

Hexham Deanery lies at the Centre of Britain

It is also at the centre of a very exciting development in the life of its parishes. For some four years now the benefices of Haltwhistle and Greenhead, Haydon Bridge with Beltingham and Henshaw, and St. John Lee with Warden and Newbrough i.e The Parishes By The Wall (Hadrian's of course!) have collectively been exploring and developing ways of working together. This is much more than swapping pulpits every so often. This is a root and stock growth in Licensed ministry, lay ministry and ecumenical partnership. It is about asking how can we be church better together? How can we release the power of God's love into our communities? How can we be inspired by the Holy Spirit to live as Christ here today? It is about transforming our churches and communities for the benefit of all of God's people.

This zeal has spilled out into the whole Deanery, with new growth and initiatives springing up in many parishes. Across them about 20 people have answered the call they feel to Authorised Lay Ministry, have completed a training course and received support from their parishes to use their ministry. This project is endorsed by the Diocese and is part of the Diocesan Transformation Strategy.

So what has happened so far?

For the last four years, we have been doing the groundwork. Firstly, by simply recognising the potential that these partnerships can release and by agreeing that this is, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the way God wants us to go forward. That in itself was a major step forward for a group of parishes that have in times past been quite insular. Out of that positive decision has grown a genuine appreciation of those who worship in parishes other than our own. This has been strengthened of late by sharing in Zoom worship and by a series of pilgrimages across our deanery visiting every church and community over four years.

Are we all up for this?

All of our thinking and acting has arisen out of shared lay/clergy conversations. This is an organic process that has grown out of shared activities which have enabled a deeper understanding of "their" perspective. Which in turn has led to a willingness to work together for all our benefit. **In short: we are. Are you?**