

WINTER 2025

LINK

The magazine for the Diocese of Newcastle

INSIDE:

PAGE 5 Curates visit the House of Lords

PAGE 8 Celebrating two new ministries

PAGE 11 Bishop's Christmas Appeal 2025

PAGE 16 Rural church offers Champing



Welcoming our new Readers

Preaching and teaching the gospel in our churches

Full story plus more pictures: **Page 4**



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Contents



Page 10: Remembrance Sunday

Page 3	A message from Bishop Helen-Ann
Pages 4-5	Readers' licensing service
Pages 6-7	Curates visit the House of Lords
Pages 8-9	Meet our new LGBTQI+ chaplains
	Celebrating two new ministries in our diocese
	Barbara Donaldson's 20 years in parish safeguarding
Pages 10-11	Remembrance Sunday
	Bishop's Christmas Appeal 2025
Pages 12-13	Taking church into our local pubs
	Welcoming the next Archbishop of Canterbury
Pages 14-15	Focus on Forest Church at Shiremoor
Pages 16-17	An introduction to Champing at Muggleswick
	A worldly experience for organist Matthew Kelley
Pages 18-19	Refurbishment at St Michael's New Hartley
	A memorable baptism in the North Sea
Pages 20-21	Supporting young adults at The Roost
Pages 22-23	Photo exhibition brings people into church
	Faith inspires ultra-runner Andy
Page 24	Living the Lantern

Link and Link Extra

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Contact us

www.newcastle.anglican.org

Email: info@newcastle.anglican.org

Facebook, Instagram & X:

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Telephone: 0191 270 4100

Monday – Friday, 8.30am – 4.30pm

By post: Diocese of Newcastle, Church House,
St. John's Terrace, North Shields, NE29 6HS

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communications@newcastle.anglican.org

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A message from Bishop Helen-Ann



The Bishop of Newcastle, Helen-Ann Hartley

Over recent weeks I have become acutely aware of the fragility of life and creation. From family health issues to weeks participating in the Select Committee work in the House of Lords scrutinising the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill.

None of us can evade the march of time and each of us in our humanity from time to time must reckon with our own mortality. There's a wider aspect of this too, in so far as it relates to our environment.

Recently I took part in a recorded conversation online with a couple of friends and colleagues in New Zealand. Emily Colgan is a long-standing friend and academic in Auckland where she teaches at Trinity Methodist College. Elisapesi Havea lives and works in Hamilton where she teaches at Wintec (Waikato Institute of Technology). She is from Tonga originally and retains close family con-

nections there as well as being active in the Methodist Church which is very strong in the Pacific Islands.

My conversation with them was about the impact of climate change in their contexts and what they see as the key issues in the immediate future. Their discerned response surprised me in that Elisapesi described it as beyond issues with the climate (which are well known and documented) and now best expressed by the phrase: a crisis of welcome.

As Pacific Island communities are destroyed by rising sea-levels people are being displaced and are seeking homes elsewhere. If and how they do this is very much dependent on how they are received by other nations, and the picture not surprisingly is mixed and complex.

All this is a rather extended build-up to the story that lies at the heart of the season of Christmas: the birth of a child born in difficult

circumstances of displacement and fear, a birth that transformed humanity forever. God in the manger, God with us, Emmanuel.

We too face so many questions of hospitality and welcome in our national life and in the life of our Church. How do we respond to the lost, the last and the least in such a way that does not perpetuate a sense of the 'other' but recognises that it is we that will be transformed by our experience of them, and not the other way round.

As we commit to a year of sharing, one of the enabling words of our refreshed diocesan vision: to enable more and different people to experience the love of God, it is my prayer and hope that this Christmas will bring a renewed sense of hope and peace in our troubled world. Happy Christmas and prayers and best wishes for 2026.

Bishop Helen-Ann

Welcoming our new Readers



Above, Dean of Newcastle, Lee Batson, Bishop of Berwick, Mark Wroe, Izzy McDonald-Booth, Bec Scane, Jo McEvedy, Bishop of Newcastle, Helen-Ann Hartley, and the diocesan Continuing Ministerial Formation Officer, Ce Pacitti

Three new Readers have been licensed to serve in our diocese. Izzy McDonald-Booth, Jo McEvedy and Bec Scane were licensed by the Bishop of Berwick, Mark Wroe, Warden of Readers, during a special Eucharist service at Newcastle Cathedral, on Saturday, 18 October.

Readers are an important part of our ministry team and have been trained to preach and teach the Gospel in our churches.



House of Lords visit - reflecting on the role of faith in public life



First year curates from Newcastle Diocese visited the House of Lords to reflect on the role of faith in public life.

They were joined by Bishop Helen-Ann, who is a Lords Spiritual – one of the 26 Bishops from the Church of England who sit in the House of Lords.

Now in its second year, the initiative is enabling our curates and their training incumbents to gain a vital insight into what happens at Westminster.

Bishop Helen-Ann said: "It was wonderful to welcome our first-year curates to Westminster, along with their training incumbents.

"This is the second year of this initiative to

enable our clergy to engage with what happens in Westminster and to reflect together on the role of faith in public life. It also gives me the opportunity as one of the Lords Spiritual to share something of how I seek to inhabit this role as part of my responsibilities of being Bishop of Newcastle.

