

# BENEFICE PROFILE



Heapey with Withnell  
St Barnabas & St Paul's

# Welcome

Thank you for considering Heapey with Withnell as the place God may be calling you to for the next phase in your ministry.

We pray that this profile will give you a flavour of who we are; our vision, values, strengths and what we see as current challenges and opportunities. We hope that this will be helpful as you discern God's will for your life and work.



Benefice Easter Walk

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*Heapey with Withnell  
St Barnabas and St Paul's*

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# The Diocese of Blackburn



The Diocese of Blackburn is passionate about the renewal of Parish life. Vision 2026 (Making Disciples, Being Witnesses, Growing Leaders and Prioritising Children and Young People) 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.

Lancashire is a wonderful place to minister, without doubt one of the most diverse and beautiful counties in England. We can therefore offer an extraordinary range of contexts for ministry: from areas of great opulence to the most income deprived communities in the UK, from remote countryside to densely populated former industrial communities and from brightly lit coastal towns to elegant university cities.

We have the most wonderful and precious family of church schools (95% of our headteachers are practising Christians) which offers both an evangelistic opportunity and the best possible start for clergy children.

People in Lancashire have high expectations of their priests who play a key role in the communities they serve. Ministry can therefore be hard work and so this is a Diocese which will offer all the support it can to its parish clergy. Bishops, Archdeacons and Area Deans do their best to know their clergy well, we offer supportive programmes such as our new five year Start of Ministry Course and the Parish Renewal Programme and there are close friendships and strong networks between clergy of all traditions.

**The Bishop of Blackburn**  
*The Rt Revd Philip North*

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





# Benefice - 'Heapey with Withnell'

Heapey with Withnell is a two parish , two church, three congregation rural Benefice set in the West Pennine moors between Chorley and Blackburn. Both St Barnabas and St Paul's are welcoming, friendly, evangelical churches of all age ranges committed to growing in discipleship, working together in evangelism, social action and prayer and exploring the needs of our community and to be better equipped to serve those needs.

There are two PCCs and a team of dedicated volunteers in both church families who are looking forward to working with a new vicar to develop and deliver our mission plan and reach out into the communities we serve.

Our location provides easy access to both Chorley and Blackburn. With nearby links to the motorways (M65, M6 & M61) travelling further afield is also easy, with Manchester and the Lakes all within an hour's drive.

Originally built in the 16th century, but substantially rebuilt and enlarged since, the grade 2 listed St Barnabas is a beautiful rural church and the building and churchyard are well maintained. A major project was completed recently to restore the South transept supported by generous donations from the congregation. St Paul's, built in 1841, sits in a large well maintained churchyard. The building has been identified by its PCC as being in need of major renovation and reordering, with planning for this advancing steadily, to better equip the church family for gospel work and to better serve the needs of the communities that surround it

We reach out to our communities through: family breakfasts; scout group activity; Mothers union; confirmation classes; "Carols round the tree" on the vicarage estate; community walks ; "Coffee in the courtyard"; garden parties and field days.





The level and commitment to young people's work in the benefice is recognised at the highest levels within the Diocese.

We have established links with both Brinscall St John's Church of England Methodist Primary School and St Michaels Church of England High School. Both parishes are foundation parishes for these schools. The vicar serves on the governing body of St John's alongside parishioners who serve on both school governing bodies as foundation governors.

We have a mission partnership link with a parish in Kenya near Nairobi. This was established in 2014. There have been a good number of exchange visits between both clergy and parishioners. This has allowed the benefice to experience the joys and boldness of Christianity in the Global South.

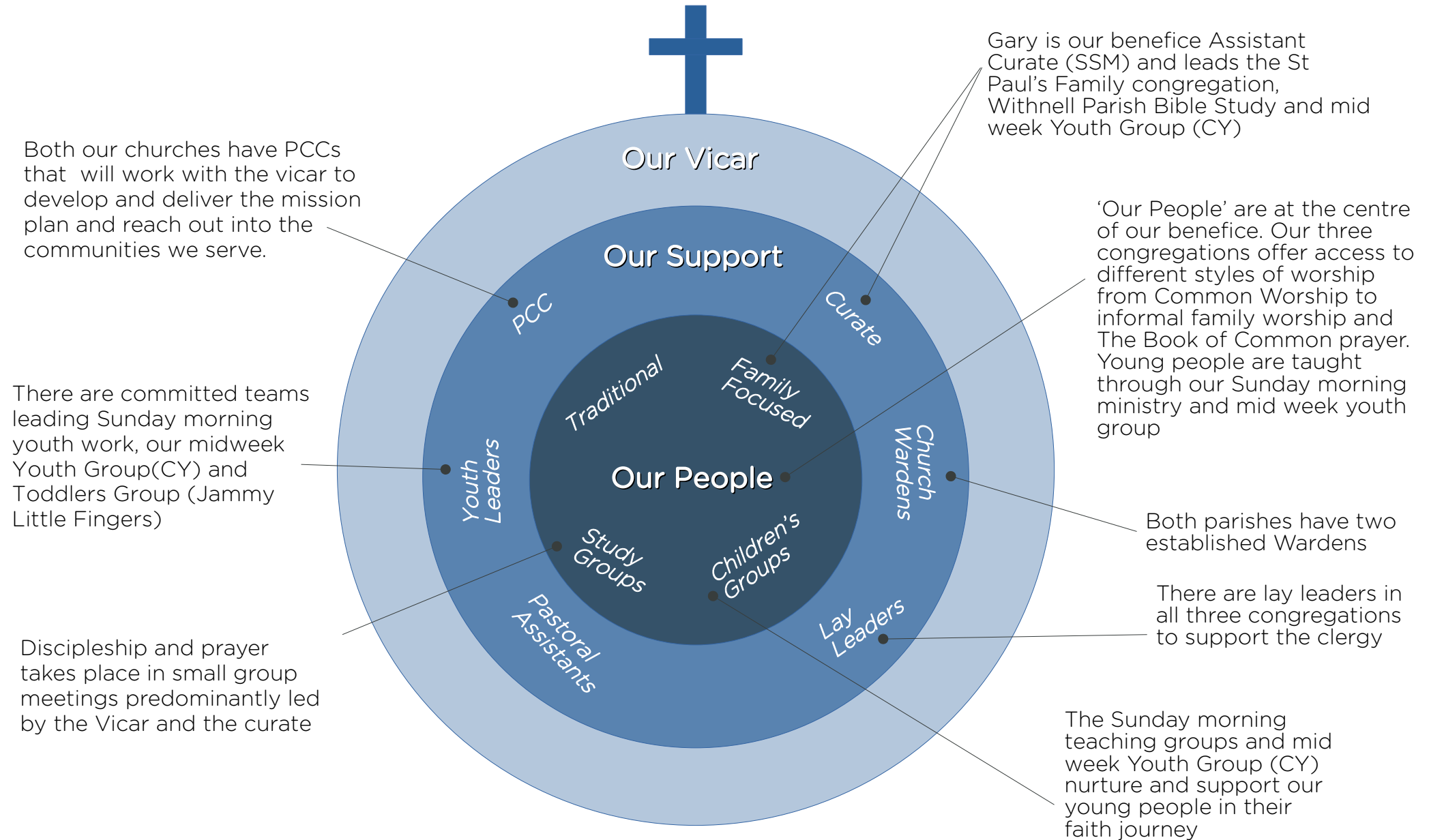
The vicarage is a modern detached house, built in the late 1990s, with four bedrooms, and the same number of reception rooms, on a quiet estate. There is a semi-detached annex which serves as a study. The back garden is very manageable and there is a good-sized front garden.

