

Parish Magazine April 2026



We are the Anglican Parishes of St Stephen's Elton and Kirklees Valley, which is comprised of All Saints Brandlesholme and St James Woolfold. We exist to worship God in the Anglican tradition, to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to serve our neighbour in thought, word, and deed. We are warm, welcoming, and friendly communities in the Liberal Catholic to central tradition of the Church of England. We are proud to be the spiritual home of people of a variety of backgrounds and ages, and we love to welcome newcomers to our services and community events. We also host a variety of non Church-based activities in our buildings, and are always keen to support and welcome new community initiatives and activities.

Our **Sunday Services:**

All Saints 11am

St James 11am

St Stephens 9am

We share a single Vicar, Rev. Sam Eccleston, who can be contacted on brseclestonop@gmail.com. We are also served by a team of very generous and able Clergy, Readers, and ALMs, to whom we are greatly indebted.

Suggested

Donation: 50p

www.allsaintsandstjames.com

www.ststephenelton.com

Vicar's Letter

In this month's magazine you will find an article on Church finance, advertisements for forthcoming events, updates from church groups, a new series on church architecture, the Poem of the Month, Fr Derek's continued reflections on ruth and much more. Every month there are thanks due to those who work so hard to contribute to the life of our churches. Of particular note are Diane, Barbara, Val, and all involved in the Irish music night, Ann and the team who arranged Easter Egg Bingo, Tony and Lynne for their work preparing for the APCMs, and all of those who helped make Holy Week and Easter a success.



Church Finance

When I'm out and about wearing my clerical collar I am regularly stopped by members of the public who want to have a chat about something. Once they have overcome their surprise that I am a priest (apparently there is something about my physiognomy which makes this hard to accept...) they are often keen to discuss one aspect of church life or another. This is, perhaps fascinatingly, very much despite the fact that the average person is actually very poorly informed on this subject, and so the conversation often involves a lot of gentle correction of sincerely believed misinformation.

One of the most common things people believe is that the church has huge amounts of money. The difficult thing about this idea is that in a sense it is true, but not in the sense most people think. People often assume that the church is funded by central or local government. This is straightforwardly not true—aside from heritage grants, which are for heritage purposes, not religious uses, the last significant bit of money the C of E received from the government was given in the reign of Queen Victoria, and even then the money came largely from royalty rather than the state proper. Local Churches do not receive any direct financial help from the council.

Be that as it may, the church does, in a sense, still have a lot of money. The Church Commissioners are responsible for about £11 Bn of investments held on behalf of the C of E, and the return on these investments contributes about 20% of the annual running costs of the church. This is what people are, I think, typically referring to when they use the phrase 'lots of money'. However, in a sense, this is quite misleading, as when most people use the word 'money' they mean liquid money; money that can be spent. As this money is invested, it can't be spent without reducing its yield, and so the real 'money' we have to spend is the return on the investment, not the investment itself. Were the investment spent, as it could be in principle, it would rapidly run out. The Bishop of Manchester never tires of telling people that if the invested money were used to foot the entire running costs of the C of E, it would run out in less than a decade. If it ran out, it would be irreplaceable.

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Its also misleading because the size of the investment is not contextualised against the size of our financial liabilities as a church. The cathedrals alone cost between two and thirty thousand pounds per day to stay open. In 2019, England's 42 Anglican cathedrals estimated that they required £140 million for repairs and maintenance over the next five years. We have around 16000 parish churches, which, while usually cheaper to maintain than cathedrals, often foot bills in the tens to hundreds of thousands of pounds for relatively routine repairs. There are between eight and ten thousand stipendiary clergy in the C of E, who, if you include training, housing, and admin costs, incur a liability of around eighty thousand pounds per year on the church. The bulk of Diocesan expenditure is on the wage bill for clergy. When you compare the investment to the liabilities, the financial reality starts to come into focus a lot more clearly.

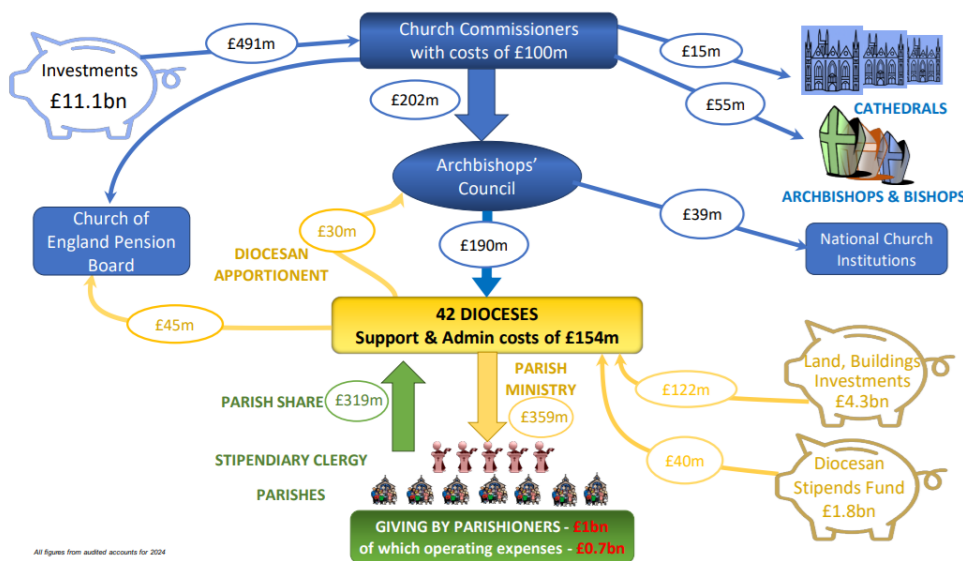


The national reality is complicated, but it is summarised by this helpful diagram from the organisation Save the Parish, available with a lengthy discussion here: [link](#)

