



Preston St Stephen

PARISH PROFILE

September 2024

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Welcome from the Bishops

Dear Sister or Brother,

The Diocese of Blackburn is passionate about the renewal of Parish life. Vision 2026 sets before the churches of Lancashire a profound belief in the power of the Gospel to transform lives and communities and expresses a firm commitment to maintaining clergy numbers and investing in the mission of the local church. We therefore seek clergy with a personal faith, fiery enough to make new disciples for Christ, with a sincere commitment to the parish as the heart of the church's mission and with the resilience and courage to bring growth and renewal to local churches. We don't want superheroes. Rather we are seeking authentic, prayerful priests of all traditions who share our passion for confident proclamation and generous service.

Lancashire is a wonderful place to minister, without doubt the most diverse and beautiful county 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.



*The Bishop of Blackburn
The Rt Revd Philip North*

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.



*Bishop of Lancaster
The Rt Rev Dr Jill Duff
(Appointing Bishop)*

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.



*Bishop of Burnley
Rev Dr Joe Kennedy*

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 overarching goal can be achieved: Making Disciples, Being Witnesses, Growing Leaders and Prioritising Children and Young People.

All that we do as a diocese is focused on the delivery of Vision 2026. 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. You can find out more by visiting the Vision 2026 pages on [our website](#).

We will look after you

Clergy well-being is a priority for St Stephen's and the diocese. 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. You will be well supported by St Stephen's as we have a strong commitment to clergy well-being. Furthermore, the diocese offers a Clergy Assistance Programme to all our stipendiary and self-supporting clergy, more information about this can be found on [our website](#). They also offer an annual conversation in which every licensed priest spends 90 minutes with a Bishop or Archdeacon discussing ministry and wellbeing. The diocese has a great property department, who will do their best to ensure your house works for you and your family and is well-maintained.

Both the St Stephen's parish and the diocese teams have adopted anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies and will actively support our new vicar as they collaborate with us to realise God's vision in this part of Preston.

If you are looking for a spiritual director or a mentor the diocese has an excellent Warden of Spiritual Direction with access to networks of people with whom we can put you in touch.

Opportunities also exist for clergy to mix apart from work include reading weeks, regular hospitality, a cricket team and a clergy walking group. We look forward to your own suggestions.

Diocesan Vision prayer

*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*





Who we are

Learning to love as Jesus does – that is what we hope you feel our community is doing here at St Stephen's when you walk through the doors, and that it is why we hope you'll be excited to join us. St Stephen's is a vibrantly diverse Anglican church located close to Preston City Centre and the beautiful River Ribble. Through a strong evangelical tradition grounded in the word of God, we endeavour to live lives transformed by Jesus and to share that amazing reality with others.

Our church family is formed of people of diverse ages, cultures and ethnicities who come together because we love Jesus. Our worship is informal, contemporary and purposeful; we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help us learn and grow in faith together. As well as our usual Sunday congregations we have been delighted in the past few years to provide a home to both a Nigerian and a Nepali fellowship, who have become integral members of our church family.

Through faithful Biblical teaching and prayer, we look for opportunities to take our faith beyond the church doors, living out the teaching of Jesus in our own lives, our school, workplaces and homes, as well as our local community.

We value the close links we have within our multi-faith community and cultivate ways to share the love of Christ in what we say and do.

What we offer:

- A thriving multi-cultural, multi-generational evangelical church rooted in its community, eager to grow and reach more people with the Gospel.
- Opportunities for new ideas for local mission with a dedicated team of lay leaders.
- A warm and supportive welcome with people who will love and care for you and yours.
- A lovely modern vicarage in a pleasant suburb in easy reach of good schools, local amenities and national transport links.
- A spiritually mature and actively engaged PCC and congregation, excited to see what God has in store for the church moving forward.
- A modern and well-maintained multi-purpose church building with a flexible worship space and ancillary rooms including a staffed office.
- The space and opportunity for a person to develop their own ministerial giftings with our support and help.

Our prayer and vision for our next vicar

Our desire as a church is *to be a Spirit-filled community of disciples, confidently sharing the good news about Jesus to people of all faiths and none through word and action in the community and beyond.*

In line with our stated vision therefore, we are looking for a vicar who will:

- Help us to seek the heart of God through prayer in order that we may serve our community with the life-changing message of the Gospel.
- Look to develop and grow our existing congregation in their God given giftings.
- Work with lay and ordained colleagues to develop worship, mission and ministry across the parish, whilst looking for opportunities to innovate and refresh.
- Help us to continue to share the light of Christ in our community.
- Develop and strengthen the existing ministry to schools.
- Work with the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to establish a new worshipping congregation in another part of the parish.



