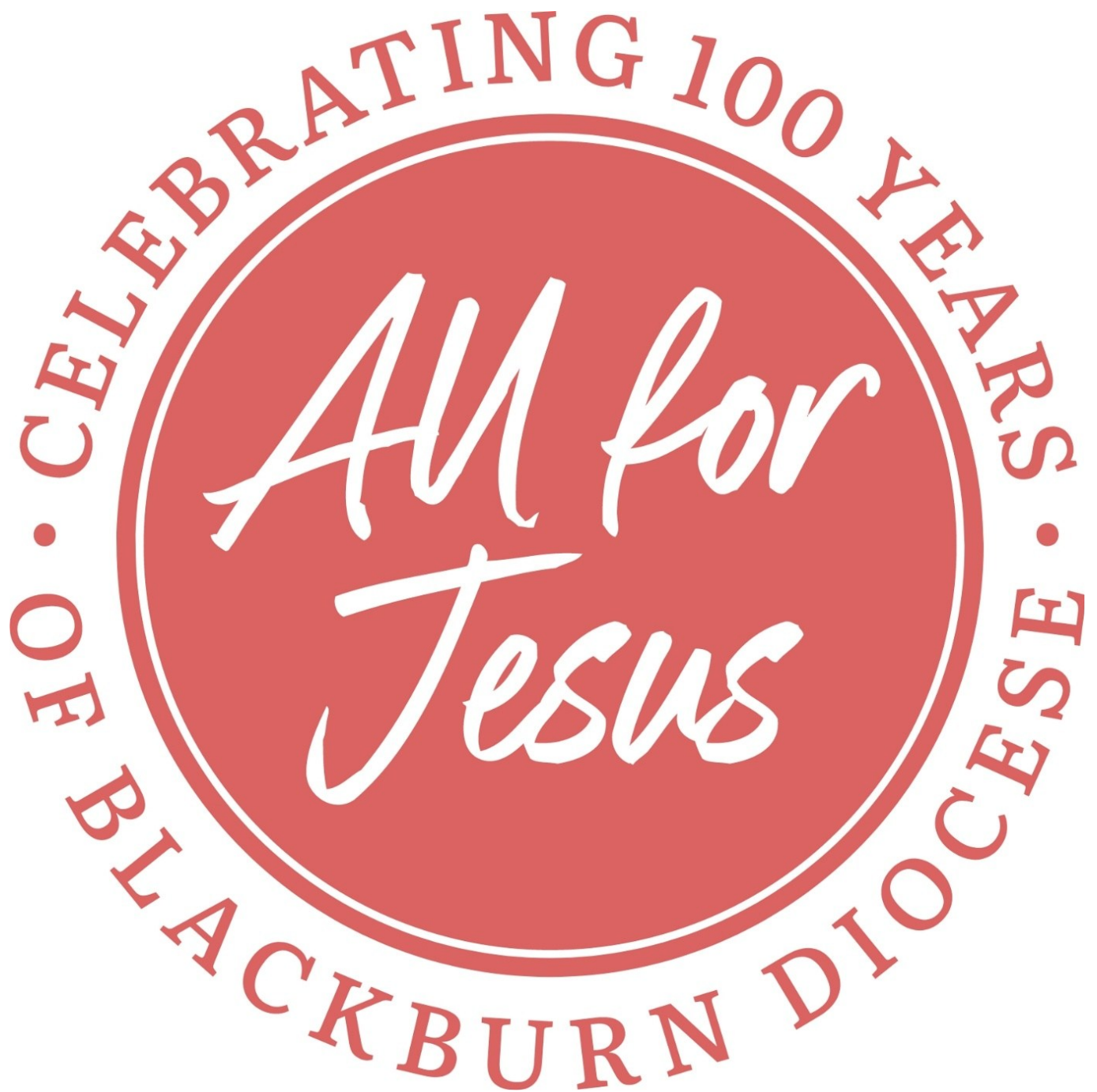


The Log



The Parish Magazine

February 2026

£1.00

www.stlawrencewithstpaul.org.uk

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Vicar's Notes

On Sunday 25th January our Parish Vision Emphasis for the year ahead was launched, '**Following Jesus on Mission**'. The emphasis on sharing the gospel and inviting people to 'come and see' echoes Jesus' invitation to two of John the Baptist's followers just after John declared Jesus to be 'The lamb of God' (John 1:29-39).

The invitation to '**Follow Jesus on Mission**' and invite those around us to 'come and see' is not a hard sell; it's an opportunity to tap into the new spiritual openness our society is going through and help those who would like to move from intrigue about who Jesus is, to walk with Him and experience the Christian faith for themselves.

'**Following Jesus on Mission**' also aligns nicely with the Centenary celebrations taking place this year for Blackburn Diocese which was established out of Manchester Diocese by William Temple in 1926. The Diocesan Centenary theme 'All for Jesus' which you can see prominently displayed on the front cover of this month's Log is a strong reminder of the churches mission and purpose everywhere.

It's a good reminder that Jesus has given his church a Great Commission to get involved and that we are called to play a part. In this light, if you would like you can join in with this special prayer:

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

Thank you to all involved in Christmas 2025

In the crazy world we seem to be living in, our intention to celebrate 'The Hope of Christmas' in all our Advent and Christmas activities seemed to resonate with the increasing numbers coming into St Lawrence with St Paul's to worship Jesus the newborn King.

So many people contributed up front and behind the scenes to make sure people were welcomed properly and offered refreshments. I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone involved, and especially to those who prepare for a good while beforehand. These include Karen Au, our Choir Director and Organist, who alongside our Senior Choir led our Choral worship. Then there is our Worship Group and Annette Walker, our Junior Choir Director, and the wonderful Junior Choir who helped to lead our contemporary worship.

In addition, for those who were able to attend the Midnight Communion service to welcome in Christmas Day at St Lawrence's Church, you'll also remember how wonderful it was to have Elizabeth Hemingway accompany the organ on the cornet.

Vicar's Notes continued**The 6th Annual Jigsaw Celebration**

Over the weekend of 17-18th January we held our 6th Annual Jigsaw Festival. During the event I heard one jigsaw fanatic who'd come all the way from Rochdale say, 'wow, it's quite overwhelming!' Again, these successful events don't happen automatically. Many of you were working hard from about this time last year to complete the wide variety of jigsaws you generously donated (no doubt some of you have even started again to prepare for 16-17 Jan 2027!).

Between the kitchen cooks and helpers and those who volunteered as stewards in the church with the lovely blue sashes we managed to raise £3,100 towards general church funds. An amazing effort – Thank you.

Becky Filder – Our New Children and Youth Leader

I'm absolutely thrilled that through a successful application to Blackburn Diocesan 'Ignite' programme (<https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/ignite-project-2/>) we have been able to employ Becky Filder as St Lawrence with St Paul's Children and Youth Leader.

Becky has only been in post a couple of weeks but is already making a huge difference to the Christian discipleship and witness we can offer to the young people in Longridge. Over a five-year period the Diocesan portion of the funding is phased down, and our church contribution will have to gradually rise. Passing on the Christian faith that has so blessed us to the next generation is of such vital importance that my hope and prayer is that from next year, when the time really begins to support the role financially, many of us will be willing to contribute.