None of this is to say that these investments could not be managed better, or the money deployed more effectively and efficiently. Save the Parish make that case themselves. However, their case in turn can be critiqued. For example, on the diagram to the left, the land, investments, and buildings held by Diocese is valued at

£4.3BN. This is accurate as far as it goes, but it ignores the fact that this is only a notional value, much of the land and buildings are actually very hard to make money from. Old vicarages, for example, are often big, poorly maintained buildings in areas where property simply isn't that desirable, so it is often very hard to sell or rent them for what they are notionally 'worth'. Church land is often agricultural land which, again, is hard to sell and can't be used for much else. Other bits of church land are rented out at peppercorn rents for the next century or so. Either way, what this shows is that, as it stands, despite the very real wealth of the Church, it is not possible as it stands for much of this wealth to simply be released to parishes. At a parish level, the idea that churches have a lot of money also ignores the reality of the changing landscape of income and liabilities that most churches face.

2024 Church of England Cash Flows Chart



All figures from audited accounts for 2024

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Again, there is a grain of truth in the idea; there are lots of parishes, particularly in the south of the country, who benefit from large historical legacies left for the upkeep of the parish, sometimes to the tune of several million pounds. However, when you take into account the cost of maintaining often ancient buildings, these sums are not all that large. In northern industrial areas like Manchester and its environs, these legacies are few and far between. Not only that, but many churches which once benefitted from significant income from weddings, funerals, baptisms, and burials in church graveyards no longer do so, partly because these life events are far less common now than they once were, and partly because the bulk of the fees are now taken by Diocese. Fair enough, you might say, it all goes into one pot, and in a sense that is true, but not for all purposes. Local churches, for example, often have to pay to maintain a historical graveyard or garden of remembrance which brings in no income, which is not maintained by the community as it once might have been, and which the Diocese do not provide assistance with, but which nevertheless incurs huge costs on church finances. All Saints church, for example, has spent over £100K on maintaining its former graveyard in the years since it vacated its original building, and is liable to funding maintenance to this day. Where many local churches could once hope to benefit from the largesse of the local aristocracy and gentry, particularly in terms of legacies given towards monuments and memorials, this too is largely a thing of the past. To make matters worse, the government have recently introduced VAT on building repairs to places of worship, which increases costs by 20%.



To put this in a wider context, in many other European countries with a similar number of inherited historic churches, the state *actually does* support the church in some relatively direct way, either by taking responsibility for the buildings or by levying a specific tax to pay for church maintenance and the provision of public services in church halls. The UK does neither.

So why is this a problem? Well, because churches do a lot of good! Aside from the spiritual, emotional, and community benefit of having weekly prayer and worship, the opportunity to come together to mourn loved ones, marry young couples or baptise babies, commemorate national tragedies or the sacrifices of generations of British service personnel and pastoral support accessible to the public free of charge, churches also host probably the majority of non-religious community activities occurring in neighbourhoods across the country. These groups and activities include but are not limited to: Rainbows, Brownies, and Guides, Beavers, Cubs, and Scouts, Military Cadets, AA and NA meetings, choral societies, art classes, acting troupes, U3A, home schoolers, yoga and Pilates, baby and toddler groups, martial arts schools, brass bands, archery clubs, youth clubs, historical re-enactment societies, board-game societies, MPs and councillors surgeries, community consultations, local and national elections, pop-up health clinics, food and clothing banks, cooking classes, dancers (of every variety), bell-

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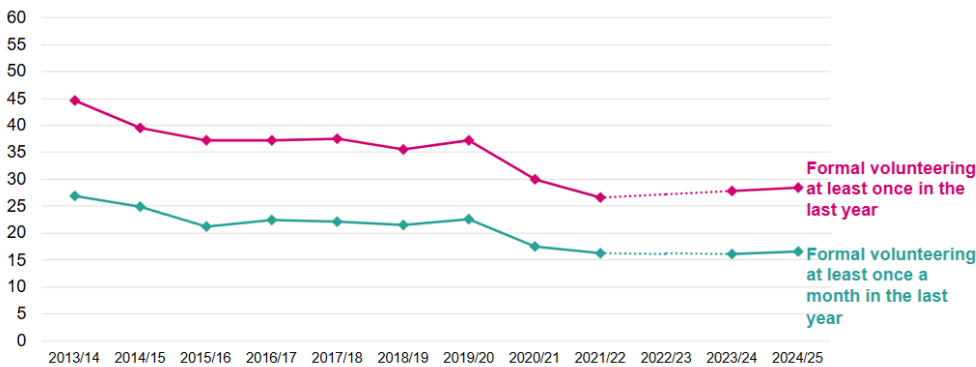
ringers, archaeological and local history societies, neighbourhood watch groups, litter-pickers, guerilla gardeners, coffee mornings, tea dances, birthday parties, wedding receptions and anniversary parties....I could go on *ad infinitum*.

In other words, churches are the infrastructure, the skeleton as it were, of community in the UK. Anything that is run on a not-for-profit basis is likely to be hosted in a church, church hall, or church-run community centre. Great, you might say, surely then these groups can contribute to the funding crisis— surely income from hall usage can pay for the various outgoings churches have? Well, the problem is that largely they can't. The not-for-profit basis upon which most of these groups operate, when combined with rising utilities costs and falling volunteer numbers, means that the modest profits churches made historically on building use has become, in many places, non-existent. The chart to the left shows government analysis of the fall in volunteer numbers in the UK over a ten year period (more available here [link](#)). This fall directly impacts the number and viability of groups using church halls.



