

# Overton St Helen's



**Parish Profile  
March 2025**

**St Helen's Road, Overton LA3 3HY**

Website link  
Facebook: St Helen's Overton Parish Church

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## 1. Introduction

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

Our Diocese 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.

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 2000<sup>th</sup> 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 Philip North*



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



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

## 2. Vision 2026 and Beyond

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:

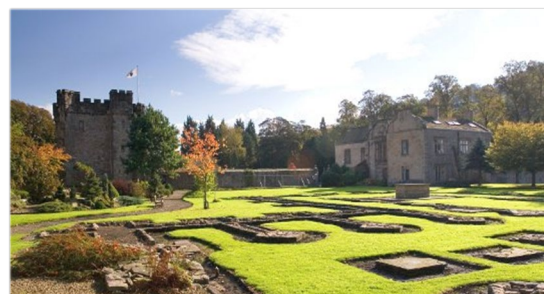
***"Heavenly Father, we embrace Your call for us to make disciples, to be witnesses,  
to grow leaders and to inspire children and young people.  
Give us eyes to see Your vision, ears to hear the prompting of Your Spirit  
and courage to follow in the footsteps of your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus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

You can find out more by visiting the Vision 2026 pages on our website:

[www.blackburn.anglican.org](http://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 Centre for Christian Discipleship and Prayer*



## 4. Executive Summary

Overton is a small village with a strong sense of community which lies at the mouth of the Lune estuary, near to both the vibrant City of Lancaster and the town of Morecambe and the beautiful Morecambe Bay.

St Helen's is an ancient Church (being part Saxon) which looks across the estuary towards Glasson Dock. The Parish of St Helen's encompasses Overton, the small community at Sunderland Point, the village of Middleton and the hamlet at Heaton-with-Oxcliffe.

Members of our church community are involved with many different aspects of village life including societies and groups. A large part of our village life is our School, and the children regularly walk up to Church for services during term time.

Financially, we are able to pay our full contribution to the Diocesan Parish Share. We are a multigenerational church, and we would embrace a Vicar who understands that we wish to be a place where all people are welcomed within a vibrant and caring community and where the Christian faith is demonstrated by our words and actions.

We are looking for a House-for-Duty Vicar to live in the Vicarage at Overton, who will actively support us in reaching out to those members of the community who need our care or who may never have visited our Church and do not know the love of God.

We hope this Parish Profile will act as a guide for any potential new priest.



## 5. The Parish and Wider Community

Our Parish is situated between Morecambe Bay and the River Lune estuary, a very beautiful place. It is made up of Overton, Middleton, Sunderland Point and part of Heaton-with-Oxcliffe.

Traditionally, this is a fishing and farming community. There are still a number of farming families but not so many who fish. There are those who commute to Lancaster and Morecambe and to get further afield, using the Bay Gateway, can be on the M6 in under 15 minutes. We have an hourly bus to Morecambe and, twice daily, to Lancaster.

We have two pubs in the village, a very good garden centre and a C of E Primary school which is a popular choice with families outside the village as well as those within. Our children mostly go on to secondary schools in Lancaster or Morecambe.

We also have a Memorial Hall where most community events take place. This is run by a committee, and they organise various social events. There is a Pre-school group (Bunnies); the Friday Club which meets on Friday afternoons and is open to all; a local drama group called TOPS (The Overton Players); Friends of St Helen's, which is a group who meet for coffee, cake and chat (and raise funds for little extras for Church). There are also the Crafty Villagers who meet monthly and create artwork for the village; WI; a Bowling Club, a Horticultural Society (which holds two shows a year) and several uniformed groups.

Our Church tradition is sacramental, with robes worn, but relaxed and friendly.

Bishop Jill has said *"St Helen's Overton is a thin place. There's been worship on this beautiful location overlooking Morecambe Bay for over one thousand years. A parish church, deeply at home in the local village with rich texture of relationships and loving missional ministry build on. Every time I visit, it is as if heaven draws near, and I hold my breath to listen. A hidden gem"*.