The financial situation of both parishes has proved challenging but resilient over recent years and there is commitment from both PCCs to promote sacrificial giving, recognising this is a work of the Holy Spirit.

At both St. Barnabas and St. Paul's we seek to put Jesus at the centre of our hearts, minds and learning. We seek to disciple all our church family be it in a service, study group or in prayer and we want this to continue through whoever God chooses to lead the benefice forward.



# Parish Structures





# Vision, Values and Mission

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## Mission Statement:

### We seek:

- to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, to worship Him, to witness in the community through example and service and to nurture Christian belief.
- to present the Lordship of Christ to every person living in our parishes through word and deed, so that all may see God's love and hear His call to repent and grow in the Christian faith.

### By:

- An emphasis on preaching discipleship in our Sunday Services to be reflected in Bible Study groups and sacrificial giving.
- To encourage and equip our Sunday morning young peoples leaders for their tasks
- To work more closely with like-minded churches in evangelism, social action and prayer
- To continue identifying and training those with leadership gifts.
- To build on our links with Kenya and particularly Gatanga Parish.
- To explore the needs of our community (spiritual, pastoral and social) and to be better equipped to serve those needs
- To reach out with the gospel to those who attend for school admissions criteria

St Barnabas and St Paul's are both Northwest Gospel Partnership churches and together jointly support Crosslinks. Our current Crosslinks mission partners are Alex and Kate Philips who are serving in South Korea

The benefice has a mission link partnership with Gatanga parish in Thika Diocese Kenya which started in 2014 and there have been many visits between the two parishes, with the next coming up in 2024 when a group will be visiting Kenya.

# Our Teams

## Withnell

Assistant Curate : Gary Bullock (1)

### Staff Team

Wardens : Peter Monks (2)  
Mike Duggleby (3)

Lay leadership : Mike Scanlon  
Avril Fowler  
Carolyn Bullock

Lay Preacher : Jack Charnock

Retired Clergy : Jeff Fearnley

Youth Group : Gary Bullock  
Carolyn Bullock

Mothers Union &  
Ladies Bible Study Avril Fowler

Women's  
Fellowship : Carolyn Bullock

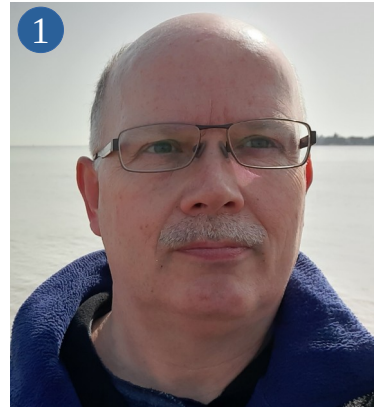
Bible Study : Gary Bullock

Social Media : Helen Kavanagh

Toddler Group : Carolyn Bullock  
Avril Fowler

Family Service  
Team (4) : Carolyn Bullock

Avril Fowler  
Janice Scanlon  
Liz McElhinney  
Helen Kavanagh  
Nicola Turner





## Heapey

Assistant Curate : Gary Bullock (1)

Wardens : Ed Holding (5)  
Charlotte Nickson (6)

Lay leadership : Chris Metcalfe (7)

Retired Clergy : Jeff Fearnley

Verger : Keith Woan

Bible Study : Vicar

Junior Church : Nicola Peach (Leader) (8)  
Charlotte Nickson  
Vicky Miller  
Amy Pavlou  
Sharon Graves  
Lizzie Holmes  
Claire Shuttleworth

Both St Paul's and St Barnabas have established Sidesperson and Refreshments teams

# Ministries

## Sundays

St Barnabas Sunday service is at 9.30am with the first Sunday in the month being All Age Family Service. The second and fourth Sundays are Holy Communion. The third Sunday is Morning Prayer. Every week, except for Family Service, we have Junior Church. Music is provided by the organist Barbara, with some songs over the AV system. Attendance is typically 40-60.

St Paul's has two congregations that meet on a Sunday morning. The family congregation is a congregation plant started in 2013 and is led by, the now, Assistant Curate and meets at 9.30am. "Jam'N'Toast" (**J**esus **A**nd **M**e **T**alking **O**n **A** **S**unday **T**ogether) is a whole family orientated informal service focused on looking at how the narrative of the whole bible points us towards Jesus. The service makes extensive use of audio visual materials and splits into 5 age appropriate groups for teaching. Attendance is typically 40-60 with an even split between adults and children.

