

+WEEKLY SERMON

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Looking ahead to a year of thanksgiving and mission

The year 2026 will be a landmark in the life of our Diocese - a centenary year, marking one hundred years since William Temple founded the Diocese of Blackburn in 1926.

It is a moment to pause and give thanks for all that God has done through His people across Lancashire: in our parishes, schools, and communities. For a century, the Gospel has been proclaimed, lives have been transformed, and hope has been shared. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, grateful for their faithfulness.

But this is more than a celebration of the past. It is an opportunity to commit ourselves afresh to mission and ministry in the service of Jesus Christ. The centenary calls us to look forward with courage and joy, asking: how will we tell the story of Jesus in our generation? How will we live out our calling to be His witnesses in every town and village?

Our celebrations begin on January 4, the Feast of the Epiphany - a day when the Wise Men laid their gifts before the Lord, revealing who Jesus is and offering their lives to Him. What better day to launch our centenary theme: "All for Jesus".

This theme reminds us that everything we do—every act of worship, every word of witness, every moment of service—is for Him.

To help every parish and school join in, resources are prepared: liturgies for Epiphany, an all-age service outline, collective worship materials for schools, and a homily (including a video) from Bishop Philip. These tools are designed to make local celebrations simple and meaningful, so that together we begin the year with prayer and commitment.

And because a celebration needs a party, save the date for our Big Day Out in Blackpool on Saturday 16 May 2026. Blackpool has played a special role in the history of our Diocese, and it will be the heart of our centenary festivities.

There will be activities for children, sessions for young people and adults, live music, sports workshops, and a giant picnic - culminating in a joyful service on St John's Square outside the Winter Gardens. From 11am to 3.30pm, it promises to be a day of fellowship and fun.

As we look ahead, let us make this more than an event. Let it be a spiritual renewal—a moment to rededicate ourselves and our Diocese to God.

It's going to be exciting and a chance to share the gospel with many people in our County. In a few weeks' time I will be writing a further entry to our Weekly Sermon series in which I will explore other events happening across 2026.

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

In the meantime you can read about everything that is planned and access resources [here](#) and I'm praying our centenary prayer - will you join me in saying ...

Heavenly Father,
in our Centenary year
we rededicate ourselves and our Diocese 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.

Ronnie Semley, Diocesan Communications Manager