

AUTUMN 2023

LINK

The magazine for the Diocese of Newcastle

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Celebrating the new
Dean of Newcastle

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We'll be printing Link magazine quarterly but will continue to publish Link Extra in-between, which will be available to view or download on our website [newcastle.anglican.org/link](https://www.newcastle.anglican.org/link). If you would like to submit content for Link Extra please contact communications@newcastle.anglican.org.

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 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

About this magazine

Feedback: communications@newcastle.anglican.org or 0191 270 4100 and ask to be put through to the Communications Team.

Sustainability: We use a Carbon Balanced printer to produce this publication. The printer works with global



conservation charity World Land Trust (WLT) to preserve critically threatened habitats. The printer has measured and balanced the CO₂ impacts of all fossil fuel usage, transportation and electricity consumption. WLT offsets these emissions by protecting threatened habitats that would have otherwise been lost, avoiding the release of stored carbon. This also enables the regeneration of degraded habitats, which gradually re-absorb atmospheric CO₂.

A message from Bishop Helen-Ann



The Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley

On the wall of my office is a painting and written across its middle is one word: 'serenity'. The painting itself bears images of mountains, a boat on a lake, and underneath a patchwork of indigenous designs from the Pacific Islands and Aotearoa New Zealand. It was crafted by a pupil at Waikato Diocesan School for Girls in the diocese where I became a bishop in New Zealand.

Every so often, I look up from my desk and glance at it and am reminded of the need to stop and breathe, and to be calm, peaceful and untroubled. The reality of all our lives at various points is that busyness through diaries, demands, anxieties and uncertainties can at times overwhelm. That is when both Jesus' example of rest and prayer, and his words to that effect, challenge any temporary excuse I may have for doing or at least thinking and feeling the very opposite.

Autumn, the season we are now in can teach us that as the earth rests before new growth, so the approach of Advent and Christmas can do the same. I realise as this printed edition of Link goes to print, I will have just nudged over the six-month mark as your bishop. As I shared at the recent Lay celebration service in Newcastle Cathedral, in many sectors a six-month time period is usually accompanied by some sort of appraisal. There is a need to take stock, and reflect, but also to look forward in hope and realise that God goes before us in all that we seek to do.

What struck me in that Lay celebration service was the immense variety of ministries that are represented right across our Diocese. It was wonderful to affirm this, to celebrate and encourage one another in renewed confidence and commitment. Only a few days prior to that service I had witnessed the celebration of fifteen years of

Street Pastors in Newcastle: a much-valued part of the local night-time economy. Another example of ministry held and lived out in challenging circumstances. 592 pairs of flip-flops handed out in 2022 alone!

I continue to rejoice in this new season in our Diocese, particularly as we have recently welcomed a new Dean, a new Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations and, I hope and pray, a new Diocesan Director of Mission and Ministry. This adds strength and capacity to our core support to parishes and the many other ministries across our diverse diocese. The ground is being stirred into new action, for the wellbeing and flourishing of all our communities. Thanks be to God.

The Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley

The new Dean of Newcastle...



The Very Revd Lee Batson was installed by Bishop Helen-Ann as the Dean of Newcastle on Saturday, 14 October at Newcastle Cathedral, in a service attended by Lee's friends and family, as well as leading figures and members of the public from across the county, city and diocese.

In his introductory message to those in attendance, Lee wrote: "As I have been preparing for my move to the North East with my wife Stephanie, I have become newly aware that it was thanks to St Cedd braving the journey from Lindisfarne to Bradwell in Essex in 653, that the Gospel of Christ was brought to the people amongst whom I have spent most of my life."

Lee was brought up in the south of Essex and first began to explore a calling to priesthood during his teenage years. This journey led him to a theological college and two decades of service in the Diocese of Chelmsford, including roles as Team Rector in Epping and Area Dean of Epping Forest. In addition to serving as a parish priest in market towns and villages, he managed Chelmsford's partnerships with Kenya and Sweden, initiated projects in new housing areas, and promoted ecumenical relationships across Essex and East London.