St Paul's 11am congregation alternates between Morning Prayer and Communion using both Common Worship and The Book of Common Prayer. Music is again provided by Barbara. A key feature of this service is expository biblical teaching. Attendance is typically 10-20 and is predominantly adults.

St Paul's has four joint Sunday services a year where both congregations come together. These services are usually Parade services too and are well supported by the families of the popular church Scout Group, several of the leaders being part of the church family at Withnell.



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## Young Peoples Work

### Sunday Morning



Both churches' 9.30am services have a thriving children's ministry. At St Paul's family service 'JnT' the emphasis is on families learning together, with the young people's groups tackling the same themes presented in the adult sermon. Our children are an essential part of St. Barnabas and we run weekly Junior Church sessions led by a small team of enthusiastic volunteers. St Barnabas firmly believe that our young people are our future, and as such, we strive to give them a solid foundation upon which to build their journey of faith. We are committed to making our Junior Church sessions relevant, engaging and fun yet ensuring that God remains at the heart of all we do.

### CY



CY is the midweek youth meeting and is open for Year 5 children upwards. It meets at St Paul's and is open to all young people in the benefice. The numbers fluctuate and are currently about 10 though the group has been in the low twenties in number. A typical evening starts with group games, then there will be a short bible teaching time, followed by tuck shop and ends with a time of open prayer to which many of the young people contribute. One member has been praying for a horse of her own for many years! The CY group has periodic weekends away but we haven't managed one since lockdown. We are hoping to lead a children's, and possibly church family, group to Yorkshire Camps soon.

### Jammy Little Fingers



This is the toddler group and takes place in the Upper Room at St Paul's on a Friday morning. It started to support a group of mums in the family service in 2016, hence its name. It continues to attract new mums and is organised and led by Avril and Carolyn from St Paul's. Children's worship songs are used, instruments are played and story-time uses the Beginners Bible which has been read through from cover to cover many times.

# Ministries

## Outreach

Church family breakfasts are very popular and have been held at both St Paul's and St Barnabas. Our most recent breakfast was a Brunch held after a Joint Service with visitors from Kenya present.

The popular church Scout Group have four parade services a year which are well attended.

The visits from Gatanga Parish and Thika Diocese in Kenya have been a platform for a multitude of events which have strengthened ties within the church family and drawn others in.

Jammy Little Fingers is intentional in introducing the Gospel in an age appropriate way and supporting young families.

The Christianity Explored course has been run three times in the last 10 years.

Each Christmas the Heapey Bank Estate puts up a lit Christmas tree at the entrance to the estate – the vicar and musicians from Withnell lead what has now become an almost traditional 'Carols Round the Tree' event on Christmas Eve for the residents of the Estate which is very well attended

Pre-Pandemic the benefice ran a successful autumn half term holiday bible club, often written in house and after a starring role in one of our early events themed on 'Star Wars' no holiday bible club was complete without the appearance of the Robot J3 16. These would alternate between St Paul's and St Barnabas and culminated in a joyful family celebration on the final Sunday.

Operation Christmas Child shoes boxes were donated by the congregations at Withnell for distribution over Christmas 2022 with over 20 boxes being dropped off at the collection point in November 2022.





## Discipleship

Midweek parish bible studies (led by both the Vicar and the Curate), a midweek daytime benefice Ladies bible study and an evening benefice women's fellowship all seek to provide both deeper understanding and practical application of God's Word focusing on the needs of the different small groups and allowing time and space for teaching, discussion and questions, reflection and prayer.

Mothers Union meets monthly and the current two year theme of 'Transformation-Now' has been embraced by the MU in the Benefice.



Confirmation classes are held annually for Year 7 up children led by the vicar and are usually held for 4 weeks or so in the autumn; timed to run so the young people can go straight on to the midweek youth group meeting if they choose to.

Every Wednesday morning a group gather, usually in one of the homes of the Withnell Church Family, to come before God in prayer and lift the needs of the parish, benefice and wider world before Him.

An emphasis on preaching discipleship in our Sunday Services is a part of the Mission Action plan and as stated this is followed up in all the small group studies.

# Ministries

## Schools

### Primary School

The benefice has strong links with Brinscall St John's C of E Methodist primary School. In 1968 the school became the first joint Anglican and Methodist Primary School, and this partnership is valued by both the school and the community. The Vicar and the Methodist Minister, currently Rev Karen Hilsden, are governors and the benefice also provides foundation governors who contribute to the Governing Body's task of setting the Christian Vision and Mission: "Shine with the light of Jesus", along with the Christian values of the school. They also play an active role in the spiritual life of the school including joining and leading school worship and supporting the school community spiritually through life challenges. They have also been invited to support the school family by accompanying school trips including residential trips and attending events such as the summer fair.



### Secondary School

Both Parishes are also Foundation parishes for St Michael's Church of England High School in Chorley. Chris Metcalfe from Heapey is the current Chair of St Michael's Governing Body. St Michael's is home to some 1200 pupils. It is now an Academy. Opened in 1965 the founder members wanted a church school for local children and raised the funds required. Their Mission Statement is, "As a learning community we choose to serve God, pursue excellence and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual." A number of young people from our parishes join the school each year and our vicar is involved in some services.



Families attend both churches to obtain a 'faith reference' for schools admissions.



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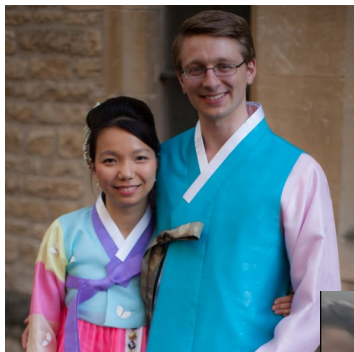
## Global Links

### Kenya Gatanga Parish Link



Summer 2022 saw resumed visits between the benefice and Gatanga parish. A small group visited Gatanga and were able to host three reciprocal visits in 2022. We maintained fellowship during Pandemic lockdowns through a joint fortnightly bible study taking place on Zoom. Trips to Gatanga parish have always been packed with activity: visiting and teaching at the churches, time with the young people including schools and a children's home, the vibrant and well attended Mothers Union and spending time in fellowship with other clergy in the Diocese. Looking ahead, the curate's family are visiting Kenya in Summer 2024 and are promoting the trip with a view to others joining in.