We trust God is calling:

- A committed evangelical who can inspire and work with us to build confidence to enable us to step out in faith to face the future with hope and joy.
- A vicar for everyone, someone committed to a ministry to all people – both those in church and those not yet.
- An individual with pastoral gifts, who is keen to develop fresh ways of reaching into the community.
- Someone who can offer firm but pastoral leadership that can equip and empower others in their respective ministries.
- A vicar who will enable us to discern and consolidate existing mission activities.

We are NOT wanting the perfect vicar, such a person doesn't exist. We are praying for someone who will love us and journey with us, and who is keen to develop their own ministry.

Where we are

The St Stephen's parish area is a diverse multicultural, mostly residential area close to Preston City Centre, running alongside the River Ribble, with a population of 4,500.

The parish is possibly the most diverse in the Diocese of Blackburn and this is reflected in the mix of ethnic groups represented and the number of religions and religious buildings; a mosque, two Hindu temples, a Sikh gurdwara, and a Buddhist meditation centre. St Stephen's is the only church within the parish boundary, though there are other churches of different denominations close by.

"We have built an enduring relationship with St Stephen's that we both value and cherish. We hope we can continue to build upon this path of love, tolerance, and understanding between our two great faiths with the incoming vicar." Arshad Dadaboy, Mosque President

Community relations across all groups are well established and there is an active residents' group that holds its meetings in the Parish Centre. St Stephen's congregation has worked in partnership with the different faith communities for many years. Relations are built on mutual friendship and trust, even as we maintain our Christian distinctiveness and speak to our friends about Jesus.

This is demonstrated by the many messages of welcome and support we have received in anticipation of our new vicar. Another example is the Holy Book Club initiative, where women from the church join with members of the Ladies Circle from the local mosque, to read and discuss some of the Stories of the Prophets common to the Bible and the Quran.

While many people have lived in the parish all their lives and others have been here for many decades, there is a certain amount of transience in the population. 31% were born outside the UK (compared with 17% national average). The parish is identified as an area of social deprivation, ranking 511 out of 12,239 in England.

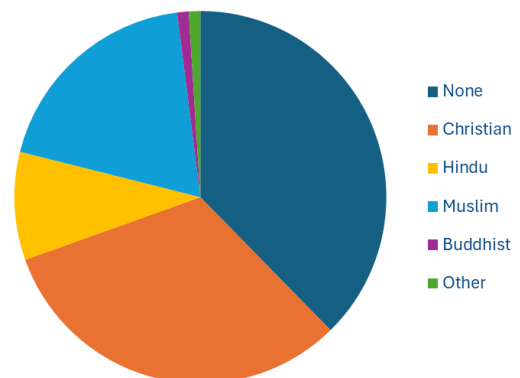
The housing stock is a mixture of social housing, private rental and owner-occupied. It is mostly terraced, with a few streets of newer properties, some with gardens.

"The community at the Gujrat Hindu Society are here to help the people of St Stephen's Church". Ishwer Tailor, President

(Data from UK Census 2021 and the ArcGIS Church of England Parish Map)

The Preston BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir are looking forward to welcoming the new minister and working together in sharing universal values of love, respect and harmony". Kailash Parekh

Religions in the Parish



Life at St Stephen's

A typical week of week of worship and service looks something like this:

Parish Centre						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
10.30am Morning Service with Junior Church (Alternates between Holy Communion and Service of the Word. The first Sunday of each month is an All-Age Service)	8.30am Morning Prayer in Church 9.00am Weekly Staff Meeting 10:15am Monday Bible Study		9am MumSpace			
12.30pm Nigerian Service	1pm Toddler Group	12.30 Lunch Club Plus				12pm Nepali Service
		2.15pm Mothers' Union (monthly)			2.30pm Food Market	
6pm Evening Service (Alternates between Service of the Word and Holy Communion with occasional Youth services)	7.30pm Prayer meeting (monthly) PCC and Ministry Leader meetings generally held on Monday evenings	7pm Youth Group evening Growth groups in various homes (not in prayer meeting week)		evening Growth groups in various homes (not in prayer meeting week)	7pm prayer and praise (monthly) Our musicians often rehearse on Friday evenings to prepare for Sunday.	

The building is also used by other organisations on a regular basis; Broadgate and District Community Group (monthly, Wednesday evenings), Preston Pedals Bike Group (roughly six times a year, Friday mornings), Emmanuel Theological College (monthly, Wednesday, all day).