The voluntary element of church life is also something which is not usually appreciated as part of the running costs of the organisation. The reality is that churchwardens, treasurers, vergers, sacristans, cleaners, building committees, PCC members, admin workers, children's workers, lay ministers, non-stipendiary and retired clergy (and others!) contribute millions of hours of unpaid labour per year to their local church. If this were costed at market rates, it would equate to billions of pounds worth of human capital. However, absolute numbers of volunteers are falling, and the average age of those same volunteers is rising.

So why does all of this matter? Well, the picture I am trying to paint is of an organisation of tremendous value, whether you are a committed member or simply someone who lives nearby, the running costs of which are in very great danger of going unmet, and which are in many ways underestimated as it is. This organisation exists in a culture which does not perceive that there is a problem, because it is unaware of how much is poured into something that it perceives, effectively, as part of the furniture, and because the prevailing belief is that the organisation is well-supported. In reality, a large number of churches are one bad quinquennial inspection away from possible closure. This means that people often misinterpret interactions with Churches— for example, if a church is not able to maintain its site well, but people believe that it has the resources to do so, this is likely to arouse anger rather than a desire to

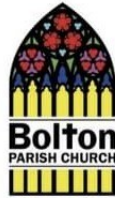


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help. A similar reaction can be predicted if a church cuts back on its community offer, or raises the prices of its hall rental, or whatever. So what does this mean for us? Well, a big thing is that we should probably campaign for existing church wealth to be better used to support the costs of ministry, and organisations like Save the Parish are part of this conversation. Another thing is that we should be confident about articulating the value of our parishes; there is simply no other organisation that offers what we offer. Were we not here, a whole ecosystem of community life would disappear, and the culture of the UK would be massively impoverished. It also means we need to think intentionally, and as part of our discipleship, about how we can best support the parish we love, whether that takes the form of time, talent, or currency. We need to ask what is my role, my calling, and my contribution in the face of this challenge?

It will probably help if we see these issues not merely as problems, but as indicators that there are both new needs and new opportunities; that we need to look at what needs doing now, and do it.

Every blessing this Eastertide.



THE PRAYER BOOK SOCIETY



CHORAL EVENSONG FOR PENTECOST

Join the congregation of Bolton Parish Church and the Manchester Branch of the Prayer Book Society for a special Evensong for Pentecost. We will be joined by the Bishop of Middleton, Rt Revd Mark Davies, who will commission our new Branch Chaplain, Revd Sam Eccleston.

St Peter, Bolton-le-Moors (Bolton Parish Church) is a landmark Victorian civic church, built on a site that has been used for Christian worship since the middle ages. They have a superb choir and a strong choral tradition, being featured on BBC Radio on several occasions recently.

President: Revd Hannah Lane
(Vicar of Bolton)

Guest Preacher: Rt Revd Mark Davies
(Bishop of Middleton)

Director of Music: Philip O'Connor

Sunday 24th May, 2026

4pm Evensong

**Bolton Parish Church,
Churchgate, Bolton, BL1 1PS**

Accessible by bus or train.
There is a car park next to the church.

PLEASE RSVP:
manchesterpbs@gmail.com

Faith Online

There is a lot of fantastic Christian content online; it comes from Christians of different denominations, traditions, and languages, and encompasses everything from Bible Study and Theology to Christian music, architecture, and art. Every month I will aim to share some of it with you.

The Starlight List outline little-discussed declines in megachurch attendance in the US here: [link](#)

Sceptic **Alex O'Connor** discusses whether we exist in the mind of God with Greek Orthodox Theologian **David Bentley Hart** here: [link](#)

The **Humble Skeptic** discusses the discovery of an ossuary perhaps linked to the Gospel of Luke here: [link](#)



Bishop Matthew Porter provides a short reflection on prayer here: [link](#)

Dean Rogers Govender introduces us to the Manchester Cathedral Bee Project here: [link](#)

Concert pianist **Yirui Weng** discusses finding faith through music here: [link](#)



Soprano Grace Davidson performs an excerpt from the music of Hildegard of Bingen here: [link](#)

CHURCH TIMES

The Church Times get to know some of the younger members of UK religious communities here: [link](#)

A short video on **Gaelic** psalm singing in the **Outer Hebrides** is available here: [link](#)

A short humorous video on the bravery/affrontery of the **early saints** is available here: [link](#)

The Bible Project explain the Trinity here: [link](#)

Leon McCarran meets the last Samaritans here: [link](#)

Local Anglicans have been asked to nominate the **Whit Walks** for a grant– please do so here: [link](#)

Watch the installation of our new **Archbishop Sarah Mullally** here: [link](#)

The Bible Society look back on the ‘**Quiet Revival**’ report one year on here: [link](#)

Study Group is typically recorded in an audio file as are sermons -if you have missed a session/service and wish to listen please contact the Vicar.



Easter Egg Bingo

Eyes down look in it's that time of year again for Easter Egg Bingo. A goodly number turned up in atrocious weather to play and support the fundraising effort. Jane and Anne in full flow calling the numbers. The players having to keep on their toes playing six cards at once, yes, you read correctly, six cards at once. Young and old alike enjoying an evening with friends the usual cuppa, biccies and raffle. And as ever the supporting team working in the background. You know who you are. A princely sum of £250 raised on the evening. Well done everyone, especially Anne for her initiative. For the winners of an Easter egg, watch the calories. Just saying. *Carol Heyes*

What is a PCC?