### Crosslinks Mission Partners



Both churches have supported Crosslinks mission workers for many years both financially and in prayer. Our current partners are Alex and Kate Philips with their children Euan, Hana, Rowan and Ethan. They are working in Busan, South Korea serving at a local church where Alex is a church elder and also completing seminary studies, and Kate her Biblical Counselling masters. Both of them lead a number of small group bible studies, as well as learning Chinese. Their original intentions of serving in China are on hold and they are seeking where they are being called to in the coming years.

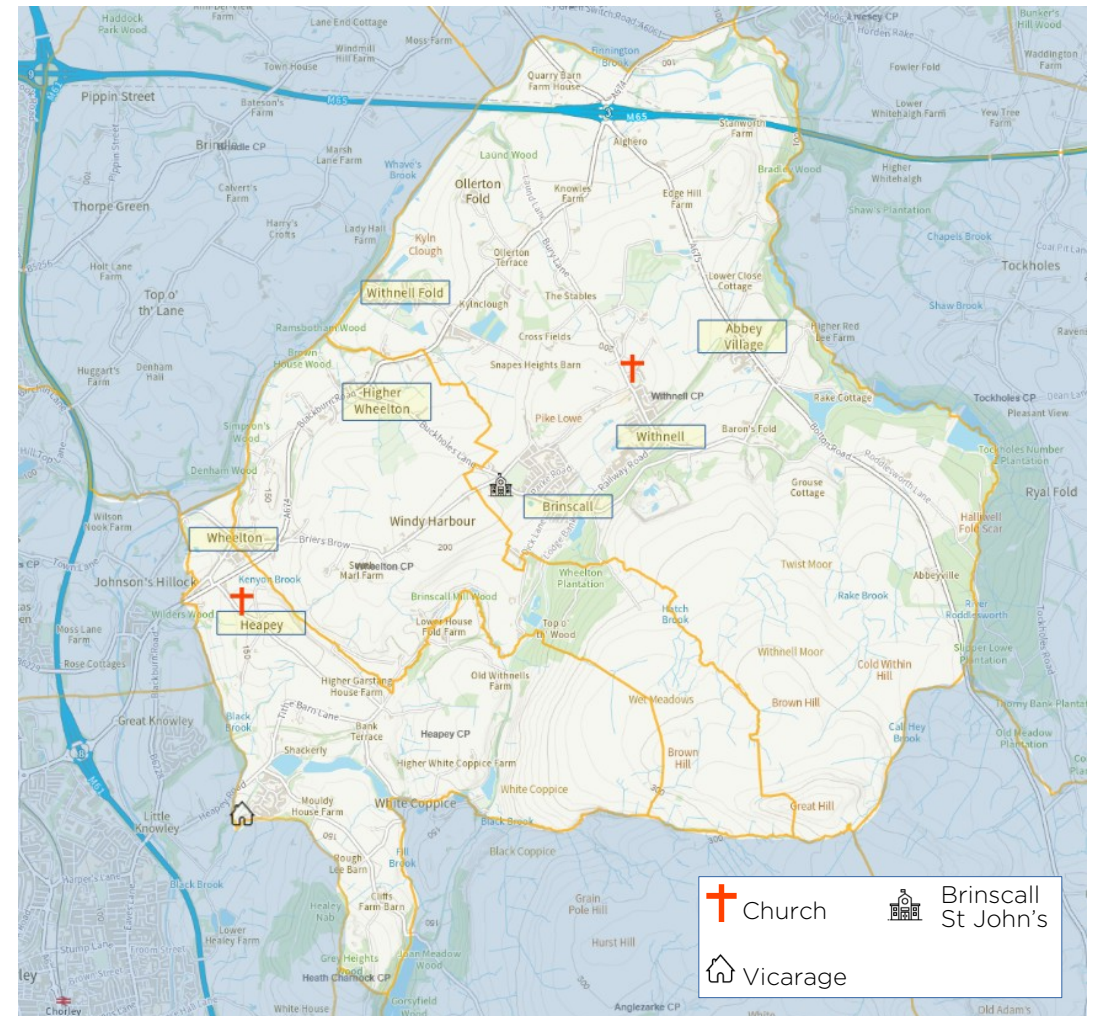
# The Villages

The villages of our parishes sit inside the north-west section of the West Pennine Moors. A 90-square-mile area of wild, unspoilt countryside which is a rural haven and a perfect contrast to the urban sprawl surrounding it.

It's a diverse patchwork of wildlife-rich moorland with its numerous reservoirs, historic villages and dense woodland, with industrial heritage mixed in. Abbey Village, Withnell and Withnell Fold still contain the mills that once provided work for many of their inhabitants. The now disused railway provides a nature trail link between Abbey Village and Withnell and the popular "Goit" trail links Brinscall with the much visited White Coppice.

Wheulton, Brinscall, Withnell and Abbey Village are the largest communities, along with the estate where the vicarage is located. The total population is 5,240.

There are four primary schools, Community Primary Schools in Withnell fold and Abbey Village, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Withnell and St John's Methodist Church of England Primary School in Brinscall.



View from St Barnabas



Heapey Parish contains Heapey, Heapey Chase, Wheelton, White Coppice and Anglezarke with a population of 2000 plus. We are a community of mixed occupations, with daily commuters, those who work exclusively from home and hybrid workers well represented. Occupations within the boundary include farming and leisure. There is a public house, a village shop, cafes and a restaurant. The parish community is very mixed in terms of age range with older and retired people well represented, as well as younger people and families with children. The villages of Wheelton and Higher Wheelton are more densely populated. White Coppice is a very beautiful picturesque hamlet. In Wheelton there is a small community of sheltered accommodation. There is a clock tower in Wheelton village where the Parish war memorial is situated.

