

St Silas Parish Church, Blackburn



St Silas

Magazine

February/March 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Well after months of planning, waiting and anticipation, here we are! Before we go any further, I'd like to thank you for the generous and loving welcome you have given to Laura, Beatrice and myself. It has been a daunting prospect moving across the great divide of the Pennines and I greatly appreciate all you have done to make that easier.

We have joined you at an interesting point in the Christian Year, licensed on the Conversion of St Paul, the Feast of Candlemas on my first Sunday is a particular favourite of mine! Before we plunge into the depths of Lent, the springtime of our Faith. Experience the great drama of Our Lord's Passion and celebrate joyfully the Resurrection of Lord. And all that in our first three months together!

A new incumbency though exciting can also be a worrying time as naturally people ask themselves, "what is Fr David like?" "What's he going to change?" "I heard he's a bit ... high Church, even maybe a Catholic!" I wanted to take this opportunity first and foremost to reassure you. Yes, there will be change, but we shall change and grow together, I shall (I hope) teach you and help you all to grow in our shared faith, but you too will teach me and help me to grow in mine. First and foremost, it is my job as your Parish Priest to love you, to pray for you, and to teach you. But the love part comes first and I cannot do that if I don't know who you are as individuals and as family of faith. So this will be my first priority.

Another worry might be the wider role which I have been appointed to. Will being the Canon for Presence and Engagement mean that the people and parish of St Silas are sidelined or even ignored? Absolutely not, the wider diocesan role will only be successful if we here as a family and a church are successful. I am first and foremost, your parish Priest.

I am greatly looking forward to working with our two Church of England Primary Schools, having enjoyed school ministry and governance in my previous role. I'm looking forward to building strong and enduring relationships with the staff and pupils at Wensley Fold and St Silas. I am as you might expect deeply rooted in the liturgical worshipping life of the church and I look forward to building a life of prayer and worship here among you, one which is rooted firmly in the Anglican tradition and is both beautiful and befitting Almighty God and the wonderful building he has entrusted to us.

This is but a brief introduction and I look forward to getting to know you all, so please do come and introduce yourself and tell me what you would like to see your church doing, and what I can bring to help us grow as a family of faith.

Finally all I would like to say is, here am I, I come to serve Almighty God and each and every one of you, that we might together be a family of faith that prays hard, works hard for, the Lord and each other and, and celebrates with joy all that our faith gives to us.

Love and Prayers

Fr David

“Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink.”

The people of Kent and Sussex must have reflected on the words of the Ancient Mariner. Tens of thousands of residents have been without water, causing much disruption. We take our water supply for granted and it takes a disaster to remind us what a precious commodity it is. And at the basic level we know that water, essential for life, is free. It is God given.

The Bible is well aware of the importance of water. If we were to follow Moses and the Israelites through their pilgrimage to the Promised Land, we would see how they set up their camps near wells and streams whenever possible. Water brought the Israelites much joy, but also more than that. It brought life itself.

Today, apart from disasters, we do not have to search for water, we have it “on tap”. However we need another kind of water as we journey through life. Jesus, sitting by Jacob’s Well, spoke to the woman of Samaria about water being God’s gift. He used it to describe eternal life. The wells of God, the wells of salvation, are full of water and never fail. As we move on our journey we need God’s grace. And this grace is available for all. Jesus said “If anyone is thirsty let them come to me and drink”. There are many “means of grace” by which the waters of life may flow into our souls. Prayer, Bible, sacraments – these are like ports at which a captain calls for fresh supplies – and many are the opportunities which occur to help and serve our fellow men and women.

The kindest wish that a Christian may make to another traveller is to help them to find the well of the water of life, and to say “may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

Rev Dennis Crook

CAFÉ CONCERT

ST. SILAS CHURCH

Preston New Road, Blackburn BB2 6PS

SATURDAY 14th MARCH 2026

ELCB Brass Ensemble

Recital at 11.00am

Refreshments from 10.15am

Admission £5

All Welcome!

The Feast of Epiphany

The Feast of The Epiphany 2026, celebrated on January 4th, was doubly special, as it also marked the day that the Diocese was to launch its centenary year, themed: “All for Jesus”. To emphasise the importance of Bishop Philip’s message to us all, Father Paul ascended into the pulpit, from where he delivered it verbatim. This was a powerful message as to the meaning of the Epiphany and the vision for the future of our Diocese.

