cannot remember a time such as this, where my longing for things to be different has been so acute, and the sense of waiting in the midst of everything so challenging. Covid-19 has come very near to many of us, and the threat of it in our society has shaped our way of being together, and had a very significant impact on our families, friends, and communities far beyond the previous life experiences of many people.

Many of you will know that my PA, Lesley Towers, has been on sick leave since catching Covid in March. Thankfully, she is now well enough to be able to make a phased return to work, but she is still living with the effects of the disease. As we think about Lesley’s experience, we are reminded of our own vulnerabilities to this virus, and of those of the people we love, and I am sure, like me, you pray daily for a relief from the impact that the virus is having on our nation and on people across the world.

As we approach the beginning of Advent, and the final weeks of 2020, I have felt that this year needs marking in some way that bears witness to the struggles we are living with, and in the garden at Bishop’s House I have had a wooden cross erected, with a plaque at its base, which reads:

COVID-19, 2020
Our World Changed in Ways We Could Never Have Imagined
We stand at the foot of the Cross of Christ
naming those who have died
mourning with those who grieve their loss
rejoicing with those who have survived
praying for those who have not yet recovered
trusting in the love of God
wondering when this pandemic will end
May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope
Romans 15:13

As I read the words on the plaque, the themes of Advent are clearly apparent. The naming of the reality of the difficulties of the world, the longing and waiting for change, and the hope we can have in God.

It is very easy to lose hope in situations such as those we are living through today, not just the coronavirus, but also climate change, gross inequality of wealth and distribution of food, access to good housing, and the refugee crisis, to name but a few - a ‘multitude of overwhelments’ as Geoff Miller, our Dean, has called it. The Psalmist, faced with the troubles of his times, gives us words of prayer for ours, ‘Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord, hear my voice.’ The journey towards Christmas reminds us that God is with us, and in this we may abound in hope.
Bishop’s Diary

This is not a full list of the Bishop’s engagements but includes the items we think might be of particular interest to you. Under the present circumstances there is a possibility of cancellations or meetings changing to virtual meetings.

December

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<td>Bishop’s Staff Meeting</td>
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<td>North Church Leaders Meeting</td>
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<td>Area Deans and Bishop’s Staff Shortlisting for Vicar</td>
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<td>St Peter’s Monkseaton</td>
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January

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<td>4th</td>
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<td>Office re-opens Planning Meeting</td>
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<td>Confirmations for Benwell Team, Newcastle West Deanery</td>
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<td>18th</td>
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<td>People and Places</td>
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<td>Diocesan Secretary</td>
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<td>Curates &amp; IME2</td>
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<td>21st</td>
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<td>Senior Staff Safeguarding Training</td>
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<td>25th – 26th</td>
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<td>College of Bishops</td>
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<td>27th</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>APPG Rural Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>28th</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>Planning Meeting</td>
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Comings & Goings

APPOINTMENTS

The Revd Neil Heslop, Priest in Charge, Sugley (Holy Saviour), is also going to be Priest in Charge, Denton (Holy Spirit).

The Revd Lee James Clemenson, Assistant Curate, Balkwell and Tynemouth St John, is now Priest in Charge, Balkwell and Tynemouth St John.

The Revd Deborah Maureen Baker, Assistant Curate (SSM), Ullingham Benefice, is now Distinctive Deacon (SSM) at Cresswell and Tynemouth.

Gospel Readings

Unfortunately we are unable to publish December and January’s Gospel Readings, but hopefully normal service will resume in the next edition of Link.

CONTACT US

The Link, Church House, St John’s Terrace, North Shields. NE29 6HS.
Tel: (0191) 270 4100.
Email: link@newcastle.anglican.org
Facebook: m.me/ncldiocese
Twitter: @ncldiocese
Instagram: @NclDiocese

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 of 250dpi or higher. Please contact the editor before submitting obituaries.

HE new Archdeacon of Lindisfarne has described her ‘joy’ as she begins her ministry and new role in our diocese.

The Venerable Dr Catherine Sourbut Groves was collated by Bishop Christine at a special Zoom service online on Saturday 14 November.

Originally, the ceremony was due to take place in person at St Aidan’s Church in Bamburgh, but plans had to be adapted following the announcement of a second national lockdown.

Catherine, 53, said: “There was a real sense of occasion despite it being on Zoom and I felt very emotional throughout the service. It was a real bonus that my family and friends, many of whom realistically wouldn’t have been able to make the journey to be present at my collation, could watch the service on Zoom. My uncle who is in his 80s and lives in Exeter watched it in the same way that someone in Newcastle did.”

Catherine thanked Bishop Christine for her warm welcome and to Diocesan Secretary Shane Waddle who ensured the technicalities of the service went off without a hitch.

The new archdeacon takes over from the Venerable Peter Robinson, who earlier this year moved to become Dean of Derby.

Catherine, who was brought up in Yorkshire, has spent the last 30 years in the South West where she was ordained in 2007. Until recently, she was the vicar of St Barnabas and St Peter’s in the Diocese of Bath and Wells and Prebendary of Wells Cathedral.

She has had a number of additional roles including being Chaplain to the Mayor of Bath, Diocesan Vocations Chaplain and Archdeaconry Advisor on Women’s Ministry.

Catherine was also co-leader of a ‘virtual deanery’ – called Magnificat Parishes Group – which was made up of disadvantaged parishes in the Diocese of Bath and Wells. She was an instrumental figure in the group which was set up to respond to the challenges of overseeing ministry and mission in less affluent parishes.

Catherine, who has moved to Northumberland with her husband Mike, is excited to bring her experience, knowledge and pioneer ministry background to our diocese.

She said: “It feels good to be back in the north. We love the area and we love Northumberland – the people have been really fantastic.

“I have a lot of time with Bishop Christine and the senior staff team, learning how the team functions and the aims and priorities in our diocese.

“I hope clergy and lay people alike will find me approachable and I look forward to learning from people about what God is doing in their context. I will be travelling around the diocese – as much as is practicable at the moment – and will be also meeting people on Zoom.”

Catherine will be leading the rural strand of our Growing Church Bringing Hope vision, and will be addressing the challenges and opportunities of ministry during the Covid pandemic.

