

Baxenden St John and Accrington St Paul (JohnPaul Parish)

Parish Profile

May 2026

Baxenden St John
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www.johnpaulparish.org.uk



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

Our Diocese is passionate about the renewal of Parish life. We have 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.

What's more, you would be coming to the Diocese at a fascinating time of our Centenary in 2026 themed "All for Jesus". 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.

1. Letter from the Bishop



*The Bishop of Blackburn
The Rt Revd Philip North*



*The Bishop of Lancaster
The Rt Revd Dr Jill Duff*



*The Bishop of Burnley
The Rt Revd Dr Joe Kennedy*

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 "The World in One Diocese" 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.

2. What is the PCC's vision for the future?

At JohnPaul we aim to continue to develop our joint parish and build on what we have achieved over the last four years.

Our vision statement is:

REACH UP, REACH IN, REACH OUT

- To be a Worshipping, Loving, Caring Church
- To trust in and see the Holy Spirit flow throughout our Parish
- To spread the good news of Jesus with expectation, enthusiasm, celebration and joy to embrace our community and those we meet along the way

The initial statement was proposed following an 'Away Day' at Whalley Abbey, which was attended by PCC, Ministry Team and people in other key areas. It was further developed by discussions and collaborative working.

Our vision is to be welcoming to everyone who comes to our churches. To encourage them to get involved with the various services and groups, to help them explore their faith and discipleship, through worship, prayer and learning together, in a supportive and safe place.

We welcome people of all ages and value the gifts that everyone has to offer and we encourage people to use their gifts in service and mission. We support those who want to explore the path to ministry and leadership.

We are committed to preaching, living out and spreading the good news, Gospel, about Jesus.

Our Children's team do excellent work throughout the year helping our children, and often parents learn more about Jesus with fun as well.

We help members of our congregations to grow in confidence by offering a variety of groups they can join, in addition, last year we ran an Alpha course, which has resulted in bringing more people to church to explore their faith. We plan to offer further 'enquirer' courses annually.

The parish has taken part in Leading Your Church into Growth to help us plan how we can work together, to grow in faith and numbers, and be relevant to our local communities. We want to continue to engage the wider community through our annual events in the church calendar and become stronger together.

Caring for one another is important in our church community, we have a dedicated pastoral team who visit those who are housebound or in care, and we aim for them to feel consistently supported and ensure that no one is overlooked.

We are looking for a vicar who will build on our strengths, inspire us and work collaboratively, to share God's love with everyone in the parish. Above all, we aim to remain a warm and inclusive church family, open to all.

3. What is our Spiritual life?

Worship Services:

On Sunday morning there is a service in each of our churches. In the months in which there are five Sundays when a joint service is held in each church in turn; usually it is a non-Eucharist service. Also, there are joint services for special Christian Festivals for example around Christmas, and before the APCM.



The Palm Sunday morning joint service

St. Paul's has two Holy Communion services each month and on the first and third Sundays services are more informal and feature All Age Worship or a more contemporary form of worship.

St. John's has one Sunday Holy Communion Service and 3 Common Worship/contemporary services with Baptisms on one of these Sundays. St John's would probably describe itself as informal. St Paul's is slightly more formal but not excessively so.

Every effort is made to enable the vicar not to be involved in the later service at St. John's for one service each month so that time can be spent with St. Paul's congregation.

We currently use 'Roots on the Web', which is based on the lectionary as a resource to support preparation for our services. We occasionally have a sermon series. Both churches follow the same readings, and it is usual for the same person to preach at both services on a Sunday morning. We have a shortage of musicians so currently use iSing and/ or YouTube.

Families@5 at St Paul's a more informal service has been developed in the hope we can attract families, at a more appropriate time for them. It is held twice monthly, currently in the Church Hall and includes light refreshments for adults and pizza for the children. Already new families are being brought into our Church family.



Families@5

Mid-week services: St. John's have developed a monthly Coffee Morning for the community which includes a celebration of Holy Communion which is well-attended. Until four years ago St. Paul's had a weekly mid-week Communion Service which was often attended by people who found it difficult to attend Sunday worship and are hopeful that this could be re-introduced.