St Paul's predominantly serves Brinscall, Withnell, Abbey Village and Withnell Fold and draws its congregations from these places. There is a genuine sense of community and identity for each and they are very much functioning communities with a mix of original stone houses and 1970's estate developments. Convenience shops, pubs, post office, chip shops, takeaways, restaurants, schools, hairdressers, cafes, GP surgery, even a swimming baths, can all be found across these small settlements.

The traditional market town of Chorley lies 5 miles to the Southwest with its still thriving market. Recent developments have added a Youth Zone, Cinema and Bowling Alley.

Brinscall Village

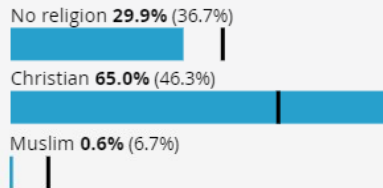


# Benefice Profile

## Religion

Heapey & Withnell Census Data 2021

(England)



## Ethnic group

Selected area (England)

Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh 0.6% (9.6%)

Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African 0.2% (4.2%)

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups 1.0% (3.0%)

White 98.0% (81.0%)

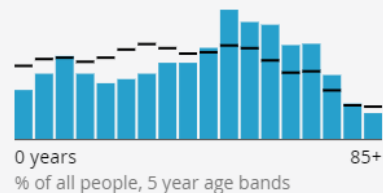
Other ethnic group 0.2% (2.2%)

% of all people

## Age profile

Heapey & Withnell Census Data 2021

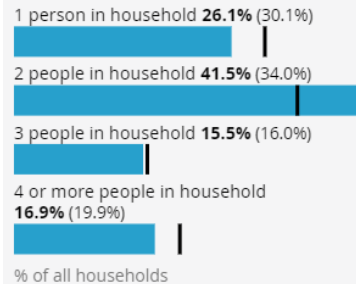
(England)



## Household size

Heapey & Withnell Census Data 2021

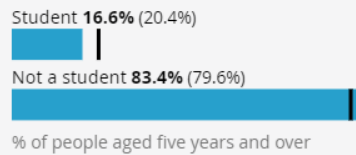
(England)



## Schoolchildren and full-time students

Heapey & Withnell Census Data 2021

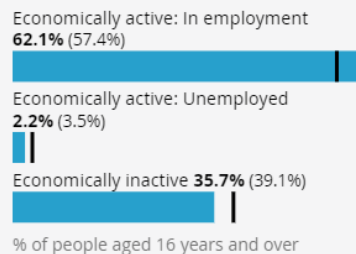
(England)



## Economic activity status

Heapey & Withnell Census Data 2021

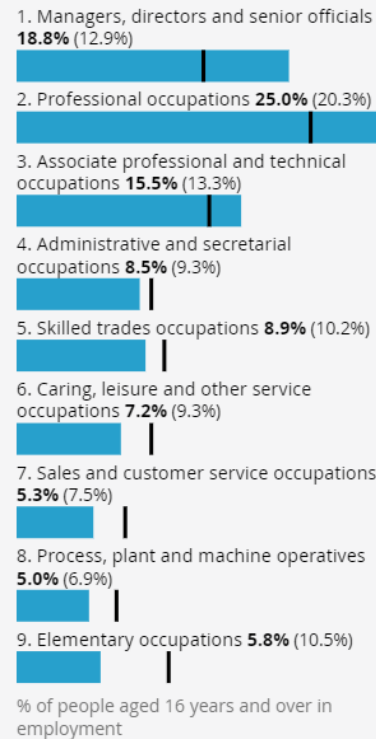
(England)



## Occupation

Heapey & Withnell Census Data 2021

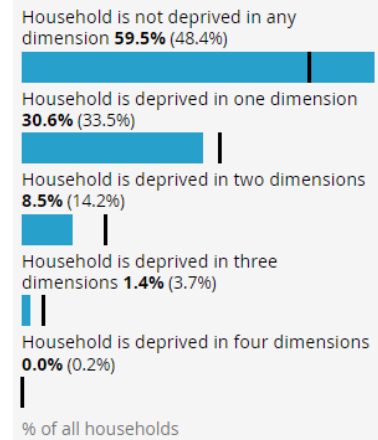
(England)



## Household deprivation

Heapey & Withnell Census Data 2021

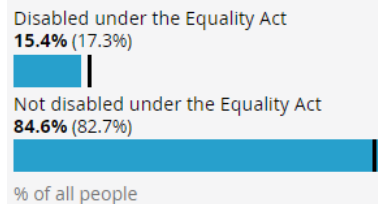
(England)



## Disability

Heapey & Withnell Census Data 2021

(England)



| Patron: Rev David Whitehouse, St Andrew's Leyland |                |             |           |
|---|----------------|-------------|-----------|
|   |                | St Barnabas | St Paul's |
| Electoral Roll                                    |                |             |           |
| Year 2022   |                | 108         | 39        |
| Age Profile of the Church                         |                |             |           |
| 0-17  |                | 27%         | 38%       |
| 18-69   |                | 50%         | 51%       |
| '70+  |                | 23%         | 11%       |
| Occasional Offices, Celebrations etc.             |                |             |           |
| Baptisms  |                | 11          | 4         |
| Weddings  |                | 0           | 1         |
| Confirmation                                      | adult          | 0           | 1         |
|   | Under 16       | 3           | 0         |
| Funerals  | in church      | 10          | 2         |
|   | at Crematorium | 0           | 1         |
| Normal weekly attendance                          | adult          | 45          | 36        |
|   | under 16       | 12          | 25        |
| Festivals   |                |             |           |
| Easter  | Communicants   | 55          | 20        |
|   | Attendance     | 67          | 50        |
| Christmas   | Communicants   | 12          | 20        |
|   | Attendance     | 20          | 40        |

The Benefice sits in the space between the two very different towns of Chorley and Blackburn, however it closely mirrors the social, demographic and ethnic trends found in Chorley. The residents of the parishes tend to look to Chorley rather than Blackburn for shopping and recreation.