Ahead of the Kirklees Valley APCM, we thought it might be useful to share information about what the PCC does, how it works, and what the relevant roles are:

Aim and purposes

The Parochial Church Council of the Parish of Kirklees Valley is responsible, in co-ordination with our Vicar, Fr. Sam Eccleston, and the Churchwarden(s), for promoting in our Parish, the whole mission of the church. It is responsible for the maintenance of our two churches, the two church centres and churchyards.

Structure, Governance and Management

The PCC is made up of

Fr Sam Eccleston – Ex-Officio

Revd Ellise O'Hara – Ex Officio (*from September 2025*)

Churchwardens

Deanery Synod Representatives

Elected members from All Saints & St. James' (serving 3 years)

Co-opted members e.g. Treasurer

Standing Committee:

Incumbent Rev Sam Eccleston

Churchwardens

Treasurer

Lay Chair

PCC Secretary

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our churches and become part of our Parish. We strive towards an inclusive community in which all people, whether within the bounds of the parish or in the wider area of Bury, feel welcome to worship in our churches and participate in our parish activities. Our activities include offering a full range of services normal to the Church of England, including baptisms, weddings and funerals. We provide pastoral care for those living in the parish and who request it.

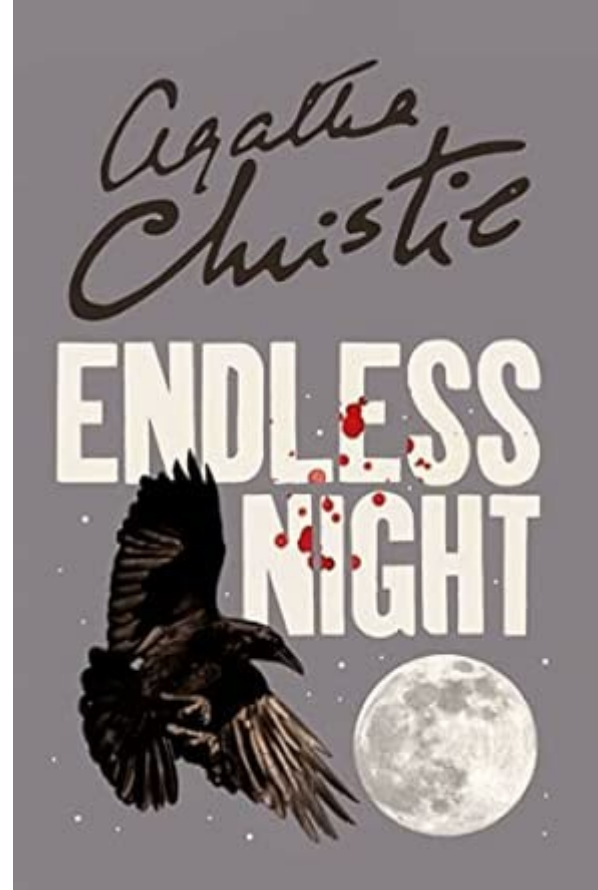
All Saints Book Club

Book club continues to meet for lively and entertaining discussions chaired by Rev. Josie. The current book-club book is Agatha Christie's 'Endless Night', blurb below:

'Gipsy's Acre was a truly beautiful upland site with views out to sea – and in Michael Rogers it stirred a child-like fantasy. There, amongst the dark fir trees, he planned to build a house, find a girl and live happily ever after.

Yet, as he left the village, a shadow of menace hung over the land. For this was the place where accidents happened. Perhaps Michael should have heeded the locals' warnings: 'There's no luck for them as meddles with Gipsy's Acre.'

Michael Rogers is a man who is about to learn the true meaning of the old saying 'In my end is my beginning...'



Irish Night at St Stephens

On Sat 21st March, St Stephen's held a celebration of Irish music and dance in the Centenary Room. Alan Eustace introduced the musicians with items from the "Three Dees" – Diane Sanderson, Diana Grundy and Dave Howard of Oldhan Tinkers fame who was also the sound engineer for the evening. A selection of well known Irish favourites and some other sing along songs followed. Jim Cooper played his violin for us, Sara Day on accordion and Sharon Bell on mandolin also entertained us. Before supper and the famous St Stephen's raffle, Aontacht Academy of Irish Dance led by Jemma demonstrated a selection of jigs and reels in traditional style. Afterwards, our guests Moondance, Diana Grundy, Harry Lines and Elliot Wyse played a variety of Irish favourites and songs ranging from Wild Thing, Whiskey in the Jar New York Girls, Five Drunken Nights and several original songs. The evening raised £463 and a good night was had by all.

Diane Sanderson



News From All Saint's

Ladies Club

We had lovely guest speaker Jane Parsons from St Stephen's at our March meeting. Enjoyed by all, Jane came to speak to us about her work as a celebrant in the local area. At our next meeting on 13th April we will have a guest speaker Captain Cor from the Salvation Army.

Our coach outing to Chester on 11th June for the embroidery exhibition at the Cathedral is almost full now and we will be collecting the money at our May meeting. For those joining us who aren't members of our group, I will send details of the payments due and the pick up details.

Monday Walking

Our first walk of the year saw 10 walkers enjoy a walk from church 'up the lines' for a planning meeting and coffee stop at Tottington Library. The programme for our walks that Karen had planned was agreed and our next walk will be on Tuesday 7th April (Monday 6th being a Bank Holiday) - meet at church at 9.45 or 10am at the Lido car park for a circular walk around Chesham Woods with refreshments at the Jubilee Centre. No need to book, just turn up, all welcome.

