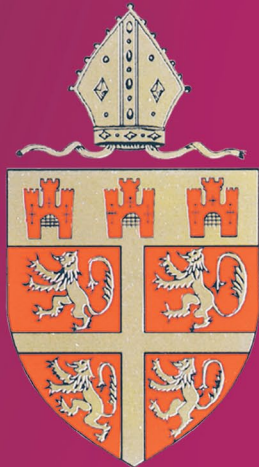


# LINK

The newspaper for the Diocese of Newcastle



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> The Warm Hub at Embleton is greatly appreciated by those who attend every Monday lunchtime.

# Keeping warm this winter

Communities open up kitchens for food and friendship

THE cost of living crisis and plummeting temperatures have led to many communities across our Diocese providing much needed Warm Spaces and Warm Hubs.

Dozens of communal spaces have opened up offering a welcoming, friendly environment where hot soup and other refreshments are served, and in some cases services from free wi-fi to a baby and toddler group,

an after-school club and even a clothes swapping service.

This month in Link, we pay a visit to the Warm Hub at Embleton near Alnwick, and find out why such community interaction helps to make sure nobody in the rural area is left isolated.

There's also information about similar offerings elsewhere in the Diocese.

Turn to page 7



> The Embleton Warm Hub is run by volunteers and supported by Holy Trinity Parish Church.



> Janet Murphy dishes out hot soup at the Warm Hub at Embleton Parish Room, near Alnwick.



# Appointment of Interim Dean of Newcastle



> The Very Revd Jane Hedges



> The Very Revd Geoff Miller

The Very Revd Jane Hedges has spoken of the warm welcome she received after being appointed as the Interim Dean of Newcastle.

Her appointment took effect on 30th December and will continue until a new Dean is appointed later in 2023. It follows the retirement of The Very Revd Geoff Miller in November last year.

Jane brings a wealth of experience to the role of Interim Dean, having served as Canon Residentiary of Portsmouth Cathedral, Canon Steward of Westminster Abbey, Dean of Norwich, and very recently

as Acting Dean of Canterbury Cathedral.

Jane said: "It is both an exciting and challenging time for the Cathedral as it has said farewell to one Dean and awaits the appointment of another. Like all cathedrals though, the running of Newcastle depends on the whole team of clergy, staff and volunteers worshipping and working together.

"My husband Chris and I have already received a warm welcome as we've visited and worshipped at the Cathedral and I very much look forward to taking on the role of Interim

Dean and working with all who are part of its life as we move in to 2023 and prepare to install Bishop Helen-Ann."

Bishop Mark said: "We are truly blessed that someone with Jane's experience and Godly character is willing to lead our Cathedral through the vacancy until a new Dean is appointed. Please pray for Jane as she prepares to take up her ministry here, and for the Chapter and team as they welcome her among them as Interim Dean."

Jane was to be commissioned as Interim Dean at Evensong on 22nd January.

## Comings & Goings

### Resignation

The Rt Revd Mark Bryant, Honorary Assistant Bishop, is resigning as Acting Area Dean (Bedlington Deanery) with effect from 31st December 2022

### Appointments

The Revd Canon Ian Flintoft, Vicar of Newsham and Horton, is going to be Area Dean (Bedlington Deanery) with effect from 1st January 2023

The Revd Dr Sarah Moon, Priest in Charge of Killingworth and Chaplain to the Mothers' Union, is also going to be Assistant Area Dean (Bedlington Deanery) with effect from 1st January 2023

The Revd Christian Mitchell, currently Incumbent of the Parish of Heathfield, Diocese of Chichester is going to be Vicar of Alnwick wef 13th May 2023

## Gospel Readings

Wednesday	Mark 6.1-6a	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Mark 8.27-33</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Mark 6.7-13</b>	Friday	Mark 8.34-9.1
Friday	Mark 6.14-29	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Mark 9.2-13</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Mark 6.30-34</b>	Sunday next before Lent	Matthew 17.1-9
3rd Sunday of Lent	Matthew 5.13-20	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Mark 9.14-29</b>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>Mark 6.53-end</b>	Tuesday	Mark 9.30-37
Tuesday	Mark 7.1-13	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Matthew 6.1-6, 16-21</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Mark 7.14-23</b>		<b>or John 8.1-11</b>
Thursday	Mark 7.24-30	Thursday	Luke 9.22-25
<b>Friday</b>	<b>Mark 7.31-end</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Matthew 9.14-15</b>
Saturday	Mark 8.1-10	Saturday	Luke 5.27-32
<b>2nd Sunday before Lent</b>	<b>Matthew 6.25-end</b>	<b>1st Sunday of Lent</b>	<b>Matthew 4.1-11</b>
Monday	Mark 8.11-13	Monday	Matthew 25.31-end
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Mark 8.14-21</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Matthew 6.7-15</b>
Wednesday	Mark 8.22-26		

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Link is produced ten times a year by the Diocese of Newcastle, with joint issues for August/September and December/January. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Diocese or the editor. The editor is pleased to consider articles or letters of not more than 350 words for publication. Where possible, articles should be accompanied by a good-quality digital photograph. Please contact the editor before submitting obituaries.

For advertising rates and deadlines see [www.newcastle.anglican.org/link](http://www.newcastle.anglican.org/link)  
**Copy date for March 2023 issue: Monday 13 February.**

## Religious Resources

north east  
your religious learning resources centre

[www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk](http://www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk)

### Are you looking for new resources and ideas to use in your work? When were you last in the North East Religious Learning Resources Centre?

The RRC is the largest RE centre in the country and supports churches, schools and parishes in all areas of religious education and learning, mission and ministry.

Based in two sites, at Church House in Percy Main and Cuthbert House in Stonebridge, Durham, they hold over 37,000 resources - many of which of which are unique to them. There are three main areas:

- A specialist children's collection to use with children from pre-school up to age 12 in churches and schools to teach about the Christian faith, and a range of other subjects covered in church and school.
- A general collection of practical resources to use in a variety of school and church contexts including Lent and small group courses, holiday clubs, supporting the bereaved or those with dementia.
- An academic collection for those studying theology including a wide selection of journals

### With books, DVD's, posters, banners, Godly Play, topic boxes and bags, there's something for everyone!

But the RRC is more than physical resources. It has a wide range of online resources available on its online catalogue and YouTube channel, a database of regularly updated faith community information and runs an extensive programme of CPD events open to all.

### Upcoming events

- The Art of Mending - 4th March, Church House. For the crafter in your community!
- Faith, Markets and Money: How economics force us to think differently about religion and power - 16th March, Zoom
- Opening up God's House: Gypsy,



> Inside the the North East Religious Learning Resources Centre

Roma, Traveller Communities and the Church - 18th March, Zoom

Everyone is welcome to visit - bring a friend! Anyone can join: the yearly membership fees are excellent value for money. Individual membership costs £28 (Concessions £16) and every member can borrow up to 10 resources at a time, including 3 topic boxes or bags.

Some people are sponsored by their Diocese and can use for FREE:

- Licensed Anglican clergy with the Bishops permission to officiate\* in the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle
- Licensed Readers with the Bishops permission to officiate\* in the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle
- Staff and students of the Lindisfarne College of Theology
- Anglican Church Schools with a Diocesan service level agreement in the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle

\*Does not include retired clergy with permission to officiate but they qualify for concessionary membership.

To find out more, you can visit their website: [www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk](http://www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk) or contact them via: [enquiries@resourcescentreonline.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@resourcescentreonline.co.uk) or 0191 270 4161.



# Artwork loan offer via Newcastle Cathedral

A sculptural art piece, *Legacy*, by Robert Fulford, is currently on loan to Newcastle Cathedral and will be on display until Easter 2023.