Please do be praying for Becky and on page 10 & 11 she explains more about her role and objectives.

Foodbank

In order to better serve the people of Longridge and locality the decision was taken in late December to move the Churches Together Longridge Foodbank based at St Paul's Church out of the Ribble Valley Gateway Trust to become an independent organisation called 'Community Foodbank @ Longridge'.

This was done with the full support and blessing of Churches Together in Longridge and District, and the Foodbank will continue to benefit from the continuing participation of the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Children and Family wellbeing service and a Ribble Valley Council Housing representative on a fortnightly basis.

As the 'Community Foodbank @ Longridge' continues to benefit vulnerable people in our local communities I know they are hugely grateful for your past, present and future support. If you'd like to know more about how you can help, please do come and speak to me or pop in and see the Foodbank team when they're open as usual every Friday between 11:00am and 1:30pm. No appointment is needed and you'll also be offered a cuppa and cheese toastie if you wish!

If you know you'd like to financially support Community Foodbank @ Longridge immediately then they have their own Business Account – Account Number: 12833754, Sort Code: 01-00-53. For more information you can contact the Foodbank team on Tel. 07977 415030. More information will also follow in the months to come.

Volunteer Role - St Lawrence with St Paul Health and Safety Officer

Places of worship are not exempt from essential health and safety legislation which is there to make sure when people enter church premises we have done our utmost to everyone safe and effectively manage any risks. With this in mind, we're seeking a volunteer who would be able to fulfil a Health and Safety Officer role in our church. It does not involve an overly onerous time commitment, but it is important that things like facilitating risk assessments, working from heights rules, electrical wiring, and mitigating such things as fire hazards and harm prevention are done well.

Perhaps you could help fulfil this role? If so, I'd be most grateful if you could speak to me or one of our Churchwardens, Dot Little or Dorothy Laver.

Live Steaming on YouTube

This is just a reminder that you can watch our 10am Sunday morning service either live or later from our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@stlawrencewithstpaulongridge>
It's a great way to join with us in worship if you can't make the service in person for one reason or another.

The New Bible Course

Over 8 relaxed sessions you can learn more about how all the bible stories, themes and characters fit together and how to make the most of reading the bible. The course starts in St Paul's Centenary Room on Thursday 29th January but don't worry if you can't come along until the second week on 5th February – it's easy to catch up! There is a one off £10 cost for the course book but apart from that the course is free to attend and dessert and drinks are provided.

Please do let me know if you'd like to come along or even just try out one session.

Ash Wednesday, Lent and Easter 2026

Easter Day falls on 5th April this year which means our Ash Wednesday Service will be on 18th February, 7.30pm, at St Paul's Church.

As we move into Lent later in February two special resources are being released by Blackburn Diocese. The first is the seasonal Lent Devotional Booklet based on the book of Acts, tracing how God's story became the Church's story. The second is a related online 5 session video course led by Bishop Philip with the title, 'Knowing Jesus'.

You'll be able to pick up the booklet from church and both will be available from the brilliant Diocesan Fruitful App which is well worth downloading using the QR code below.



THANK YOU.

Janet, Andrew, Jon and their families would like to thank the Church family at St Lawrence with St Paul for their cards, messages of sympathy, flowers and offers of prayer and support since Mark's passing on Boxing Day. To know that we are held in your thoughts and prayers has been a huge comfort during this time of sadness.

The Mortimer family.

Log Distribution

Thank you to all our regular subscribers for having The Log over the last 12 months but now it is time to start again with a new subscription – which is staying at £10 yet again – what a bargain for a good read. The person who delivers your magazine will call with the latest edition and collect your £10 at the same time – don't worry if you're not in, they'll call again. If you would like to start receiving the magazine regularly, please contact me on

07769663156, 7875114 or judithkaye@sky.com

Also, a big thank you to all those who get the magazines out to our subscribers.

JAK

The Longest Yarn – 'Britain at War'

This impressive exhibition of intricate knitted wartime scenes is currently being hosted at Blackburn Cathedral from 7th January until 7th February.

Hundreds of volunteer knitters from across the UK have created a stunning set of 80 individual knitted panels, each depicting a scene of Britain during wartime. They go from the outbreak of war in 1939 through to VE Day in 1945.

I was fortunate to visit on the first day and it was wonderful. You don't have to be a knitter to appreciate how each scene is accurately interpreted from photographs taken at the time.



Blue Sky Thinking from GraceNotes?

Always keen to have a hook to hang a show on, for its next series of outings GraceNotes will exploit the feel-good factor with a selection of songs from the thirties to the sixties. Leader and accompanist for the group, Carly Fitzpatrick, notes that a good proportion of the songs feature references to the sky, or to things in the sky. We're certainly hoping that audiences, in the care homes in our district, will be on Cloud Nine when they hear us and to that end we plan a slightly more intensive series of practices than usual.



We'll be restarting those practices on Mondays from 16th February for six weeks then, after a break for Easter, we'll be out to entertain twice a week.

Perhaps you think it's something you'd like to be involved in. If you enjoy singing for the fun of it and for the satisfaction of stirring a few memories in listeners, then why don't you join us? You don't need to be a professional singer - and you won't need a pilot's license. Ask any of the members or speak to Carly on 07972 548684.

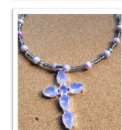
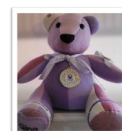


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Clergy & Church Officers

Vicar	Rev. Mike Barton	The Vicarage, Church Street	01772 389837	revmikebarton@gmail.com
Curate	Rev Jesse Adesina		07776 750695	revjesseadesina@gmail.com
Retired Clergy:	Rev. John Ball		07754 771220	
	Rev. Adrian Mairs	8 Hacking Drive	01772 356015	adrian.s.mairs@gmail.com
			07899 905768	
Licensed Reader	Janet Mortimer	8 Tootle Road	07734 475762	jan.mortimer1958@hotmail.co.uk
Churchwardens	Dot Little	26 Hoghton Road	01772 783998	dotlittle003@gmail.com
	Dorothy Laver	19 The Pastures, Grimsargh	07719 389529	dorothy.laver@gmail.com
Deputy Wardens	Graham Kelsall			graham@oaktreehouse.net
	Mae Heys	29 Fell Brow	07740 068099	brbrbrtn6@gmail.com
PCC Secretary	Barbara Burton	7 Chaigley Road		graham@oaktreehouse.net
PCC Treasurer	Graham Kelsall			psostlandplongridge@gmail.com
Safeguarding Officer	Elizabeth Hemingway			secretarystlandplongridge@gmail.com
Parish Administrator	Michael Dawson	See hours below	01772 783281	
Health & Safety Officer	Vacant			
Electoral Role Officer	Michael Dawson			
Ignite-Children & Youth Leader—Becky Filder				becky.ignitelongridge@gmail.com

Parochial Church Council

Chairman	<i>Rev. Mike Barton</i>
Hon. Secretary	<i>Barbara Burton</i>
Hon. Treasurer & Stewardship Recorder	<i>Graham Kelsall</i>
Members:	Clergy and Churchwardens Amii Bateson, Karen Boardman, Helen Clements, Ellen Dawson, Andrew Filder, David Hartley, Mae Heys, Philip Jones, Vernon Kinrade, Terry Lewis, Rosemary Lyons, Barbara McCormick, Annamarie Rogers-Waterman, Val Wardley, Stephanie Willan.