Thursday Prayer Group

Our prayer group meeting at the end of February co-incided with the start of Lent, and we had a short Holy Communion Service, presided over by Rev. Josie, who we had to thank for stepping in at the last minute. Our meeting in March was led by Joyce and we looked at and prayed about the many different readings about Flowers in the Bible.

For those who attended the **St Stephen's Irish night**, **Aontacht Academy** offer classes in Irish dancing suitable for all ages and abilities.

CHURCH TRIP TO CHESTER CATHEDRAL TO SEE THE EXHIBITION 'THREADS THROUGH THE BIBLE' MONDAY 8TH JUNE



Ceili-Fit New Class for 2026!

Starting Thursday 16th April 2026 7pm - 8pm

Come along and try Irish Ceili (Group) Dancing
No previous dance experience or partner needed - this is a beginner friendly class
All levels of fitness welcome - if you can walk, you can ceili!

Come for the class, stay for the craic!

Bury/Bolton - Thursday £6 per class
6pm - 7pm : Shamrocks Children 5y+ and Teens
7pm - 8pm : Adults (16y+) - Beginner Solo Step & Ceili-Fit
8pm - 9pm : Adults (16y+) - Improvers & Advanced
Adults can attend both classes for practice, only £6/week
St James Church Hall, Blackburn Rd, Edgworth, BL7 OPW

Teachers: Bury - Jemma, Kristy & Tash

07917 936414
aontacht.academy@gmail.com
<https://www.facebook.com/AontachtAcademyID>
<https://www.instagram.com/AontachtAcademyID>
<https://www.tiktok.com/@AontachtAcademyID>
<https://aontachtacademyofirishdancing.wordpress.com>
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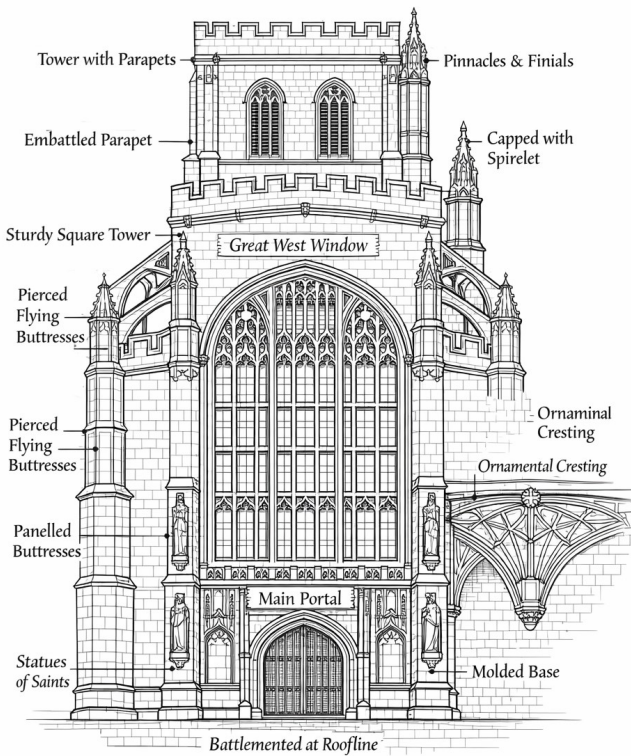


Exploring Church Architecture

Church architecture is deeply familiar to most of us, and yet at the same time we lack the vocabulary to describe what we are seeing or classify the different styles of structure and decoration that describe the buildings we see. Over the next few weeks we will introduce some of the major styles of church architecture, so next time you go exploring, you might find yourself recognising a few things. This month we have a look at a classically English style— perpendicular Gothic.