He added: "Along with extensive work in schools, and engagement with the local authority, these opportunities have given me the privilege of hearing voices outside of the



in the footsteps of St Cedd



Eric Jubb, Chapter member; Edna Beveridge Chapter member; the Ven Rachel Wood; the Very Revd Lee Batson; Bishop Helen-Ann; Canon Peter Dobson; David Lawrence, Chapter member; John Inglis-Jones, Chapter member.

Pictures: Lang Shot Photography

Church of England.

“Alex Niven – an academic at Newcastle University – asserts that ‘the idea of the future has tended to be at the forefront of northern culture.’ It is a claim that resonates with my faith in God who always – to use words of the Revd Dr Sam Wells – calls us to a future bigger than the past. I have seen this worked out in the life of

Epping, through its work with those affected by dementia and those who have survived domestic abuse, as well as countless other ways.

“It is also what is going on across Newcastle Diocese as it seeks to become younger and more diverse, and particularly by the Cathedral as it works with children across the City

through its music ministry, the Lantern Initiative, and our partnership with the Oswin Project.

“As my journey of faith has taken me in the opposite direction to St Cedd, so I look forward to meeting with and working with you to discern the future that God desires for God’s people here.”

Celebrating Lay Ministry

The annual Lay Ministry Celebration Service was held on Sunday, 24 September at Newcastle Cathedral, with Bishop Helen-Ann attending. It was a wonderful opportunity to recognise the valuable work of lay ministers across our Diocese.



A new school term has started with a new Interim Diocesan Director Education (DDE) following the appointment of Gill Booth, in September.

Gill has stepped into the role vacated by Paul Rickeard, following his move to become full-time Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust this summer.

A vastly experienced education professional, Gill is already well-known and respected across the North East and within our Diocese. For 13 years, she served as Headteacher and then CEO of Dayspring Trust (Ian Ramsey CE Academy in Stockton-on-Tees and Venerable Bede CE Academy in Sunderland), which now form the secondary arm of Northern Lights Learning Trust.

Gill, who has also carried out work as a school improvement partner in both Newcastle and Durham, shadowed Paul during the summer term in preparation for the handover. As she looks enthusiastically ahead, Gill is keen to acknowledge the work carried out by Paul during his eight years as DDE.

"Paul has helped our schools to thrive," she said. "I am fortunate to have a strong team of professionals working alongside me in the Joint Education Team (JET) across the Dioceses of Newcastle and Durham.

"Everyone has been very welcoming. I'm excited to be in a role that is pivotal in ensuring that our children are able to flourish and reach their potential, working alongside the

Introducing our new Interim Diocesan Director of Education



Gill is pictured with pupils during a visit to Heddon-on-the-Wall St Andrew's Church of England First School.

Diocese and school leaders. Education in our Diocese is in a very strong place and we will do all we can to support schools and maintain the highest of standards.

"My hope and aspiration is that all children, staff and governors can live 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10) through collaboration and partnership with one another."

A Durham Diocese Board of Education member for well over a decade, Gill has worked within both primary and secondary settings and also has vast experience of special educational needs and disability (SEND). Gill is determined to be a visible presence and has already begun visiting schools in the Diocese, such as St. Andrew's in Heddon-on-



New headteachers met with Bishop Helen-Ann, Gill Booth and members of the Joint Education Team.

Welcome to our new headteachers

New headteachers at our church schools have been welcomed by Bishop Helen-Ann, Interim Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) Gill Booth and members of the Joint Education Team (JET).

A meeting at Church House in North Shields was attended by Jason Cochrane,

“My hope and my aspiration is that all children, staff and governors can live



Gill Booth.

‘life in all its fullness’ (John 10:10) through collaboration and partnership with one another”

- Gill Booth, Interim Diocesan Director of Education

the-Wall, part of the Pele Trust.

She explained: “It was a privilege to visit such an inclusive school who are living out their Christian values each day.”