Organisations

Parish Administrator	<i>Michael Dawson</i>
Parish Office Monday and Wednesday	9:30—12:30
Friday	9.30—15.30
	01772 783281
Altar Flowers	
Hon. Sec. St. Lawrence	Dot Little 01772 783998
	Judith Kaye 01772 785114
Hon. Sec. St. Paul	Ellen Dawson 07487 741745
	ellendawson7@gmail.com
Choir	
Organist and Choir Director	Karen Au
	karen.au1990@gmail.com
Church Lads & Church Girls Brigade	
Wednesday Nights Berry Lane School Term Times	
Martins 6 pm, Young Members 6.30 pm JTC/Seniors 7.00 pm	
	Oliviastewart@clcgb.org.uk
Crafty Café	
Last Monday each month, Centenary Room 1.30 - 3.30pm also:	
Contacts	Helen Bailey 07891 075023
	Bev Keating
	Jean Saunders 01772640146
Handbell Ringers	
Leader	Judith Kaye
	judithkaye@sky.com
	Park View, Fleet Street, PR3 3ED
	01772 785114

Children's Church	<i>Carolyn Barton</i>	<i>carolynbarton@hotmail.co.uk</i>
Mothers Union	7.30pm on 1st Tuesday	
Enrolling Member	<i>Judith Kaye</i>	Park View, Fleet Street, PR3 3ED
	judithkaye@sky.com	01772 785114
Prayerline	If you would like our prayer team to pray for you e-mail	
<i>Muriel Anderson</i>	12 Plessington Court, Brewery Street, Longridge	
	Murielanderson33@gmail.com	07823 762089
Tuesday Club	7.30pm on 2nd Tuesday	
Chairman	<i>Fred Little</i>	26 Hoghton Road
Hon. Sec.	<i>vacant</i>	01772 783998
Walkie Talksies	<i>Hannah Green</i>	20 Darwen Close
		01772 783558
Bereavement Group	meets on 1st Monday of the month including Bank Holidays	
	<i>Karen Burdett</i>	07712 440135
	karenlburdett@hotmail.com	

Longridge C of E Primary School

www.longridge-ce.lancsngfl.ac.uk

Headteacher

Mrs Catherine Parkin

head@longridge-cofe.lancs.sch.uk

Clerk to the Governors

Val Morris 01524 581136 c/o the School Office

School Office 01772 782378

bursar@longridge-cofe.lancs.sch.uk

Pre-School

01772-780078

PTFA Hon. Sec.

Katie Keighley

Sidesmen and Sideswomen

Karen Boardman, Bev Keating, Janet Heap,
Peter Turver, Lib Turver, Graham Kelsall,
Val Wardley, Dianne Sanderson, Muriel Anderson,
Merilyn Kinrade, Barbara Burton,
Ian Cookson, Ruth Buckley, Jennifer Sturzaker, Kai Ng,
Helen Eccles, Keith Thompson, Judith Singleton.

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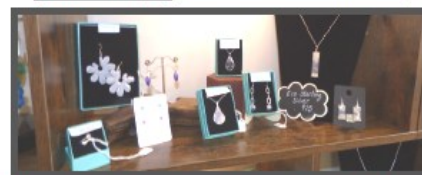
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Churches Together in Longridge and District WORLD DAY OF PRAYER (A WOMEN LED, GLOBAL, ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT)

'I will give you rest, come'

Friday 6th MARCH 2026 at 11am Christ Church, Berry Lane

The World Day of Prayer is celebrated on the first Friday in March each year by over 120 countries. This year, the service has been prepared by women from Nigeria, and includes music and reflection as well as an opportunity to pray for women from all parts of the world. The theme for 2026 is ***'I will give you rest, come'*** (Matthew 11:28-30).

In the service, our Nigerian sisters call us to come closer to God and find rest in him. When we totally trust and have faith in God, our burdens become light and we find rest. We will hear the stories of four Nigerian women who inspire us to work towards a world without injustice, insecurity, marginalisation, religious persecution, poverty and despair.

We will be joined by a group of children from Longridge CE Primary School who will be leading us in one of the hymns. The service will last for approximately one hour and will be led by women and men from all of our local churches.



We give thanks to the Christian women of Nigeria for this service and pray that this service will inspire people throughout the world to unite as one in prayer and action.

A light lunch will be served in the church after the service.

Everyone is welcome. Come and join us!

LENT LUNCHES

Churches Together are once again arranging Lent Lunches and this year's dates and venues are as follows:- Wednesdays

February 25 th	St. Paul's Centenary Room
March 4 th	St. Wilfrid's Parish Room
11 th	Christ Church Hall run by Christ Church & Grimsargh
18 th	St. Wilfrid's Parish Room run by Alston Lane
25 th	St. Paul's Centenary Room



Please do join us between 12 Noon – 1pm for soup, sandwiches and good company.
All proceeds will go to the work of CAFOD and Christian Aid.

Please Note: Brew Time will still run on the 25th February and the 25th March from 9.00am – 11am with Lent Lunches following from 12 Noon to 1.00pm.

Friday Morning Prayers.

A reminder that Friday Morning Prayers during 2026 are in St. Paul's Centenary Room at 7.45am. Prayers are led in turn by the different denominations and last approximately 15 minutes.

Everyone is most welcome – do join us if you can.



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Introducing Becky Filder our new Ignite Children and Youth Leader

Hello! My name is Becky Filder, and I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Ignite Worker here at church. I have been employed by the PCC as part of the Ignite Project through Blackburn Diocese, and I feel incredibly grateful and excited to be stepping into this role at such a significant time for our children, young people, and wider church family.

By profession, I have spent the last 10 years working as a primary school teacher, a role that has shaped my heart for children, their learning, and their spiritual development. Alongside this, my family and I have been part of this church for the past six years, and for the last five years I have had the joy of volunteering in Children's Church. Sharing faith, fun, and friendship with our children has been a real privilege and a calling I cherish deeply.

Church is very much a family affair for us. I love worshipping and attending church alongside my husband Andrew and our children Isabelle, Jacob, and Charlotte. This community has supported and nurtured us, and it is a real blessing to now be able to serve in a role that allows me to invest more time and energy into discipling the next generation.

I am especially excited about the opportunity to spend my time walking alongside children and young people, helping them to grow in their relationship with Jesus. My heart echoes the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:14:

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Children and young people are not just the church of the future – they are a vital part of our church today, with gifts, faith, and voices that matter right now.

My Vision

My vision for this role is:

"To see children and young people encounter Jesus, grow as lifelong disciples, and flourish as confident, compassionate leaders who shape Longridge with God's love."

In practical terms, my time will be spent praying, building relationships within and beyond the church, connecting with local schools, engaging with the wider community, and supporting groups linked to church life. I will also be undertaking training as part of the Ignite Project, equipping me to serve more effectively and faithfully.