Home Communion: A Pastoral Team from each Church takes Communion to the sick, elderly or house-bound members of our Church Family throughout the year to assist the vicar.

Midweek Communion and Coffee Morning

Benjamin Hargreaves and Baxenden St John's Schools: A service for the whole School is held in St. Paul's Church at the end of each term. The schools are Involved in special services like Harvest or the Toy Service and as a parish we are eager to develop this involvement. Currently one of our LLMs takes an

assembly/service weekly in each of our Primary Schools, using the Diocesan Scheme for School Worship, as was the vicar's practice. The Vicar is, usually, an ex-officio member of both Governing bodies.

Prayer – great emphasis is placed on the importance of both public and private prayer. We have a Prayer App which is widely used, often when members are experiencing ill-health or personal difficulties.

Annually the parish is involved in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, holding services and attending those held in other churches. Also for a number of years we have been involved in the days of prayer between Ascension Day and Pentecost (Thy Kingdom Come), encouraging all members of our church family to pray individually and daily, for 5 people each to come to Christ.



Prayer blankets are knitted by our Knit'n'Natter Group

There is, currently, a weekly prayer meeting in the home of a member of our church family who is a retired priest and a prayer meeting held monthly in one of the churches. All our business meetings begin and end with prayer. In 2025 a whole series of sermons in each church focussed on prayer.

Bible Study/Connect (discussion groups) are held in members' homes for study periods of approximately 6 weeks e.g. in Advent or Lent. Our Groups often follow Diocesan courses of study. Currently two Connect Groups are meeting regularly. It is hoped that the Men's Saturday Breakfast Group will reopen.

The Bible Book Club is held monthly and a different book of the Bible is studied each session.

Diocesan Study literature is always available in Church, together with books with a spiritual/religious theme.

Congregational Study/training opportunities:

- **In Summer 2025** the Alpha Course was undertaken by 25 people
- **The Start Course was introduced** within the past two years and has proved popular.
- **Confirmation classes** for both adults and teenagers have been held this year
- **An Enquirer course** was held for the first time in 2025 for new church attenders which led one adult to ask to be confirmed this year.
- **Pre-baptism training for parents** covering the significance of promises they make and what it means to follow Christ. Parents are offered a celebration service, if they do not feel ready to make the promises which are the essential part of Baptism
- **Safeguarding:** All PCC members have completed the Foundation Safeguarding Course and others more advanced courses. All Church Officers have more advanced qualifications as required.

4. What resources do we have?

Church Officers

- 2 LLMs one of whom is very experienced and the other began his training with the Diocesan Occasional Preachers' Course.
- 1 ALM who has completed a number of courses e.g. Leading Worship and Care of Older people in our churches (Later Life Ministry)
- We have a prospective candidate for ALM accreditation who has already completed the M Power Course.

Ministry Team: is a group of people, currently eight, from both churches who were appointed to support the Vicar; to pray and help discern direction for the church; to help manage sensitive situations; to oversee and guide patterns of worship and growth of the church.

Financial situation

In 2025 there was a slight increase in our planned giving. This is from committed members. We use the Parish Giving Scheme. Ad Hoc giving, through the plate and card readers, is down. Over the last few years we have had to tap into our reserves and are running at a deficit. We are currently paying 62.5% of the Parish Share as agreed with the Diocese. This percentage has gradually been increasing. The Diocese has 'written off' the remainder of the Share for the previous 3 years since we have met our commitments. JohnPaul Parish tithes 5% of income to various charities. The aim is to increase this to 10%. A Gift Day was held in 2024 and further ones are planned.

Buildings

Our Parish has two distinct church buildings.

St John's is a Victorian Building from 1877 with all the issues that raises. There was extensive remodelling in 1996 to create a narthex (lounge), including a kitchen and toilets and the balcony. The pews were removed in 2001. The balcony holds our sound and technical equipment as well as fixed seating. The church is fully accessible with flat path and entry way. There are two screens and projectors onto which our services are projected. The church has Wi-Fi. The lounge also has a screen and projector. The cellar has been remodelled as a space for youth.



