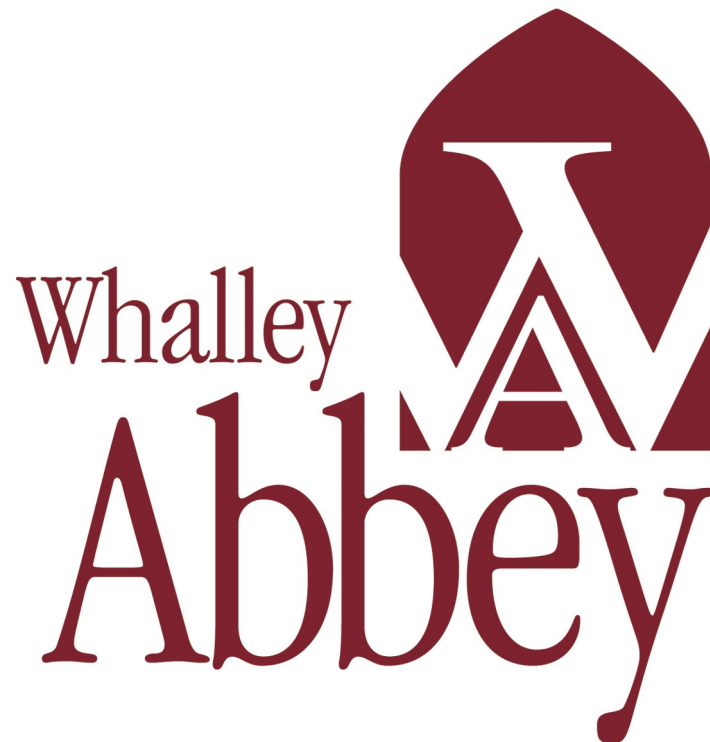


Whalley Abbey Ministry Experience Scheme Guide Booklet



INTRODUCTION

Do you feel called to spend a year exploring your call to ministry in a retreat house based in the ruins of a 13th Century Abbey? Do you want to experience at first-hand what the ministry of service is about? Might you be wondering about a call to ordained or lay ministry in the Church? Do you have a heart for a deepening of faith and being a witness to God's work in the lives of all people?

The Whalley Abbey volunteer scheme is open to all. It's a chance, within the national structure of the Church of England Ministerial Experience Scheme, to spend a placement year, funded and supported, experiencing ministry in Whalley Abbey, the Diocese of Blackburn's centre for discipleship and prayer.

WHALLEY ABBEY VISION

After a year's closure during Covid, Whalley Abbey reopened in 2021 as a Centre for Christian Discipleship and Prayer. The Governance Committee has been reviewing its strategic vision within the context of the Diocese of Blackburn's Vision 2026 Update. We believe that the Abbey will play a key role in supporting the parishes in Making Disciples for Jesus Christ, but our experience during our first year of re-opening has convinced us that the Abbey is also able to contribute significantly to the other themes of the Vision - Being Witnesses, Growing Leaders and Inspiring Children and Young People.

Our high-level strategic vision, adopted in March 2022, is as follows:

Encounter, spiritual refreshment and growth for all

COME IN AND BE CHANGED

Whalley Abbey, as a Centre for Christian discipleship and prayer, will:

Encounter

1. Facilitate an encounter with God and one another
2. Be open to the unexpected ensuring that the community team will be open and responsive
3. Ensure that there is always someone available to listen

Spiritual Refreshment and Growth

1. Help people relate their faith to their everyday lives
2. Encourage an engagement with scripture
3. Reflect a variety of Christian traditions
4. Grow the praying the community
5. Send people out strengthened and ready for their faith journey

For All

1. Increase the number of Blackburn Diocesan parishes engaging with WA to 50%
2. Increase the number of parishes coming from Liverpool and Manchester diocese by 50%
3. See a younger and more socially diverse community and visitors
4. Help more people from all stages of the journey of faith
5. See more people return, return more often, and return for longer.

Beneath each of the three sections above, the Governance Committee has a detailed delivery plan, with targets that are specific, measurable, realistic and timed.

Aspirations for Future Development

As we shape the next stage of the strategic plan we keep in mind the following longer-term aspirations:

- Reuniting the whole site and developing its potential in partnership with the Roman Catholic Diocese
- Developing our strong link with the Royal Foundation of St Katherine
- Additional accommodation on site for the assistant director
- Working with the cathedral to develop and grow a dispersed praying community
- Strengthening links with the village community

The Governance Committee will review the above strategic plan in November 2023, following the arrival of the new Director.