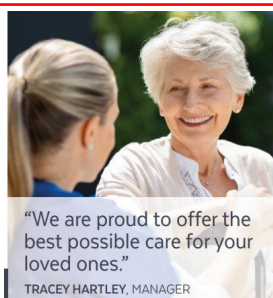
My Aims

At the heart of my work are five key aims:

- **Encounter**
To create regular, accessible spaces where children and young people can meet God through prayer, worship, scripture, creativity, and play.
- **Grow**
To provide age-appropriate discipleship that builds biblical literacy, spiritual practices, resilience, and a strong identity in Christ.



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new Ignite Children and Youth Leader continued

- **Connect**
To strengthen relationships across families, schools, church, and the wider community, so that no one walks alone.
- **Serve**
To enable children and young people to discover their gifts, take responsibility, and make a positive difference in the world.
- **Lead**
To raise up young leaders who help shape church life now and in the future

I am so thankful for your prayers, encouragement, and support as I begin this new chapter. I am excited to see all that God will do in and through our children and young people as we journey together in faith and if you feel like you would like to become involved in this vital work please come and have a chat or drop me an email.

Becky Filder— becky.ignitelongridge@gmail.com

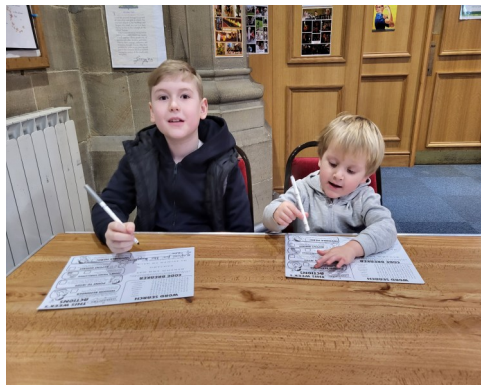
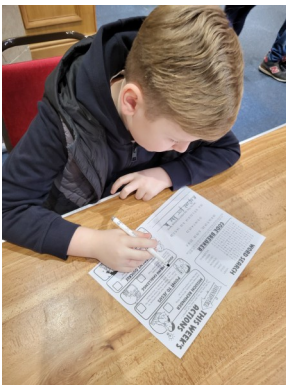


CHILDREN'S CHURCH

We have had a lovely time in Children's Church over Christmas celebrating and learning about the story of Christmas. We spent each week focusing on each part of the story.

This year in Children's Church we are linking our learning to the Diocesan Theme of 'All for Jesus' and our own vision of 'Following Jesus in Loving Community on Mission' and we are starting the year exploring the life of Jesus. This is so the children can clearly see the life of Jesus and get to know him more. We started with Jesus in the temple and the children enjoyed listening to the story and exploring the theme through games and a temple craft. This week we move on to Jesus Baptism.

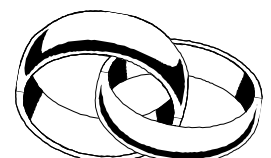
We are always looking for new volunteers who would love to get involved with Children's Church, if you think this could be you please contact Becky. becky.ignitelongridge@gmail.com



WEDDING

Many congratulations and our very best wishes to:

Jordan Luke Bridge and Sally Anne Seed, who were married on Sunday 14th December 2025 in St. Lawrence's Church



Before Christmas we were appealing for items to go to the Women's Refuge in Preston. Louise Williams (Deanery Presiding Member) arranged for the contributions from the deanery to be handed over to a representative of Safenet who run the refuge – below is an email Louise received in response to our efforts.



"On behalf of everyone at the refuge, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude for the generous gifts that you donated for our residents this Christmas. Your kindness will bring joy, comfort, and a sense of hope to the individuals and families who are going through an incredibly difficult time. The thoughtfulness behind each gift means more than words can express. For many of our residents, your generosity will help make this festive season feel a little brighter, a little warmer, and a lot more meaningful."

Thank you for thinking of our residents and for choosing to support those who need it most. Your compassion truly makes a difference!!"

Isn't it good to get a thank you and hopefully that will enthuse us to try again for Christmas 2026 even though that seems a long way off just now.

Our speaker at the February meeting is Rev. Jesse Adesina to whom, I'm sure, we'll give a warm welcome. Non members are always welcome to join us at our meetings.

Please remember Sheila needs your subs (£32.50) as soon as possible as it is a tight deadline for branch money to progress through the different layers to get to MSH. We also need the deposit (£10) for the canal trip later in the year in celebration of 150 years of Mothers' Union.

Dates

3rd Feb

Rev. Jesse Adesina (7.30pm in the Centenary Room)

3rd Mar

Sheila Birby Bee Lady

JAK

Our first meeting of the year on 13th January started with the AGM when we briefly looked back on what had been an encouraging twelve months for the Tuesday Club with good attendances and excellent speakers. Treasurer Keith Thompson was able to report positive news on the finances and the election of officers saw Fred Little continuing as Chairman and Keith as Treasurer. The role of Secretary is still officially 'vacant' but we are grateful to Jean Saunders who has agreed to again book speakers for the next programme.

Tuesday Club

With the AGM over Jean was able to introduce renowned organist Liz Harrison a visit long anticipated. Liz regularly plays at the Blackpool Tower Ballroom on the Wurlitzer as well as venues all over the country and has an amazing repertoire. Apart from her huge collection of tractors she also volunteers and plays for charity amongst her many other 'hobbies'.

Liz entertained us with a medley that included Bring Me Sunshine, Hello Dolly and Bye Bye Blackbird. Her Yamaha organ can produce sounds such as Brass Band Marches (Teddy Bears' Picnic) and light classical music imitating a church organ also bagpipes with a Scottish medley finishing with modern jazz (Skyliner). We hope that she will come again in the future.

Next month on 10th February historian Michael Akers will give us a fascinating insight into the Preston Bus Station entitled Brilliantly Brutal. This iconic building, once in danger of demolition, has now Grade 11 listed status and this illustrated talk will be very thought-provoking.

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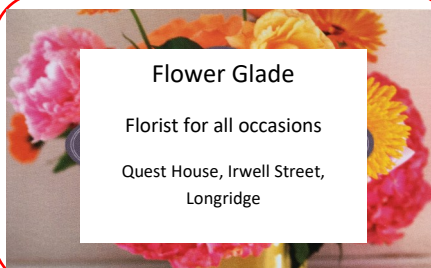
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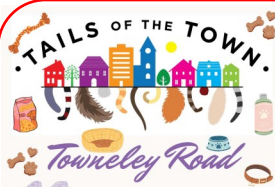
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My Favourite Hymn – Revd. Jesse Adesina

I love *Alleluia, Sing to Jesus* because when I became a priest, this was one of the hymns most commonly used during Holy Communion. As Communion was being celebrated and distributed, singing this hymn helped me to see more deeply the sacrifice of Jesus and the sacredness of that holy moment at the Lord's Table.

What draws me again and again to this hymn is the truth carried in its lyrics. It sings powerfully of the finished work of Christ that Jesus has redeemed us by His blood. It helped me to see Holy Communion not just as a ritual we perform, but as a proclamation of what Christ has already done for us once and for all.

The hymn reminds me that Jesus has not left us. He promises, *"I am with you evermore."* He is our intercessor, the friend of sinners, continually pleading for us. He is also our great High Priest both Priest and Victim in the Eucharistic feast, the One who offers Himself and feeds His people with grace.