Many visitors, including a number of our special organists, had joined us for our service and, indeed, our own Organist Emeritus, David Brindle, had returned from his recent retirement to play for us and, together with our wonderful choir, augmented with the addition of wife Jean, to provide music fit for a king. The reason for this, of course, was that it was to be the last day of Father Paul’s ministry with us.

In last month’s magazine, Father Paul wrote of Milestones being points for sharing souvenirs collected along life’s journey and of those he had collected during his time with us, and which he would cherish. That magazine had also been a vehicle for tributes to Father Paul which, at the end of the service, were reiterated by Matthew, prior to him presenting gifts and cards from the congregation and choir, in sincere gratitude for all that he had done for us in the past fourteen months. Amongst these was a beautiful block-printed card, created by

Alison, of our magnificent church window - a lasting memory for him of his time at St Silas'.

Following the service we all gathered in the Narthex, with glasses charged, as Father Paul cut the splendid Three Kings Cake, bedecked with impressive sugar-crafted kings and chocolate gifts, ably created by sisters Margaret and Christine and the Galette des Rois, fresh from Mahla's kitchen – complete with crown, but minus the choking hazard of a feve, as was the original custom!

Whilst crown and star themed canapes were circulated, created by members of the Events and Hospitality team, and cake was devoured, we reflected on the past year and, as the morning came to a close, we all, once more, wished Father Paul well as he embarked on the next stage of his Ministry.

Nora Clay

FLOWER GUILD MAGAZINE NOTES FOR FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2026

Christmas and New Year are over once again and we face another year with no doubt more and new challenges. By the time this magazine is published we will have welcomed our new priest in charge, Father David D'Silva, who may have his own ideas on decorating the church. Looking back to 2025 as most of you know, we faced many challenges posed by Father Paul regarding his vision of how it can be done to the glory of God. We would like to think we did him proud. Our final session was of course our Christmas display. This meant raiding friends' gardens to cut branches of Ilex 'Golden King' holly, fir, ivy, and other suitable foliage that was variegated and evergreen. The foliage was the "backcloth" to red berries, Poinsettias and a few small tasteful baubles adding a little bling to welcome Parishioners in the Porch and Narthex. Unfortunately owing to a winter cold, I was unable to help on this occasion, but my fellow Fairies as usual did an excellent job.

Earlier, before Christmas, one of our pedestals had a calamitous mishap whereby the top sheared off from the stand. We were both fortunate and grateful to have Joe, Church Warden, solder the two pieces together and make it as good as new again!

Thanks to the many generous donations we have received throughout the year, Diana and I were recently able to purchase some silk flowers for a new pedestal to fill the gap by the Altar at this time of year (an inbetweenner)! We already have suitable displays for Spring, Summer and Autumn, but lacked one for this period which covered us for when fresh flowers are both hard to find and costly.

Diana has been able to arrange these new silk flowers, (temporarily placed in the porch for the present). At the same time, on behalf of the congregation, we purchased a basket and planted it with Spring bulbs as a welcome present for Father David and Mrs D'Silva and family.

Whilst decorating the church in readiness for the weekend of the 25th January, the Flower Fairies had the pleasure of meeting Fr David informally. It was an opportune moment as we were deliberating where to place the altar pedestal of flowers so that the Bishop's chair was seen! We need not have worried as Fr David explained exactly where the chair was to be placed, in the centre between the Choir Stalls. We all look forward to this forthcoming happy occasion, having been invited to attend The Licensing of Revd Fr David as our Priest-in-Charge, by the Lord Bishop of Blackburn, on Sunday, 25th January at 4.00 pm at St. Silas's.

Val and Diana



Eco Team News



The Eco team would like to welcome Father David and his family to St Silas and are looking forward to a productive 2026 with a focus on achieving the Eco Church bronze and silver awards.

Take a walk around the perimeter of the church; we have planted bulbs and young hellebores in the curved bed at the side of church and we hope to see our fruit bushes close to the gate to the Alms Houses grow stronger this year.