VISION 2026



Your placement with us will take place within the context of the Diocese of Blackburn's Vision 2026 as we work together in our Diocese to become healthy churches, transforming our communities.

The year 2026 marks the centenary of the formation of the Diocese of Blackburn. In the ten years leading up to our centenary, Vision 2026 is a plan to turn around the long-term trend of gradually declining attendance. Our vision is for the growth of God's kingdom, not just of his church. Our vision is to develop healthy churches which transform their communities, a vision in which making disciples for Jesus Christ and pursuing social justice sit side by side.

As a diocese with our Vision, we are willing to face the cost of change; and in prayer we see the grace and power of God which can alone bring renewal and growth. We are committed to work together (clergy, laity, church schools, diocesan staff and the cathedral) to deliver Vision 2026 by:

Making disciples of Jesus Christ

- Knowing the Scriptures better through reading, teaching, preaching and study
- Worshipping in spirit and truth
- Praying with greater depth and urgency for the Kingdom of God to come
- Giving generously of our time, talents and money to the cause of Christ

Being witnesses to Jesus Christ

- Sharing the Gospel of salvation with confidence
- Meeting human need: actions as well as words
- Planting 10 Strategic Church Plants and 200 New Local Congregations
- Caring for God's creation

Growing leaders for Jesus Christ

- Developing a diocesan-wide culture of vocational discernment so that all may hear God's call and use their gifts in the service of the Gospel.
- Discerning and forming theologically literate lay and ordained leaders, rooted in prayer and with a deep love of the Lord Jesus
- Nurturing a healthy partnership between clergy and laity by fully implementing the Lay Majority Ministry framework
- Forming and supporting a pipeline of highly motivated deacons and priests in order to enable the Diocese's clergy deployment strategy

Inspiring Children and Young People to raise up a new generation for Christ

- Discipling and nurturing children and young people in their Faith
- Holding regular worship that is accessible and appealing to children and young people and their families.

- Enabling growth in the numbers of leaders of children and young people
- Leveraging a step change in ministry with those aged 11-16
- Facilitating effective partnerships between churches and schools

The Whalley Abbey Community participants will be a part of this vision as we use this scheme to grow leaders by giving young people space to explore their own calling, whether that's to lay or ordained ministry, or something else altogether. Also, those living and working in the Abbey facilitate the Vision by providing a focal point for a programme of events to take place in its service.

THE PLACE

Details about Whalley Abbey and the work that we do can be found in the accompanying ethos document and below.

COMMUNITY LIVING

The participants will live together in Whalley Abbey. Each participant will have their own bedroom, and will have access to Abbey kitchen and living areas. Living together in Christian community will be a key element in this scheme. It is at times challenging and you need to be someone who works well with others and can compromise, but it is also joy-filled and helps us grow. Members of the community commit to making themselves available to others, without forgetting time for personal recharging. The Director and others in a mentoring role will provide support and oversight.

WORSHIP

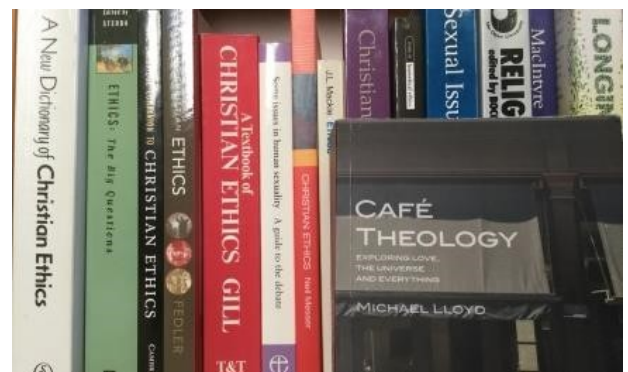
The heart of the church life is prayer and worship, from which everything else flows. You will find a wide range of different worship experiences within a range of spirituality. Prayer and worship will form a key component in your time with us and you will have the opportunity to be regularly involved with planning and leading parts of the worship services, including our daily prayer services which run four times a day.



STUDY AND REFLECTION

The most important thing in the scheme is not just what you experience, but how you reflect on and make use of that experience. There will be regular chapter meetings, individual placement supervision sessions, as well as plenty of opportunities for informal discussion and reflection.

All participants will follow a program of study – as there are several different options available, each participant will have a study program tailored to their experience, needs and ability.