And then there is that great declaration of praise: *"His the sceptre, His the throne, His the triumph, His the victory alone."* It lifts our eyes to Jesus reigning in glory. From every nation, He has redeemed us by His blood.

It is more than a hymn; it is a hymn that sings the gospel.

Oh, what truth this hymn holds — truth that continues to shape my faith, my ministry, and my worship.



Alleluia! sing to Jesus,
His the sceptre, His the throne;
Alleluia! His the triumph,
His the victory alone.
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion
Thunder like a mighty flood:
"Jesus out of every nation
Hath redeemed us by His blood."

Alleluia! not as orphans
Are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia! He is near us,
Faith believes, nor questions how.
Though the cloud from sight received Him
When the forty days were o'er,
Shall our hearts forget His promise,
"I am with you evermore"?

Alleluia! Bread of heaven,
Thou on earth our food, our stay;
Alleluia! here the sinful
Flee to Thee from day to day.

Intercessor, Friend of sinners,
Earth's Redeemer, plead for me,
Where the songs of all the sinless
Sweep across the crystal sea.

Alleluia! King eternal,
Thee the Lord of lords we own;
Alleluia! born of Mary,
Earth Thy footstool, heaven Thy throne.
Thou within the veil hast entered,
Robed in flesh, our great High Priest;
Thou on earth both Priest and Victim
In the Eucharistic Feast.

Alleluia! sing to Jesus,
His the sceptre, His the throne;
Alleluia! His the triumph,
His the victory alone.
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion
Thunder like a mighty flood:
Jesus out of every nation
Hath redeemed us by His blood."

Handbells

Some of you may have noticed that we didn't ring before the Nine Lessons and Carols service as planned. This was due to unexpected absences and illness. This led us to wondering if there are people who might like to give bell ringing a try. It isn't necessary to read music because we have the scores colour coded. If you would like to try or know more, I can be contacted on 07769663156, 7875114 or judithkaye@sky.com.

Our next practice is scheduled for February 5th at 6.30pm in the Eckton Room at St Lawrence Church.

Judith Kaye



Christmas Reflection by Wendy Smyth

As I write this, we are just into a New Year and life in 2026 hasn't become too busy just yet, so I have a few moments to sit and reflect on the Christmas just past. And what a Christmas it was. From peaceful Carol Services to the anticipation and excitement of the Crib Service, I think there was something for everyone. I'll start with 9 Lessons at St Paul's. As a member of the choir, it was fantastic to have some additional members and as a group we all thoroughly enjoyed the service. Lots of singing and a good selection of well known congregational hymns for people to enjoy. The mulled wine and mince pies were well received (thanks to the benefactor who supplied all those treats, the fruit cake was delicious) and it was brilliant to see the Centenary Room buzzing with faces known and new.



Christmas Eve Midnight Mass was yet again another lovely service and how special it felt taking place in St Lawrence's. As I left to go home on a beautiful evening I really felt Christmas had begun.

Now I come to my main reflection. On Boxing Day the family wanted to take a walk down to the graveyard to say hello to my mum. It was a bright day, perfect for a walk so there were plenty of people out and about. After going down to the graves, it was suggested we take a look in the church as well. I was really pleased the building was open, with my sister commenting how lovely it was to have a peaceful space to wander around and particularly enjoying looking at the traditional stained glass windows.

Whilst we were there two other ladies came into the church, one spent time at the book of remembrance while another came to light a candle and say a prayer. My daughter also took a moment to reflect and write a message for the prayer tree.

On social media I have responded to a few posts and directed people to various services for those looking for Midnight Mass, Carol Services, Children's Services and just places for people to light a candle or enjoy some company for newcomers to the town and I have been reflecting on all this since Christmas. How blessed we are to have such a wonderful church community to help fulfil all these requests. From busy services to quiet spaces to reflect, we have it all on offer.

Lots of people see the effort that goes into the busy services and acknowledge that, but how many see, and are able to acknowledge, the small acts that sometimes would go unnoticed. I think we all owe a special thanks to the team who open St Lawrence's church daily, particularly on that Boxing Day. Whilst families were spending time together, St Lawrence's Church was there, quietly serving the community of Longridge as it has done for many hundreds of years. In the short time I spent there, I witnessed how it gave comfort to numerous people all in different ways, who left very grateful that they were able to have a few minutes peace away from all the business. With my daughter being the seventh generation to have worshipped in the church, I feel so lucky to have witnessed Christmas's past and present there and look forward to celebrating many more in the future.

I wish you all the best for 2026 and if you haven't taken in the peace and quiet of our Parish Church yet, I hope you all have an opportunity to do so this year.



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Our experience as new choir members!

In August last year, we were invited with others to sing with the choir to help swell the numbers during the holiday period.

Little did we realise then, what it would lead to.

Now it was a busy lead up to Christmas as choir members! Ray had been in church choirs in the past, the last time was in Emmanuel Parish Church in Preston but for me this was a completely new experience!

Karen made us so welcome as did all the other choir members. We valued the help and support we received from everyone, and as Christmas approached we were both looking forward to what was to come because we hold the Christmas message close to our hearts.

One of our most memorable moments was the Nine Lessons and Carols Service and singing with the choir to a full church, followed by the applause for Karen's voluntary.

Finally the time spent with all who came, sharing mince pies and mulled wine together in true Christian fellowship was truly uplifting.

Our last thoughts were leading up to the Midnight Communion on Christmas Eve and celebrating Christ's Birth early on Christmas morning. What a joyful time for us all.

Wishing everyone in our Church Family a belated Happy and Holy 2026 as we look forward to our next celebration in the choir at Easter.

Best Wishes from Ray and Andrea Hodgson.



Lychgate repairs successfully completed — Rosemary Lyons

We are delighted to report that early December saw the completion of the long-awaited programme of repairs and restorations to the lychgate at St Lawrence's Church. Log readers with good memories will recall that the funding appeal to restore the lychgate was launched back in June 2024. A busy programme of fundraising events ensued over the following 12 months, including a flower festival, afternoon teas, and concerts by Longridge Band and the Valley Singers. The very many individual donations that people made were vital in reaching the target and also pay testament to the great attachment felt towards St Lawrence's Church and its heritage.

By June last year we were able to report that sufficient funds had been raised, and preparatory work began on site in August, with the scaffold going up, very appropriately, the day after the feast of St Lawrence. Work continued over the next few months to repair and replace the decayed sections of timber, followed by redecoration and roof repairs together with smart new gutters and drainpipes. As the lychgate lantern was switched back on to mark the end of the work we were pleased that this important landmark should now be safe and secure well into the future. We do thank all those who have contributed and helped in any way to achieve this significant milestone.





**Jigsaw Festival
17 / 18 Jan
2026**



AMAZING JIGSAW CELEBRATION SUCCESS.

This was our Sixth Annual Jigsaw Celebration and undoubtedly our most successful with more people than previously coming to view the displays and enjoy the refreshments, with a wonderful community atmosphere throughout the two days.