It will be available from the artist, free of charge, to any church wishing to display it. The piece takes the shape of a wall-hung cross made from 150 metres of walnut veneer, backed with golden copper leaf and created to immerse the onlooker in Christ's love and sacrifice.

Further information can be obtained from Lindy Gilliland at the Cathedral ([lindy.gilliland@newcastlecathedral.org.uk](mailto:lindy.gilliland@newcastlecathedral.org.uk)) or Roberta Fulford ([robertafulford@hotmail.com](mailto:robertafulford@hotmail.com)).

Interested churches should note that the artwork is very low-tech, free-flowing and maintenance-free. It is best suspended from a hook but can be sculpted to suit any architectural space. Roberta would be pleased to discuss loan dates and arrange a site visit.



# A big year for education – but it's 'business as usual' as DDE prepares for new role

**E**XCITING times lie ahead for education in our Diocese as a key figure prepares to move from one high profile role into another.

But Canon Paul Rickeard, Diocesan Director of Education (DDE), is reassuring schools that it will be business as usual in 2023.

On 31 August, Paul will step down as DDE after seven years to become the full time Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust, which has grown considerably since it was set up for schools in both Durham and Newcastle dioceses five years ago. Until this point the Trust has been run by Paul and his team as part of a secondment agreement from both Boards of Education for two days a week.

The Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) already runs 13 Church of England schools in Durham, and it is hoped it will take on its first school within the Newcastle diocese this Easter.

Such has been the success of the MAT, that Paul will be the man to lead it forward as full time CEO, meaning he will have to relinquish the role of DDE which he has carried out with distinction since 2015.

"This has been a huge decision for me," said Paul. "I have loved serving as DDE. With my team of dedicated professionals, we have achieved such a lot with our great schools and it's certainly not easy to leave all that behind."

While Paul is looking forward to his new role and couldn't turn down the opportunity to lead the MAT's exciting future, the decision to step down as DDE was taken out of his hands.



> Canon Paul Rickeard

"I couldn't do both," he explained. "The Department for Education (DfE) wanted somebody specifically for each role. But I still feel as though I will be part of each Diocese and I've no doubt that there are exciting times ahead."

From September, Paul is to be replaced as DDE by Gill Booth, of the Dayspring Learning Trust, a first class education provider steeped in Christian values.

"Gill is great," said Paul. "She will bring her own strengths to the role but she has a lot of knowledge and experience to offer. I know how dedicated Gill is and my strong message is that during this transition, it will be business as usual. Schools will continue to receive the

high level of service they need to support them.

"It's always about ensuring the best possible outcomes for every child, making sure they get the best start in life. That is always our priority and that will not change."

The role has been a huge undertaking. Paul and his dedicated team have 107 schools and around 30,000 children under their wing, from pre-school to 19 years of age, under 10 different local authorities – all with different expectations.

During Paul's time as DDE, an effective school improvement service has been established, with fully qualified Ofsted inspectors deployed to help schools which are struggling, as part of a raft of professional resources available within our schools. Standards have improved in schools in both dioceses but this is down to exceptionally talented leadership teams in our schools and the excellent Joint Education Team.

Paul and his team also oversee our school buildings, making sure they are governance compliant and are environmentally friendly.

"The strength of my role is the strength of my team," said Paul. "People are highly experienced, highly sought after and are in huge demand. That is evident in that they get asked to do work beyond the diocese."

Paul added: "Our mantra is that no child is ever left behind and that is very important to us."

Paul is an ecumenical canon. That honour was bestowed upon him by Bishop Christine before her retirement.



# Bishop's Letter

With Bishop Mark Wroe

I am delighted to let you know that the legal process enabling Bishop Helen-Ann Hartley to become our new Bishop of Newcastle continues on 3 February when her Confirmation of Election takes place at York Minster. In the weeks following this, Bishop Helen-Ann will travel to Buckingham Palace where she will pay homage to His Majesty the King, and on Saturday 22 April at 3pm her Installation Service as thirteenth Bishop of Newcastle will take place at Newcastle Cathedral. Details of the service will follow in due course, but you may wish to hold this date in your diaries. I hope as many people as possible will be able to join us in person for the service; it will be livestreamed on the internet for those unable to attend in person.

In the period between Bishop Helen-Ann's Confirmation of Election and Installation, her focus will very much be on getting to know our diocese in more informal meetings and gatherings, and she will not pick up her formal duties as Bishop of Newcastle until after her installation has taken place. In the meantime, at Bishop Helen-Ann's request, I will continue to be responsible for the day to day running of the diocese, as I have been since Bishop Christine's retirement.

Please do pray for Bishop Helen-Ann and Myles as they prepare to move home from Yorkshire to join us here in Newcastle Diocese.

+ Mark



> The Right Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley

## MONTHLY E-BULLETIN...

HAVE you signed up to our monthly Diocesan e-Bulletin? Delivered straight to your inbox on the last Friday of each month, the e-Bulletin features the latest news, information, upcoming events and resources for the Diocese as well as our monthly Prayer Diary.



You can sign-up at [www.bit.ly/ebulletin-resub](http://www.bit.ly/ebulletin-resub) or via our Facebook page @ncldiocese



## Growing Faith – life in all its fullness

By Tara Russell

Growing Faith is the movement that exists to put children, young people and families instinctively at the heart of all the mission and ministry of the church by changing the culture of the Church of England. No small task!

It comes from the vision set by the House of Bishops and endorsed by General Synod in 2019. It involves **churches, schools and households** working together to help children, young people and families have life in all its fullness.

The Growing Faith Foundation, led by Lucy Moore, formerly of Messy Church, seeks to benefit children and young people, helping them create the world they want to live in, specifically through the lens of the Christian faith.

Every Diocese has appointed one or more Growing Faith Champions to take forward the Growing Faith mission locally. Tara Russell, Team Leader for Children and Young People has been part of the Growing Faith conversation for the last four years.

Last year, the Children and Youth Team held their Regional Roadshow, with Lucy



> Participants join together during one of the Youth Cell sessions.

as the keynote speaker. We had three evenings of amazing content, where we shared our stories, learned from each other and Lucy, and came away with renewed hope for the future of children and youth in our churches. Out of the tour, our region has been selected as a Growing Faith Learning Hub, which is incredibly exciting. Please pray for **Ignite Alnwick** who will lead the Hub, and those who will work alongside.

## Ignite Alnwick

Ignite is a Christian charity based in Alnwick. It has a strong focus on youth and schools work, striving to serve its local community with love and action.

The organisation believes that all young people should be encouraged to think about spiritual matters while recognising that they need the space to make their own choices as to what to believe.

The charity seeks to raise the aspirations of young people and facilitate their healthy and full development, enabling them to become mature, responsible citizens who are active in the community.

Ignite's Youth and Schools Worker Jessica McArdle said: "With the knowledge of Lucy and her team we feel hugely invested in. To have this level of investment in a rural area is both exciting and unusual.

"It gives us an opportunity to be really creative and to think outside the box as we work out how we reach children, young people and families. They are at the core of what we do and at the centre of our decision making. It means we can have fun in thinking about how we meet their needs in a new way."

There's much going on at Ignite, including an ecumenical messy church, which is a friendly, supportive community with family fun, crafts and games, age-appropriate worship and finishes with a Sunday tea.

There are junior youth cells for different age groups, providing a recreational and creative space to build friendships, explore the Christian faith and have lots of fun.

There were Christingle workshops before Christmas, while transitional work supports youngsters as they make the move from primary to secondary school.