She added: "There was something about the experience of lockdown, as there was more time to reflect and pray and think about the bigger picture. The fact we are in a pandemic is making us all think in a more pioneering way. We have to plan at a strategic level and we need to rethink about how we can 'be church' in a world of Covid, and how we emerge in the aftermath – we have to be imaginative, creative and pioneering.”

Catherine and Mike, who have two grown up children, enjoy spending time outdoors and are looking forward to exploring everything our beautiful diocese has to offer.

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We are extremely pleased to announce that a date has been confirmed for the consecration of the Venerable Mark Wroe as our new Bishop of Berwick.

Mark will be consecrated on Tuesday 5 January at 11am in York Minister.

Because of Covid restrictions, there is likely to be a limit on the number allowed to attend, however video will be streamed live on the internet.

We’ll post further details closer to the time on our website and social media channels, as well as in the e-Bulletin.
Hexham Abbey receives lifeline grant

Hexham Abbey has received a lifesaving financial boost from the government’s £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund.

It is one of 445 heritage organisations across the country to benefit from this funding, in a bid to help them through the coronavirus pandemic.

The Abbey has received a grant of £356,861 to be spent on much-needed repairs to the roofs of the Chantry and the Nave North aisle, helping to prevent any further water ingress.

The Abbey has also received grants and loans, amounting to £737,000, for the Abbey Roof Refurbishment.

The re-laying of the salvaged existing and new slates.

The repair and treatment of any decayed and infested exposed timber work.

The formation of a new treated counter and tilting batten structure with breather membranes.

The removal and repair of the failed lead items.

The risk of not carrying out this work is that timbers will become decayed and rot, causing irreparable damage to the medieval roof. The medieval roof is one of the glories of Hexham Abbey and rated as being of the highest significance to the Abbey fabric.

This vital funding is from the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage and the Heritage Stimulus Fund - funded by the Government and administered at arms-length by Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Both funds are part of the Government’s £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund which is designed to secure the future of Britain’s museums, galleries, theatres, independent cinemas, heritage sites and music venues with emergency grants and loans.

The Revd David Glover, Rector of Hexham, said: “Roofs are easily taken for granted but are, of course, vital for protecting the whole building. By repairing now, the most badly deteriorated sections of the Abbey roof, we are ensuring the Abbey will continue to thrive as place of worship, pilgrimage and heritage, and continue to be a place of deep blessing to Hexham and the wider region.”

“We are absolutely delighted to receive a grant from Historic England for just under £357,000. We are also extremely grateful to the Hexham Abbey Restoration Trust which is providing the remaining funds to complete the crucial first stage of the Abbey Roof refurbishment.”

The value of Hexham Abbey and its Priory Buildings is of international heritage standing. It is a building that warrants the very highest quality in conservation techniques and standards, and requires the very best in skilled craftsmanship. This project will provide heritage skill development and high-level training opportunities for the successful contractors as we work to preserve this wonderful building for future generations.”

The Abbey will be closed to the public from 4 January to 31 March while this work is carried out, reopening in time for Easter. The café, shop and Priory buildings will remain open. Services will continue to take place in the Priory buildings.

Prayer for the Nation

Churches across the diocese are participating in a national month of prayer as we navigate our way through our second lockdown.

Throughout November, Christians are being encouraged to pray daily for a specific area of national concern, wherever they are, in a collective moment of prayer at 6pm each evening, with cathedrals and churches invited to ring a bell at this time.

Christians are also encouraged to follow a simple seven-day prayer cycle, praying for a specific area each day including the NHS and frontline workers, the bereaved, and those struggling with physical and mental ill-health, and for children and young people.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: “Prayer is my first response when I feel out of my depth, when I need help, when I am worried, when I am concerned for those I love.”

“It is a gift that God gives to all - whether you are a regular prayer or not - bring your cares and the cares of the nation to God. For God loves and hears and holds. Prayer changes things.”

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: “Prayer changes things. It changes things by inviting God into the room. At this challenging time when all of us are fearful and anxious, and when so many are suffering, it is the one thing we can all do.”

“We can pray and invite God to change us, giving us the solace, strength and comfort we need for the difficult winter that is ahead of us. Let’s pray together at this difficult time.”

The prayer call has the support of senior church leaders and is supported by the Church of England’s House of Bishops.

A selection of resources to suit Christians from across all denominations and traditions, and those exploring faith at this challenging time, are available on the Church of England website to guide prayer throughout lockdown.

The call to prayer comes as both Archbishops encourage churches to redouble their efforts to serve their local communities, caring for the elderly and most vulnerable.

Prayers and other resources are being shared on social media with the hashtag #PrayerForTheNation.

To find out more information about the invitation to pray visit: churchofengland.org/PrayerForTheNation

Although Newcastle Cathedral isn’t able to ring its bells at present due to ongoing development works, it is joining in the #PrayerForOurNation via YouTube.

The cathedral is creating weekly videos which features the sound of its bells ringing and a member of the ministry team leading a prayer.

Keep an eye on the cathedral’s social media pages highlighting the different focus for prayer each day and visit its YouTube playlist at www.bit.ly/2Uz6xoe to watch the #PrayerForOurNation videos.

MESSY CHURCH Home invasion!

In the midst of the Covid pandemic, churches are creatively finding ways to continue engaging with people across their parishes.

And the latest initiative by The Revd Benjamin Carter and his team from the Parishes by the Wall is certainly keeping the younger members of his community entertained.

The team have launched ‘Messy Church at Home’ in response to nationwide social distancing restrictions which have prevented usual Messy Church events taking place in the benefice.

Families are now taking part in Messy Church activities from the comfort of their home over the second weekend of each month, culminating in an online Zoom service.

Around 50 children from three schools and churches in the local area – as well as two little ones from Scotland – are getting involved in the fun event which follows a different theme each month.

Benjamin, who came across the idea via the Messy Church network, said: “It’s been working really well so far. The key to it all is organisation.”

“We meet 10 days before the service to plan the theme, and then at the beginning of the week before the Sunday Zoom we put up packs – a bit like a conveyor belt - with the various activities and prayers, which are then delivered to schools. They are kept in quarantine for three days before they’re handed out to the children, so it’s all very Covid-secure.”