St John's



Unfortunately, due to building issues it is not currently usable. This is included in the plans for future work. The church has a graveyard, which is still in use, and a Garden of Remembrance.

St John's needs extensive building work, some of which has started. The cost will be £400,000 plus. We have a fundraiser and a designated fundraising group who are applying for grants. Four bids, worth approximately £70,000, have been successful over the last twelve months. We hope that these works will secure

Ceilidh and Harvest Supper

the building for future community and church use.

St Paul's is a late Edwardian building which has been well maintained. It has a new AV system and services, songs etc are projected on to the wall above the altar. It has recently been agreed to remove the pews and replace with seating and storage. We are awaiting the Faculty for this.



St Paul's



Our Autumn Fair

There is a separate church hall which was fully refurbished in 2010 with a fully fitted kitchen and toilets. Both church and hall are fully accessible.

Both churches and their buildings are used by various community groups including uniformed organisations, yoga, Busy Bees (carer and toddler group) and social events. St Paul's Church Hall and St John's Church Lounge are available for hire.

Benjamin Hargreaves is opposite St Paul's and a member of the Learning Together Academy Trust. Baxenden St John is a Voluntarily Aided School opposite St John's. Members of the parish serve as Governors for both schools.

Accrington Christians Together (ACT)

ACT is an ecumenical group of churches that meet fortnightly for prayer. They also run initiatives such as the foodbank and Street Angels.

5. What is the community we serve?

The parish is within Accrington Deanery parts of which have a high deprivation index. Although the churches are only 1.5 miles apart the areas they cover, historically, are non-contiguous.



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Our parish has 2 distinct areas. Baxenden is a semi-rural village and is home to approximately 11700 residents with a mix of ages, but with a lot of young families. There is a friendly atmosphere and close-knit community.

St. Paul's, on Plantation Street in Peel Ward, is an urban area close to the town centre. The church is in the centre of the ward and has traditional terrace housing, a 1970's estate of 120 maisonettes and a 1990's estate of modern homes. This ward has a high working age population with the majority being in 20-29 age bracket. There has been a shift to private rented accommodation, reflecting a changing housing market and socio-economic conditions. There is a large transient population.

Hope for Accrington is a project supporting five selected parishes, including JohnPaul Parish, to address both opportunities and challenges within their communities. Many of these communities face social and economic pressures, and spiritual disconnection. By working together on a strategic mission plan, these parishes aim to secure funding from the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board.

The plan will be developed around the agreed Hope 4 Accrington vision for parishes: Christ-centred communities, joyfully living out God’s mission to share the Gospel and bring transformation, hope and vibrant life to every corner of our town.

This is a vision based on our church buildings being at the heart of the communities and from which Christ’s light shines welcoming people of all ages into our buildings, worship services and activities. It values hospitable spaces, diverse worship traditions, collaborative relationships, outreach efforts, and faith-driven initiatives addressing poverty and wellbeing.

The vision is underpinned by five strategic priorities: radiating Christ-Centred love and welcome, inspiring vibrant worship and joyful mission, bringing hope and rewriting the narrative, building cross-community connections, and transforming lives and communities. Hope4 Accrington’s initial consultation will conclude in September 2026.

6. Vicarage and Education Options

The Vicarage



Rear of the Vicarage and Patio

The Vicarage is located in Baxenden with splendid views across open countryside, and set in a large garden. The property has a large lounge, with double doors into a dining room, with a kitchen, utility room, study and toilet comprising the downstairs of the property. Upstairs are two double bedrooms with fitted wardrobes, one generous single and one small single bedroom, along with a separate bathroom and toilet.

There is an integral garage with an EV charging port. There is a patio with extensive gardens, although challenges are posed by the slope and the wind. The Vicarage is five minutes walk from the church at 2 Langford Street, Baxenden.

Near to the Vicarage are a café, two pubs, a doctors’ surgery, dentist, pharmacy, butchers and a Tesco express. The nearest Post Office is in the centre of Accrington. There are active golf and cricket clubs. There is also a running club ‘Baxenden Bugs’. The local hospital is in Blackburn, with Acorn Urgent Care centre in Accrington.