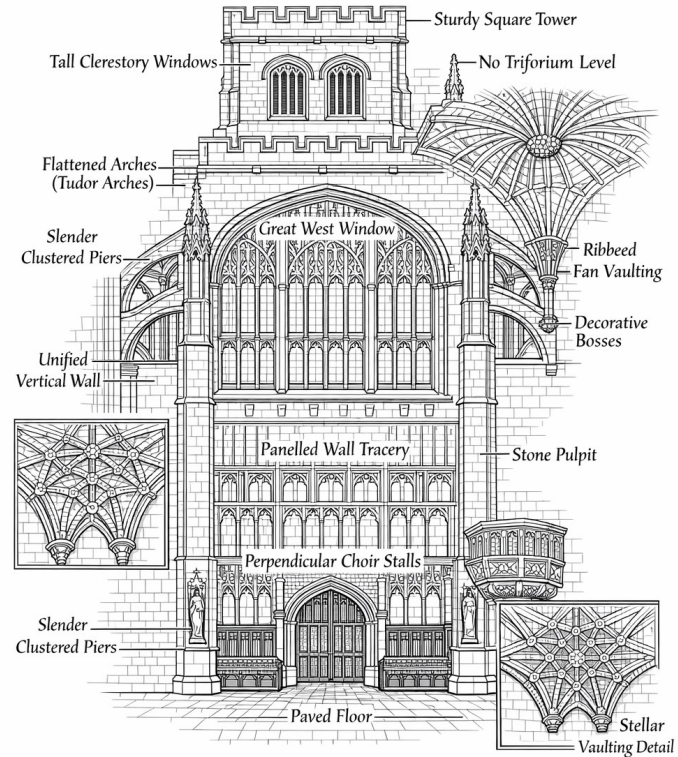
Perpendicular Gothic Architecture

Elements of a Perpendicular Gothic West Front



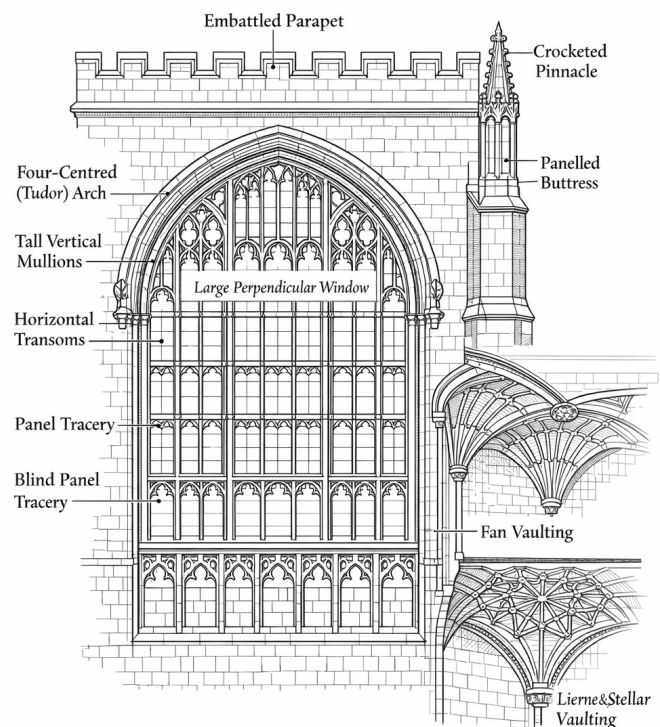
Perpendicular Gothic Architecture

Interior Elements of Perpendicular Gothic Churches



Perpendicular Gothic Architecture

Archetypal Features of the Perpendicular Gothic Window





St Stephen's
CE Primary School

John 13:34 'Love one another, as I have loved you'

NEWSLETTER

27: Thursday 2nd April 2026

Learning, loving and growing; together as God's children

Happy Easter



We would like to thank Year 5 for leading our worship today and to our children, staff and families who joined us in Church as we shared the story of Easter.

At the heart of Easter is a powerful message of hope, love, forgiveness and new life. It reminds us that even in difficult times, light can overcome darkness, and joy can follow sadness.



As we celebrate this special season, we hope that the message of Easter stays with you — inspiring kindness, compassion and peace in our everyday lives.

We wish all our families a peaceful and joyful Easter, filled with hope and happiness.

Year 4 Anglo-Saxon & Viking Workshop with Delve into History



We're excited to welcome Del from Delve into history on Thursday 23rd April for the Year 4 Anglo-Saxon and Vikings Workshop. contributions can be made on School Money.

STAY CONNECTED WITH US:

Phone: 0161 764 1132

Email: ststephens@thesycamoretrust.co.uk

Facebook: [St Stephen's CE Primary School, Bury.](#)

Website: www.ststephensceprimary.co.uk/



LOGIN

LOG INTO OUR
SCHOOL APPS:



Arbor 94%
Parent Portal usage



School Money

FAITH, FRIENDS, FUN



St Stephen's Sunday School

All Welcome

Weekly during the main service

Speak to Leanne or the Vicar



0-5

Baby and Toddler Group

EVERY WEDNESDAY

9:30AM-11:30AM

ALL SAINTS CHURCH

HEBBURN DRIVE, BURY, BL8 1ED

ALL WELCOME

FREE TO ATTEND



BIBLE STUDY COURSE

THE GOSPEL OF

LUKE



ALL SAINTS CHURCH

WEDNESDAYS 1.30PM

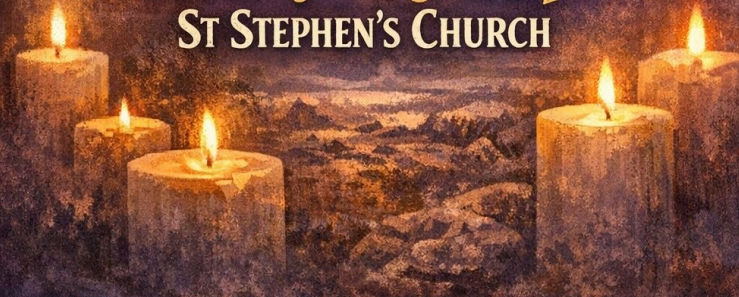
LENT GROUP

...Continued



Monday Night 7pm

ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH



Poem of the Month

This month's poem is by poet and Priest Thomas Traherne 1636-1674

Eden

A learned and a happy ignorance
Divided me
From all the vanity,
From all the sloth, care, pain, and sorrow that advance
The madness and the misery
Of men. No error, no distraction I
Saw soil the earth, or overcloud the sky.
I knew not that there was a serpent's sting,
Whose poison shed
On men, did overspread
The world; nor did I dream of such a thing
As sin, in which mankind lay dead.
They all were brisk and living wights to me,
Yea, pure and full of immortality.
Joy, pleasure, beauty, kindness, glory, love,
Sleep, day, life, light,
Peace, melody, my sight,
My ears and heart did fill and freely move.
All that I saw did me delight.
The Universe was then a world of treasure,
To me an universal world of pleasure.
Unwelcome penitence was then unknown,
Vain costly toys,
Swearing and roaring boys,
Shops, markets, taverns, coaches, were un-
shown;
So all things were that drown'd my joys:
No thorns chok'd up my path, nor hid the face
Of bliss and beauty, nor eclips'd the place.
Only what Adam in his first estate,
Did I behold;
Hard silver and dry gold
As yet lay under ground; my blessed fate
Was more acquainted with the old
And innocent delights which he did see
In his original simplicity.