"I'm incredibly grateful to my parliamentary colleagues Simon and Chloe who helped our visitors and provided an illuminating tour of what is quite an incredible location filled with so much living history."

Bishop Helen-Ann expressed gratitude to Anna Dixon MP and Hannah Rich, Chair of Christians on the Left, who spent time in conversation with the group after lunch. There was then an opportunity to sit in the gallery during oral questions in the House

of Lords before departing for home again.

She added: "I hope the day was one of encouragement and hope for the vital importance of articulating a confident faith in our world. Thank you for all that our curates and their training incumbents do to make this a reality in their parishes and communities."

Those who attended the visit, on 21 October, were the Revd Fran Bell, the Revd Emily Emmerson-Finch, the Revd Dr Sarah Moon, the Revd Captain Steve Dixon, the Revd Yvonne Gardner, the Revd Christian (Mitch) Mitchell, the Revd Andy Morsman, the Revd Phil Keates, the Revd Daniel Freyhan, the Revd Canon Steve Wright, and the Bishop's PA, Deborah Botha.

Welcoming our new LGBTQI+



The Revd Emma Duff, Izzy McDonald-Booth, David Casati, and Bishop Helen-Ann

Newcastle Diocese has welcomed two new volunteer chaplains to its LGBTQI+ chaplaincy and support service, part of its commitment to radical Christian inclusion.

During a choral evensong at Newcastle Cathedral on Sunday, 21 September, Bishop Helen-Ann commissioned Izzy McDonald-Booth and David Casati. They will serve alongside the Lead LGBTQI+ Chaplain, the Revd Emma Duff, who said:

"We are in the middle of an exciting journey. Since beginning in post, I have witnessed so much that is positive, and I am looking forward to working together with David and Izzy to see what God has in store for the chaplaincy and how God is going to use David and Izzy's experience and knowledge."

The chaplaincy hopes to continue recruiting volunteer chaplains who can work alongside David, Izzy, Emma and Bishop Helen-Ann to demonstrate God's love to all.



volunteer chaplains



David Casati and
Izzy McDonald-Booth

Izzy and David reflect on their new roles

Izzy McDonald-Booth

When this role came up, I knew immediately I would enjoy doing this work. I love to listen and support others and from my own history I know how important it is to find a safe and non-judgemental person to speak to. I am afraid Christians don't have a good record of keeping quiet about how they interpret the scriptures, especially not when they see a person who looks like they have wavered off course! I joke about this but it is a very serious matter, both highly complex in terms of scripture, history and doctrine but also very simple. How can we refuse to respond pastorally with love to a person's lived experience of their personal identity?

I bring experience of the Church's work on these topics as I was the Living in Love and Faith advocate for Newcastle Diocese a few years ago, alongside being on a national group discussing pastoral issues relating to

this. Much of that work was discussing the Church's response to LGBTQI+ people and our relationships. I was working with people I profoundly disagree with, which was both a great learning experience but also costly personally. Being reduced to an 'issue' is never a positive way to have your identity described; an identity I know in my heart is affirmed and loved by God. I pray that I may be a calm and listening ear to anyone who needs it. The Chaplaincy team do all ask for your prayers in this work. What a privilege it is indeed!

David Casati

I am honoured to be part of the LGBTQI+ Chaplaincy—a place specifically created to be a signpost and presence of inclusion and listening, to support and to celebrate, to work for real inclusion of all of us belonging to the LGBTQI+ community in our church. Our lives shouldn't be up for debate, and if they are — we should be the ones speaking.

I grew up in a Roman Catholic environment and spent a number of years in religious life. That experience allowed me to explore my faith deeply, in ways I could not have otherwise. However, it also revealed how difficult it is to live authentically as a queer person in a church that often negates your lived experience.

For a long time, I prayed and thought about where my spiritual home truly was. I found a definite answer when I was received into the Church of England a few years ago. I had a sense of clarity that this was the place where God wanted me to be and I experienced a renewed sense of belonging to God and willingness to serve and minister.

Alongside my day job I am training to be a Reader. I hold a BA in Theology and am currently working toward an MA. Please pray for us and our work in the Chaplaincy.

Celebrating new ministries in South East Northumberland



The local community gathered together at Duke's Secondary School in Ashington to welcome and celebrate two new ministries within the Diocese - the Revd Allison Harding as Pioneer Minister, and Jon Wright as Youth and Children's Enabler with Beyond Youth.

The service of commissioning, led by the Bishop of Berwick, Mark Wroe, brought together people of all ages for an inclusive act of worship, opportunities to reflect on God's work in

the area, and time to share in fellowship over refreshments.

Speaking after the service, which took place on Saturday, 27 September, Bishop Mark reflected on the energy and hope he witnessed in the gathering:

"There's such a real buzz in this room – a strong sense of what God is already doing here, and so much potential for the future. It fills me with joy and hope for what lies ahead."

Both Allison and Jon's ministries will focus on engaging with the local community, supporting young people and families, and encouraging fresh ways of sharing God's love in the parishes of Ashington, Cresswell and Lynemouth, Seaton Hirst, and Woodhorn with Newbiggin. The commissioning marks an exciting chapter for the Church's mission in South East Northumberland, as new opportunities open for creativity, collaboration and deeper connection with the community.