Hartington Hut (regular and occasional activities)						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
July 2024 Mural design workshop 4pm Pop-up Church (Sundays throughout August 2024)	pm Holiday Fun Club (runs in school holidays)	August 2024 Mural painting Occasional evenings Coffee with a cop	12.30pm Weekly prayer at the hut 1.30pm Hut Club (weekly for adults; chat, gardening and a brew)	May 2024 Pop-up Prayer space September 2024 Mural grand opening by the Mayor of Preston		April 2024 Community Fair June 2024 Floorball Tournament July 2024 Football Tournament



Worship

Weekly worship

We are one congregation with four distinct services.

Sunday Morning 10.30am - usually two Holy Communion services each month, one all-age and the rest Service of the Word.

This is a contemporary and informal service, we have 2 live bands who play a mix of contemporary worship songs and old favourites. Preaching is rooted in the Bible, with a balance between thematic sermon series and lectionary readings. We livestream our Sunday morning services, and our YouTube channel can be found [here](#).

Sunday Evening 6.00pm – typically alternates between Holy Communion and Service of the Word.

A smaller, quieter, more reflective service with recorded music. Our Sunday evening teaching gives us the opportunity to learn from the Bible in greater depth, often preaching through whole books in a series.

Sunday 12.30pm Nigerian Service - led by Nigerian clergy with permission to officiate.

Saturday 12.00pm Nepali Service – lay led, with clergy for Holy Communion (monthly).

Clergy are not expected to robe.

Baptisms and Confirmations are all joyous occasions, and adult baptisms are often by full immersion.

Mothers' Union

St Stephen's has a branch of the Mothers' Union, established for over 100 years that meets monthly for prayer and fellowship.

Parish Population	4,500
Electoral Roll	103
Average Sunday Attendance	
Adults	75
Children under 16	14
Occasional Offices in 2024 to date	
Adult Baptisms	10
Infant Baptisms	6
Confirmations (2 services)	14
Funerals	2

Special events include:

Friday prayer and praise, informal praise (monthly).

Monday prayer meeting (monthly)

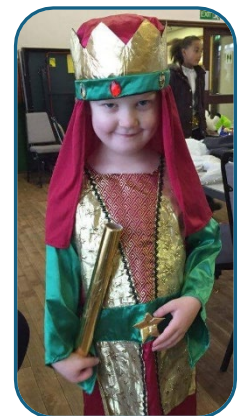
Hush Before the Rush, a reflective service and outreach event for women, in the first week of December.

Prayer week – We start each new year with a week of prayer, with events for people to take part in at home and in church.

Parish weekend away – We aim to have residential weekends every two or three years. In November 2023 (our first weekend since the pandemic) we took 90 people from across our church family to the Quinta in Shropshire for an amazing weekend of worship, teaching, fellowship and fun.

Junior Church

On average 14 children under 16 attend church each Sunday morning. We teach children about the Christian faith using stories from the Bible. The children are split into different age groups but we are flexible with the age group distribution to even out the group numbers as and when required. We love the children's enthusiasm and are often inspired by the insights they bring.



Small groups

Several Groups meet during the week. They are very diverse, but all are committed to deepening their faith through studying the Bible together and growing in fellowship with each other.



Ministries and outreach

Tuesday night Youth Group

Between 10 and 20 young people attend our Youth Group, for school years 6-11 and college year groups. The evenings include lots of activities; sports, games, quizzes, crafts (and the occasional water fight!) Then we have a Bible time slot and snacks. We like to go on occasional trips such as Lazer Quest or ten-pin bowling. This summer we took seven young people to a CPAS Christian Holiday camp, which the youth group helped fund through a car wash and table-top sale. During the Spring/Summer terms, we learned about the main doctrines of the church leading up to a service where some of the Youth group members were baptised and confirmed

Lunch Club +

Meets every Tuesday during term time to provide a delicious two course lunch, friendship and a short reflection for around twenty-five people each week from our diverse community.



Toddler Group

Meets on Mondays during term time to provide a safe space for babies and toddlers to interact with other children, hear Bible stories and play, while parents / carers can talk to each other, form



friendships and support each other. Despite reduced numbers following the expansion of free nursery places we



believe that the Toddler group provides a vital service for the community and gives us the opportunity to invite families to our church events, such as the family fun days at the Hartington Hut.