## 6. The Church Community

Our team consists of:

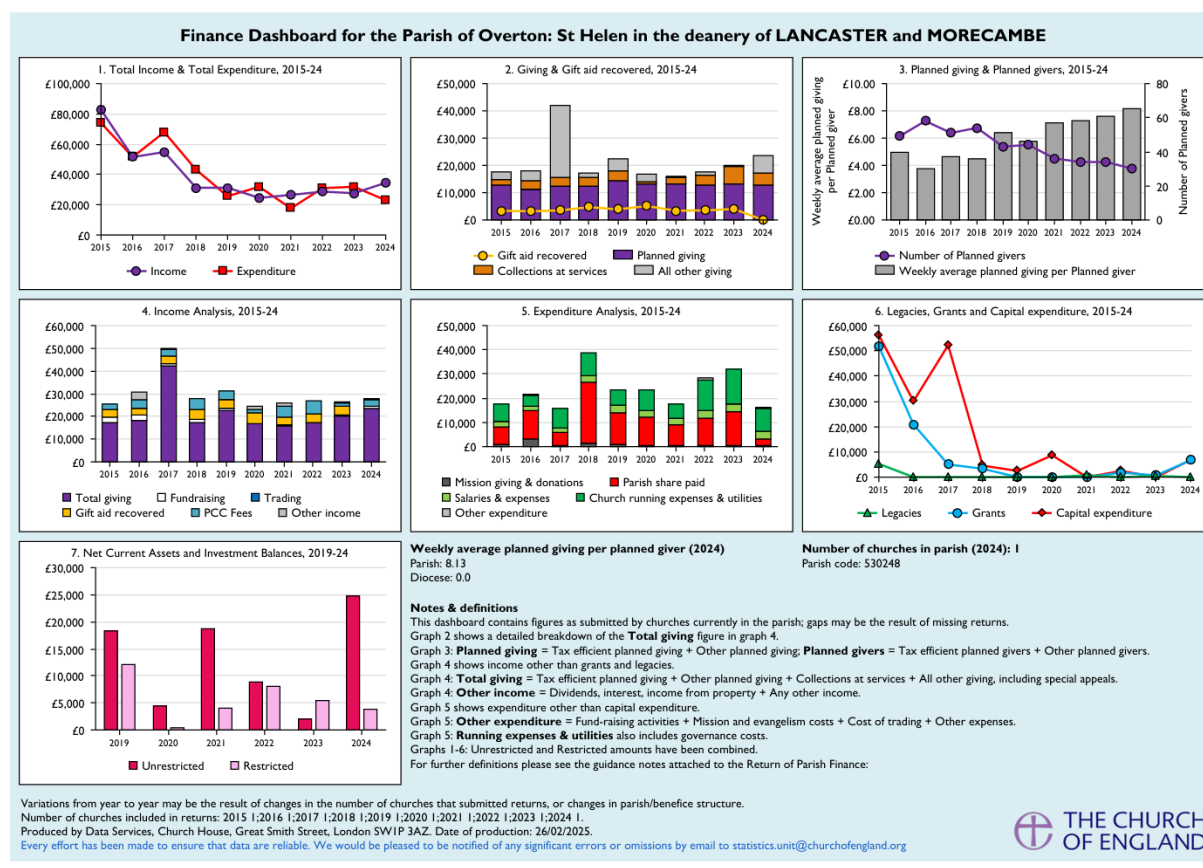
- A retired vicar with Permission to Officiate who lives in the village
- Two Church Wardens
- Our PCC
- A Junior Church Leader for Junior Church which meets every two weeks during term time
- A Pastoral Visitor who takes Home Communion to two people at present. She has recently completed the M-Power course (a Blackburn Diocese sanctioned course)
- An organist

And volunteers who:

- Act as sidespeople to welcome worshippers
- Act as Servers
- Read during the services
- Act as vergers for christenings, weddings and funerals
- A Churchyard team which keep the grass cut and the graveyard tidy
- Who clean the church
- Who unlock the church
- An “eco warrior”
- Provide refreshments each week, after services

## 7. Statistics for Mission Dashboard

Please see (appendix/appendices) for details of our latest statistical returns for the parish(es)



## 8. Parish Statistics

| CHURCH NAME                                  |                     |    |
|--|---------------------|----|
| <b>Patron</b>                                |                     |    |
| Enter Name of Patron(s) Vicar of Lancaster   |                     |    |
|  |                     |    |
| <b>Electoral Roll</b>                        |                     |    |
| Year   | 2024                |    |
| Number                                       | 69                  |    |
| <b>Age Profile of the Church</b>             |                     |    |
| 0-17   | 20                  |    |
| 18-69  | 30                  |    |
| 70+  | 20                  |    |
| <b>Occasional Offices, Celebrations etc.</b> |                     |    |
| Baptisms                                     | 11                  |    |
| Weddings                                     | 2                   |    |
| Confirmation                                 | Adult candidates    | 0  |
|  | Under 16 candidates | 0  |
| Funerals                                     | in church           | 6  |
|  | at Crematorium      | 2  |
| Normal weekly attendance                     | adult               | 25 |
|  | under 16            | 8  |
| <b>Festivals</b>                             |                     |    |
| Easter                                       | Communicants        | 31 |
|  | Attendance          | 43 |
| Christmas                                    | Communicants        | 15 |
|  | Attendance          | 15 |

## 9. Our Services

Sunday at 10.45 am is the Eucharist service followed by refreshments served in the Church.