At our Eco Café Forum last year, we outlined the work of A Rocha, the Christian conservation charity who advise and provide resources for practical community based action through churches. In addition to their **Eco Church** initiative, A Rocha provide information packs to support **25 different threatened species, groups and habitats**.

Take a look at [Target 25 - A Rocha UK](#) on the A Rocha website for more information, or on the Eco Board at the back of church. The Eco Team hope to focus on attracting more of the following to our church grounds

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- Garden Birds (Target 7) ~ by adding bird feeders and increasing nesting boxes in the church grounds.
- Butterflies (Target 9) ~ by planting more nectar rich flowers in the sunny front beds.
- Bees (Target 10) ~ by adding a greater variety of pollinator friendly plants around the church grounds.
- Bats (Target 11) ~ We have 3 bat boxes ready to fix to trees (bats like a south/south east facing position for the warmth from the morning sun).

We would welcome any offers of help to tend to and develop our beautiful church grounds.

Things change for the better when we work together. Every story of hope offers more inspiration and momentum to take action to address the biodiversity crisis we face.

The Eco Team – Margaret, Keith, Alison and Anne KP

LADIES' CIRCLE – FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2026

A huge welcome to Fr David and his family, and we hope you will all be very happy with us at St. Silas's. It will be lovely to have a young family in the vicarage once again.

As I write, we are looking forward to our Annual General Meeting on the 28th January at 2.30pm at Larmenier, our "winter headquarters." (We resume in church for spring and summer). We always welcome new members, and also anyone just wanting to come along now and then. There are so many groups now in church that we cannot expect to recruit many more ladies to ours. Having said that, everyone will be more than welcome!

At the AGM, we will present our programme for 2026, and would members who cannot attend please let me know and I will let you have a programme.

I am delighted to say that Calvin Howard, well-known to Tuesday Morning Fellowship and services at Larmenier, will be our speaker, returning by popular request on Tuesday, 24th February, 2.30pm at Larmenier.

On Tuesday, 24th March, member and Larmenier lady Megan Hartley, has offered to present a card-craft workshop. This will also give us chance to chat and get to know one another. As several of our members live at Larmenier, we don't get much time to talk altogether!

The meetings are in the small private dining room and are followed by refreshments in the café.

Let's hope for another good year at L.C!

Best wishes

Ruth Loft, secretary, Ladies' Circle

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STAMPS FOR THE HOSPICE

Thank you everyone who saves used stamps and puts them into the box in the Narthex. We had a bumper collection after Christmas!

Carole (Scadding) continues to take them to the East Lancashire Hospice where they are gratefully received.

Ruth Loft

CAFE CONCERTS in 2026

2026 brings with it a brand-new programme of Saturday morning café concerts, comprising events from brass band music to organ recitals and an instrumental duo. It will feature some new names as well as old favourites, performing in a variety of styles.

The format remains the same, with refreshments available from 10.15, followed by the concert at 11 o'clock – as does the admission charge of just £5.

We bid you a warm St Silas welcome to our first event on 14th March; the return of the rousing ELCB Brass Ensemble under the direction of Dale Grindrod.

Brian and Sheila

TOMBSTONE HUMOUR by Eric Spilman.

Here lies the corpse of Doctor Chard
Who filled up half of this churchyard.
Yeovil, Somerset.

Spectators all, as you pass by,
As you are now, so once was I
As I am now, so you must be,
Prepare for death, and follow me.
St. Mary's Churchyard, Whalley.

Sacred to the memory of MAJOR JAMES BRUSH, Royal Artillery
who was killed by the accidental discharge of a pistol by his orderly,
14th April, 1831. Well done, good and faithful servant.
Woolwich Churchyard, London.

Here I lie at the Chapel door,
Here lie I because I'm poor,
The farther in the more you'll pay,
Here lies I as warm as they.
Parish grave-digger, Kingsbridge, Devon.

In memory of ELLEN SHANNON who was fatally burned by the
explosion of a lamp filled with Danforth's Non-Explosive fluid.
Grand Cemetery, Pennsylvania.

Here lies Margaret Sexton,
Who never did naught to vex one.
Not like the woman under the next stone.
Grave of a second wife, Enfield, London.