Themes covered so far are Harvest and Remembrance, with the children creating a range of fantastic artwork from autumn wreaths to colourful scarecrows and poppies. The third Messy Church at Home event in December will focus on Advent.

Many of the families join the Sunday Zoom service, which Benjamin describes as ‘extraordinarily chaotic (but in a good way!’

Benjamin added: “We have lots of excited six, seven and eight-year-olds taking part. It’s great as it allows the children to help lead us in prayers and do readings. It all comes together really well.”

From September 2019 up until lockdown, Parishes by the Wall were running Messy Church as an after-school activity. Benjamin added: “It will be interesting to see what happens once restrictions are lifted. Messy Church at Home might be one of the things that remains as it offers families a higher level of flexibility, and the engagement so far has been fantastic.”

Messianic Church at Home in their own area. Contact him at revbenjamincarter@gmail.com or call him on 01434 688196/07985 412542.

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Benjamin would be happy to chat with anyone interested in the idea of running Messy Church at Home in their own area. Contact him at revbenjamincarter@gmail.com or call him on 01434 688196/07985 412542.

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A tribute to Canon Carol Wolstenholme OBE

1 January 1943 - 5 November 2020

Carol Wolstenholme had a sense of vocation to serve God in every way she could as a lay person. Gifted with clear insight, intelligence and wit, she served the people of Denton, her family and very many friends. She was also highly valued by the people among whom she worked in sections of the Civil Service, for which she was awarded an O.B.E. on retirement in 2006. But here we concentrate with particular thankfulness, her contributions made over many years and to the people of the Diocese of Newcastle.

Carol was a life-long member of Holy Spirit, Denton, a leader there for a quarter of a century and chronicler of its history. Though perhaps arriving at different perceptions of the roles of lay women in the church, she was shaped in the sixties by the spiritual leadership and teaching of Fr. Cook and they sparred happily together until the time of his death last year. In her teens she was elected President of their branch of the Anglican Young People’s Association and this opened opportunities to experience church life and leadership across a wider section of the Church of England. Professionally, she rose to become Leadership Development Manager for the Pension Service and her life-long mission has been to help the Church rediscover in our own time what the church of ‘The Acts’ knew, that everyone is gifted by God in discipleship and for ministry and that all must find their voice and let it sound, unhindered by issues of gender, education, prejudice or precedent.

Carol not only as one of The Rectory Room members, who was known in Falstone as one of ‘The Rectory Room Team’, but also in her role as Chair of the House Livery, where she was there when I cared for her in my role as her nurse in the final weeks of her life. Carol was instrumental in encouraging me to complete the Authorised Lay Ministry course and I will forever remember her with joy in my heart. May she rest in peace.

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A village remembers...

THREE spectacular giant poppies in the heart of the village helped the people of Ponteland to remember the sacrifices of two World Wars and subsequent conflicts.

The traditional Remembrance commemorations could not be held due to Covid-19 restrictions and concern for people’s health and safety. But Ponteland people still remembered with style and dignity.

A year-long community project by Ponteland Town Council led to the creation of the three giant poppies which attracted much praise. Individuals and organisations laid wreaths at the War Memorial informally rather than at the usual Remembrance Sunday service.

Plus the Town Council asked children to put pictures of poppies in their windows and many people observed a two-minute silence on their doorsteps on Remembrance Sunday.

On the morning of November 11, the vicar of Ponteland, the Revd Capt Paul Allinson, went to the War Memorial for a private prayer. About 30 people gathered just before 11am, all standing socially-distanced, and a two-minute silence was observed, followed by representations of several organisations laying wreaths.

The three giant poppies were made up of more than 2,000 poppies knitted or crocheted by people throughout the area.

 Coun Karen Overbury, who helps to organise Remembrance events in Ponteland, explained: “The Town Council had planned drop-ins and workshops so people of all ages could get together to make poppies or learn how to knit or crochet.

“Obviously, we were forced to cancel all our community events, but we got the word out and the wonderful people of Ponteland came up trumps. The Town Council would like to thank everyone who made poppies. I hope by seeing the displays, residents will feel that their hard work was worthwhile. We have certainly had a tremendous amount of praise for them.”

The Town Council had had to cancel the annual Remembrance parade and services, but encouraged individuals and groups to buy wreaths to support the work of the Royal British Legion and lay them at the War Memorial. The Town Council has also given a £200 donation to the British Legion.

Ponteland Mayor Alan Varley laid a wreath at the War Memorial early on Remembrance Sunday.

He said: “All councillors were very disappointed to have to cancel the 2020 Remembrance Sunday parade and service due to Covid-19. However, councillors were determined that the fallen of the two World Wars and subsequent conflicts would not be forgotten.”

COUNCILORS were determined that the fallen of the two World Wars and subsequent conflicts would not be forgotten.

IN this edition of Link, we feature the story of 86-year-old choir singer Gerry Hogarth (originally published in The Chronicle).

Gerry Hogarth, from Heaton, has performed with St Gabriel’s church choir since 1945, when he joined as an 11-year-old schoolboy.

On returning to Newcastle following evacuation during the Second World War, Gerry Hogarth joined his local choir.

His attendance at the age of 11 was inspired by a piano teacher while he stayed with a family in Belford, Northumberland as an evacuee.

And 75-years later the 86-year-old continues to perform at Heaton’s St Gabriel’s church, admitting that he has no plans of quitting the choir until he is told to stop singing.

Gerry, who has lived in Heaton all of his life, said: “I’ve always loved to sing and listen to church music and choir. Your voice can’t go on forever. But until somebody tells me I should give up I will keep singing.”

Gerry’s passion for singing with the choir spanned into a successful career in the music industry, performing as part of a male barbershop-style vocal group, The Dene Boys.

The group, who found success on BBC’s ‘What Makes a Star?’ radio competition in the 1950s, was made up of young men from St Gabriel’s choir.

And their name was inspired by their Sunday walks through Jesmond Dene between choir practice.

The Dene Boys later earned a recording contract with HMV, before their inability to play musical instruments brought an end to the quartet in 1959.

Gerry said: “I have seen vast changes in the music of the church. Music has changed to suit changes to services and when I first joined it was an all-male choir.