Years of dedication highlight the importance of parish safeguarding

A dedicated volunteer has reflected on a “hugely rewarding” 20 years as a Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO).

Barbara Donaldson has stepped down from her role in the Benefice of Scremerston, Spittal and Tweedmouth, but she remains at the heart of the church community as a worship leader.

Now as she hands on the PSO baton to her successor, Ani Johnson, Barbara has reflected on two decades of service in a hugely responsible position.

Safeguarding is an integral part of the Church of England’s mission and ministry. Across our parishes in Newcastle Diocese, we seek to promote a safe culture for every child, young person and adult.

PSOs play a vital role in keeping our places of worship safe – supporting those who are vulnerable, identifying potential risks, including church related abuse - and responding promptly to any safeguarding concern or allegation.

“We have to protect children, vulnerable adults and also the elderly,” said Barbara. “Sometimes you have to identify a safeguarding situation, but when you have helped someone and you see them come out the other side, it is very comforting. It is a hugely rewarding role.

“It is a commitment and a huge responsibility. But there is great support from within our local churches and at diocesan level. This is crucial because there can be some sensitive situations.”

Originally from Kingston-upon-Hull in East Yorkshire, Barbara moved to Tweedmouth in 2004 with her husband, the Revd Malcolm Donaldson, who served in Manchester before having to take early retirement on health grounds.



Barbara Donaldson

Barbara, who had previously carried out a safeguarding role in Manchester, quickly got involved in her new benefice. She initially started working with vulnerable children, before incorporating people of all ages.

Having also served as a churchwarden at Tweedmouth, Barbara’s abilities led to a former vicar suggesting that she should consider becoming a worship leader.

“I’ve done this for eight or nine years now,” said Barbara. “It’s mainly at Tweedmouth and occasionally at Scremerston. I’m also involved with Tea Time Church for families and children on Sunday afternoons at St John’s Church, Spittal. Our churches have loyal congregations and it’s wonderful to be involved.”

Barbara is currently a PCC member at Tweedmouth, where she previously ran home group sessions.

She is delighted that Ani has stepped into the PSO role and is happy to offer support when required.

The Benefice of Scremerston, Spittal and Tweedmouth has been further strengthened by the recent appointment of a new vicar, the Revd Richard Cornfield.

Those interested in taking on a PSO role are encouraged to speak to their vicar for further information or the safeguarding team at safeguarding@newcastle.anglican.org.

Newcastle marks Remembrance Sunday



The City of Newcastle came together on Sunday, 9 November to honour all who have served and sacrificed for their country. A military parade made its way from the Civic Centre to the City War Memorial in Old Eldon Square, where a Service of Remembrance was led by Bishop Helen-Ann.

Crowds gathered in solemn reflection, and at 11am the city paused for a two-minute silence to remember those who lost their lives in the two World Wars and in conflicts since.

With thanks to *Steve Brock Photography* and Newcastle City Council for the photographs.



Bishop's Christmas Appeal 2025

Bishop Helen-Ann is delighted to launch her Christmas Appeal for 2025 – in aid of The People's Kitchen.

Based in Newcastle, the charity supports vulnerable people who may be homeless, unemployed, lonely or living in poverty.

Bishop Helen-Ann said: "This year, for my Christmas Appeal I am inviting us to support The People's Kitchen, which works incredibly hard to support and change the lives of people, including those who are homeless and vulnerable.

"The organisation's dedicated team of volunteers provide hot food and other every day essential items, such as sleeping bags, clothing and toiletries which can make life on the streets more tolerable. But The People's Kitchen goes far beyond this, offering friendship and access to professional services to support mental wellbeing and help people move towards healthy, independent living."

The People's Kitchen has been a mainstay for 40 years. It was founded in 1985 by the late Alison Kay, after being shocked by news about the death of a homeless man.

She initially started by taking out teas and coffees, but within a year, Alison had built a



growing community. Together with a team of 40 volunteers, they opened The People's Kitchen to support the homeless with food, clothing and a warm fire for anyone who needed it.

For her work, Alison received an Honorary Degree from Newcastle University in 1997. She died in 2001, aged 91, but her legacy remains.

Today, The People's Kitchen serves more than 250 meals every day – 365 days a year. There's a family atmosphere at the charity's

building, on Bath Lane, where people who use the service are called friends and not 'service users'.

They are free to chat with each other or enjoy quiet time if they wish. Volunteers are on hand to offer friendly conversation and valuable support. In some cases, friends have given back to the charity by volunteering themselves, after successfully turning their lives around.

Jackie Boardman, trustee of The People's Kitchen thanked Bishop Helen-Ann for choosing the charity to be the recipient of this year's appeal:

"Thank you to Bishop Helen-Ann for supporting The People's Kitchen this Christmas. It is our fortieth anniversary this year and we are seeing more people needing help with food, clothing and a warm place to reconnect with people.

"The cost of helping people 365 days a year continues to grow and we are able to continue helping our friends due to our team of wonderful volunteers and the generosity of the people of the North-East."

● Information on how to donate money, food or winter clothing can be found on the diocesan website: www.newcastle.anglican.org



Residents in a rural village are raising a glass in their local pub as they sing hymns and enjoy fellowship together. The Pints and Praise initiative at the Fishers Arms in Horncliffe, Norham Parish, near Berwick, is attracting people from near and far for monthly Sunday evening services.