Jessica added: "We're focused on developing our work with the high



> One of the youth activities made available by Ignite.

schools. How we connect family and church and school. What happens at those intersections?"

Ignite works closely with The Roost, a locally-based charity which helps young adults to explore their spirituality and connect with the Christian Heritage.

Ignite also runs a coffee van service, which provides hot drinks for people out and about in Alnwick on Saturday nights. It reaches out in a practical way and is a Christian presence, supporting people during their night out, taxi drivers, bouncers, dog walkers and police officers.

Jessica said there's a great steering group at Ignite, a mixed representation with people from schools, families and different denominations coming together. There is also much support from volunteers, local church leaders, young leaders, parents and grandparents.

# Reflecting on 'a hugely rich and enjoyable time' as DDO

A priest who led the prayers at one of Queen Elizabeth's landmark birthdays has retired after serving a key role within the Diocese of Newcastle.

Revd Claire Robson said it was "an honour and a privilege" to serve as Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO) from 2018 until last Christmas.

The highly responsible yet fulfilling role saw Claire work as part of the discernment process to identify those suitable for ordination.

Claire, who is originally from Hartlepool, returned to the North East after serving in high profile roles elsewhere in the country. She was Vicar at Bath Abbey in Somerset and prior to that was Minor Canon Chaplain at St Paul's Cathedral in London. It was during her time at St Paul's when Claire was handed the honour of organising the National Service of Thanksgiving for the 80th birthday of Her Majesty the Queen in 2006.

More recently, Claire's service within the Diocese included the role of Assistant Area Dean in Bellingham Deanery, and Associate Priest at Hexham Abbey during Canon Dr Dagmar Winter's time as Rector.

"I've had a hugely rich and enjoyable time with the Diocese," said Claire, who will continue to live in the area at Humshaugh in the rural Tyne Valley. "It has been a privilege to meet and to work with so many extraordinary people who I will continue to pray for."

Claire's arrival in Newcastle came about after nine years at Bath Abbey. When she expressed a desire to return to her native North East, Bishop Christine offered her a role initially as Interim DDO.

"I had previously worked in a variety of city and rural contexts," said Claire. "I had also carried out some vocations work in the dioceses of Salisbury, London and Bath & Wells. That background, and working in a variety of contexts and traditions, was very useful for the role."

Claire was well suited to working with Bishops during the discernment process, and also individuals who felt that they were being called to ministry. That's what she did at a local level within Newcastle Diocese, but Claire also became a Bishop's Adviser for National Selection Panels - a role she will continue to perform.

She added: "It takes a great deal of courage for anyone to come forward and say they feel called to ministry - and there's a huge variety of people, from teenagers to 60+. For some it might lead to ordination, whereas others are more suited to a lay role. The discernment process is very much one of exploration. It's about encouraging, enabling, giving confidence to people to explore. It's a lengthy process and it's a great responsibility, but we want to see whether or not God is seeking for them to be



> Revd Claire Robson.

ordained." The process also involves speaking to church communities and seeking advice from referees as well as input from national selection panels.

"It has been an absolute honour and privilege to serve Bishops Christine and Mark," said Claire. "I want to thank them and also give particular gratitude to Canon Christine Brown who has worked as Associate DDO and the other members of the DDO team."

Prior to her career in the Church, Claire was a deputy headteacher in North London. She went on to serve as a priest in Dorset, then in West Hampstead in London before moving to St Paul's Cathedral, where she served as the Rector of the Society of Catholic Priests for the Diocese of London, a role which she also held in Newcastle Diocese.

In retirement, Claire is looking forward to travelling and catching up with friends and family. She will continue to serve as a member of the House of Clergy on General Synod.

She added: "As a priest you never really retire. After a period of time I will see if I can be useful and assist at a parish in the Diocese."

Bishop Mark has announced that the Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh has agreed to serve as Interim DDO on a part-time basis, whilst continuing as vicar of St Peter Monkseaton. She will be supported by the Revd Dr Alastair Price, who is DDO for Durham Diocese. A new DDO is set to be appointed in the early summer.

Bishop Mark said he was deeply thankful to Claire and also to Christine Brown, who has stepped down at the same time. To contact the DDO email [DDO@newcastle.anglican.org](mailto:DDO@newcastle.anglican.org) or call 07741 849651.



# Hot off the press! New book published – Newcastle Cathedral: A Treasure Chest of Stories

**T**HE former Dean of Newcastle, Geoff Miller, will give a talk on Saturday 4 February at 11:30am, to mark the launch of Newcastle Cathedral's new guidebook.

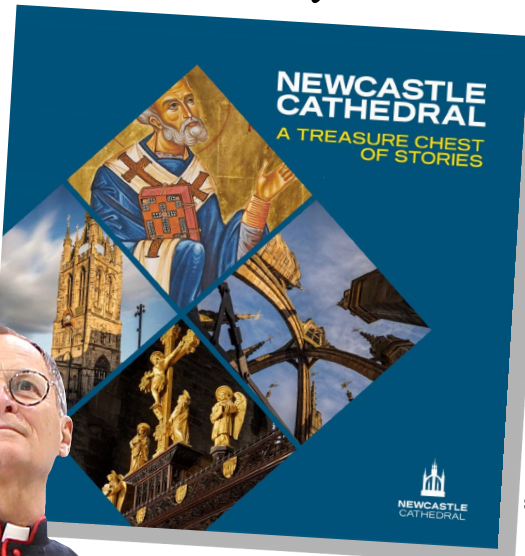
Newcastle Cathedral: A Treasure Chest of Stories was written by Geoff as part of his legacy to the Cathedral before his retirement last November.

Designed to be 'more than a guidebook', readers can expect to be taken on a "journey of discovery" as Geoff's distinctive voice guides them through architectural spaces and introduces some of the key historical figures involved in co-creating the building we know today.

The book's publication comes 18 months after the completion of the £6m National Lottery Heritage Fund redevelopment project, Common Ground in Sacred Space, which took inspiration from the Cathedral's ancient roots to reinvent the space as a dynamic hub for worship and community activity.

Geoff says: "Every generation has adapted St Nicholas' to suit prevailing fashions and contexts. It is a shrine to the people's stories;

➤ **Former Dean of Newcastle Geoff Miller.**



vast collection of ledger stones which commemorate notable people of the city.

More recent events include the 'Unknown Knight' effigy's return to its former resting place and the introduction of a new set of liturgical furniture created and made by local designers, Raskl.

The book has been funded by the Friends of St Nicholas, with support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The Friends of St Nicholas is an independent charity whose mission is to maintain and beautify the Cathedral and enhance the experience of all those who visit and worship there.

Newcastle Cathedral: A Treasure Chest of Stories is available now for £5.99 from the Cathedral's retail area, which is open Mondays to Fridays, 10am-4pm, and Saturdays, from 10am until approximately 3.30pm.

people who have co-created this place, who have lived and laughed, loved and cried here.

"This guidebook tells a mere fraction of the stories that are recorded within the walls."

Tales within the book include the Siege of Newcastle by Scottish invaders in 1644; the Cathedral's connections to Trafalgar hero Admiral Lord Collingwood; and a brief look at the Cathedral's

The launch event is free to attend with an optional donation, and refreshments available afterwards with the Friends of St Nicholas.