Every other week, during term time, we have Junior Church which takes place during the main service. The children join us for the Eucharist and we encourage the children to participate by coming up to the altar rail for a blessing or to receive the host. This service is well attended by children and their parents.

Following *Launchpad* the previous incumbent innovated a small but thriving Friday night (once a month) youth group (ages 10-14): [Launchpad | Youthscape](#).



The intercessional prayers and bible readings are read by members of the congregation.

Services at Church with the school as arranged.

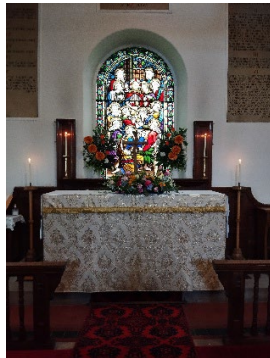
At Easter, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday service, Stations of the Cross on Good Friday and the Easter Eucharist on Sunday.

A Remembrance service is held in church with members of the uniformed organisations, during which there is an Act of Remembrance at the War memorial in the Church

graveyard. There is also an Act of Remembrance in the Memorial Hall on Armistice Day usually led by the Incumbent.

Christmas services include a Christingle service and the popular Carol Service on Christmas Eve followed by midnight Mass and a Eucharist service on Christmas morning.

If, for any reason, we have no Vicar to lead worship, we have a group of four people who are ready to step up to lead Morning Prayer.



## 10. The Church Buildings

We aim to open our church every day between the hours of 9am and 4pm.

Our beautiful, ancient Church has a Saxon wall, and an Anglo-Norman doorway. Originally a chapel for St Patrick's Church, Heysham, it was renovated and rededicated to St Helen in Georgian times and a transept was built in Victorian times. It is heated using electricity. Our boilers are about 10 years old.

Over the past 10 years we have replaced the whole roof and had new protective coverings on all the windows, including several fine stained-glass scenes. We have converted the old organ loft into a room where the Junior Church meet. The building is in good condition.

Our most recent Quinquennial report was carried out in 2023 and we are working our way through this.

We don't have a Parish room.



### **Vicarage**

Our Vicarage is a modern, two storey, 4 bedroomed modern building with an attached garage which is situated approximately 300 yards from the Church. It has a small, private rear garden and a more open front grassed area which has a view over the river Lune towards Lancaster.



### **Churchyard**

The Churchyard is maintained by a group of volunteers. We have plenty of plots for burials and also have a Garden of Remembrance for the Interment of Ashes.

### **Eco Church**

St Helen's Church is committed to caring for God's creation and we are pleased to be part of the inter-denominational Eco Church initiative.

Although we are only at the early stages, we strive to integrate environmental responsibility into our worship, buildings, land, and community. Our churchyard provides a peaceful space for reflection and prayer.

With a focus on sustainability, we are seeking ways to reduce our carbon footprint and inspire our congregation to live in harmony with the natural world.

Nestled in the beautiful countryside of North Lancashire, St Helen's enjoys stunning views over the River Lune and Morecambe Bay. Our historic church is surrounded by rolling fields making it a place of tranquillity and inspiration. The changing seasons bring a rich variety of flora and fauna, from wildflowers and butterflies in summer to migrating birds in winter.

We seek a vicar who will share our passion for both faith and the environment, helping us grow as a church while continuing to cherish and protect the natural beauty of countryside and the ever-changing waters which surrounds us.



## 11. The Church Finances

We always aim to hold sufficient balances to pay any unexpected expenditure in respect of repairs.

When we have had large, planned expenses such as the church roof and the conversion to provide a Sunday School area, in addition to obtaining grants, the local community has always come together to offer donations or have fund raising events to enable us to move forward.

The historic church of St Helen's is held as a special place for many villagers whose families have worshipped here over generations and possibly have ancestors buried in the graveyard. They will therefore make further donations if they are aware there is a need for specific works.

