have appointed a Community Outreach Worker. We believe that we have been given a remarkable opportunity through the witness of word and service to proclaim the message of God's unconditional love. We also have funding to recruit an Associate Priest who will have a primary task of mission in this part of our parish.

The Priory has been committed to the objectives of the Diocesan Vision 2026 and are keen to be involved with the Diocese in developing Vision 2033. The opportunities offered by Diocesan events and resources have been publicised including the Festivals at the Cathedral and quiet days at Whalley Abbey (the Diocesan retreat house) and at St Joseph's House of Prayer at Tunstall. The Vision Champion has produced a new set of prayers each week. These are posted on the Priory website and circulated to all those on a dedicated mailing list. They also write a weekly reflection based on a passage of scripture and, on a different day, these too are circulated to all those on the mailing list. There seems to be a new spirit growing within the Priory family which we are keen to see flourish. These will need support from our new vicar if they are to continue to develop. Priory on the Marsh Prayer and Mission Group meets weekly and is committed to Christian growth. We commit to run several Lent and Advent groups each year to involve a wide cross section of our Priory community

The Priory continues to be a significant player in the cultural life of our city, and we are keen to enhance our contribution whether that be by important lecture series in conjunction with the universities, stimulating concert programmes especially those featuring young, local musicians, and dramatic installations on important celebrations e.g. Light Up Lancaster. We value these as a means to engage with sectors of the community who are attracted to this diversity of culture. We believe it demonstrates that the Christian life can be rich and full.

We seek to be a Christian community in which our experience of the love of God flows out in service to other. We want to be people whose lives

are guided by fundamental principles of the teaching of Jesus. The Five Marks of Mission encapsulate our purposes as follows:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom (Tell)
- To teach, baptize and nurture new believers (Teach)
- To respond to human need by loving service (Tend)
- To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation (Transform)
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth (Treasure)

13. What We Offer

We can offer extensive support to our new incumbent in a variety of ways as described in the following paragraphs.

Our congregation is diverse and lively and ready to respond to new challenges. They value the atmosphere of openness and honesty, where questions and doubts are treated respectfully and where there is ample opportunity for nurture in the faith and growth in discipleship. The church is well loved by its members, and several are second or even third generation of worshippers here. At the same time there is a small stream of newcomers – many associated with the two universities in the city. We are proud of what previous incumbents have achieved and look forward to supporting our next vicar in the coming years. We believe the future for the Priory can be extremely positive in its contribution to the parish, the diocese and to the city of Lancaster.

The Priory Team which oversees the day to day running of activities is headed up by our Operations Manager/Head Verger. She is supported by two part time Assistant Vergers who are skilled and knowledgeable in matters of liturgy and occasional offices. Two dedicated and hardworking Churchwardens work alongside the small staff team which includes a part time Vicar's PA.



Palm Sunday in Castle Courtyard

Our work on the Marsh and Luneside Estates is fronted by our Community Outreach Worker (part time) but this post is subject to securing future funding. A full time Associate Priest would be able to support this work and play a major role in this mission.

We are fortunate in having two Licensed Lay Ministers, one Anna Chaplain, three authorised ALMs and several Honorary Associate Priests who support the Vicar by participating in services. Several sub deacons are rostered to assist in the Priory Eucharist on Sunday mornings. We also count ourselves fortunate that we have many lay people, with an important range of skills and experience, ready to take on leadership roles within the church. Identifying and deploying the skills of lay people is an area we wish to continue to develop.

The Vicar carries important responsibilities outside the parish. There are 18 parishes both urban and rural of which the vicar is patron. The vicar also chairs two important local trusts which support the work of education and is also a member of Lancaster Charities which provides housing for residents of modest means.

Lancaster Priory has a vibrant tradition of preaching with a variety of voices heard from the pulpit.

14. Who is God calling?

We are looking for a Vicar who will be so excited both by what we have to offer and what we now aspire to do that s/he will want to join us and lead us forward on the next stage of our journey.

Essential Qualities – for shortlisting

We seek an experienced Parish Priest who:

- Has a track record of leading a church into growth. A person who can develop, share, and lead a consistent long-term vision for the Priory as a major church in the modern catholic tradition, having a distinctive role in the city and the Diocese.
- Values inclusiveness and mutual flourishing of all people as equally loved by God. A person who can relate effectively to people with a wide range of social standing, experience, ability, education and church traditions.
- Has a passion for preaching and pastoral care and seeks to promote the Priory's commitment, spirituality and outreach to the whole parish.
- Encourages congregational engagement in worship, based on their own deep personal spirituality, that opens the way for people to experience the love of God in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- A person who values our tradition of choral worship but who recognises the need and opportunity for developing new congregations with other styles and modes of worship.
- Will share ministry and delegate responsibility by drawing on the abilities and experience of clergy and laity in the pursuit of the Priory's long-term vision, focusing on the core role of a Parish Priest, while maintaining effective oversight.
- Will be inspired by the challenges of our "Layers of Time" Project embracing it; and will lead and direct our dedicated Project team.

- Can build beneficial relationships with external groups including the Diocese, local churches, other religious groups, the Regiment, the Duchy, the Castle and tourist agencies.
- A Vicar who will actively continue to seek out and encourage vocations from the congregation.

Desirable qualities – for selection

Experience of:

- Working in a major church
- Leading choral worship
- Ministry to families and young people
- Building new congregations with fresh expressions of worship
- Using digital media and the internet effectively
- Spiritual direction
- Evangelism
- Curate training
- Will be inspired by the challenges of our 'Layers of Time' project, embracing it and will lead and direct our dedicated Project Team.