You can find more details about the event, and reserve your optional space, via the Cathedral website, [newcastlecathedral.org.uk/treasure-chest](http://newcastlecathedral.org.uk/treasure-chest)

To find out how you can join the Friends of St Nicholas, visit [newcastlecathedral.org.uk/friends](http://newcastlecathedral.org.uk/friends)



View from the  
**NEWCASTLE CATHEDRAL** Lantern

By The Revd Canon Peter Dobson



➤ **Newcastle Cathedral.**

Just before Christmas, fans of Richard Osman's TV gameshow 'House of Games' might have spotted contestants being challenged with a question about our very own Cathedral. The question: 'For several centuries after its construction in 1448, the tower of Newcastle Cathedral was used as what?' The answers to choose from: 'A brewery', 'A lookout post', 'Target practice for archers', or 'A lighthouse'.

Hopefully you would have easily picked the correct answer, and, if you're not sure, the title of this column would give you a clue. A lighthouse. When the Newcastle skyline looked rather different and the town of Newcastle, as was, was growing up from the banks of the Tyne, St Nicholas' iconic 'Lantern Tower' was its major landmark, a beacon on the hill, something to help ships navigate their way up the Tyne and to shine a light at what was the heart of this town as it developed.

Today, the Cathedral's 'Lantern Initiative' – a way of being, of thinking, and behaving, to re-cast how we respond to vulnerability at the City's heart today, and live out our calling as a place of Radical Welcome, Inspiring Worship and Empowering Worth in one another – continues to seek to shine a light in ways that are meaningful for our time and the city as it is today.

While we hope we are able to shine a light for those in dark times, we also want to be changed by the light shining from others calling us as a community to change. Looking back on 2022 it is easy to think of folk such as one person traumatised and longing for a fresh start in baptism after leaving a difficult circumstance in life behind, and another, struggling in their mental health, who wanted to offer some of their estranged children's favourite things on the altar and sit, in security, crouched by the cathedra. One volunteer, who came to us after leaving prison, has helped us find a better way to do all we need in terms of safer recruitment without triggering past trauma.

Whatever the Cathedral's Lantern Tower has been in the past, today, more and more it and our Lantern Initiative stand to remind us, not just about who we may be able to shine a light for, but to be attentive to who may be bearing a light for us. How, at the beginning of another year, might we hold and cherish God's light in the dark together.

## National headlines as campaign against fishing ban gathers pace

A growing campaign against a controversial proposal which would ban fishing on Holy Island has become national news.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has proposed that the island should be a designated Highly Protected Marine Area, intended to allow nature to recover and for ecosystems to thrive.

But local campaigners, including local vicar the Revd Sarah Hills, have strongly opposed the plan, claiming that it would put livelihoods at risk. Fishing has been at the heart of Holy Island life for hundreds of years and remains an essential part of the local economy.

They claim environmental sustainability and stewardship are already high priorities for the Lindisfarne community, with fishing in the area small scale, sustainable, low impact lobster and crab potting with no fish being caught commercially.

After months of campaigning, the issue made national headlines in mid-January with coverage in The Mail, The Guardian, and the BBC, among others.

Sarah said the community was doing all it could to raise awareness of the campaign, while it awaits a decision from Defra which is expected in the



➤ **The Revd Sarah Hills with Holy Island fishermen.**

coming weeks.

She said: "We're continuing with our social media campaign and we're keeping the matter in the public domain via the press. If people want to help, the best thing they can do is write to their local MP or Therese Coffey, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. They could also pray."

Sarah and her fellow campaigners say they cannot stress enough the impact on the island of a total fishing ban. The

fishing families are a major part of the island's population, providing workers in the village and children at the Church of England primary school.

Fishermen have also reiterated that they should not be positioned as 'fishing against environment'. They are important allies, not enemies, in protecting the oceans.

In addition, the fisherman also work as coastguards and first responders on an island which is a major tourist destination.



## Take on a course of generosity this Lent *By Dennis Fancett*



Many people like to use the season of Lent as an opportunity to step back from the normal hubbub of life, reflect a little more deeply on their faith, and to seek to draw closer to God. Accordingly, several churches like to break from their normal programme and offer specific Lent material to enable this.

'Surprised by Generosity' is a 7-week Lent Course originally developed by the Diocese of Exeter that looks at God's generosity to us and our call to live generously in return. It is based on the Gospel of Luke and features a series of videos, and a small group study guide along with notes and instructions for the Course Leader. It is ideally suited for small or midweek groups, could be clergy or lay led, and run either in-person or online. Originally developed for Lent 2022, the Course has now been adapted with Exeter's permission to make it relevant and topical for any year.

For those who feel Lent would be an ideal time to consider the subject of generosity more deeply and would like to consider using 'Surprised by Generosity' please contact Dennis Fancett in the Generous Giving Team, on tel 07467 563311 or email: [d.fancett@newcastle.anglican.org](mailto:d.fancett@newcastle.anglican.org) who will be happy to send full details.

Asking for the Course details does not commit you to it, so you are welcome to review the material and consider if it is right for your specific circumstances. The course can also be downloaded from the [Teaching and Nurturing Generosity](#) section of the Diocese website.

# Parish Giving Scheme Launches "One-Off Giving"

**M**ANY people are now familiar with the **Parish Giving Scheme** ("PGS") - an efficient and safe way to administer regular giving to your church. Givers can set up a regular Direct Debit gift, (either over the telephone, via the website, or by post) and Gift Aid is automatically claimed on behalf of the parish each month, on all eligible gifts.

**By Leanne Conway-Wilcox, Generous Giving Adviser**



are looking forward to extending the scheme to include one-off donations."

To go with the new service, PGS have created brand new customisable resources for use in church and online to encourage and give thanks for people's generosity. Options for both digital and print media will include sample magazine articles, content for newsletters and social media, as well as guides and communications suitable for different stages of the PGS journey. Please visit [PGS Resources](#) for more.

The number of churches using PGS in Newcastle Diocese is increasing significantly. Last year, over £0.75m of generous donations (including gift aid) were made to parishes through the scheme, which now has over 800 regular givers across 55 parishes. If you are interested to see how many churches in your deanery are already using the scheme, you can take a look at the latest quarterly information on our dedicated [PGS web page](#), where you will also find details about how your church can register to join.

At the beginning of this year our friends at PGS, launched an additional service which allows givers the option to make a one off-donation on those occasions where a regular gift is not suitable. This may be because the gift is from a visitor to the church, or from someone who only comes when they can, or perhaps because life means that a regular monthly gift doesn't work for an individual's circumstances or finances.

For a small charge of 1.5% per transaction, the new one-off giving service offers another cashless way for people to give, and it can work with Google and Apple Pay making transactions quicker and easier for

people already using these methods. One-off giving through PGS also comes with the same benefits regular giving offers, including monthly statements, gift aid automatically collected where appropriate, and a wide range of promotional resources.

Ahead of the launch in January, the new service was trialed just before Christmas and over £40,000 was processed nationally. This incredible generosity should be an encouragement to us all to embrace new ways of giving! Dave Pope from Morpeth Parish, one of the churches taking part in the pre-launch trial said, "The PGS has proved a great success in Morpeth Parish, and we





# Cost of living crisis: Churches and communities pull together to provide hot food and warm space

**T**HE cost of living crisis and plummeting temperatures during the winter have led to many communities providing much-needed Warm Spaces and Warm Hubs.

Dozens of communal centres have opened up around the Diocese, either directly run by or supported by local churches. They offer a warm, welcoming and friendly environment where hot soup and other refreshments are served.

In some cases there's more, from free wi-fi to a baby and toddler group, an after school club for 11-16 year olds and even a clothes swapping service.

But essentially, our churches and their communities have provided a safe haven, a place for anyone who needs it, whether they're living in isolation, struggling with living costs or seeking support from other people.

At Embleton, near Alnwick, the Parish Room which stands in front of the village's Church of the Holy Trinity, is a hive of activity every Monday, with hot, homemade soup and crusty bread providing the sustenance for strong community relations.