“Rehearsals would take place twice a week and all day on Sunday was more or less taken over by different services.

“You would return home for dinner and have a walk around Jesmond Dene after 11am service. Then you would join Evensong at 6.30pm. But far fewer services take place today.”

St Gabriel’s church choir is looking to welcome new members. Anyone interested in joining or would like further information can contact chorus director, Timothy Burke via email at singingstgabriel@gmail.com.

And while they welcome members of all ages, Gerry hopes that his story will inspire younger members to join the choir.

He added: “It was a great shame when we lost the number of younger people joining the choir. It would be great to get more young people back into singing.”

Gerry hits the right note at St Gabriel’s Heaton!
Couple rearrange their wedding to beat lockdown

CHRIST Church in North Shields played host to a hastily rearranged wedding so a bride and groom could say ‘I do’ before lockdown.

Aly Harwood, 33, and Gareth Bateman, 34, moved their big day forward as the date they set a year ago fell in the midst of the second national coronavirus lockdown.

The pair, from Swarland, Northumberland, were originally due to wed on 20 November, and they had already scaled back plans considerably after social distancing restrictions forced them to reduce their guest list from 200 to 15.

But after hearing a second lockdown was set to be announced by Boris Johnson, Aly quickly realised the wedding wouldn’t be allowed to go ahead at all.

The bride-to-be sprung into action and managed to rearrange her wedding in one day, bringing it forward to two days before lockdown.

Aly, an underwriter, said: ‘Gareth was about to go out before lockdown. BRINGING IT FORWARD TO TWO DAYS BEFORE LOCKDOWN. ‘Gareth and Aly’s wedding, it was a big spiritual experience - the bride and groom radiated with happiness - it was all about the marriage not the wedding day. The couple will be well supported by family and friends in their future together.’

Aly then contacted Revd Dorothy Robinson, Team Vicar for Christ Church, who confirmed she’d be able to marry the couple on 3 November.

Thanks to the efforts and goodwill of Aly and Gareth’s wedding venues and suppliers, the ceremony went ahead with 15 in attendance, followed by a small reception at the newly-wed’s local pub, the Cook and Barker.

Aly added: ‘It’s been a total yo-yo of emotions. It was my dream wedding we had planned. But we just wanted to be married. It wasn’t about the party for us.”

Dorothy said: ‘Gareth and Aly just wanted to be married. Their wedding was booked for 20 November 2020, banns had been read and service planned - then lockdown is announced from 5 November! Aly asked if it would be possible to bring the ceremony forward to 3 November, so it was all systems go - florist, photographer and a small reception fell into place.

‘It was a privilege to officiate at Gareth and Aly’s wedding, it was a real spiritual experience - the bride and groom radiated with happiness - it was all about the marriage not the wedding day. The couple will be well supported by family and friends in their future together.’

> Aly then contacted Revd Dorothy Robinson, Team Vicar for Christ Church, who confirmed she’d be able to marry the couple on 3 November.

> Aly and Gareth Bateman married two days before lockdown

You must be physically fit to take part in this tour. £20 per group (Max six people from the same household or support bubble per tour)

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Book: bit.ly/3goCrZi

> The married couple sign the register in Christ Church

> Aly and Gareth Bateman married two days before lockdown
The Church of England has published a landmark set of resources drawing together the Bible, theology, science and history with powerful real-life stories as it embarks on a new process of discernment and decision-making on questions of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

The product of three years' work by more than 40 people, led by the Bishop of Coventry, Living in Love and Faith includes a 480-page book, a series of films and podcasts, a course and an online library of other publications, in what is thought to be the most extensive work in this area by any faith group in the world.

It comes as the House of Bishops issues an appeal to the whole Church of England to participate in learning together, using the resources for open, honest and gracious discussion, listening and learning.

A group of bishops, chaired by the Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, will lead the process of discernment and decision-making about a way forward for the church in relation to human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

It is anticipated that the period of church-wide learning and engagement would take place during 2021. The House of Bishops would then bring the discernment and decision-making to a timely conclusion in 2022 which would then be put before Synod.

In a foreword to the Living in Love and Faith resources, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, acknowledge and apologise for the "huge damage and hurt" that has been caused particularly to LGBTI+ people within the Church.

But addressing the future, they add: "Our prayer for the Church through this work is that collectively we demonstrate the same love to one another that we have experienced from God."

The book opens with an account of how Jesus invited people to sit down together as he fed the 5,000. It notes how Jesus often sat down with people with radically different lives and views.

A group of bishops, chaired by the Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, will lead the process of discernment and decision-making about a way forward for the church in relation to human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, who will lead the ‘Next Steps Group,’ said: “The challenges of the pandemic have underlined how we need each other more than ever.

“At the same time, we can see how deeply divided the Church is over these questions, and we must seek God’s will by learning together, listening to each other and to God.

“We will encourage and support churches to do this in ways appropriate to their local contexts over the coming year, inviting people to reflect on their learning, both as groups and individually.

“This must be a meaningful process with a clear way forward.

“However, it will not succeed without love, grace, kindness and compassion.”

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**Festival of Angels**

A ‘VIRTUAL’ Festival of Angels has been launched this year by Allen Valley Churches. Following on from the very successful event in September 2019, this year’s Festival of Angels will follow a similar format to the parish’s Scarecrow Festival at the beginning of lockdown.

The churches are calling on creatives in the area to make angels of any size, any medium and any colour. To enter your angel into the festival, simply take a photo of your creation and upload it to www.allendalechurch.co.uk/angels between 22 November and 5 December.

Shirley Brown, Churchwarden of St Cuthbert’s Church, Allendale, said: ‘Get your creative thinking caps on all of you crafters, knitters, needleworkers, carpenters, metalworkers, potters, artists, bakers, flower arrangers. Let’s flood the Allen Valleys and beyond with a heavenly host of angels winging their way and spreading joy, peace and love!’