Organised by the Revd Canon Dr Rob Kelsey, vicar of Norham and Duddo, the sessions are a way of bringing the church and the wider community together.

"It's like Songs of Praise, but in the pub," explained Rob. "Participants sing up to ten hymns, and say some 'rhyming refrains', as we raise our glasses together in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

"It seems to me that pubs and churches have something in common, in that they both serve the local community. I see Pints and Praise, primarily, as a good way of supporting our community-owned pub on what would otherwise be a quiet Sunday evening."

Bishop Helen-Ann was delighted to join Pints and Praise at the Fishers Arms on 26 October, to celebrate the season of All Saints. Afterwards, she expressed her appreciation for all the hard work that goes into keeping the pub open.

Bishop Helen-Ann said: "Led by the Revd Rob Kelsey, a full house enjoyed fellowship and singing with hymns and a service to celebrate the season of All Saints. It was terrific to be there and I greatly enjoyed the welcome, warmth and hospitality of the local community."

Church meets pub for Pints and Praise initiative



Bishop Helen-Ann was among those raising a glass at the Fishers Arms during Pints and Praise

Church in the pub scheme is starting to fly

Another initiative involving both church and pub is growing its wings.

Church in the Kittiwake takes place every Tuesday evening at the Kittiwake pub in Whitley Bay.

"It takes the form of a discussion group," said the Revd Nigel Taylor, the Vicar of St Mary's Monkseaton, who runs the sessions alongside curate, the Revd Claire Lewis.

"Every week we look at a current topic from

the news, or a current issue that is challenging. We look at it from a Christian perspective and see how that develops our own discipleship."

Between 12 and 14 people attend each week. It attracts Church of England church-goers and Methodists, as well as new people who wouldn't usually go to church.

Nigel added: "We have seen some incredible transformation – more so than in regular

church services, so it has been very transformative. The discussions are very engaging, but they are always kind and done with grace."

Church in the Kittiwake takes place every Tuesday (except during Christmas Week and Holy Week) at 7.30pm and everyone is welcome.

The Kittiwake is a busy pub, so the church sessions take place in the front room, pro-

The Rt Revd Sarah Mullally to become 106th Archbishop of Canterbury

Bishop Helen-Ann has welcomed news that the Bishop of London, the Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally, will become the next Archbishop of Canterbury.

It follows an announcement from Downing Street, on 3 October, that His Majesty The King had approved the nomination for Bishop Sarah to become the 106th Archbishop since Saint Augustine in 597 and the first woman to hold the position.

She will be installed in a service at Canterbury Cathedral in March 2026.

Sarah Mullally has served as Bishop of London since 2018 and was previously England's Chief Nursing Officer.

Bishop Helen-Ann said: "I welcome the announcement that Bishop Sarah Mullally is to be the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury. This is historic and ground-breaking news and represents another glass-ceiling for women that has been well and truly shattered.

"My prayers are with Archbishop-designate Sarah, her family and friends and



Archbishop-designate Sarah Mullally

the Diocese of London who now prepare to farewell her in the coming months.

"We in the Diocese of Newcastle rejoice and with full hearts offer our support to her, as she takes on this extraordinary

task of Christian leadership. I pray for a whole Church that is renewed, steadied and ready to listen afresh to the voices of the weak, marginalised and excluded. A fresh vision for a world in need of healing and hope."

viding quiet space for discussion and a prayer at the end. Bishop Helen-Ann attended earlier this year.

Church in the Kittiwake started in October 2024. It evolved from a Beers and Carols event, which took place ahead of Christmas 2023 and has also become a firm fixture, attracting 70 to 80 people. This year, Beers and Carols will take place on Thursday 18 December at 7.30pm. Again, everyone is welcome.



Church in the Kittiwake

Forest Church inspires children and



A new outdoor initiative is enabling people of all ages to connect with God through nature.

Forest Church has been established by St Mark's Shiremoor, St John's Killingworth, St John's Wallsend, and Church of the Good Shepherd, Wallsend, as part of a collaborative project with the wider community.

It is the latest offering from the Rising Sun Neighbours project, which is aimed at people living in new estates around the Rising Sun Country Park centre in Benton. It reaches out to the community with engaging initiatives, which have included carol singing, Christian meditation, a summer festival and a Holocaust Memorial Day service.

families in Benton

Forest Church was launched earlier this year. It is based in the picturesque surroundings of the country park, which offers 400 acres of green space. It's a haven for wildlife and has a lake area, which is a designated local nature reserve.

"It has been very encouraging so far," said the Revd Canon Dr Rae Caro, Priest in Charge at St Mark's. "We have a very informal service with activities, games and song. It is popular with families and at our most recent session we had 11 adults and 11 children.

"We are seeing a mixture of people. Some are from our existing churches while other people have seen it advertised. Everyone is welcome, and in some cases, passers-by have seen our Forest Church sessions and joined in."

Forest Church has held three bi-monthly sessions so far, with a fourth session planned for 14 December at 2pm.

Rae added: "We explore the country park and get to know God through nature. It's wonderful to be outdoors and the sessions have been very well received. We only meet for half an hour to 40 minutes, so it's not overly time consuming for those attending, but it is a really positive and engaging environment.

"We haven't rushed things with one service every couple of months. It is building up slowly and hopefully it will keep growing."