At present there are no large projects requiring funding, however being mindful of the need for ongoing maintenance, fund raising activities are held from time to time such as:

- Fashion shows in local venues
- Small music events within the church which raise the church profile by bringing local talent into the church
- Larger music events involving a local "rock" band, held in the Memorial Hall in the village
- Easter breakfasts held in the Memorial Hall
- Big Breakfast, drawing supporters from further afield
- Our parishioners and other people within the village subscribe to "Easy Fundraising" which brings regular small amounts into our finances
- Favourite Carols; for payment of a small fee, votes are taken for the carols to be sung at the carol service

|                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Year 2024</b>            |                        |
| <b>Parish Income</b>        | <b>£34,525</b>         |
| <b>Tax Efficient Giving</b> | <b>£22,502</b>         |
| <b>Amount per person</b>    | <b>£8.13 (planned)</b> |
| <b>Parish expenditure</b>   | <b>£23,012</b>         |
| <b>Share Assessed</b>       | <b>Y-£9,275</b>        |
| <b>Share Paid</b>           | <b>£9,275</b>          |

## 12. Our School



**Surrounded by God, we inspire hearts and minds through learning, faith and love.**

At Overton St Helen's Church of England Primary School, we strive to provide high quality education that meets the needs of all children throughout their whole school life. We believe that every child is special. Within our school family all decisions are underpinned with Christian values which play a major part in the life of our school.

Our school vision articulates the purpose of everything we do in school, from planning our curriculum, delivering daily learning experiences, encouraging inquiry and questioning, creating opportunities to inspire and nurturing self-confidence and spiritual growth. God gives us these gifts and as children of God we make sure we, through our unique talents, our different characters, our strengths and weaknesses, our love and friendships, show His glory and our thankfulness.

Our School Vision was arrived at through collaboration with children, parents, staff and governors of the school. In order to communicate our thoughts further the additional explanation of our shared vision was created.

***"We encourage children to be respectful, forgiving and compassionate. We are a nurturing, inclusive and safe community built on Christians Values that inspire positive trusting relationships between school, families and the wider world."***

***We aim high, engaging children in a dynamic and diverse curriculum with opportunities and experiences that allow them to excel, through discovering their unique talents, relishing challenges with courage and perseverance, knowing that God is with them."***

Overton St Helen's CE Primary School was last inspected by SIAMs in June 2017 when our school was given an 'Outstanding' judgement.

As a school, we aim to serve our community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. We encourage an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promote Christian values through the experience we offer to all our pupils.

The worship and prayer life of our school is not limited to the legally required daily acts of worship. Opportunities are taken to use prayer and encourage reflection in order to support the spiritual development of self and others.

The new Vicar would be welcomed as a School Governor and we would hope that the relationship between church and school would become even stronger.

<https://st-helens.lancsngfl.ac.uk>

## 13. Our Links Into the Wider Community

In our small community there are members of our congregation in almost every group in the village and we lend support wherever we can.

One of our congregation takes Home Communion where needed.

Another member of our Congregation has founded a charity, The Ripple Effect, providing aid in the form of clothing to refugees both in this country and abroad. We all support her in this endeavour.

We all try to live our Mission Statement and link God to everything we do.

## 14. Our Vision

**Our Vision Statement** *"Sharing God's love with people we meet wherever we are."*

We want to grow our church and church family's presence in the Parish and to be there when people need us.

## 15. What We Offer

We offer a modern, comfortable vicarage in a friendly village situated in a beautiful part of the world.

Apart from the Wardens and PCC to support the incumbent, we have a team who help with the services. We have a rota for readers, assisting at the Altar and sidespersons. We also have rotas for cleaning and maintaining the Church and churchyard.

We are a happy Parish; our Congregation are friendly and accommodating. We will do our best to support and make our new Incumbent and their family welcome. We also appreciate that a house for Duty incumbent is not a full-time vicar and we will encourage them to manage their work-life balance.

## 16. Who is God calling?

We voted many years ago to accept the ministry of women and would like a person who can embrace that.

We are looking for someone:

- with a good sense of humour
- who is inclusive
- who will embrace the school and encourage union and will be happy to be a Governor
- who is open to change and
- who is empathetic and welcoming

We would welcome a Priest who has a heart for prayer and mission.



“Come, not because you have all faith, but because you have some faith and would like to grow it”.

*Taken from a call to the Eucharist*