As organisers you try and analyse why it was more successful and one reason we feel is that we have kept to the same weekend each year and worked hard to establish the event. Secondly the weather was mild and at times wet so no icy conditions, but the main reason we feel is down to advertising and we know from chatting to people that we had visitors from the Fylde, Longton, Euxton, Garstang and at least two friends from Ramsbottom who run a similar event to ours in September each year. For many people it was their first visit to St. Paul's and to a jigsaw event and they were amazed both with the church and the displays. We had some beautiful jigsaws – a 6,000 piece one completed by Peter Turver sold to an enthusiastic couple who hopefully have a very large table!

When setting up the weekend, we looked at the many hundreds of completed jigsaws that people had kindly done for us over the past twelve months and wondered how on earth we could possibly expect to sell them all but amazingly those piles kept disappearing and we had relatively few left..

With the jigsaws stored at St. Paul's and the boxes at St. Lawrence's its no easy task matching the boxes to the jigsaws but the team who have been there from the very first Jigsaw weekend - Mary Cookson, Sheila Roberts and Peter & Lib Turver, not forgetting other volunteers who did a wonderful job. We also thank the Brigade for getting the boards down for us. In fact the whole operation is very much down to team work and when we talk about teamwork we think of the catering team who once again did a sterling job – our thanks to the soup makers and the cake bakers.

Having the morning service at the Parish Church this year made a tremendous difference as we could leave everything in place for the weekend and it really did raise our spirits when so many people came up to St. Paul's after the Service, many of them staying on for a soup and sandwich lunch. Thank you so much – it meant a great deal to have that support. We had many compliments about the catering and our thanks go to Judith Kaye and to Kathleen English who were confined to the St. Paul's kitchen for the weekend.

As well as completed jigsaws we had many many boxed jigsaws that people had kindly donated, all enhancing the display and for the first time had a jigsaw tombola where people could try their luck at winning a jigsaw and that proved very popular.

As with all the major events we have in church one of the things we value most is people who come towards the end to help clear away and return things back to normal and we do thank the people who did that for us. There were some pretty tired volunteers by 4pm on the Sunday.

The Jigsaw weekend raised an incredible £3,100 for much needed church funds, considerably more than last year. We did put some jigsaws back in store – some we also took to YMCA who are always so supportive. We now start again and make up jigsaws for the weekend of 16th & 17th January, 2027. If you would like to complete some jigsaws for us we have both jigsaws and boards available – just have a word with Dot Little.

Our final thanks go to Jigsaw Companies Wentworth, Gibsons and Ravensburger who all donated jigsaws for the event.

Longridge Youth Band Concert Sun 8 March 14:00 - 16:00

The Youth Band will once again be holding their end of term concert at St. Lawrence's Church on Sunday afternoon 8th March. Admission is free but any donations will go directly to the Youth Band. Do come along and support our local young brass players.



SCHOOL NEWS – from Headteacher Catherine Parkin

What a great idea!

As Mrs Ingram leads our environmental work in school, she was very keen for her class to visit Eco Town in Farington. This is an Environmental Education Centre which teaches about reducing,

reusing and recycling waste. The problem was going to be the cost because, although entrance is free, transport would not be cheap. Class 5 had other trips to pay for during the year so their teacher came up with a plan. Instead of asking parents to pay the full price, they would raise money in school to make things as cheap as possible! So, Class 5 opened their own tuck shop at playtimes and all profits are going towards the cost of the trip. What a brilliant idea!



School Worship

Our worship this term has centred on having a positive outlook and being open to new opportunities and the call of God. We started off by looking at the story of Jonah, a man who tried to ignore God's will and even tried to run away and hide from God. The story teaches us that

this is not possible and that we have to find the courage to say yes to the opportunities we are given to do God's work, no matter how difficult it may seem. It may lead to us achieving great things!

We also found out about people in the modern world who have had a hugely positive impact on society in some way. One of these people was Marcus Rashford who campaigned for pupils in need to receive free meals through the summer holidays during the pandemic.



Robinwood 2026 - Teamwork

As usual, our Year 5 visit to Robinwood was a huge success.



The children had a wonderful time – as did the staff! While this trip gives our children the chance to try a range of outdoor and adventurous activities it also does a good deal more; teaching them how to work as a team, face their fears and rely on



each other for support. Just look at some of the team activities they enjoyed.

School News continued



This is an opportunity to work closely with others and to get to know each other better. Perhaps most importantly it teaches our children to use their own skills and ideas to help others.



Preston North End Community Education Trust

April and Tom joined us in the school hall recently to start this year's Play and Skills at Teatime Activities (PASTA) programme. A lucky group of our children are currently meeting on Wednesdays after school to do some cooking as well as some fun activities with their parents. The fruit kebabs looked delicious. Pizzas next!



BREAKFAST IS SERVED – Saturday 28th February.

As we say farewell to February for another year – a month that can be cold and dreary- we have an opportunity to come together in St. Paul's Centenary Room for a parish breakfast. This will run from 9am – 11am – no need to book just come along and enjoy a full English or a bacon or sausage bap with perhaps an egg on top. If that sounds tempting then do join us for good food and excellent company. Proceeds to our General Church Fund.



BREWTIME

Wednesday's from 8.50am-11am
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We serve tea, coffee, toast, crumpets and cakes!
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Do join us we would love to see you.

Kath, Jacqui, Bev and John. and Judith

My Life in Saudi Arabia- Olivia Stewart

Twelve months ago, I embarked on an unexpected and exciting journey — moving my whole life to the Middle East to take up a job opportunity in Saudi Arabia. Through my career, I'd been fortunate enough to travel to this part of the world before, which gave me the confidence to apply for a full-time role. Still, nothing quite prepares you for packing up your life and stepping into something completely new.

The move didn't come without its challenges. For a long time, I wasn't sure I'd made the right decision. I had to make peace with leaving my family behind — especially my elderly grandparents who relied on me so much — missing my nieces and nephews growing up, and stepping away from my church family and brigade, which meant more to me than I can easily put into words. It felt like guilt and grief all at once — a feeling I hadn't experienced before.

Being so far away has also brought a quieter, ongoing struggle that's harder to put into words. Much of my connection to home now relies on messages, voice notes, and FaceTime calls, and the three-hour time difference can make even those moments difficult to line up. There's a constant pull between wanting to be present in family life and church life, while knowing that distance makes that impossible in the ways I would choose. Planning our wedding has been bittersweet — a season that should feel full of excitement has often been complicated by distance, with many moments experienced through screens rather than shared in person. Losing my Grandad while being so far away brought a particular kind of grief, one that felt heavier without the closeness of family and familiar places.

In those moments, my faith has been both tested and strengthened. I've been reminded that God is not limited by geography, time zones, or distance. While I haven't always felt close to home, I've trusted that God has been close to me — holding space for grief, carrying the weight of guilt, and offering comfort in ways I didn't expect. This season has taught me to lean more fully on God, to release the need to be everywhere at once, and to trust that He meets us exactly where we are, even when that place feels far from everything familiar.

I wrestled with these thoughts for some time, but I kept coming back to the same conclusion: life is for living. You only get one opportunity, and this was mine. I didn't want to reach later life asking myself, *what if?*

Now, twelve months on, I can honestly say I have no regrets. I'm making the most of this season, and I wanted to share what the last year has looked like for me.