Two thirds of the population identify as Christian, but this is down from three quarters in the 2011 census. The overwhelming proportion of the population identify as White British, and worthy of note is the higher proportion of 55 to 80 year olds with a corresponding lower proportion aged 20 to 45. Those working in Higher Managerial and Professional occupations is nearly 40% higher than the average for England. Employment levels are high, and deprivation and disability are lower than average.

The "Church Families" are quite different in the two parishes:

- St Barnabas is located between the main villages of the parish. It draws its church family from both the local communities and also from a wider area. Half of the congregation come from outside the parish area.
- St Paul's draws its church family from predominantly within the parish for both its congregations. This is very much the same for the groups that use the building during the week. It would not be unusual to find the same families at a scout group section meeting, with Children at the Youth group or Toddler group, and part of the family congregation on Sunday morning

# The Buildings



St Barnabas is a beautiful rural country church built in the 16th Century with a cross as its footprint formed by the distinctive North, South and East transepts, with high walls of carefully dressed and coursed sandstone, shaped Welsh blue slate roofs and picture windows, set in an elevated position close to the West Pennine moors and with an extensive vista overlooking the Lancashire plain towards the coastal sea side towns and villages. The well-kept grounds offer a place of relaxation on one of the benches provided by our parishioners, to enjoy the wild flowers, blossom and birds singing for a precious moment and to be able to reflect on all God's work. In celebration, the children enjoy the Eco church with visits to the hedgehog houses, bug houses and to see the different birds and mammals living in the grounds. We are grateful for those who give their precious time and resource and help to maintain our beautiful church and grounds for us all. Thanks be to God for providing us with such a rich and joyous heritage and the opportunity to pass this on to our children.



The church is used two evenings a week by local AA groups, twice a month by Chorley Naturalists and quarterly by the Parish Council. The foyer is used by the local authority as a polling station. St Barnabas has traditional wooden pews with seating for 200 plus. A number of windows are excellent examples of leaded lights. There is access for those with disabilities. There is an organ, dating from 1797 but still in good working order and beautifully played by Barbara Miller. The church is in a good state of repair with a major project being completed in May 2023 to make the South Transept waterproof and to repair internal water damage.

There is an upstairs meeting room and kitchen, both in need of some refurbishment. The room is used most Sundays by Junior Church and the midweek groups.

A Quinquennial Inspection is due to be commissioned in 2023. There is an experienced Health & Safety Officer. A rota of volunteers is organised to clean the church on a regular basis. Four "clean-up" Saturday mornings are held, again covered by volunteers, one each season. An extension to the churchyard was opened about four years ago with room for many years of burials. There are areas for the internment of cremated remains.

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Built in 1841 from stone quarried less than a mile away St Paul's sits at the top of Withnell village. It seats around 150 in traditional pews. Its well maintained Churchyard is close to full.

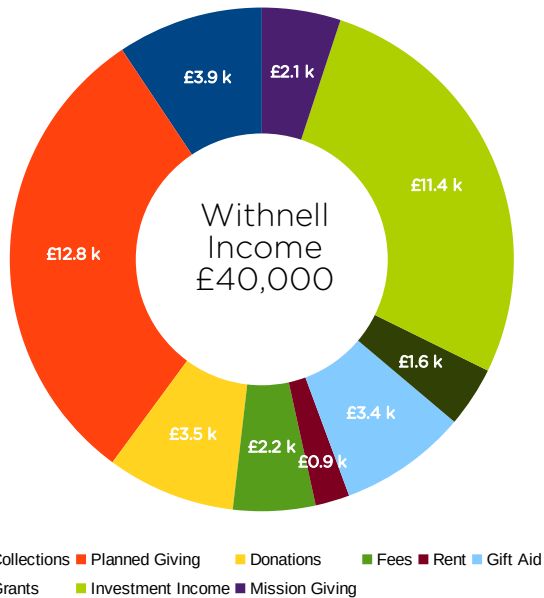
The layout and condition of St Paul's do not meet the needs of the church family or the community. The PCC recognises this building is in need of major renovation and reordering to better meet gospel and community needs - this started pre-pandemic and continues to be actively progressed by the PCC. A mezzanine was created in the church in the early 70's to serve as the church hall and it is currently well used by the Scout Group, Youth Group, Toddler Group and Family Congregation. Church family breakfasts are hosted in the hall.

The possibility to build a worship/community centre on adjacent land the church owns is also an option under consideration.

The vicarage is a modern detached house, built in the late 1990s located on the Heapey Bank estate (34 PR6 9BA), with four bedrooms, and the same number of reception rooms. There is a semi-detached annex which serves as a study. The back garden is very manageable and there is a good-sized front garden. During the interregnum the vicarage and its gardens are being cared for by four families from the estate.



# The Finances

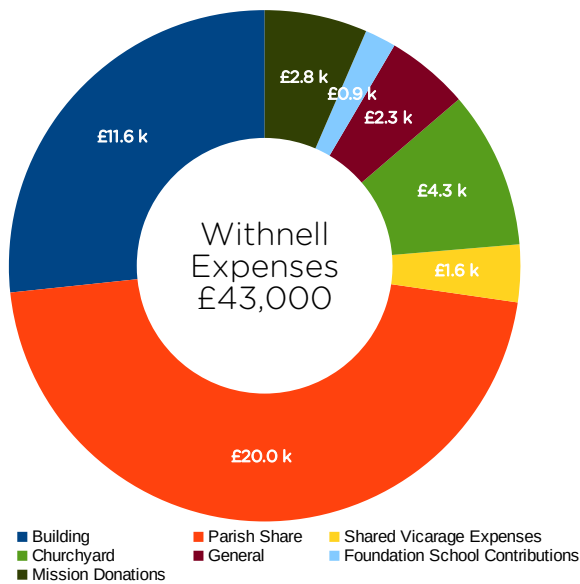


## Withnell Parish Aims

- To be financially sustainable in terms of both parish share contributions and to have a redeveloped sustainable building, thankfully we have endowments to draw on for a significant proportion of the redevelopment work.
- To provide the financial resources for gospel and community work in the parish.
- To promote sacrificial giving recognising this is a work of the Holy Spirit