PURPOSE OF THE ROLE

A volunteer programme in which you offer 'a year or two in God's time' to be part of a religious community dedicated to prayer, hospitality and training in discipleship.

Inspired by the Cistercian tradition of the site, you will be involved in a daily pattern of prayer, study and manual work designed to help you grow in your relationship with God.

MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE ROLE

- Maintaining a rhythm of worship and prayer, with daily hours of prayer and participation in the regular celebration of the Eucharist
- Study and mentoring – receiving teaching, training and mentoring in faith, developing your gifts and being equipped for future ministry. Each member will be encouraged to have a spiritual director/companion outside of the Abbey community.
- Ministry of hospitality to visitors – helping to receive guests, look after their needs and provide a listening ear.
- Manual work – contributing to the work of the house on a rota basis, including the practical running of the programme and everyday tasks such as cleaning, housekeeping, serving and catering, and event duties as needed .
- Evening and night time cover – members of the resident community will take turns to be on call as requested in case of emergency whenever guests are resident.

You will be encouraged to make a distinctive contribution according to your gifts, skills and interests, to enhance the life of the community and the Abbey. Living in community provides an opportunity for personal growth and enrichment through our availability to others, and it is expected that you will actively engage in the social element of community life.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

All candidates will sign a placement agreement.

The programme will usually run for 12 months with an option to extend for a second term if both parties agree.

The programme is aimed at adults over 21 (but those aged 18-21 will be considered if recommended by a local diocese).

Accommodation will be provided on site.

An allowance of £330 per month will be paid and food will be provided, although at times you will be expected to prepare your own meals.

Time off – one fixed day a week and an extra day off each month, plus 4 weeks annual leave. Annual leave would not be taken on major Christian festivals. A day a week will be given for personal and spiritual development.

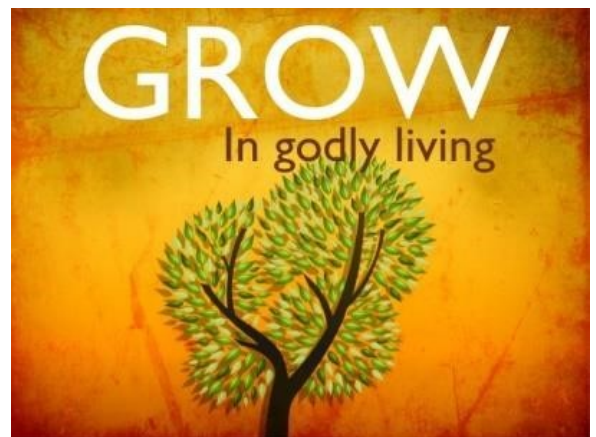
An enhanced DBS check will be required for all community members.

Start date: Rolling

Support will be provided to develop a package of learning and training that will be tailored to each candidate's needs. This will include funding for job related training and support in trying to find bursaries for funding for appropriate academic qualifications. This plan will be produced by week 5 of your placement.

CODE OF CONDUCT

As well as fulfilling your duties, we also will be asking you to adhere to a behaviour code during your time with us.



- We seek to develop our personal integrity and live with respect, openness and honesty with others in community.
- We have an ongoing commitment to growing in Christian maturity and embracing challenge.
- We seek to protect God's creation in everything we do.
- We seek to follow the good guidance of those in authority.
- We seek to conduct any personal relationships within the guidelines for clergy as held by the Church of England.
- We seek to live a Godly life, acknowledging that our behaviour, in work and at leisure, is a reflection of the

Christian life to all. This also includes our use of social media.

- We will maintain confidentiality within appropriate boundaries.
- We will deal with any grievances within the provided framework.

Clarification of any of these points can be raised when you work with your supervisor on your personal working agreement.

WHAT NEXT?

If you discern during the placement that you're being called to explore further a vocation to lay or ordained ministry, there will be plenty of help and support in taking the next steps. If you decide that it's not something you are being called to, we are sure the experience here will still have provided much to help you on the next stage of your own journey, wherever that takes you.

ANY QUESTIONS?



Please feel free to contact the Director of Whalley Abbey, the Revd Anna Walker if you want to ask anything at all, or if you want to apply.



We do recommend applying early as there are only four places available. Informal visits, to meet us or to find out more, can be arranged: just get in touch! Applicants will need to complete an application form and provide

references, and appointments will be subject to a satisfactory enhanced DBS clearance.

To ask anything, to find out more, to arrange an informal conversation or visit, contact the Director of Whalley Abbey:

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email anna.walker@whalleyabbey.org