MumSpace

Meets on Wednesdays during term time and is a space for parents to come (with or without their children) and share in the highs and lows of the parenting journey together. We normally get around 5-10 mums each week and always have a focussed

workshop/discussion time each week. The group successfully applied for funding from the Together Fund, which has enabled parents to be trained as walk leaders, Zumba instructors and first aiders.

Food Market

This has been running at church for six years, every Friday afternoon. Fresh fruit, vegetables, milk, bread and other groceries are sourced from Fairshare and local supermarkets. We ask for donations, but have no eligibility criteria for entry.

Hartington Hut

Our parish is split in half by a main road and we have a long held vision for outreach into the western half of our area to eventually develop a worshipping community there. Over the past two years and with the help of our community worker we have organised many outreach events. Preston City Council has generously given us the use of the Hut on the local recreation ground, which is now run by a community steering group and overseen by the PCC. This summer a crowdfunding venture enabled a community art project to paint the hut's shutters with a colourful mural.



Activities at the Hut include regular Family Fun gatherings during term time and Easter or Summer Fun in the school holidays this summer we held 3 themed afternoons (beach/ carnival/ international) and over 150 people from the local community attended, had amazing fun and heard a brief message about Jesus.



Hut Club runs every Wednesday afternoon, when folk from the community gather to chat, garden, have a brew and hear a short Christian reflection.

Thanks to some grant funding and links with Ambassadors in Football we have also been able to run sports activities on the site. This year we ran successful floorball and football events for adults/youth and are now exploring what might be next with this ministry.

We have also experimented with Pop-Up Church in a marquee on the site. On four Sunday afternoons in August around 15 people who do not normally attend church experienced a simple service and shared food together.



St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

St Stephen's Church of England Primary School admits 45 children each year and is also home to St Stephen's Nursery – a popular, well-resourced early years setting for children from 3 to 4 years old. The school is proud of its diversity and the richness this brings. At St Stephen's, everyone is welcome and feels a deep sense of belonging.

Visitors often comment on the strength and authenticity of the relationships between all members of the school family. It is a school where children from all backgrounds flourish together in community and which pursues a deeply Christian and inclusive vision and mission. Its ethos is



that all members of St Stephen's CE Primary School are born to make a difference in God's world. This is captured by the motto (Aspire to Greatness) and is taught through the school values. Children at St Stephen's understand that living a life of 'greatness' means living a life of 'goodness' - serving others through good deeds and transforming society with love. The school wants children who leave St Stephen's to be passionate about serving God and transforming communities through acts of goodness.



We greatly value the strong relationship we have with St Stephen's School. We are active in school life and are known by the children. We support the delivery of collective worship in school, host visits at church to support learning in RE, help facilitate monthly prayer meetings for school staff, and support the school to thrive by playing a key strategic role on the governing board. We aim to bless the school through partnership.



The school very much looks forward to working closely with our new incumbent.



Safeguarding

We are blessed to have a large number of volunteers and activities in our church community. However, this also means our safeguarding is a real priority as we prayerfully consider how we can best support and protect the most vulnerable in our community.

We use Parish Dashboards, giving us assurance that we are complying with statutory requirements and Church of England policies, and flagging necessary actions that need to be taken. The Parish Safeguarding Officer has been working closely with the church administrator to bring this system up to date and progress to Level 2.



It's important to us that safeguarding is much more than an administrative task, it is central to our mission and ministry. It encompasses protecting those who are vulnerable to physical and spiritual harm, those who may have been taken advantage of in the past and those who may be turning their lives around and searching for Christ's love as we diligently proclaim the gospel here in Broadgate.



Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and at St Stephen's we continue to create a culture of perusing God's priorities for vulnerable people. Safeguarding asks us to consider how to make our church community healthier, thereby having a positive and transformative effect on our society.



Governance and accountability plus staff team

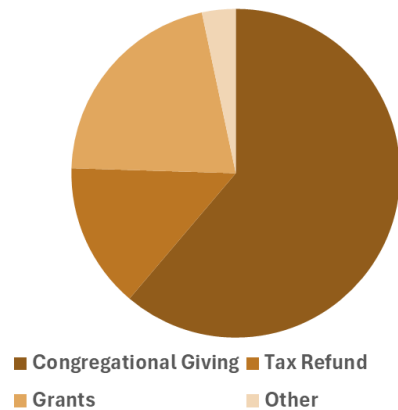
We have an active and skilled PCC of 19 people from across our diverse congregation, which usually meets 6 times a year. Our congregation includes an LLM and a varied ALM team. We have three part time staff: an administrator, a community worker and a cleaner.