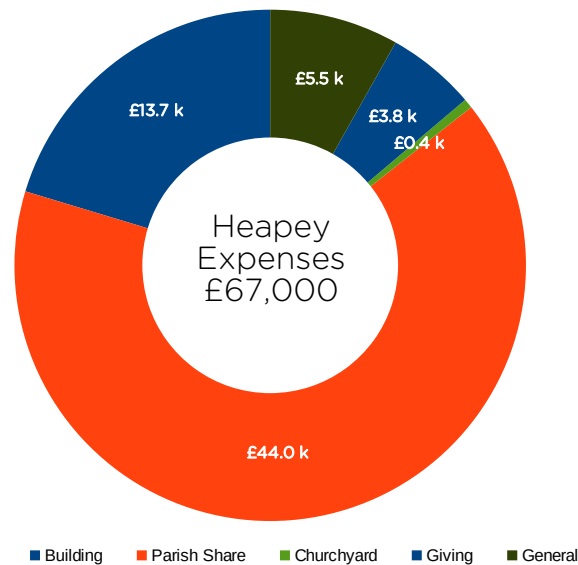
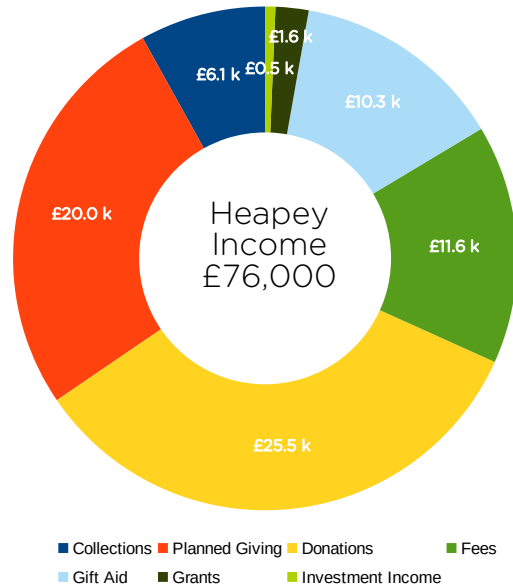
The parish share contributions for Withnell have been agreed with the Diocesan Board of Finance for 2023, 2024 and 2025, with the Diocese graciously agreeing to provide support and the parish agreeing to draw down some of the capital from its endowments to meet the agreed contributions.

This will allow for a period to focus on the redevelopment and its financing needs alongside continued teaching to promote sacrificial giving, following on from the delivery of the “Generosity Project”, and gospel outreach seeking to grow the church family.





# The Finances



## Heapey financial strategy 2023 to 2030

Our financial strategy for now until 2030 is to prioritise maintenance of the church and graveyard and to meet our Parish Share. It's of vital importance to our PCC that we sustain our church with a permanent - albeit shared - clergy and a fit for purpose, well maintained building. Maintenance of the church is a sizeable commitment which we've invested in heavily over the past 15 years and we know this isn't going to change. We will be commissioning the next quinquennial review during 2023 and this will allow us to plan for the specific requirements of the future. We also aim to align with the Church of England target of achieving net zero by 2030, which will mean investing in decarbonisation technology. We envisage that we will target funding of the larger refurbishment events through specific fundraising. This has been very successful during 2022/2023 for our most recent project (£50k), demonstrating the generosity of our church family (£16k) and giving us real cause for optimism as we seek to sustain a healthy church. Where available, we'll make use of grant funding (£3k).

We intend to achieve our Parish Share through negotiated settlement until 2026. In this way, we have met our full share in each of the past four years (2019 to 2022), where both our contribution and the ratio between final settlement and initial request have increased. One of our greatest challenges is the dynamic nature of a large section of our congregation and the ageing core, who are traditionally the most generous givers. We have made some good progress in recent years but recognise that there's a need to take different approaches. We took part in the 'Generosity Project' during October of 2023 as part of seeking to engage more with our wider congregation. We will also seek further support from the diocese and make use of the learning materials which are available. It's a priority of our PCC to achieve a full contribution for the fifth successive year and to continue to do this as the norm.

# Things We Celebrate

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- Young people's work across the benefice: from the work on Sunday mornings, links with our primary and secondary schools, midweek youth meeting to restarting holiday bible clubs... The level and commitment to young people's work in the benefice is recognised at the highest levels within the Diocese.
- Biblical expository teaching is very much the norm for the pulpits at both St Barnabas and St Paul's, which has been valued and appreciated by those receiving it.
- Both church families have connections with Chorley Help The Homeless. There are permanent baskets in the entrance ways of both St Barnabas and St Paul's' to collect donations for their food bank. All Harvest gifts are also donated to Chorley Help The Homeless. In Early December both churches have their "Toy Services" with gifts of new toys again being donated to Chorley Help The Homeless.
- St Paul's family service Jam'N'Toast provides a gospel-orientated, whole family focused space for families to learn about Jesus together in a relaxed informal atmosphere in which they feel comfortable and accepted with no expectations about how to behave in church. Everyone learns about the same bible passage each Sunday in an age appropriate way. Just about to celebrate its 'tenth birthday' Jam'N'Toast is going strong.
- Jammy Little Fingers is the chance to provide support to families in the community alongside sharing the gospel with preschoolers as well as their parents and carers. The group reaches out to families not connected with the church by word of mouth recommendations in the community.
- The prayer meeting has met faithfully each week for more years than anyone cares to count up. This group sees their prayer ministry as essential to the parishes' continuing ministries.