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**Order the Living in Love and Faith Book and Course from Church House Publishing [www.chpublishing.co.uk](http://www.chpublishing.co.uk)**

- **The Book** (480pp, full-colour) £19.99
- **The Course** (64pp, full-colour) £4.99, or 6 copies for £24.99
Spotlight on contactless

No expert is more a champion of contactless giving than Revd Helen O’Sullivan who has written about this subject with greater passion and more experience than any other clergy person I know. The Goodbox Core has been marketed to church groups for a number of years now and has been a tremendous success.

The last few months have seen a growing number of churches, especially those in rural areas, adopt contactless giving as a means of continuing to receive donations while the church buildings are closed. The Goodbox Core has been a godsend in this regard.

I recently attended a conference where a church representative from the north of England explained how their church had been able to continue to receive donations during the lockdown period by using a Goodbox Core. The church had previously been using a cash box and had found it difficult to keep track of the donations.

The Goodbox Core has been a great help in this regard. It has allowed the church to keep track of the donations and has helped to ensure that the church is able to continue to offer financial support to those in need.

The Goodbox Core has also been a great help to churches in the south of England, where the lockdown period has been shorter. The church representative from the south of England explained how their church had been able to continue to receive donations during the lockdown period by using a Goodbox Core.

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In the north of England, the Goodbox Core has been a great help in helping churches to continue to receive donations during the lockdown period. The church representative from the north of England explained how their church had been able to continue to receive donations during the lockdown period by using a Goodbox Core.

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In conclusion, the Goodbox Core has been a great help in helping churches to continue to receive donations during the lockdown period. It has allowed the church to keep track of the donations and has helped to ensure that the church is able to continue to offer financial support to those in need.

By Joanne Christie, Generous Giving Adviser @JoanneCTweets

Tackling food poverty

In our September edition of Link, Revd Allison Harding revealed her discovery of the hidden poverty in the parish of NW and the number of people in need of food. Since the publication of the article, Allison has been overwhelmed by the response and writes a follow-up piece about how she, Jacqueline Atkinson, Children & Families Missioner, and others in the parish have been tackling the issue.

After an article that was published in the Link, we had an amazing response from an anonymous donor who gave us the confidence to move ahead with our response to the need that was uncovered during the summer, both in Newburn and Denton Parishes.

During October half-term a number of people from the church packed food into bags to be given out to families in need. Jacqueline Atkinson and I then delivered the bags to families in Newburn, Throckley and Denton.

We made up over 40 food parcels and gave each family a pumpkin and a pumpkin prayer written by Jacqueline. The recipients of the food were delighted - on the doorstep there were tears, laughter and lots of gratitude. Word got out about what we were doing and people from the community have volunteered to be involved as this develops. It’s so humbling, I can’t express how grateful I am that, because people have responded, we can continue to do this vital work. We now have a few families that are delivering to each week and hope to be able to offer weekly food parcels to more families in the near future.

This year has shown beyond a shadow of doubt that we can keep up. The speed at which our parish has adapted and the willingness that has been shown to learn and share new skills is a real testament to the determination and commitment of our communities. Taking positive action now is vital to our financial security next year and beyond. As we look forward to the return of weddings, baptisms and other occasional services in our church buildings, we can take this opportunity now to position ourselves well for the future.

If you would like to know more about any of the information in this article or arrange a trial of contactless equipment, please get in touch with the Generous Giving Team. We can also provide help and support if you’re looking to set up your own equipment.

Contact Joanne at jchristie@newcastle.anglican.org or call her on 0191 270 4155/ 07503 338 013
Advent Calendar for Creation

A S Christmas approaches I’m reminded that, in Jesus, the God of all creation came to dwell among us, sanctifying this good earth by his presence and demonstrating his love for it. Caring for the earth on which Jesus trod, and for all its creatures, is an integral part of our response to God’s love - and by the time you read this, I hope our Diocesan Synod will have committed us to being Carbon Net Zero by 2030, and to becoming an Eco Diocese. But God doesn’t only call us to care for the world: he invited us to delight in it too – and as we do so, we may feel a deeper sense of connection with God, and the creation of which we are a part. Do you ever go outside to enjoy the world this time of year? Even in the cold and the darkness (well wrapped up!) there is much to appreciate. So, as we wait for the birth of the Light of the World, why not try some of the activities in this Franciscan-inspired ‘Advent Calendar’? (with thanks to the Revd Hilary Bond)

**Greening our churches in the New Year**

ARE you wondering how to start on the journey to Net Zero? Why not start the New Year by reading ‘The practical path to net zero carbon for churches’ – a really useful resource from the Church of England’s environment team ([tinyurl.com/y367hc4](https://tinyurl.com/y367hc4))

The team is also putting on some excellent webinars on topics ranging from heating and lighting solutions, solar pv panels and electric car charging, to energy management and quick wins. Some of these are in December, so you don’t need to wait until January! [https://tinyurl.com/y5m5qqy3](https://tinyurl.com/y5m5qqy3)

**For further inspiration, sign up to the Church of England’s excellent quarterly Environment newsletter [https://tinyurl.com/j2c5s3l8](https://tinyurl.com/j2c5s3l8)**

**Christianity and climate crisis book launch**

THE Founding Guardian of The International Community of Aidan and Hilda has written a book about climate change and Christianity.

Faced with the impending climate crisis and significant and irreparable damage being done to the earth, and climate campaigners who believe Christianity is not earth-friendly, this book offers a Christian spirituality of creation.

Ray Simpson’s latest offering, called ‘Celtic Christianity and Climate Crisis’, explores some of the key concepts of the Celtic tradition — and some of the criticisms levelled against it.

He shows how the Celtic affirmation of creation and of equality and love among human beings hold the key not only for the future of the church but of the whole planet.

Ray said: “Since my first book on Celtic spirituality was written 25 years ago, I have examined all serious criticisms raised against Celtic Christianity. I boil these down to twelve, and liken this work to mining. Much dross is indeed discarded, but gold is also quarried. I highlight twelve golden keys not only for the future of the Church but for the whole planet.”

The book (£12.99) is available to order direct from the publisher (Sacristy Press) or Amazon or from Ray’s website www.raysimpson.org. It can also be downloaded as an e-book on Kindle, Kobo, iTunes and Google Play.
Alison brightens our lives

If you need a bit of sunshine in the gloom of lockdown, then you need to listen to Alison Rudd’s new CD ‘Morning Sunshine.’