Those things which first his Eden did
adorn,
My infancy
Did crown. Simplicity
Was my protection when I first was
born.
Mine eyes those treasures first
did see
Which God first made. The first ef-
fects of love
My first enjoyments upon earth did
prove;
And were so great, and so divine, so
pure;
So fair and sweet,
So true; when I did meet
Them here at first, they did my soul
allure,
And drew away my infant feet
Quite from the works of men; that I
might see
The glorious wonders of the Deity.

A reflection on the Book of Ruth Chapter 2

Settling in

Read Ruth chapter 2

Naomi and Ruth arrive safely in Bethlehem after their 50-mile (80 km) trek but have to tend to some of the essentials of daily living, like finding food. They looked to an established custom, i.e. gleaning. It is the practice of farmers being obligated to leave an area around the field that was not economically profitable to harvest (Lev. 19:9–10, Deut. 24:19–22) and the poor, widows and foreigners could gather, glean, these areas and keep the produce. In this case barley grain. Naomi and Ruth return with the status of effectively refugees.

Boaz said to Ruth, 'Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have ordered the young men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.' Then she fell prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, 'Why have I found favour in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?' But Boaz answered her, 'All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. May the LORD reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!' (Ruth 2:8-12)

This story gives us a positive glimpse of the practice that goes back to a thousand or so years before Christ. In our story Ruth is accepted and graciously protected as she gleans. It is not only Boaz who acts graciously it appears his servant also acts in the spirit of the rules regarding gleaning. This story could have gone badly wrong for Naomi and Ruth. We know today it is one thing to have a law what is equally if not more important is how it acts out in practice, is it acted out graciously or begrudgingly. Life was still not going to be easy for Naomi and Ruth, goodness knows how hard it was but they persevered, encouraged by the gracious and Godly behaviour of others. For in the words of Boaz they receive the 'full reward from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!' But of course, the Lord worked through the hands of others. Scripture reaches out to us across the millennium, a simple story of sharing that enriched the lives of both the giver and receiver. This story lives on in the simple and yet gracious act encouraged by Boaz. No judgements made just gracious giving.



Perhaps there is no time like the present to embrace this part of the Book of Ruth and to do a form of modern day 'gleaning'. Our life journeying of late has been uncertain but we could manage a stroll around our home and find the surplus in our own material harvest, not just food. We have so much stuff in our homes, unused and not worn cluttering up the place. I don't think I need to expand on it, I'm sure you know what I mean. There is so much need why not let others benefit from our surplus. Do what you can, graciously, and then a little more. Below are the words of Sydney Carter's hymn 'Brother, sister, let me serve you' If you use YouTube, you can find a link to the song below. An alert the advertisements that appear in YouTube are random.



Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christlight for you
in the nighttime of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.





<https://youtu.be/TKnD4XYJZf4>

TKnD4XYJZf4

Prayerful thoughts to close this reflection.

Prayer of St. Teresa of Avila

Christ has no body now but yours.
 No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
 Yours are the eyes through which He looks
 compassion on this world.
 Yours are the feet
 with which he walks to do good.
 Yours are the hands
 with which He blesses all the world.
 Yours are the hands,
 yours are the feet.
 Yours are the eyes,
 you are His body.
 Christ has no body now but yours.
 No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
 Yours are the eyes through which He looks
 compassion on this world.
 Christ has no body now on earth but yours.
 yours. Amen
 Fr Derek



THE DIOCESE of MANCHESTER

The Art of Discipleship ✨

Join Bishop Matthew Porter for a series of four discipleship seminars exploring:

Giving • Journalling • Fasting • Reading



Giving | Thursday 30th April | 7:30–9:00pm

Oldham Parish Church

Book: tinyurl.com/29fp93uu



Journalling | Monday 18th May | 7:30–9:00pm

Church of the Resurrection, Beswick

Book: tinyurl.com/4wjeuz95



Fasting | Wednesday 24th June | 7:30–9:00pm

St John's Pendlebury

Book: tinyurl.com/yc3arvax



Reading | Thursday 16th July | 7:30–9:00pm

St Peter's Halliwell

Book: tinyurl.com/3ph5ap7v

Doors open at 7:00pm. All are welcome!



St Stephen's
CE Primary School

John 13:34 'Love one another, as I have loved you'

School Places Available

To enquire about a place, or book a personal tour, please call 0161 764 1132
or email ststephens@thesycamoretrust.co.uk



Sycamore Trust
Grow together. Learn forever

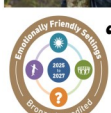
Our school vision is about celebrating the uniqueness of every individual, inspiring a life long love of learning and experiencing life in all its fullness.



"St. Stephen's welcomes, nurtures and supports all children enabling them to flourish."

SIAMS Inspection, November 2023

To find out more about our school, please visit www.ststephensceprimary.co.uk or visit our social media page.



Equip 2026

EQUIP Weekend '26 is a three-day training and formation gathering for all those involved in children's, youth, and families ministry. Designed especially for ALM/GLP participants, the programme offers worship, shared reflection, practical input, and opportunities for conversation and learning. Across the weekend, participants will explore the world of the child, develop confidence in best practice, and reflect on how faith develops and takes shape across different ages.

The programme includes worship, themed teaching sessions, short talks on play, wonder, and identity, and a range of practical workshops exploring creative communication, mixed-age engagement, and building stronger connections with parents and clergy.

There will be opportunities to look at what we currently offer in our ministry settings, consider how to strengthen faith at home, and take part in a guided session on planning for children's and youth work. Sunday includes time to explore relationships and resources, followed by a practical prayer session offering ideas suitable for early years, children, and young people.

The weekend concludes with worship, commissioning, and an outline of next steps for ongoing development.

Refreshments are provided throughout the weekend, with lunch included on Saturday.