Another positive factor is that some of the new attendees have expressed an interest in getting involved with their local churches.

Rae explained: "When new people have attended the Forest Church sessions, they have generally accepted an invitation to fill in our contact form. Most of them have taken up the option on the form to be connected to their local churches, which is very encouraging."



Champing offers a new way to welcome people into church

A rural church has become the first in Newcastle Diocese to join a growing phenomenon which is enabling people to sleep over in places of worship.

All Saints is one of 30+ churches across the country to join the scheme, devised by national charity The Churches Conservation Trust, which along with other funders made the project possible.

Champing, which translates as camping in church, is a new offering at All Saints Church Muggleswick, where people can spend the night. Those who stay need to bring a sleeping bag, but comfortable camp beds are provided, each complete with a throw, cushion and a hot water bottle. The season runs from March to October and can be booked via champing.co.uk.

The idea of champing was first pursued by former vicar, the Revd Dr Helen Savage who retired in 2023. Since then, churchwardens Helen Barrass and Lynne Bean, with the support of the PCC and members of the small community, have worked to bring the project to fruition, while overseeing essential roof repairs among other initiatives.

A small diocesan grant to repair the ceiling plaster at the end of spring meant the church was safe to welcome champers this summer.

The initiative also makes good use of recent additions at the church funded by various organisations, which include an impressive servery and accessible toilet, tea and coffee making facilities, a sink with hot water, a microwave, a fridge, and a table and chairs with crockery for dining.



A warm welcome for champers



Churchwardens Helen Barrass (left) and Lynne Bean

Pews at the back of All Saints have been strategically remodelled so the two main champing areas are next to the facilities. However, the church can accommodate up to six people.

Helen and Lynne said: "All Saints got involved as a way of bringing in more income, as well as increasing the use of a very special place that needs to be cared for. We started in June and have had quite a few champers including families.

"It's very early days but feedback has been very positive. It's a very atmospheric church and a peaceful place to rest and reflect. People who have stayed have mentioned how the light comes in through the stained glass window early in the morning.

"Champing here is a unique experience and we are situated midway between Heavenfield and Durham Cathedral on the Northern Saints Trail and also on the newly launched Roof of England Walk. All Saints remains open for worship and has a monthly service."

The church is usually open for walkers during the day. They can make hot drinks and leave a



Helen Barrass

donation, but the church is closed from 5pm onwards if champers are booked in.

Permissions are in place to replace the nail sick roof at All Saints Church, with the addition of solar panels. This will take place once funds are available.

A new vicar, the Revd Melanie Shillito, took up the post of Priest in Charge of the Derwent Valley Group of churches in late October.

Matthew provides a soundtrack to the world at Hexham Abbey

Matthew Kelley joined Newcastle Diocese earlier this year and is a key member of our new Safeguarding team.

But away from his role as Safeguarding Administrator, the 26-year-old is an accomplished organist who is making a big sound at Hexham Abbey, where he is Assistant Director of Music.

Matthew's musical skills have been providing the soundtrack to Gaia, the inflatable earth artwork by internationally renowned artist Luke Jerram, which is currently on display in the Abbey's nave.

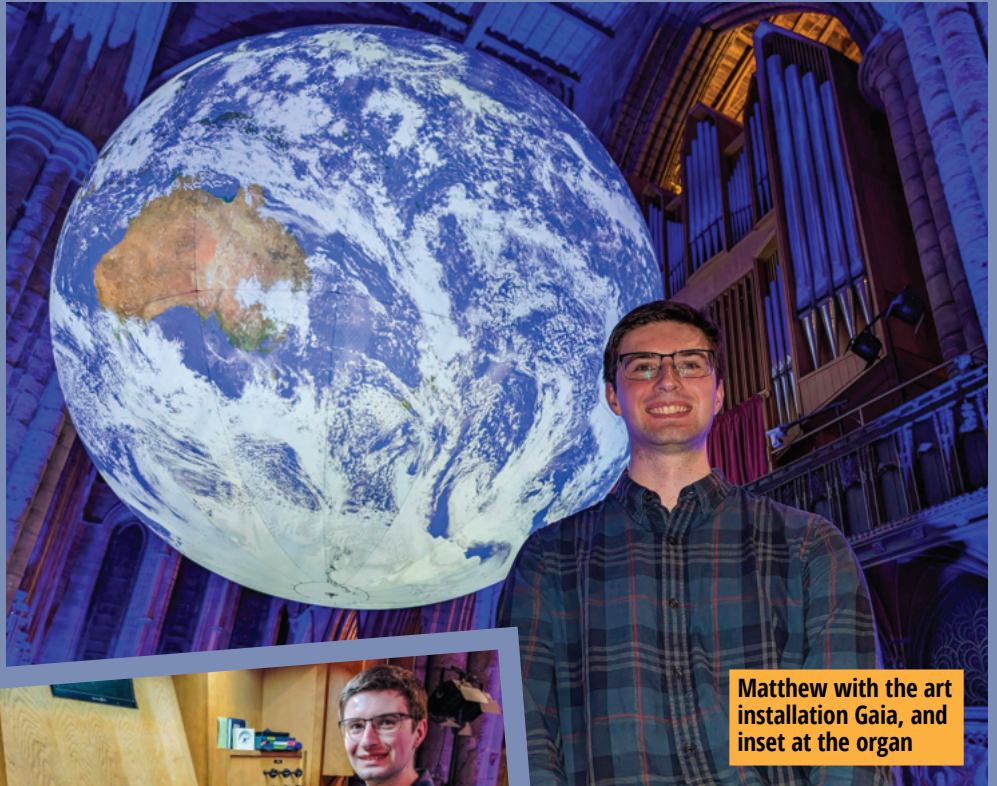
On 1 November, Matthew played cosmos-themed organ music for visitors to the installation, which included the soundtrack from the film *Interstellar*.