Alison, who lives in Amble and is organist at Alnmouth and Lesbury churches, works as a peripatetic music teacher in Northumberland teaching piano and keyboard.

Alison said: "The CD evolved during the lockdown when I had lots of time at home to compose and improvise on piano, keyboard and flute inspired by the natural beauty of Northumberland.

"When the churches were closed the opportunity arose to record music for the Aln and Coastland parish website.

"My music explores the varying sounds and rhythms available on the keyboard and I was able to combine them using multi-track recording."

The CD consists of solos and improvisations for keyboard, piano and flute, as well as a Northumbria Suite and a Jazz Suite.

The Northumbria Suite consists of six movements: Howick Pastorale, Long-houghton March, Alnmouth Air, Lesbury Jig, Warkworth Sarabande and Amble Hornpipe. Each movement has its own character reflecting one aspect of the village or town.

One member of the Alnmouth congregation has described the CD as ‘38 minutes of joy and meditation’.

The price is £5 which includes a donation to Cancer Research UK.

If you would like to buy a CD, contact Alison on 01665 713974 or alisonsmusic@outlook.com

Wellbeing

by Patty Everitt, Counselling Advisor (Interim)

The area between the bull’s eye and the second circle contains all the things over which we do not have direct control but where we do have influence and can contribute our views and opinions. This includes the way we choose to vote to influence who will represent our views and the discussions we have with others about what should or could happen. If we do not like the outcome then we could change our perspective on the situation and choose another response, or we may be content and do nothing more. We could also rant or take offence. We control our response, and this includes when a sibling winds us up (yet again!).

The area between the second and third circles contains all that we cannot control and cannot influence. Within that area lies the weather, the motion of the planets, and again unsettlingly, the way other people choose to behave and respond in a situation. We can choose how we respond to events even though we cannot control the events themselves. We can choose to do the best for ourselves and others under the circumstances or we can choose another course of action. Our responses are still under our control. Terry Waite’s choice of response to his captors when he was held hostage is a profoundly humbling reminder that we can choose our behaviours.

As Advent approaches now is a good time to remind ourselves of what is in the bull’s eye, what is in our area of influence and what is beyond our control and influence and which we simply have to accommodate.

We can use this time of preparation to make choices about our spiritual, emotional, mental and physical response to the challenges and joys that will or might arise for us at Christmas.

We can use the time of Advent to take stock of what we can control or influence and what we cannot.

The one thing over which we always have control is how we choose to respond. When we recognise this, then we are most likely to be at peace with ourselves and the world. That could be a hopeful place to find ourselves in the season of Peace and Goodwill, of Comfort and Joy. Happy preparation.

If any of the above sparks something that you would like to explore, please contact Patty at counselling@newcastle.anglican.org and find out how the counselling service might be able to help.

PREPARING FOR COMFORT AND JOY

I AM writing this in the season of remembrance and as I watched the Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph I realised how adaptable we humans are.

The event was certainly notable for the lack of crowds but more than that, it was notable for the way in which honour and respect was still demonstrated despite the restrictions. Symbols of respect were still offered, prayers were still said, heads were still bowed in respect and the dead were honoured in the way our nation and communities choose so to do.

This was a most powerful reminder that, regardless of the situation, there are things over which we do have control and things that we can do; there are situations in which we have influence over what can happen; and there are situations where we have no control at all and the best that we can do is adapt or maybe endure.

The first time I saw this idea in print I thought: So what? That’s obvious.

Of course, if it were obvious then we wouldn’t be acting on it, so perhaps it isn’t that obvious after all.

Imagine, if you will, three concentric circles.

The inner circle, the bull’s eye, contains everything over which we have control and power. It includes, unsettlingly and most importantly, how we choose to respond to other people and events. Our response includes our behaviours, our thoughts and our emotions. Yes! We do have control over how we choose to feel.

The two’s Company - telephone befriending

ISOLATION is a word we have heard a lot in 2020, and we know that many people are feeling lonely and are not able to have regular contact with their families, neighbours, and churches.

As churches we have often been at the centre of offering spaces of welcome, hospitality and company for those in our communities.

‘Two’s Company’ was launched in April and is a telephone befriending tool for churches based on a framework already established for the ‘Linking Lives’ home visiting projects.

It is designed to be a tool which churches can use to reach those people in their communities hardest hit by lockdown measures.

The model is quick, easy, and safe to set up and is free of charge (although donations are welcome). Training is carried out by Linking Lives UK for local coordinators by Zoom, who can then cascade that training to local volunteers.

Calls are made to Link Friends on a weekly basis for around 30 minutes and this is often a real lifeline to those most marginalised and unable to engage with friends or family.

Referrals are received from social workers, social prescribers (community connectors etc.) and from family members.

Linking Lives UK is still inviting churches to partner with them to provide this vital service to their communities.

Communities Together Durham and Newcastle and North East Churches Acting Together are partnering with them and are hosting an information webinar for churches who wish to find out more.

The Two’s Company information webinar takes place on Thursday 21 January 2021 at 1pm. And you can register via https://bit.ly/2I8D0pk

For more information, contact Joanne Thorns on regionalofficer@necat.co.uk or visit: www.linkinglives.uk
Shaping skills for digital church

By Andrew Tinkler, Generous Giving Team

Being Generous can cover many aspects of our calling as Christian disciples. As well as financial generosity we are also called to give our time, gifts and talents too.

If repeated social lockdowns have given us time for soul searching then there are some new practical ways in which we can be generous! Can we use our gifts and talents to nurture and grow our own church, or could we also take a wider view and consider helping other churches across the diocese to flourish?

In thinking through what this could look like it led to a conversation with a group called Together Newcastle and Gwyn McKenzie: “Together Newcastle is all about collaboration and we believe that every parish has assets they can use and share for the benefit of others. We don’t think of assets as primarily financial but as human. There is an abundance of ‘gifts’ everywhere, our job is to help find them and support folks as they work out how best to use those gifts locally. If we can help share those gifts on a wider basis so much the better for everyone in the diocese.”