Speaking to those who attend really hits home the core reasons why such an offering is essential.

"I think we'd be lost without it," said Vivien Wilson, who swapped urban Northamptonshire for rural life at Embleton. "It's a wonderful service and it really is a big community thing.

"At this time of year, with cold, dark mornings and evenings, it's important to give people the opportunity to come together during the day. We can talk, make sure everyone is all right and has access to all they need."

Vivien said the service is a community hub. Establishing new friends at the Parish Hall gives strength in numbers, helping to ensure everyone is accounted for in times of emergency, such as adverse weather and power cuts.

"We sit and eat soup but really there's much more to it than that," stressed Vivien, now retired, who previously worked as a long distance lorry driver. "It's a great way to meet people and make friends."



> Janet Murphy



> A cup of tea is warmly received



> Vivien Wilson

The service at the Parish Room in Embleton came about because a Warm Hub was already established in the community, with offerings at both Mandell's Coffee Pot and the Dunstanburgh Castle Hotel.

The offering, from 11am to 2pm on Mondays, started at the end of October 2022, complementing services at the other venues at other times of the week.

It was established by community volunteer Janet Murphy, the sister of local vicar, the Revd Alison Hardy, and fellow volunteer Christine Hunter. Funding was made available for a soup kettle and other essentials, including the cost of electricity.

"It really has been appreciated by the community," said Janet. "Not only can we cater for those who come along on the day, we can also

identify other people who are perhaps living in isolation and are unable to get here, so we can deliver soup to those people in the village and surrounding areas."

Jean Barlow regularly attends from neighbouring village Christon Bank. "I live alone," she said, "so to come along to the Parish Hall enables me to see different people. That interaction with others means a lot to me. I greatly value this service."

Two choices of soup are available each Monday at the Parish Hall. Take out cups are available and the organisers are keen to stress that everyone is welcome. There are also links to Age UK to ensure people who need it get access to other essential services.

## Poverty, Action and Justice

Poverty Action Sunday – 19th February 2023



> Bishop Mark and Bishop Helen-Ann during their visit to Newcastle West End Food Bank last October

By David Peel

A bang on the door. Betty's mother died six months ago. Her husband left her three months ago. She has four children, and according to the rules, because of their ages, her three bedrooms are one too many, so she has to pay the bedroom tax. Her income is Universal Credit. She should have claimed a reduction of her council tax, but there are, newly, separate forms for that and for rent reductions. Because of what's been going on in her life, Betty has missed filling in the council tax form, so she has got into debt. Not paying the right Council tax is a criminal offence.

A bang on the door – it's the bailiff. Fortunately, Betty did not let him in. She went to a friend, who contacted the Magistrates' Court and got proceedings delayed for a while, time for Betty to get payment of the debt organised. This meant she did not lose her furniture and such to the bailiff, and was able to assert her dignity, agency and power, doing which should surely be everyone's right.

Betty and her children are victims of the cost of living crisis, the cost of living on the edge. Because of the help she received, she did not fall into more problems than she was already coping with. But she's far from being the only victim of poverty. At present there are 3,900,000 children in poverty in the UK. In Newcastle the number increased by 14% in the last six years, to 42.4%. In Tynemouth constituency, 28.4% of children, 5,200, live in poverty.

Church Action on Poverty (CAP) is an ecumenical organisation that campaigns against poverty and its causes. 19th February is Poverty Action Sunday, when you are invited to a CAP event to hear about some ways in which poverty is resisted – at 3.00 pm in St Cuthbert's RC Church, Albion Road West, North Shields, NE29 0JB (in Tynemouth constituency), with refreshments afterwards.

Sir Alan Campbell, the local MP, will be speaking, as will representatives of a savings group, some school pupils who have opposed high bus fares, asylum seekers, St John's, Percy Main baby bank, a food bank, Gateshead Poverty Truth Commission and others.

ALL WELCOME!



### Such vital services are being provided elsewhere within our Diocese

To find out where they are – and to watch a video of the warm hub at Embleton, visit: <https://www.newcastle.anglican.org/warm-spaces.php>

Newburn Parish has produced a 15-minute audio documentary giving an insight into a church-led project to provide food for people in need. The audio

highlights the vital work of the project and the remarkable generosity of members of the public who make essential donations and volunteer their services.

The project, led by Newburn Parish vicar Revd Allison Harding and Holy Spirit Denton's children and families missionary Jacqueline Atkinson, reveals the hidden

need for food provision and tackles some of the uncomfortable questions faced by the project as it seeks to obey God's command to care for those who need it most.

Listen to the audio documentary here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llkt3mUplpY>



# Wellbeing

by **Patty Everitt**,  
Counselling Adviser



## WILDERNESS

“Look, I have set before you an open door” Revelation 3.8 (NRSV)

This is the January saying from the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer and what a wonderful saying to contemplate at the start of a new year!

An open door can be an invitation to move into something new, which indeed it is. It can also be an invitation to leave a place of stuck-ness where there is comfort but where growth has stopped or a place of confinement where there is pain and loneliness.

Stepping across the threshold of a doorway is both. We leave something behind and move into something new. We can choose to loiter on the threshold or confidently (or even thoughtlessly) step across.

Liminal spaces - edges, margins and wilderness - are also thresholds which separate something from something else; invitations to move from one thing to another. They can be physical or symbolic. They can be places of sanctuary and abundance: the tideline, hedgerows, field edges. They may also be places where unwanted things and people are cast out, discarded and conveniently forgotten - literally marginalised. They may be places where we feel lost and directionless.

Change can be very challenging there is no doubt and if we are forced into change by circumstance or external events over which we have limited or no control then thresholds between what we know and what we don't may be very uncomfortable spaces to inhabit. We may feel fearful, sad or pained. It may feel less like stepping across a threshold and more like being cast out into a wilderness to stumble and wander. The place we are coming from is the place we want to

remain, a place which is comfortable, friendly and predictable. The place we feel forced toward feels strange, unwelcoming and probably lonely.

Wilderness has been woven into myths and legends and literature from the dawn of story-telling and of course, we are familiar with wilderness throughout the Bible. The wilderness is symbolic of struggle to overcome whatever challenge is out there and placed before us.

I think of wilderness as a state of mind where I dwell when there is something I need to learn about myself, others or the world. I must learn this lesson or overcome this challenge before I can find my way out. It may be something I would rather not know or face up to - a wart if you like. I will continue to dwell here until I can bring myself to finally “let go” of what was comfortable and familiar and prepare to take the courageous step of moving into the new and becoming a different version of myself.

Perhaps the most difficult wilderness is the one we have not yet realised that we inhabit - a pattern of behaviour or an attitude that hurts us or alienates us from others. Typically, we can recognise a pattern when we have a feeling of weariness or a sense of here-we-go-again.

The start of a new year is another symbol - a symbol of a new start. The open door offers a way out of stuck-ness and into growth and movement. The open door invites us to check with ourselves and notice if we are carrying anger, fear, sadness or shame and then to ask: how can I step through the open door I am being offered?

Recognising that we are in a wilderness is the first step to finding our way out.



## Bikes, camera, action in Newcastle Diocese

**T**HE national spotlight beamed down on Newcastle as local churches and charities teamed up with BBC's *The One Show*.

The *Gift a Bike for Christmas* initiative saw generous members of the public donate their old bikes and scooters, which were refurbished and given to those who needed them most as festive gifts.

A film crew from the *One Show* descended on St Silas' Church in Byker, which was opened up as a Donation point, while St James' Parish Church in Benwell was used as a distribution point for repaired bikes and scooters.