Work and Purpose

The main reason I moved was work. BAE Systems has a huge presence in Saudi Arabia, and I was fortunate to step into a role in procurement that wasn't vastly different from what I'd done in the UK, which made the transition easier. I work within a team made up entirely of Saudi nationals — I'm the only expat — which initially felt daunting. But what has stood out most is just how welcoming and kind everyone has been.

Work culture here is very different. Family always comes first, and that challenged me more than I expected. I've always been someone who prioritised work — long hours, extra tasks, always pushing to do more. Living here has forced me to reflect on that mindset and ask myself, *at what cost?* It's been a quiet but important lesson.

Professionally, I've been given opportunities I never imagined. I've loved helping to develop and mentor my team, learning from them just as much as they learn from me. I've also been part of the *Mulhemah* committee, which focuses on inspiring and empowering women in the workplace. Being involved in conversations about confidence, leadership, and opportunity has been incredibly meaningful.

I've even had the privilege of representing the company at major international events like the World Defense Show — engaging with industry leaders, and seeing Saudi Arabia's ambition up close. These experiences have stretched me professionally and personally, and I'm deeply grateful for them.



Faith in a Muslim Country

Living in Saudi Arabia as someone with a strong Christian faith has challenged and deepened my beliefs in ways I didn't expect. Before moving here, my understanding of Islam was limited and largely second-hand. Being immersed in a Muslim country has changed that.

I've visited mosques, explored museums dedicated to Islamic history, read parts of the Quran, and had many open and honest conversations with colleagues about their faith. Through this, I've come to realise how many similarities there are between Islam and Christianity — our shared belief in one God, the importance of prayer, charity, family, and living morally.

What has impacted me most is the dedication Muslims show to their faith. Prayer is woven into daily life through the call to prayer five times a day. It's not rushed or hidden — it's honoured.

I also joined my colleagues for one week of Ramadan. Fasting from dawn until sunset was extremely tough — physically, mentally, and spiritually — but it gave me a new respect for the discipline and intention behind it. It made me reflect deeply on sacrifice, self-control, and dependence on God within my own faith.

Living here hasn't weakened my Christian faith — if anything, it has sharpened it. Understanding another faith hasn't meant compromising my own; instead, it's opened doors for respect, deeper conversations, and a clearer sense of how God is at work across cultures.



Beyond the Headlines

In the West, Saudi Arabia is often viewed through headlines shaped by politics and stereotypes. Before moving here, I shared many of those assumptions. Living here has shown me a far more nuanced reality.

One of the most visible changes is Vision 2030 — the Kingdom's long-term plan to diversify the economy, empower people, and open the country to the world. It's not just a concept; it's visible in daily life, new industries, public spaces, and the ambition of the people around me.

There's also a common perception that women are treated poorly here. That hasn't been my experience. I work alongside educated, ambitious women in leadership roles who are encouraged to succeed and thrive. While no society is without challenges, the reality I've seen is far more positive and hopeful than many realise.

Culturally, Saudi Arabia has surprised me again and again. Sports like Formula 1, boxing, golf, and international football matches are now part of life here. I've attended Soundstorm festival, seen world-famous artists perform, and even watched comedians like Kevin Hart live — experiences I never imagined I'd have in the Kingdom.

Sharing It With Family

One of the greatest joys of living here has been sharing it with my family when they've visited. Seeing Saudi Arabia through their eyes has reminded me just how diverse and unexpected it is.



We've ridden camels in the desert, raced quad bikes across sand dunes, gone on safari, explored Boulevard World, visited mosques, walked through the Diplomatic Quarter, and visited Diriyah — the birthplace of Saudi Arabia. We've even driven to Bahrain for the Formula 1. Each visit has been full of laughter, learning, and genuine surprise.

What stands out most is how welcoming these experiences have been. Far from feeling closed off, the Kingdom has opened itself up in ways that invite people in.



My Life in Saudi Arabia continued

Home and Community

I'm here with Josh, my partner, and our dog Rupert, who has adapted remarkably well to life here. We live on a compound made up of employees, and it has a strong community feel — like a little village in the middle of the city. With pools, a restaurant, and a great gym, it's a place where people connect easily, while still being close to everything.

Driving, however, is another story. It's completely chaotic, and the sheer volume of traffic is something I'll never quite get used to. I do drive — but only at certain times of the day!



Outside of work, staying active and connected has been really important to me. I play netball for *Sharq Storm*, training every Monday night. Last year we came second in the league and even played in the Dubai 7s. I've also helped set up a book club on the compound — a small initiative to bring people together and encourage reading.

These everyday rhythms — work, faith, friendships, sport, and home — are what have

made Saudi Arabia feel less like a temporary posting and more like a place where life is genuinely lived.



Looking Ahead to 2026

As I look ahead to 2026, I do so with a real sense of excitement and expectation. There are more family visits planned, which I'm already counting down to, and many new moments still to be shared together here. Work continues to bring opportunities that are both exciting and challenging, pushing me to grow in ways I couldn't have predicted a year ago. I'm also deeply grateful for the simpler rhythms of life I've found here — the sunshine, the sense of community, and the space to be more present and intentional. While this journey hasn't always been easy, I step into the year ahead feeling hopeful, thankful, and ready for whatever comes next.

Conclusion

Looking back over the past twelve months, I'm deeply thankful for all that this season in Saudi Arabia has taught me. It has stretched me far beyond my comfort zone — emotionally, spiritually, and professionally — but it has also deepened my faith, broadened my understanding of others, and reminded me that God often works most powerfully when we are willing to step into the unknown. This hasn't been a year without challenges, but it has been a year full of learning, connection, and unexpected joy. As I continue this journey, I do so with an open heart, trusting that wherever we are placed, God is present, purposeful, and always inviting us to grow.

Brigade Notes.— Olivia Stewart.

At the End of November our wonderful Jean, Julie and Mr H worked hard at our stall at Longridge Christmas late night shopping and raised over £400 for our general funds. We enjoyed the festivities each week which included Gingerbread house making and creating flowing carrot snowmen that made beautiful Christmas decorations. We also prepared all of the oranges and bags for Christingle and had over 20 members present in church during the service. We welcomed Gareth back for our Christmas party which was enjoyed by all before taking a well-deserved break over Christmas.



We've welcomed all our members back during January and started off learning all about the Epiphany, learning about the wise men and playing many royalty themed games. We even made our own crowns to take home. We've also been talking about the story of Jonah and the big fish and read the parable and a group discussion about its meaning- we then made our own big fish with Jonah inside during craft. Our older members have enjoyed some team building games as we welcomed new members- one including working together using detective skills to figure out how to save the president.

2026 is already looking like a busy year for us here at Brigade and we have now reached our capacity of members and are closing our books until further notice. If your child would like to be added to the waiting list then please get in touch with a Brigade Leader. We are so pleased to have such a large number of members within our Brigade and remain thankful for the support we receive to continue providing opportunities for members to explore their faith and build lasting connections.

Dates for your diary:

Afternoon Tea:

Saturday 25th April we will be holding our Annual Afternoon Tea fundraiser. Tickets will be on sale soon.

National Band Concert:

We are pleased that the Brigade National Band will host their Annual concert this year in Longridge on Saturday 3rd May 2026. We would love to see as many familiar faces there as possible to support our members from Longridge who will be performing. You can purchase your ticket by using the QR code on the poster below or speaking to one of the Brigade Leaders.