"It has been such a memorable event to put together," said Matthew. "The Gaia installation has been so popular so far, bringing many people into the Abbey. With this particular evening, we wanted to add some suitably dramatic music that was fitting to the occasion. It was a delight to play a part in this exhibition."

As a child, Matthew was a chorister at Worcester Cathedral, in the city where he grew up. But after learning to play piano, the organ was a natural next step and he never looked back.

A career as a musician beckoned and after leaving school, Matthew continued learning through full-time Organ Scholarships at both Guildford and Chelmsford Cathedrals, passing on his skills, supporting choristers and the next generation of young musicians.

Matthew, who has also worked in secondary schools, ventured North when he joined Durham University to study music, including modules such as composition, perfor-



Matthew with the art installation Gaia, and inset at the organ



mance and music theology.

"My work as an organist has always been linked to liturgy and the church in some form," he explained. "I was thrilled to get the opportunity to continue this at Hexham. It's a hugely satisfying job, not least because of the community we have here. I couldn't have asked for a better welcome to the role earlier this year."

At the Abbey, Matthew's role involves playing the organ during key services, events and concerts, directing the choir and training its young singers.

Throughout his years in music, safeguarding has always played an important role in his work. He explained: "We are extremely fortunate at the Abbey to have such a large number of singers across all ages. My work with our Abbey choristers involves plenty of crossover between my roles in music and safeguarding – both spheres are an integral part of running a successful parish choir such as this."

"I am learning so much from both roles within the Diocese and have really enjoyed being a part of this community so far, both at Hexham Abbey and at Church House."

Safeguarding is a key part of our ministry and mission, both in our diocese and across the Church of England. Matthew is delighted to be part of the new Safeguarding team, working alongside Director of Safeguarding Sharon Devlin, Safeguarding Caseworker Jill Thirlaway, and Training & Learning Advisor John Hulse.

Historic church is ready for the future after investment project

A church has completed an internal makeover in time to celebrate a special milestone in its history. St Michael's at New Hartley has been at the heart of its community, near Seaton Delaval and Seaton Sluice, for 125 years.

But the church needed attention after black mould built up on the ceiling and part of the walls, becoming an unpleasant feature of the building.

Thanks to a £10,000 grant from the diocesan Minor Repairs and Improvements Grant Fund, and a further £5,000 from the church's own fundraising, a scheme has been carried out to eradicate the problem.

Specialists were brought in to establish the cause of the mould, before the ceiling was professionally treated and painted. The internal walls were also treated and given a fresh coat of paint.

"A huge thank you to the Diocese," said the Revd David Atkinson, Priest in Charge of Delaval and Seghill Churches. "The grant made this possible. We had the means to raise a few extra thousand pounds but we couldn't have done this without the grant."

"The work has made such a difference to the



The congregation of St Michael's celebrates after the repairs

church. Before, we tried not to look up at the ceiling but now have something to be proud of again, something befitting of a historic church in its 125th year."

Raising the remaining £5,000 was quite a community effort. It included coffee mornings, a murder mystery night and generous donations, while one member of the congregation embarked on a sponsored run.

"It was a real team effort," said David. "We are very thankful to everyone who contributed to this cause. They have played their part in making such a difference."

A recent 125th anniversary service at St Michael's was attended by people from across the Delaval and Seghill Churches, as well as by ecumenical partners. The same hymns and liturgy from the church's 100th anniversary back in 2000 were revived.

"It was great to reflect on the history and was also a good time to look ahead to the future," said David. "We have an active Sunday school with a growing core of youths coming to our main Sunday service now, so that is very encouraging."

Tim Lewthwaite, Diocesan Church Buildings Support Officer, who manages the grant fund said: "I visited St Michael's in February, when PCC treasurer Gerald showed me the unpleasant layer of black mould across the church's ceiling and walls. This parish is full of life and activity, and the church is doing so much to serve New Hartley with its Little Angels toddler group and Open Doors community café. I was pleased to see St Michael's come forward for a Minor Repairs grant with a compelling case for support, which our grant panel enthusiastically backed."



Before the work there was unpleasant mould on the walls and ceiling. They were given a fresh coat of paint after the mould had been professionally treated

Crowds turn out for 'incredible' North Sea baptism



People gather on Seaton Sluice beach to witness the baptism

A teenager has described his joy after being baptised in the North Sea while surrounded by brothers and sisters in Christ.

A special ceremony for seventeen-year-old Elijah took place at Seaton Sluice beach, where he was waded into the water by his dad, Joe, and the Revd David Atkinson, Priest in Charge of Delaval and Seghill Churches.