Specialists from charities WAT-

bike and Recycle Y' Bike were on hand to carry out maintenance work to ensure the two-wheeled donations were in full working order and were safe to ride.

Newcastle West End Food Bank also played a leading role, helping to establish people who would benefit from a Christmas cycling gift.

Revd Helen Gill, of St Silas' in Byker said: “We were absolutely overwhelmed by the generosity of people who brought bikes and scooters to St Silas' during a limited time frame on 12th December.

“About 160 bikes and scooters were brought to our church. Only so many could be restored on the day but about 40 of them were ready for

use. The others were taken away to be restored afterwards.”

Helen stressed that no bike or scooter was given away without a free helmet, as part of a huge push on health and safety.

“It was a great initiative,” she added. “It was a fantastic way to recycle old and disused items and to get them to those who really would benefit from them. Hopefully it was a nice Christmas boost for many people. The BBC were excellent. They were very interested in the scheme, very helpful and made the whole filming process very easy.”

The *Gift a Bike for Christmas* initiative featured on *The One Show* in mid-December.



# Youngsters play their part in Christmas story with facelift for Mary



➤ Revd Allison Harding with pupils and headteacher Julie Stewart at Throckley Primary School and the stained glass shows the defect on Mary's face



SCHOOL children have stepped in to restore the face of one of the key figures in the Christmas story.

the parish of Newburn, said she was "blown away" by the generosity and initiative of the children.

sters for part of the bag pack.

She added: "It started when they came into St Mary's for a visit and asked lots of excellent questions about things in the church, such as the font, the organ, the communion table and other features.

She added: "I saw just how polite and assertive the children were. They asked everyone who walked through the door to 'give for a new face for Mary at St Mary's'.

"Then they noticed one of the stained glass windows had a defect and that Mary no longer had a face. I explained that Mary had never had a face while I've been in the parish."

"The school presented me with an enormous cheque. We thanked them and God - and the children will be VIP guests to see Mary's new face at St Mary's once the repair has been done."

Allison said the children were feeling sad upon their return to the classroom, but came up trumps with a great idea when teachers challenged them to find a solution.

To complete the story of generosity, Simon of Borderdale Glass agreed to carry out the work for no more than the £500 raised by the children.

"I was amazed and delighted when the children decided that they could do something to put this right," said Allison, who joined the young-

"I'm blown away," added Allison. "It's the only way that I can describe my response to the generosity and initiative of the Year 2 children of Throckley Primary School."

St Mary the Virgin Church at Throckley has been missing a key component for several years, after a stained glass window bearing an image of Mary became defective, leaving her without a face.

But now that's all set to change, after eagle-eyed Year 2 children from Throckley Primary School noticed the defect during a recent visit.

Keen to restore the image of Mary to its former glory, the youngsters set about a fundraising campaign for the window to be restored.

They embarked on a bag pack at Sainsbury's in Throckley, which yielded an impressive £500 which will cover the cost of restoration.

The Revd Allison Harding, vicar of

## Trail brings nativity to life as 350 children 'Follow that Star'



➤ Children from local schools taking part in Follow that Star

By Jane Abrams

For seven days at the beginning of Advent, eight schools in the Bellingham Deanery had the invitation to visit St Mungo's Church in Simonburn to enjoy a day on an Advent trail called 'Follow that Star'.

The Revd Frances Dower, who has now created many trails, with Judith Sadler, Jane Abrams and a dedicated team of over 60 volunteer helpers, were able to offer this gift to local schools thanks to securing generous funding from the Evans Trust and St Hilda's Trust.

Over seven days about 350 children took part, divided into small groups and supported by the volunteers. We began each morning with a Godly Play story of the 'Advent Wreath'.

The short days and cold weather added to the thrill of walking up to the hill following the twinkling star carried aloft on a hazel wand. In the ancient church filled with the smell of frankincense they visited Mary's house, Joseph's workshop, a field where shepherds had been watching their sheep and the home of the Magi, pausing to wonder at each station until they finally found themselves at a stable in Bethlehem where the children themselves became part of the nativity scene. They returned to the warmth of the village hall and the excitement of joining the other children busily making Advent wreaths, Butter bean Nativity scenes and glittering angels to hang on



their own Christmas trees.

Each day was supported by Revd Canon Sarah Lunn or Revd Claire Maxim as they welcomed the schools from the Deanery. A team of kitchen volunteers provided a very welcome lunch for the volunteers each day.

This event was the follow up to the 2022 'Mystery of Easter' Trail. Since then the number of schools attending has doubled and the number of our loyal volunteers has increased also. We now anticipate the possibility of yet another trail for 2023.

## Midnight service dates back to St Aidan

By Canon Alan Hughes

A midnight service on Holy Island kept alive a Christmas Eve ceremony which first took place there in early Medieval times.

About 50 people attended St Mary's Parish Church for the service, which dates back 1,400 years to the days of St Aidan.

Christianity probably came to the south of Britain from Rome with first century traders, early missionaries also and fortuitously for us taking the faith over to Ireland. When The Romans left Britain, the

pagan Germanic tribe of Angles filled the void and Christianity retreated into Ireland, Angleland or England becoming a pagan country once again.

St Columba, an Irish Christian Monk had founded a monastery off Scotland's West Coast on the tiny Island of Iona. Oswald, King of Northumbria, wanted to make his Kingdom Christian and invited Iona to send him missionaries. Aidan came with 12 others and Oswald gave them Lindisfarne as their base from where they walked around Northumbria spreading the Christian message, King Oswald

acting as Aidan's interpreter, Monarch and Church working in harmony.

Since then Holy Island, with a few interruptions from Scandinavian raiders, along with its founding Isle of Iona, has been a place to re-focus on the first principles of Christianity, encouraging present generations of Christians to get out and about from their buildings and share their faith, encouraged by our present Christian Monarch King Charles III and his walkabouts as in the days of Oswald and Aidan.



➤ Photograph by Canon Alan Hughes taken at Midnight Christmas Mass, central to the decoration a coracle, the early form of boat used by Celtic Monks.