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- St Barnabas recently became the first church in Chorley Deanery to commit to A Rocha UK's "Ecochurch" programme. We have been enthusiastic about this part of our church life and are close to achieving a bronze eco award overall. In 3 of the 5 areas of church life we have already surpassed the bronze standard and are bordering on silver award standard, namely "worship and teaching", "buildings" and "land".
  - A lively "Bioblitz" was hosted in 2022 in our expansive church grounds, which was attended by children from the church and local school, as well as members of the congregation of all ages, and supported by the area lead for A Rocha. We have made a host of changes to our building and the church grounds, to reduce our impact on the climate and encourage the flourishing of wildlife. During the interregnum we have been excited to host our first "outdoor church" session for our junior church, which was attended by 20 children of varying ages, as well as supporting adults. We have also welcomed Chorley Natural History Society "Chorley Nats" to use our building and grounds since July 2023, and have agreed to host a beehive in our churchyard.
  - The recent restoration of the South Transept at St Barnabas to its former state.
  - The Gatanga Parish Kenya link partnership has contributed to the life and gospel witness of the benefice in very many different ways over the years, including bringing the benefice closer together, experiencing the challenge of Christianity in the Global South, encouraging us to be bold and joyful about our life in Jesus both in word and song, and new commitments to following Jesus among the congregations.



# Challenges & Opportunities

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- Both parishes need to develop sustainable buildings as part of the Church of England 2030 Net Zero vision:
  - For St Barnabas this means continuing with our programme of work to make our beautiful and historic church warm and watertight, this has required heavy investment over the past 15 years. St Barnabas has a large foyer with a flexible layout of tables and chairs and a meeting room and kitchen at mezzanine level which require some refurbishment.
  - St Paul's will address sustainability as part of the proposed renovation and reordering project to provide flexible space well suited for hosting worship, events for Gospel outreach or community groups and events. Withnell PCC is awaiting a report from the Church Buildings Council which will concentrate focus on the potential redevelopment options.
- Both parishes have highlighted their financial situations to their church families, and continued to promote and teach the biblical principles of giving. Both parishes are paying negotiated parish shares and have been doing so for many years, both are seeking to increase this to full parish share in the medium term . In October 2023 both parishes used the 'Generosity Project', adapted and delivered as a whole church project from the pulpit, as a reminder of God's amazing generosity towards us and how we can respond with all the God-given gifts and talents we receive.
- To be more intentional in Gospel outreach to families who initially attend Sunday worship to satisfy school admissions criteria and seek to offer opportunities to learn more of what it means to follow Jesus.
- Gospel opportunities through and following Withnell building redevelopment. Involving the community in the redevelopment phase and welcoming new people and groups afterwards.
- Building a deeper gospel partnership between the two parishes of the Benefice.

# Our New Vicar

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## We are looking for:

- A prayerful, mission-minded evangelical who, recognising the differing theological views among the PCCs and congregations will encourage mutual respect and fellowship, whilst nurturing and supporting the contribution of both parishes in the leadership, operation, and mission of the Benefice.
- Someone who can lead in bringing the Benefice closer together and unite them in Christ, so that we see spiritual growth across all age groups.
- Someone firmly grounded in biblical truth and prayer, teaching with theological integrity in a way that is relatable and relevant to the congregations in their daily lives.
- Someone who will be a shepherd both to the congregations and in the community, showing love, care and pastoral support, including visiting the elderly, long term sick, hospitalised and providing bereavement care, in a way that puts the churches at the heart of their Parish.
- A leader who will help to equip and grow new leaders from within our church family and who will encourage, motivate and develop opportunities for both men and women to flourish in the many varied leadership roles, both lay and ordained, that God has called them into.
- A leader of the church who will organise the staff teams to ensure that all diocesan policy and legal requirements are fulfilled.
- Someone to lead in developing the vision and work with the support of each PCC to take us forward in all areas of ministry and worship whilst recognising the nature and traditions of the different congregations, and that all are welcome.

*The Withnell PCC has passed the following resolution in order for a male incumbent to be appointed: 'The Parochial Church Council requests on grounds of theological conviction held by complementarians within the church, as well as the need to support its clergy and maintain congregational unity, that arrangements be made for it in accordance with the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (Paragraph 8).'*

*After thoughtful consideration, in the interest of unity, the PCC at St Barnabas have decided not to propose a resolution on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests.*

# Diocese Support

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If you come to Blackburn Diocese we will look after you...

- 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 encourage all clergy to take their full annual leave entitlement, and also to use creatively the overtime we all put in to take an extra day off once each month, to enable you to have a midweek 'weekend' away.
- We have a beautiful diocesan retreat house in the grounds of a ruined Cistercian abbey, where clergy are welcome to have personal reading days without charge (bring your own lunch).
- Whalley Abbey Centre for Christian Discipleship and Prayer
- 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.
- We offer an Annual Conversation in which every licensed priest spends 90 mins with a Bishop or Archdeacon discussing ministry and well being.
- If you are looking for a spiritual director or a mentor we have an excellent Warden of Spiritual Direction and have networks of people with whom we can put you in touch.
- We offer first incumbents a mentor and participation in our 5 year Start of Ministry Programme
- 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.

# Diocesan Vision

Vision 2026 is an agenda for growth and change 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. To make disciples we are raising levels of prayer, helping regular patterns of bible reading to be established and encouraging generous 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 a local human need. New leaders are emerging as we seek to enable and equip those God is raising up in our midst for lay and ordained ministry. And our focus on children and young people is enabling creative thinking to raise up a new generation for Jesus Christ.

Over 85% of our parishes have a 'Vision Champion'. This is usually a lay appointment and the Champions' role is to encourage and support their parish leaders in pursuing the goals of Vision 2026 in a way that is appropriate for their local community. 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.

Through prayer we see the grace and power of God who can alone bring renewal and growth. 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)

**Carolyn Barton**

Director of Vision Delivery



# Get in Touch

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