Front of the Vicarage



View from the Drive

Schools and Colleges

The Parish is served by Baxenden St John CE Primary School and Benjamin Hargreaves Academy School. There are also other good local primary schools. The Hollins Secondary School is located in Baxenden. Accrington Academy is nearest to St Paul’s. Within easy reach are also St. Christopher’s High School, the highly acclaimed Church of England secondary school, with Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School being an option for many of our local young people. Accrington and Rossendale college offers a wide variety of courses up to and including degree level.

There are good local leisure centres, with pools, as well as various local private gyms.

Local attractions

Accrington has a number of pleasant parks, two of which are within easy walking distance of the Vicarage. There are attractive walks including along the old railway line and the Jubilee Trail. Close to St. Paul's is the Coppice, which is visible from all parts of the town and is the largest local nature reserve in Lancashire. You are never far away from the lower Pennine Hills in Accrington. The Ribble Valley and Trough of Bowland are only 30 minutes away.

The town has easy access to both the M65 and M66. Manchester is only 40 minutes away by car and there are excellent links to other northern cities like Leeds, Liverpool and Blackpool by bus and train. There are local theatres and cinemas. Accrington has the, recently modernised and refurbished, Haworth Art Gallery. This was built originally by a local wealthy textile family, in the late nineteenth century, which now houses the prestigious Tiffany glass collection brought to Accrington in the 1930's after the closing of the New York Tiffany Company by Joseph Briggs, the last President of the Company. He had left Accrington as a poverty-stricken teenager to become an errand boy in the New York Works but rose to be the world-renowned glass design engraver and partner of Tiffany himself.

There are good local places to eat with something for all tastes, styles and budgets. The well-known Holland's Pies are made just outside the Parish boundary.

The famous Accrington Stanley football club is the local professional football team and has supporters within the congregation. Others support Blackburn, Burnley and teams from further away.

7. Who is God calling

We are seeking an enthusiastic, kind and caring vicar, with a sense of humour:

- who will work with us in a collaborative ministry.
- who can relate to all ages and bring them together
- who is sensitive to different needs in our parish, churches and community
- who will be a visible presence in our community.

A person who knows their own gifts and skills:

- to lead a team to enable our parish and community to grow
- to be able to identify and develop gifts and skills in others
- to be able to manage change

The successful candidate will, preferably, be an experienced minister

They should:

- be a good communicator
- have good organisational skills
- adapt and cope with many different situations and people
- be a team player as well as a leader to enable us to grow and develop our ministry to the congregation and community
- be someone who is prepared to challenge us and be challenged themselves

We know that this will involve change and are looking for a minister to lead and facilitate this. However, any change should be done after consultation and discussion.

Worship and Prayer

Our new minister should put the Gospel at the centre of our services with Bible based teaching.

Our churches have different traditions of worship. We want to grow our worship and would like some of that distinctiveness to remain.

Our new vicar will help develop the prayer life of the church and discipleship amongst our members, and beyond and lead by example.

Schools

The successful candidate will endeavour to strengthen links with:

- with our two primary schools: Baxenden St John's CE and Benjamin Hargreaves
- with our two secondary school: The Hollins and St. Christopher's

to encourage young people to think about Christianity and service which could potentially play a significant role in the growth of our two churches.

Someone who will work with ACT and Hope4 Accrington and reach out to our community by strengthening those links.

The PCC would be willing to appoint a vicar who would be open to using the Prayers of Living in Love and Faith.

8. Vision 2026 and Beyond

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

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.

In our Centenary year, the Diocese has embarked on a major programme of listening to God and our communities as we discern when he is leading us next.

Our Centenary Prayer is:

**Heavenly Father, in our Centenary year
we rededicate ourselves and our Diocese to you.
Send the Holy Spirit to give us confidence in our witness,
generosity in our service, and love for our neighbours,
that your Church may be renewed and many come home to you,
through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

You can find out more about our Centenary year by visiting our website:

[All for Jesus: Centenary of Blackburn Diocese in 2026 | The Diocese of Blackburn](#)

9. 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 Centre for Christian Discipleship and Prayer