### HAVE YOUR SAY

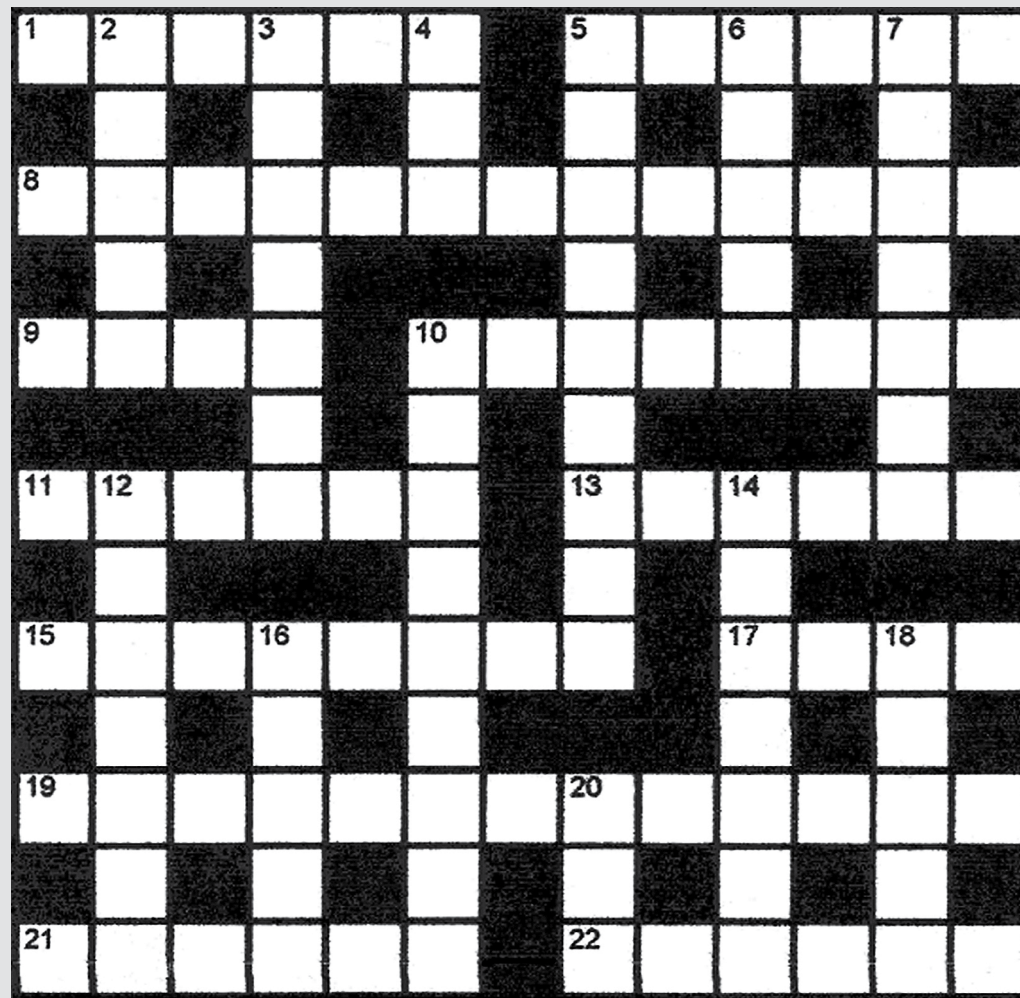
Anything catch your eye in this month's LINK? Something on your mind? Or in your prayers? Send an e-mail, message or letter to LINK and we'll publish the best of them:

**Have your say. LINK, Church House, St John's Terrace, North Shields NE29 6HS. Email us: [communications@newcastle.anglican.org](mailto:communications@newcastle.anglican.org)**



## Link Crossword 189 *Compiled by Mary Sutton*

This month we are including the crossword for fun (sorry, no prize this month). Please do not submit crosswords to Church House.



### ACROSS

1. It's illuminated before a new year initially for form of prayer (6)
5. A right scoundrel firstly entering covered passageway (6)
8. Cheat in no French class – first to find Methodist, eg (13)
9. One's next to the French land mass (4)
10. Popular performance – one about idleness (8)
11. Man inside for every intercession (6)
13. Home team within a building (6)
15. Dust, eg, covered up by taller gentleman (8)
17. Skin irritation concealed by fit chap (4)
19. A Pole with the French initially concerned about man's statement of beliefs (8,5)
21. Person who cures the woman imbibing beer (6)
22. Feel sorry for salesperson in French town initially (6)

### DOWN

2. One cheats with devotional paintings (5)
3. A Catholic youth leader includes her shooting sport (7)
4. Longing to have Japanese money (3)
5. A party allowance given with great love (9)
6. Celestial body making us arrive on time (5)
7. Woman's flex leads to disagreement (7)
10. Erratic ruler with a rig, possibly (9)
12. Return of illness making royal pass by (7)
14. Commotion at university involving royal rider's foot support (7)
16. Relieve learner of artist's frame (5)
18. Conservative thin and free from dirt (5)
20. Title of one interrupting sister (3)

## Noticeboard



► Jerusalem

### TRIP TO THE HOLY LAND.

Join Revd Dr Robert and Revd Alice Ward, formerly priests in charge of St Luke's Church, Newcastle, on a tour of Israel. There will be 9 full days touring, 1 full day at leisure in Jerusalem, 4 nights on the shore of Galilee, 6 nights in Jerusalem. Tuesday 14th - Saturday 25th March 2023. For more information contact Robert - 07768 528181.

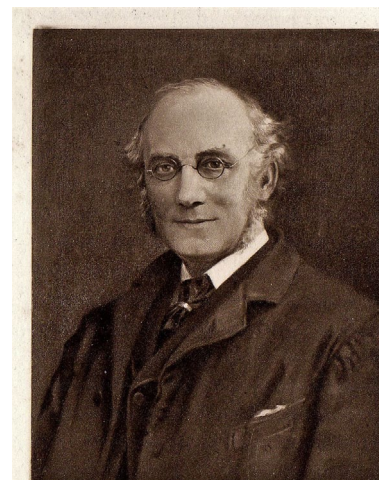
### REVISITING THE WORKS OF WILLIAM SEARLE HICKS

Soon after the time of the founding of the Diocese of Newcastle in 1882, William Hicks was appointed Diocesan Architect.

Formerly a pupil and partner of Robert Johnson, Hicks went on to build, restore and design furnishings for 83

churches in the Diocese. His earliest commission was St James' Shilbottle and this was soon followed by Blyth St Cuthbert, Heavenfield, St John Lee, Wall, the tower of St Matthew Big Lamp, Elswick St Aidan (no longer standing), Ashington Holy Sepulchre and St John and work in the Bishop's Chapel, now at Dinnington. He designed the reredoses at Bamburgh, Warksworth, Amble, Lucker and in many other places. One of his final commissions before his early death in 1902 was the magnificent St Chad's Bensham – 'just across the water'.

Canon Colin Gough has been visiting and reviewing some of Hicks' work and if your church is one in which he worked, he would be happy to come and in give an illustrated talk, share something of Hicks' understanding of the purpose and pattern of worship that led him to design buildings in the way he did. Many of us share his heritage, but now know little of the man and his art. Contact Colin Gough on [canoncolin@gmail.com](mailto:canoncolin@gmail.com) for more details.



► William Searle Hicks

### ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD 188

#### ACROSS:

1. Litany
5. Arcade
8. Nonconformist
9. Isle
10. Inaction
11. Prayer
13. Inside
15. Allergen
17. Itch
19. Apostles' Creed
21. Healer
22. Repent

#### DOWN:

2. Icons
3. Archery
4. Yen
5. Adoration
6. Comet
7. Discord
10. Irregular
12. Relapse
14. Stirrup
16. Easel
18. Clean
20. Sir



# New parish newsletter reaches out into church's rural community

**T**HINK about any form of communication today and our minds automatically focus on laptops, phones, apps and social media.

The mere thought of a church newsletter or magazine – in full printed form – may feel a little past tense. After all, it's 14 years since Rowan Williams, who was then Archbishop of Canterbury, celebrated the success of such publications on their 150th anniversary back in January 2009.

Fast forward to 2022, and with e-bulletins and other web-based communications in full swing, is there a place for the traditional parish newsletter or magazine in the modern world?

One parish based in the Tyne Valley certainly thinks so – and believes that the printed product is an effective way to reach out to their rural community.

St Cuthbert's Church at Haydon Bridge launched its first newsletter ahead of Remembrance Day last November. The eight-page, A5 colour booklet was packed full of interviews and features based around the theme of Remembrance – as well as reflections on the season and a news round-up from around the parish.

Printed copies of the newsletter were made available from the church, as well as other outlets in the community, including the local coffee shop, pub and newsagents.

While the printed newsletter is great to sit down with in the café, in the park or in the comfort of your own living room, it is part of a wider communications strategy at St Cuthbert's. A PDF is available on the parish website and links are shared on the church's social media pages.

The Revd Gill Alexander, Interim Minister at St Cuthbert's said it was early days, but the newsletter had



been well received.

Gill explained: "As a rural parish serving a diverse community we are keen to develop a range of ways to communicate effectively, not just to our regular church members but to the wider community. We have developed our use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as well as establishing an e-bulletin and parish website. These tools have been invaluable.