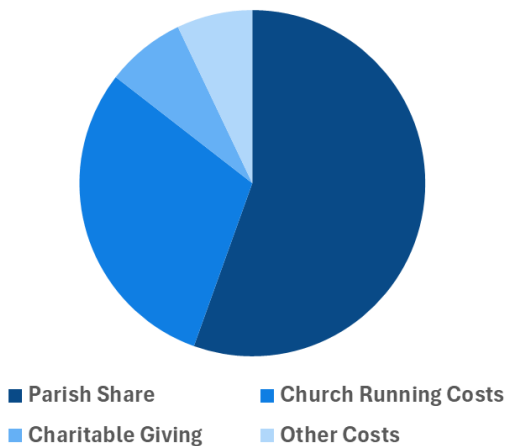
Finances

We are not a wealthy church but thanks to God’s grace and generosity we have always been able to meet our obligations and resource our mission initiatives. Three quarters of our General Fund income comes from giving and tax refunds. Giving dropped by 10% during Covid but is now back to 2019 levels. Three quarters of our regular giving is now through the Parish Giving Scheme. In 2023 the General Fund received just over 20% of its income in Diocesan grants, most of which was from the Low Income Communities Fund (our area is on the 4th centile in the Parish Social Deprivation Index).

General Fund Income 2023



General Fund Expenditure 2023



However, our costs have increased significantly over the past couple of years, and we reported a deficit in unrestricted funds of £4,239 for 2023. 55% of our General Fund expenditure was on Parish Share and the rest on staff salaries (administrator and cleaner), building costs and utilities, clergy expenses, church activities and our own mission giving. It has been PCC policy for many years to give 10% of donations received to support mission and charitable activities in the UK and overseas. Much of our own mission work in the past couple of years, including the Hartington Hut project and our community worker have been funded through grants from various bodies.

In 2024 we have worked hard to bring the General Fund back towards financial balance and are heading in the right direction, with a forecast deficit for the year of around £2,500.

The Annual Report and Accounts for 2023 are available [here](#).

Summary of Accounts 2023	Unrestricted £,000	Restricted £,000	Total £,000
Income			
Donations and Gift Aid	80	4	84
Grants	23	25	48
Other	5	12	16
	108	41	148
Expenditure			
Parish Share	60		60
Giving	8	4	12
Running Costs	40	24	64
Church Activities	3	9	12
	112	37	148
Surplus / (Deficit)	(4)	4	0



Buildings

The Parish Centre

Our modern church building (built 1996) is in a residential area in the east of the parish, half a mile from the city centre and mainline railway station.



The main worship area seats up to 100 people and is a flexible space with chairs that can be moved around for different types of service. The building is fitted throughout with screens and AV equipment, enabling us to expand seating capacity for special services up to 150 if necessary, as well as record and livestream services

The building as a whole is compact but manages to make good use of the space. The ground floor also includes a large foyer, a connecting corridor with three toilets/baby change, the hall, a fully equipped kitchen and the church office. Upstairs there is a meeting room and a small prayer room. There is level access to the ground floor at all doors, but there is no lift to the upstairs rooms. One of the toilets is fully accessible.

Outside there is a small car park and a small garden of remembrance with some interred ashes.

The church building was designed to be low maintenance and is largely looked after in-house by volunteers. Our most recent quinquennial in 2022 found no major issues and all recommendations have been acted upon.

Hartington Hut

We have exclusive use of Hartington Hut, on licence from Preston City Council. It has one small room with a kitchen unit, two toilets and some storage space, plus basic utilities (electricity, water, a small heater, burglar alarm).

The vicarage

St Stephen's is blessed to have a large, modern vicarage, built in 2005, in the suburb of Penwortham. A wide-range of local amenities are half a mile away and the Parish Centre itself is a 5 minute drive (or 10 minute bike ride or 30 minute walk).

The vicarage has five bedrooms (two ensuite), a family bathroom, open-plan kitchen/lounge, second lounge, dining room (or study), conservatory, downstairs toilet and utility room. The house has gas central heating, a double garage and a large, well-maintained garden.

Preston and South Ribble have a number of beautiful parks. Hurst Grange Park is within easy walking distance of the vicarage, enroute to the parish centre.

The vicarage is close to Preston railway station on the west coast main line, enabling easy access to Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and London via Euston. There is also a bus service and good motorway access to cities in the North of England and Scotland.

There is an excellent choice of schooling in the area, at primary and secondary level. All local schools are rated either Outstanding or Good by Ofsted.