As part of my role within the Generous Giving Team, we have been working with parishes to better understand what support they may need during the Covid pandemic. One common practical challenge that we have all faced in the last few months is the use of technology in church life. As a result of this we realised there was a need to bring together a group to discuss this, and set up a new Diocesan Digital Development Network which could facilitate the sharing of learning, to support one another and explore practical solutions which can help our churches grow and evolve.

Network member Matthew Hunter, from St. John’s Whorlton, told us: “As a relatively late adopter, rather than a digital native, I’m conscious of how inadequate technology can make you feel, but also know that being willing to experiment and figure things out is integral to developing proficiency.”

At our recent meeting it was useful to hear what other churches were doing, but it felt I should stress that it’s important not to over-complicate matters. Plus, where finances are tight, we may not need to make a substantial financial investment in new audio-visual equipment either. I felt some simple solutions were closer to hand; trust the smartphone in your pocket, and the software on your laptop (and sync your devices)."

So, sometimes it is about making better use of what we already have and understanding how to get the best of our current equipment then. This is where some conversations with one another can really help.

Gwyn told us: “I can’t claim to be a technical whizz and was struggling to work out how to lead online worship from my own church in Riding Mill as we headed into the second lockdown, but a conversation with another church gave me a simple solution which worked really well. Without that bit of sharing I’d still be struggling!”

As a network we have also spoken about the challenges associated with technology and our church buildings themselves: if you do not have Wi-Fi or 3G/4G that enables you to livestream a service, then perhaps recording and uploading after the service or event could be a preferred option?

Matthew added: “Why rush to install Wi-Fi in a church building during the pandemic when you can give yourself permission to literally do church at home, where you most likely already have broadband (and heating, for that matter)?? Digital Church, or even just digital proficiency as a church, doesn’t have to be daunting or expensive, and might even be fun?”

So, being generous with our skills and knowledge can help us grow as individual disciples but it can also nurture others and the wider diocese too.

Whilst a digital network may not have all the answers at least it gets us talking and working together to share skills and support one another in new ways for these new times. If you would like to learn more or get involved please get in touch with the Generous Giving Team, The Church of England also runs online training (Digital Labs) at www.churchofengland.org/resources/church-england-digital-labs which features a blog covering a range of topics such as filming services or events on your phone.

Free Covid Cash Recovery course

As we enter what will be a difficult winter, with many changes to government policy, and increasing levels of need in our communities, the Covid Cash Recovery course is more important than ever in equipping people to support those who are experiencing financial hardship at this time.

Together Newcastle is delivering the last few online Covid Cash Recovery Train the Trainer sessions 10am - 12.30pm on the following dates:

- Tuesday, 1 December
- Wednesday, 9 December
- Tuesday, 15 December

These online webinar sessions will be covering everything from general entitlements, rights, government and charitable support, to budgeting, help with bills, loans, debt, and money strategies for making it through these next few months.

Together Newcastle can also offer this as a bespoke course for groups of six or more.

For more information email kerry.crellin@together-newcastle.org or visit www.together-newcastle.org/whats-new/covid-cash-course

Low carbon church webinars

A WEBINAR about housekeeping and quick wins is being run by the Church of England.

This webinar tells you where to start on making your church more energy efficient and how to reduce carbon emissions.

Practical steps like setting boiler/heating controls, DIY draught proofing, timers, water saving, procurement of energy and energy bills. Simple steps that don’t cost the earth.

Speaker: Matt Fulford from Inspired Efficiency. Matt is the sustainability advisor at Gloucester Diocese, and has carried out countless church energy audits as part of the national audit programme and the Oxford Diocese audit programme.

He led a project at his own church, to make St Michael and All Angels Withington a ‘zero carbon’ church.

- Tuesday 1 December, 4-5pm
- Thursday 17 December, 12-1pm

For more information and to find out how to register, visit https://bit.ly/3kJzefj and scroll down to ‘Webinars on low carbon solutions – heating, lighting, solar and more’ then click on number three.
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: link@newcastle.anglican.org

Link Crossword 168 Compiled by Mary Sutton
This month we are including the crossword for anyone looking for something to keep them occupied during lockdown but just for fun (sorry, no prize this month). Please DO NOT submit crosswords to Church House.

ACROSS
3. Good book with protective cover found by the French (5)
7. Skin design needed for military entertainment (6)
8. Brother involved in film on king (4)
9. Accommodation for soldiers arriving among defenders (8)
10. Woman badly hurt (4)
11. Man taking time with mother’s vehicle initially delivering seasonal item of post (9,4)
15. Comprehending mutual agreement (13)
16. Just light (4)
18. Quiet substitute wanting jam (8)
20. Stake found by a Greek character (4)
21. Ask for popular verse and most of article (6)
22. Wise men about to show conjuring tricks (5)

DOWN
1. Mother with deserter, hot, on long run (8)
2. Celebrity followed by wise men? (4)
3. Refuses to deal with lad with beds, say (8)
4. Singer, graduate, on ship (4)
5. Eastern doctor, rushed, being hugged (8)
6. Insect held by ageing naturalist (4)
7. Apprehensive (4)
8. One Conservative initially eating best frozen food (8)
11. Idolised (8)
13. Extended (8)
14. Repair taking about a month at Easter, originally (8)
17. Tea (4)
19. In French verse, youth initially showing jealousy (4)

ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD 167
10. Elite     12. Diocese
14. Trowels    16. Resit
17. Tea    20. Distinguished
21. Address      22. Spud

DOWN:    1. Reverent  2. Tact
3. Chewed     4. Aristocratic
5. Cleaners    6. Late
7. Apprehensive   11. Idolised
13. Extended  15. Stages

Major Tyneside theologian honoured again

By William Cooper Bailey
THE prestigious Praglia Abbey in Italy, who have just published the final volume of their Monastic Antiphonal – the standard Gregorian Chant book used in monasteries and Christian communities worldwide, have honoured the Venerable Bede – the theologian and hymn writer from Tyneside who died in 735, by including his hymn for Vespers on the Festival of the Beheading of St John the Baptist in the final volume of their chant book.

A new development in the Chant field is that modern chant books now include where the music and words come from – in this case a 13th century manuscript in Rouen Municipal Library in France – the Jumièges Sanctorale, folio A339, if you want to know.

Progressively, manuscripts are all being scanned, so that documents can be read remotely on line.