"However, we recognised that they weren't reaching those who aren't on our mailing lists or active users of social media. We are, therefore, experimenting with 'old technology'

and decided to launch a parish newsletter as part of the communication channels we use. It has been very much welcomed by our congregation and is reaching a wider audience such as shoppers, customers of our village coffee shop, village shop and pubs.

"We have seen in recent months a gradual growth in those attending church services. Whilst it is early days - it shows that communicating effectively isn't just an added extra - but central to our mission and ministry."

The next edition was scheduled to be launched on 21st January, in

Epiphany and before Candlemas, with associated themes, more news, reflections, interviews and features.

While Church of England advice was to cease printing during lockdown, printed products have returned and in a world dominated by social media, and where local newspaper print sales have declined, it's hoped that parish newsletters will continue to have a key role to play.

In the interests of the environment, limited numbers are being printed at St Cuthbert's and availability is based on demand, which is being monitored.



> The Revd Gill Alexander

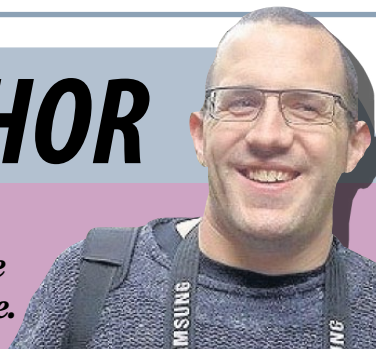
## GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY SHAVE

I hate shaving. It's a faff and a daily routine I very much could do without. I always miss an important bit (no matter how carefully I try, there's always a scratchy bit to get rid of later on). I've tried electric razors and wet shaves with old fashioned safety razors and modern multi-bladed monstrosities, they all have their pros and cons but I think it's the shaving itself that I don't enjoy. There's something about the process that doesn't feel quite natural and I hate having to carry on with something that, whilst I'm fairly proficient, I could always do better.

The thing is, if I miss one daily shave, I don't really notice and neither does anybody else, but after a couple of days without shaving, I start to get complaints of prickliness from my wife and daughter and it starts to affect my relationship with them.

## LIKE A METAPHOR

**Tim Hardy, formerly of the Religious Resources Centre, works from the home he shares with Ros, Anwen and Twinkle.**



After a couple more days my face starts to feel itchy, as if my very skin was rebelling against the stubble I'd inflicted upon it and I feel less at home in my own body. In the end, I trim it back down to a manageable length and then shave it all off again, which is probably more effort than keeping things under control on a daily basis.

My dad used to say that seven days without prayer made one weak, and, whilst it may be a

terrible pun, it at least points at the truth.

I don't think I've ever really got the hang of praying. I can give my lists of complaints and requests to God with the best of them, and I think I do quite well at being grateful for the many wonderful people and things in my life. But I know I need to work on the praise aspect, and the listening. I don't like doing things that, whilst I'm fairly proficient, I'm aware I could do better.

If I don't pray for a day, the chances are that I won't notice any difference in my life. But the longer I go without praying the more serious the effects - my personality develops in ways that make me less comfortable to be with, less likely to be worth embracing and less effective in my Christian life.

Jesus probably had a beard so wouldn't have had to worry too much about the whole shaving thing, but we also know that he took prayer very seriously, and took regular time to spend time "with the Father" - everything he did resulting from that time and what he heard the Father saying.

"How should we pray?" his disciples asked him. Jesus handed them metaphorical shaving foam and razor and began, "Our Dad, in Heaven..." which seems like a very good place for us to start too.



# Refugee charity launches recruitment drive for more landlords

A charity which helps refugees and asylum seekers in our region is looking to attract more people with second homes to help the homelessness crisis amongst people seeking sanctuary in Tyne and Wear.

Newcastle-based Action Foundation charity runs a variety of projects aimed at supporting and empowering people to overcome the barriers they face as newcomers to the North East and providing accommodation is a big part of their work.

Their Action Lettings and Action Housing projects are supported by 17 generous landlords who make their properties available to the charity at either a nominal or reduced monthly rent.

Helen Cowgill, who heads up the accommodation projects, said: "This type of giving allows us to house and support our clients in safe, warm and welcoming homes at a critical time in their lives.

"We have 'accidental landlords' who never planned to own a second property; retirees who purchased a property just for us; organisations using an existing asset and private landlords, who own multiple properties and want to give back to others. Each makes a significant contribution to our clients' futures."

Sharyn Collins has been a landlord with Action Foundation for several years. She said she likes the fact her properties are managed well for the good of people who encounter inequality,



► Sharyn Collins, landlord

disadvantage and sometimes destitution.

"From a humane point of view I am so happy to be able to help refugees and those fleeing from fear and torment in their own countries," said Sharon. "From a practical point of view I have experienced many negative situations in the property world but Action Foundation took all those worries away when they started renting out my flats."

If you would like to find out more about renting out a property through Action Foundation, you can find out more on their website here: <https://bit.ly/3XABGpw/>



► Damee with Sarah

## Could you help people like Damee?

Damee is just one of the refugees who has benefited from living in a landlord's home rented out through Action Foundation.

A young adult from Ethiopia, he gained refugee status in November 2020 and had just a month to find somewhere to live. Thanks to the generosity of a landlord who rents out her

four-bed Gateshead townhouse through Action Foundation, Damee avoided homelessness.

"When I first moved in, I had the smallest room," said Damee. "But as people have moved on, I now have a much bigger room with an en-suite bathroom. It is very nice and close to my college."

Action Foundation provided Damee with a support worker, Sarah, who helped Damee register with a GP and join one of the charity's free English classes.

Sarah said: "It's great to see a sense of community in the shared house, with people living together, socialising and supporting each other."

# Be a Changemaker this March

PICTURE: ALEX BAKER / CHRISTIAN AID



By Helen Cunningham, Church Engagement and Fundraising Officer (North East & Cumbria)

christian aid

**A**RE you passionate about justice? Join us to eradicate extreme poverty! Christian Aid warmly invites you to join our annual **Changemakers Conference** on **Saturday 4 March**.

Supporters across the UK will gather online in preparation for this year's Christian Aid Week in May. We have a diverse program with an exciting range of stories of the work of Christian Aid from staff members from across the globe. Highlights of the day's schedule include:

- Introducing Christian Aid Week 2023 – get behind the story of this year's Christian Aid Week; watch the premiere of the video; hear about fundraising ideas and resources.
- Celebrating the impact of the funds raised in Christian Aid Week 2022
- Campaigning – Why we need to talk about climate justice
- The challenge of fundraising during a cost-of-living crisis
- Hear how we respond to humanitarian emergencies around the world (eg. Ukraine)
- Discover Christian Aid's amazing story over the last 75+ years

We welcome you to come and connect with the people and stories behind the global work of Christian Aid. Find out how you can make positive change by acting on climate justice. Join with volunteers across the UK as we share creative and successful fundraising ideas for you to try, and leave feeling inspired and equipped for Christian Aid Week.

If you would like to gather in-person with folks from your church or community, why not hold a 'watch party' for the day so that everyone can share together. You will need access to the Internet and a means to project the conference for all to see. Ask folks to bring a sandwich for the lunch break and lay on some teas & coffees, and you're sorted! Or if you're feeling adventurous you could hold an 'all day **Big Brekkie**'!

■ **To register for our free Changemakers Conference, head to [caid.org.uk/conference2023](https://caid.org.uk/conference2023)**

Links:  
 ■ **Big Brekkie:** <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/fundraising/big-brekkie>  
 ■ **Conference sign up:** <https://caid.org.uk/conference2023>