"By the Grace of God, I am overjoyed to say I was baptised in the North Sea," said Elijah. "I have never felt lighter than in that moment after I was lifted out of the water. As if the weight of my sin had been washed away. Praise God!

"The ceremony was incredible. Initially, I expected there might be 20 people from our congregation, and family and friends. To my bewilderment, what must have been over 50 of my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ turned up, and what made it even better was that the public nature of this gathering meant people, even families passing by, came to see what was going on. And so, I thank the Lord.

"Maybe he used this public, pure and pas-



Elijah is lifted out of the water by his dad, Joe, and the Revd David Atkinson

sionate display of Christian unity to plant the mustard seed of faith in even just one person."

It was the culmination of a remarkable journey for Elijah, who felt a calling to be baptised after studying Matthew 3 in the New Testament, which talks about John the Baptist's ministry in the wilderness of Judea, and subsequently the Baptism of Jesus - the descending of the Holy Spirit and the voice of the Father.

"In that moment, I felt a discernment, a calling to be baptised in the very way the Lord was," said Elijah. "After all, in my personal journey of faith and sanctification, I must try to follow Christ in all of my thoughts, words and deeds. This was the understanding I had prayed for.

"People had previously asked 'Oh, why haven't you been baptised yet?' It wasn't until I truly began diving consistently and wholeheartedly into the Word that I discovered why I felt this way."

David said there was representation from all five churches which make up the two parishes of Seghill and Delaval.

He added: "As a priest of over 21 years I have had the privilege to baptise 650 mainly children and a few adults but never in the North Sea before. It was a great occasion and a real witness to the community of our faith. Someone described it as moving, beautiful and memorable.

"Lots of interest from the community followed, even with requests for further sea baptisms next year."

The Roost – a Christian community



**Beth Rookwood
at The Roost**

A Christian charity is seeking to nurture spirituality and wellbeing within young adults across Northumberland.

The Roost is based in the picturesque surroundings of Barns Farm at Netherwitton, near Morpeth, which provides therapeutic outdoor space enabling people to connect with the natural world.

"There are many challenges facing young adults," said Founder and Director of The Roost, the Revd Beth Rookwood. "From leaving the familiarity of family and education, to the big decisions that follow, and the way all of this can impact on their emotional and mental health.

"They may be getting to grips with a new career, they may be a young carer looking after a parent, they may be struggling to settle into a new area and finding new friends, or they might be coming to terms with grief.

"Regardless of their circumstances, this is a place where young adults can come and feel accepted. They can talk about whatever they want to, either one-to-one or as part of a group, take part in activities such as gardening and cooking, enjoying some nice food and rest.

"People can learn new skills with The Roost, make new friends and become part of our community. If we can find that place of stillness here, we can start to live from that in other areas of our lives."

Although it is orientated towards young adults aged 18-35, The Roost is there for everyone, offering support and a safe space for all who need it. People can either self-refer or be referred by a social worker or another organisation.

Beth founded The Roost with her husband, Barney, after moving to the North East in 2014, first serving her curacy in



**Beth with
Roost team
member
Angela**

where young adults can thrive



Morpeth parish. They identified Barns' farm as an ideal location. Being located in the Diocese means the charity can also offer support to the Diocese's churches and clergy in their work with young adults.

The Roost is made up of a committed team of dedicated volunteers and trustees – all offering skills and expertise in different areas.

God is at the heart of The Roost, with Biblical themes inspiring many of its activities. They include workshops on self-esteem, self-discovery and self-care; retreats exploring silence, soul care and connecting with nature. Special events focus on topics ranging from grief to contemplative

prayer, while The Roost has also led pilgrimages to sacred places such as Holy Island.

Despite its great work, The Roost is not directly funded by anyone. It is able to apply for grants and hosts its own fundraising activities.

Beth said new volunteers are always welcome to join the team of wonderful, talented people with big hearts. Currently The Roost is on the lookout for someone with bid writing experience.

● For more information and to make a donation visit roostcommunity.org



Photo exhibition offers a trip down memory lane – and into church

Over 100 years of history in Haydon Bridge was brought back to life when the local church opened its doors for a memorable exhibition of photos. *A Story of Haydon Bridge in Pictures* took place at St Cuthbert's Church over four days at the end of September.

It attracted dozens of people from the community each day, with photos showcasing village events and people, the fire station, retail, railway history, sporting achievements and more.

Those who attended donated generously, with proceeds going towards a proposed refurbishment of the vestry at St Cuthbert's, as well as much needed accessible toilets and a servery at the back of church.

The Revd Ollie Dempsey, Rector at Haydon Bridge, Warden with Newbrough and St John Lee, said: "It was wonderful to welcome so many people into the church for the Haydon Bridge photo exhibition.

"We were delighted to host this event, which showcased the history of the village and brought people together to share their memories of the place they know and love. Thank you to all who were involved in setting this up, and to everyone who donated to the church during the event."



The Revd Ollie Dempsey with Julia Cooper (centre) and Avril Kirsopp of the St Cuthbert's fundraising team

The exhibition took place instead of the annual Harvest Market this year. Julia Cooper, who is part of the fundraising team at St Cuthbert's, said it proved effective in capturing the imagination of the wider community.

"The Harvest Market had been successful for quite a few years," said Julia. "But it's important to look at different ways of bringing people into church. We quickly realised that there was a strong appetite for an exhibition of historic photos and it snowballed from there.