Tickets available:

- Full Weekend
- Friday & Saturday
- Saturday

Tickets available here: [link](#)



**SEE.
BUILD.
GROW.**

EQUIP Weekend
St Johns House // 8-10th MAY 2026



Parish Information

Pastoral Teams

Visiting those who are infirm and providing home communion. If you would like to receive home communion, or join the team please contact the Vicar or:

All Saints

Mark Cresswell

Lynne Williamson

St James

Ann Redding

St Stephens

Celia Dutton

Study Group



Regular Events/Groups

Mon: Community Café Brandlesholme Community Ctr. 11am-1pm, **Ladies Club** 2nd Mon of Month 2.00pm St Francis House

Wed: St Stephen's (Centenary Room) **Midweekers** 1.30pm weekly, **Mothers' Union** 1st Weds of the Month 7.00pm, **Games evening** 7.30 pm 2nd Weds of the month, **Prayer meeting** 7pm 4th Weds of the month.

Thurs: Prayer Group 4th Thurs of month All Saints Church 10am **Arts and Crafts** Group weekly 2pm St Francis House

Children's Activities and Uniformed Organisations

St Stephen's Junior Church: every Sunday **Toddler Group:** Wednesdays 9.30 All Saints

Beavers: Mon 5.45 **Cubs/Scouts:** Mon 6:45 St Stephen's School **Rainbows:** Wednesdays 5.45pm St Stephen's School

Thursdays 4.30 St James' Centre **Brownies:** Wednesdays 6.45pm St Stephen's School

Drama Group: Thursdays 7pm at St Stephen's Church

April Rota

05.04.26		Pres	Preach	Deacon	Colour	Gold/white	Easter Sunday
	AS	11 S. Eccleston			Readings	Acts 10:34-43 Matthew 28:1-10	
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara			
	SJ	11 E. O'Hara	E. O'Hara				
12.04.26	AS	11 J. Partridge			Colour	White	
					Readings	Acts 2:14a, 36-41	
	SS	S. Ec- 9 cleston	E. O'Hara			Luke 24:13-35	
		S. Ec- 6 cleston	E. O'Hara		Evensong		
	SJ	11 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara			
19.04.26	AS	11 D. Akker			Colour	White	
					Readings	Acts 2:42-end	
	SS	S. Ec- 9 cleston	E. O'Hara	E. O'Hara		John 10:1-10	
	SJ	S. Ec- 11 cleston	F. Nuttall	E. O'Hara			
26.04.26	AS	11 G. Joyce	E. O'Hara		Colour	White	
					Readings	Acts 7:55-end	
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara		John 14:1-14	
	SJ	11 S. Stonestreet					

May Rota

03.05.26		Pres	Preach	Deacon	Colour	White	
	AS	11 S. Eccleston			Readings	Acts 7:55-end John 14:1-14	
		SS	9 S. Eccleston	E. O'Hara			
		SJ	11 E. O'Hara	E. O'Hara			
10.05.26	AS	11 D. Akker			Colour	White	
			S. Ec- 9 cleston	E. O'Hara	Readings	Acts 17:22-31 John 14:15-21	
		SS	6 J. Walk	S. Eccleston	Evensong		
		SJ	11 S. Eccleston	E. O'Hara			
14.05.26	SJ	7 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara	Colour	Gold/White	Ascension Day
					Readings	Acts 1:1-11 Luke 24:44-end	
17.05.26	AS	11 J. Partridge			Colour	White	
			S. Ec- 9 cleston	E. O'Hara	Readings	Acts 1:6-14 John 17:1-11	
		SS		E. O'Hara			
		SJ	S. Ec- 11 cleston	F. Nuttall	E. O'Hara		
24.05.26	AS	11 G. Joyce			Colour	Red	Pentecost
					Readings	Acts 2:1-21 John 20:19-23	
		SS	9 S. Eccleston	E. O'Hara			
		SJ	S. Ec- 11 cleston	E. O'Hara	Baptism		
31.05.26	AS	11 S. Eccleston			Colour	Gold or White	Trinity
					Readings	Isaiah 40:12-17, 27-end Matt 28:16-end	
		SS	9 S. Eccleston				
		SJ	11 E. O'Hara	S. Stonestreet			

Contact Details

Vicar: Fr. S. Eccleston O.P. brseclestonop@gmail.com 07851121800

All Saints' Contacts:

Warden: Sue Stonestreet 07763 147598

Art and Craft Group: Joyce Abraham 0161 764 2247

Bible Study: The Vicar

Pastoral Visiting: Mark Cresswell 07521087791 Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

Choir: Stuart McArthur 07821 287018

Messy Church: Deirdre Watson 07733 008078

Prayer Group: Joyce Abraham 0161 764 2247 Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

St Francis' Ladies Club: Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

Room Hire at All Saints/St Francis: allsaints.kirkleesvalley@gmail.com 07368 460378

Website: www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16034/

www.allsaintsandstjames.com

<https://www.facebook.com/allsaintsbury>

St James' Contacts:

Mothers' Union Ann Redding 0781 112 9355

Room hire at St James' Centre Ann Redding 0781 112 9355

Website: www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16046/

www.allsaintsandstjames.com

St Stephen's Contacts:

Warden: Carol Heyes 07354902873

Email: ststephenelton@gmail.com

News sheet/rotas: Tony Parsons tony.parsons67@gmail.com

Christian Meditation: David McKenna 07442 534860

Reader Emeritus: Celia Dutton 0161 764 0583

Room Hire: Keith Hughes hughes_k4@sky.com

Website www.ststephenelton.com

<https://www.facebook.com/people/St-Stephens-Church-Elton/61575109828589/>