> Bede’s hymn in the chant book

There is nothing old fashioned about the Praglia Benedictines: modern word processing for Gregorian Chant handles both words and music together, so that the computer locates the syllables under the correct notes automatically, and obviously does two colour typesetting and large initial letters with an effectiveness early scribes could hardly dream of.

Although today Bede is often remembered mainly for his History of the English Speaking Peoples, he was actually a prolific writer and produced many Bible Commentaries and Sermons (used by some parishes for Lenten study), and school text books on mathematics, music, botany, astronomy, travel, poetry and many other subjects.

Visit https://www.newcastle.anglican.org/events/category/all-events/ for events taking place across the Diocese
I t can feel as though hope is in short supply at the moment. The season of Advent and the approach of Christmas, however, are a powerful reminder that, contrary to appearances, hope does simmer around us. It just doesn’t look like we expect it to look. On one level this shouldn’t surprise us. Jesus, hope for all the world, certainly didn’t look like the people of his day expected him to look. The Jews of the first century had all their hopes pinned on a powerful, majestic king - what they got instead was a baby; they expected him to be in a palace - instead he was found where animals eat. The light that shines so vividly in the darkness was certainly nothing like anyone had thought he would be.

At this time of year, and especially this year as we trudge onwards through what feels like never-ending Covid uncertainty, fear and grief, it is worth reminding ourselves again and again that hope has always appeared among us at an unexpected time and in unexpected form. The Jesus whose birth we prepare to celebrate brings the kind of hope we can neither imagine nor anticipate.

It is so easy to imagine that we need to go looking for hope, that we need to generate it, expecting it; hope can spring up in even the darkest of times and one of the factors that causes it to happen is love. When we can forget ourselves sufficiently to deeply care for those around us, when we reach with compassion beyond our own needs, anxieties and concerns, then hope can stir. This hope, however, is not a thin, inward looking hope for ourselves but a hope for the whole world, the world that God created and loved so much that he sent his only Son - the unexpected, unimagined embodiment of hope.

Christian Aid’s theme this Advent and Christmas is precisely this - that love builds hope, when we reach out beyond ourselves to care for God’s world, then hope grows and hope is built. Or as the apostle Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 13 - ‘faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love’.

When crisis threatens, love builds hope. Love builds hope in some of the world’s toughest places. Love builds resilience in some of the world’s fiercest climates.

In Ethiopia, and around the world, people living in poverty are on the frontline of the climate crisis. Families are losing water, food, homes and livelihoods. Every day they walk further, dig deeper, work harder, and build stronger to survive.

This Christmas, we stand united with mums like Kumana who, in the face of devastating drought, wanted to build a more hopeful future for her children, and tools to set up a thriving aloe vera soap-making business. Using the drought-resistant aloe vera plant that was native to the area and thrived in the climate where other crops failed, Kumana has been able to make a living for her family and build a more hopeful future.

“The money from our soap production is not only for food, but also for clothes and teaching materials for my children,” Kumana said. “We need support for other women, so they can be like us!”

This Christmas your gifts will build hope for women like Kumana.

Find more Advent and Christmas resources, including a video of Dr Paula Gooder’s full sermon (excerpt above), at caid.org.uk/hope.

Which magazine is best?

The search is on for Britain’s best church magazine. Entries are now invited for the annual competition run by the Association for Church Editors (ACE). “Church magazines are often a forgotten but effective means of communication,” says Sally Churchus, Chair of the national organisation, “so we are keen to encourage editors everywhere.”

For the coming 2021 competition, which closes on February 1st, awards will be made for any sized church magazine, excluding A5, and printed in colour. The Gold Award winner will receive the John King Trophy, to be held for one year, while Silver and Bronze Awards will receive an inscribed trophy to keep, together with a Certificate of Excellence for display.

A panel of judges assesses each magazine, giving points for various aspects including cover design, headlines and clarity of the Christian message. The prize giving is open to everyone, to be held, hopefully, at Westminster Central Hall on 19 June 2021. The event will include a lecture and workshop on effective magazines.

For more information on how to apply, visit churchmag.uk/2021-awards.

Getting CHAORDIC!!!

OUR Mixed Ecology Learning Pathway is going well. Nine of us are exploring what it might be to have new Christian communities/fresh expressions/churches that are both different from and linked to our parish congregations. Broad questions like ‘how can the church love and serve the community and explore spirituality within it?’ are causing us to theologically reflect together around areas of mission and ‘what is church?’, and more specific questions like ‘what are the desire lines in our community (natural walkways and spiritual footfall) are causing us to shift how we have previously pursued evangelism and community development.

Today’s question ‘how are you getting chaotic?’ needed some explaining! This term - a mixture of the words ‘chaos’ and ‘order’ describes a space that is happy to be in between the two, recognising the value of what can emerge in that deliberately in-between space that is neither crazily-chaotic, nor overly-ordered.

If a space (activity, conversation, meeting etc) is in chaos, then it is likely that people in it won’t feel safe to be there, or speak up, or then even to show up. If a space (activity, conversation, meeting etc) is too ordered, then it is one of creativity and innovation can be crushed and again, not all voices, opinions or questions are welcomed. Neither chaos, nor order are preferable to encouraging creativity and adaptability.

A chaotic space, then, is a space (activity, conversation, meeting etc) where the pace is slowed down, where there is time to think, ponder, reflect, experiment and explore, and where all voices are actively encouraged to speak and are then valued and listened to. Respect is built, and power balances are actively shifted so that diversity is affirmed and genuine relationships are nurtured. Chaotic spaces have been found to be fertile for deep wisdom and rich decision making - for ownership, for authenticity, for community building.

As we explored it, we asked ourselves - how ‘chaotic’ are the spaces we live and minister in? Which voices are valued, and how can we invite others to be with us on the journey of exploring mission, discipleship and community? We wondered if these spaces might be one of the keys, and golden nuggets to releasing new and contextual ideas in our life and ministry. How about you? How chaotic are your spaces?! For more information, have a look at Emily Bradbury’s work, found at www.courageathrive.org.uk and for info on pioneer ministry in Newcastle Diocese, contact revbethrookwood@gmail.com