"We kept a lot of the key elements the same

as we would for the Harvest Market. There were refreshments outside on the Saturday, there was a raffle and several stalls. But we were overwhelmed by the community's response to the photo exhibition."

The exhibition also included rare video footage of the Haydon Bridge Village Show during the 1950s.

St Cuthbert's has never had toilets on site. These, along with a new servery would greatly enhance the church's offering for services and other events while further developing links with the community.



Avril Kirsopp (left) and Julia Cooper



Some of the exhibits on display

Faith helps ultra-runner Andy get over the line

An ultra-runner has revealed that his faith plays a key role during long and sometimes gruelling footraces.

Andy Lie has been associated with Newcastle Diocese ever since he first arrived with his wife Mabel in 1993. Since then, he has served as a Reader at various churches and has also carried out community and inter-faith work.

But running has been a big part of Andy's life since he was a teenager. Now aged 68, he continues to run several marathons (26.2 miles) or ultra runs (up to 100 miles) and is showing no signs of slowing down.

A training programme, which involves stretching, helps to keep Andy's body supple, but faith feeds his mind with the stimulus he needs to succeed.

"Faith certainly plays a part," said Andy. "I have hymns playing in my head while running and quite often I pray. It is very stimulating because sometimes the runs can be very demanding, depending on the terrain and the weather conditions.

"Faith keeps me positive and I often run in stunning locations, so it is also a wonderful way to explore God's creation. I treasure the 'me time' that running gives me and Mabel has always been there to support me!"

Andy was born in Indonesia, but grew up in Singapore, where it was compulsory to enlist for National Service from the age of 18. He joined the army and subsequent training developed what was to become a passion for running.

"I've always loved running but I didn't resume running seriously until 2003," he explained. "To date, I have done 47 marathons and 16 ultra-marathons. My goal is to join the UK 100-Marathon Club."

Over the years, Andy's running has raised between £10,000 and £15,000 for several local, national and international charities,



Andy Lie is one of seven run directors for the Town Moor Parkrun in Newcastle

including the West End Refugee Service and Water Aid.

Last summer, Andy took on the Kielder 50K in aid of Newcastle Phoenix Choir, which is based at St James' & St Basil's Fenham (where he actively serves as Reader) and celebrates life and friendship through song and time shared together.

While Andy raised about £200 for the cause, he contributed to a much bigger collective fundraising campaign, which has raised over £9,000 so far.

"I am not part of the choir," said Andy. "But I

was entering the Kielder 50K and wanted to support the Phoenix Choir because it provides great opportunities for anyone who wants to sing."

Andy has enjoyed a long and varied career in the church and other sectors. After studying theology at St John's College in Nottingham in the mid-1980s, he joined our diocese, carrying out community and inter-faith work in Elswick until 1998. Other work has involved serving as Ecumenical and Inter-faith officer for the United Reformed Church Northern Synod until he retired in September 2024.

A year of musical opportunities culminates in a new choir CD

Choral music lies at the heart of worship at Newcastle Cathedral. On most days, the walls resound with song led by the Cathedral Choir – independent lines of boy and girl choristers supported by Lay Clerks and Choral Scholars.

This year has been particularly exciting. The choir has recorded a brand-new album, *O Nata Lux*, featuring music for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, and they shared their gifts nationally in a live choral evening broadcast on BBC Radio 3 for Easter Day.

Central to our mission is ensuring that the musical, cultural and spiritual education we offer remains accessible to children from all backgrounds across the city and region. So, how can young people begin their journey into Cathedral music?

Small Sounds, supported by the Cathedral Music Trust, offers an introduction to music-making for children aged 0–5 and their grown-ups. These joyful sessions take place every Tuesday in term time at 10:15am, providing a welcoming space to sing, play and connect.

For children in Reception to Year 2, ChoriStarters meets every Wednesday in term time from 4:10–4:50pm. Led by pro-

Living the Lantern

By Ian Roberts, Director of Music at Newcastle Cathedral



Training choir members

fessional musicians and educators, these fun gatherings help young singers develop musical skills, confidence and friendships through the joy of singing.

Older children benefit from our Schools Singing Programme, which brings chorister training directly into a diverse range of classrooms. Complementing this, initiatives such as Cambiata Voices – a pioneering choir supporting boys in Years 9–13 as their voices change – allow even more pupils to experience the Cathedral's rich choral tradition.

Children from schools not yet involved are welcome to email music@newcastlecathedral.org.uk to arrange a solo audition.

Beyond school-age children, our Lay Clerks and Choral Scholars – including students

from Newcastle, Durham and Northumbria universities – are an integral part of the Cathedral's musical life. Our collaboration with local schools and universities also extends to our Organ Scholarship, run jointly with St Andrew's Church and Newcastle University, and we recently welcomed our first junior organ scholar.

Through our ongoing 'Not Just a Pipe Dream' Organ Appeal, we are committed to preserving and enhancing this magnificent instrument, ensuring that future generations can learn, perform and be inspired by its extraordinary sound.

O Nata Lux: Music for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany is available to purchase from the Cathedral's retail space and online – visit newcastlecathedral.org.uk/music for details.

Pictures: Chris Strickland



Choristers and choir



Training Choir members and choral directors Laura Oldfield and Clare Crinson