THE NATIONAL BAND
OF THE
CHURCH LADS' & CHURCH GIRLS'
BRIGADE

CONCERT

Longridge Civic Hall - 1 Calder Avenue, Longridge, PR3 3HT

2.30pm
Sunday 3rd May 2026

Tickets
£10 (Under 12 £5, Under 5 Free)

Tickets available online
WWW.EVENTBRITE.CO.UK

Scan me!

TRAVELS WITH DOROTHY LAVER – St. Dorothy: Feast Day 6 February

My younger son moved to Oxfordshire in 2017 after qualifying as a Spanish teacher. He now lives with his wife and young son near Witney, once famous for the manufacture of blankets. I had a caravan holiday last summer with friends staying at a site near Burford, a very picturesque town known as-the Gateway to the Cotswolds.

The town has a very grand church reflecting the wealth from the medieval wool trade with wealthy merchants financing its expansion. I was most surprised to find a chapel inside dedicated to “St Dorothy”. When the church was being restored in the 19th Century the architect created a new chapel intending it to be used as a nave altar.

I knew the name of Dorothy is of Greek origin meaning “Gift of God”. The name was quite popular from about 1450 in England and was well used between 1750 and 1820 with the variant of Dorothea and nicknames of Doll or Dolly. Dorothy became very popular in the United States in the first half of the 20th Century but has fallen out of popularity since then. But I didn’t know there was a St Dorothy. So who was she?

Dorothea lived in Caesarea in Cappadocia in eastern Turkiye in the 4th Century. We do not know much about her but the stories passed down say that she was beautiful and converted to Christianity when quite young. She gave herself to the service of Christ and refused to worship the Roman gods. She was sentenced to death in 311. On the way to her place of execution she was mocked by a crowd including a lawyer called Theophilus. He said to her “Bride of Christ send me some fruits from your bridegroom’s garden.” After her execution an Angel in the shape of a child appeared to Theophilus bearing Dorothea’s head dress filled with roses and fruits from paradise. Theophilus at once confessed himself a Christian and he too was put to death.

St Dorothy is regarded as the patroness of gardeners and florists due to the head dress of a wreath of roses. In paintings she is depicted carrying a basket of flowers, sometimes with fruit, and also wearing a crown of roses. On her feast day of 6 February it is customary for gardeners to bless their trees and ask her prayers for a successful Spring planting.

That must be where I have gone wrong with my garden in the past so this year on 6 February I will be saying some prayers for my garden to be miraculously transformed.



St. Lawrence Flower Rota

February

- 1st In memory of William & Ettie Fordham
- 8th In memory of Michael Swanson
- 15th In memory of Mary Wilkinson and her father W.J. Wilkinson
- 22nd LENT

St. Paul’s Flowers

February Linda Eccleston and Barbara McCormick



OUR WORSHIP AND READINGS

Following Jesus on Mission

Our regular Sunday 'in church' services are as below.

St Paul's Holy Communion Service with Children's Church at 10:00am (arrival from 9:30am)

St. Paul's 'All together' Service 10:00am on 2nd Sunday of the Month

St Lawrence's at 6:30pm (arrival from 6:00pm)

The readings that will feature in these services are listed below.

Our regular mid-week Holy Communion Service takes place on Thursday at St Paul's at 10am

1st February—Epiphany 4 (Presentation of Christ)

10am St Paul's Holy communion with Children's Church

Malachi 3 : 1 - 5

Luke 2 : 22— 40

6.30pm St Lawrence's Evensong

Psalm 122

Malachi 3 : 1 - 5

Luke 2 : 22— 40

8th February — 2nd Sunday before Lent

10:00 am St. Paul's-All Age Worship

Romans 8: 18-25

Matthew 6: 25-34

6.30pm St Lawrence's Holy Communion

Romans 8: 18-25

Matthew 6: 25-34

15th February — 1st Sunday before Lent (Giving Sunday)

10am St Paul's Holy communion with Children's Church

1 Chronicles 29 : 6-16

Luke 6 : 38

6.30pm St Lawrence's Evensong

Psalm 84

1 Chronicles 29 : 6-16

Luke 6 : 38

18th February — Ash Wednesday



7.30pm St Paul's

2 Corinthians 5: 20b— 6:10

Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21

22nd February — Lent 1

10am St Paul's Holy communion with Children's Church

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Matthew 4: 1-11

6.30pm St Lawrence's Evensong

Psalm 50 v1-15

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Matthew 4: 1-11

1st March—Lent 2

10am St Paul's Holy communion with Children's Church

Genesis 12 : 1-4a

John 3 : 1-17

6.30pm St Lawrence's Evensong

Psalm 135 v1-14

Genesis 12 : 1-4a

John 3 : 1-17

BAPTISMS

We congratulate and pray for those who have been recently Baptised into our Church family:

Theodore David Mallon on the 25th January 2026 at St. Paul's Church

Penelope Katie Kerrigan on the 25th January 2026 at St. Paul's Church



FUNERALS

We commend to God those who have died recently and pray for those who mourn their loss

Harry Pinder

Mark Mortimer

William (Bill) Pye

Sydney Thorpe



Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child, Baptisms, Marriages

Arrangements for these should be made with Rev. Mike or via the Church website

Do you know anybody who is in hospital or ill at home?

If so, please let Rev. Mike or Rev. Simon know so that they may be visited.

The Last Word

From the Vicar Rev. Mike Barton



There's a saying, 'democracy is like a bicycle, if it's not going forward it starts to wobble.' The same can be said for the Church. In his letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul famously said, *'I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus'*.

A church should always be moving forward with its purpose to proclaim Jesus, because a church that prefers to settle comfortably will inevitably wobble and fall.

Or to use a different analogy, for Christmas I asked for a new set of kitchen knives because slicing onions, in particular, had become difficult. However, it wasn't until I started to use my new set and accidentally cut my

finger that I realised just how blunt and ineffective the old ones had become.

The bible tells us that, *'the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword'* (Hebrews 4.12). A church that stops proclaiming the gospel as scripture presents it, loses its cutting edge.

That's why in late January I launched our parish vision emphasis for the year ahead, **'Following Jesus On Mission'**. The idea is to sharpen the focus of St Lawrence with St Paul on our core business, to proclaim the good news that through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God demonstrates his sacrificial love and offers forgiveness, new life, and the hope of eternal salvation to all who trust in him.

For some this message may seem outdated, but this message has continued to drive the Church forward for two thousand years and is now finding fresh traction with younger generations who are witnessing how the world wobbles painfully when it's ignored.

So as we move forward *'following Jesus on mission'* we must play our part wisely, with gentleness and respect, because just like a cyclist chooses a road bike for speed, a mountain bike for rough terrain, or a hybrid for everyday journeys, so we'll have to share our faith appropriately and lovingly, depending on the context.

Likewise, in the kitchen, we soon discover that no single knife is right for every task: a chef's knife for chopping, a bread knife for crusty loaves, a paring knife for precision. Each knife is needed to prepare a scrumptious meal. So as we follow Jesus on mission, we're going to need all of your different gifts. For this reason, I'm expecting this year to be exciting and fun!

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