She added: “I hope to support school leaders to live out their Christian vision and feel honoured to work with our dedicated JET professionals. As a team, we are there to help school leaders overcome any challenges they may face and support them in providing the best possible education for our children.”

of St Paul’s C of E Primary, Newcastle; Ruth Baker, acting head at Morpeth All Saints C of E Primary; and Sharon Lock, interim head at Richard Coates C of E Primary, Ponteland.

They were joined by four new headteachers from Durham Diocese – Cheryl Lain, of St Aidan’s C of E Primary, Gateshead; Gillian Hood, St Aidan’s Memorial C of E Primary, Hartlepool; Nichola Pallister, of St John’s C of E Primary, Shildon; and Sarah Wassell, of Wynyard C of E Primary.

Experienced head ‘privileged’ to work with schools on spiritual matters

A former headteacher who was ordained three years ago is now helping pupils and staff to live out their Christian vision and flourish spiritually.

Over the past three decades, Paul Rusby has led Church of England schools at Seaton Hirst Middle, Ashington; Richard Coates, Ponteland; and Cragside Primary, Cramlington; as well as supporting leadership teams across the North East as a National Leader of Education.

Paul recently completed his curacy in Morpeth Parish and is now integrating his background in school leadership and theological training. He is currently working with some schools in both Newcastle and Durham dioceses looking at ways of integrating spirituality into their curriculum and collective worship – as well as seeking to demystify what can be a wide-ranging subject.

“It is a real joy and privilege to go into schools and work with pupils, staff, governors and school leaders,” said Paul.

Paul’s work is assisting schools in meeting the objectives of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS). This sets out seven inspection questions which explore each school’s theologically rooted Christian vision and the impact on areas such as how collective worship and the curriculum enable both pupils and adults to flourish.

He explained: “It’s part of a new, national, inspection framework introduced in September. Part of this asks schools to develop their own understanding of what spirituality means for them in their individual contexts.



The Revd Paul Rusby pictured with pupils at Morpeth All Saints Church of England First School.

“I’ve had an interest in spirituality for many years. It’s an opportunity to try to demystify key elements of this and help schools to consider how to incorporate it in practical ways such as quiet moments of reflection and stopping, just to be still and appreciate our changing seasons and beauty of God’s creation around us.”

Paul delivered some initial training to primary school teachers and headteachers during a recent training session at Duke’s Secondary School, Ashington, which is part of the Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust. He is also working with individual schools, having been invited to get involved by new Interim Diocesan Director of Education Gill Booth.

“I’m delighted to be part of this,” he added. “It is a real privilege to work collaboratively with our wonderful schools and trusts, looking at how schools are places that can enable children and adults to flourish.”

Paul is looking forward to leading training on spirituality in schools in Church House, North Shields and Cuthbert House, Durham during October and December through the Joint Education Team.

Bishop Helen-Ann answers questions asked by pupils at NCEA Duke's Secondary School, Ashington



Questions were asked by Samyar Kalantari, aged 14; Grace Lightley, aged 13; and Samuel Tasker, aged 12.

What is the best thing about being Bishop of Newcastle?

Getting to live and work in this wonderful region! I grew up in the North East, and so much of its landscape shaped and formed my growing up. I realise there is a lot of change since I last lived here, but the landscape, the sea, city, coast, and everything in-between has a lot of familiarity to it too. Being bishop means I get to see all of it, and I hope that I can inspire and lead in such a way that encourages us to be

confident in our faith in Jesus Christ. Schools are a really important part of our life, and the challenges and opportunities facing our children and young people are considerable. Being bishop also means I see the great work that is being done to support our young people, and I rejoice in that.

What was life like when you were a teenager and what did you want to be when you grew up?

I was a teenager in the 1980s, and this means I am part of the pre-internet generation. I will spare the details of some of the things that now seem really strange or ancient (like home tele-

phone with a dial-wheel, and cassette tapes! And fashion items too like leg-warmers!), but as I have reflected on this question while I guess I didn't have to contend with the pressures of social media or email, it doesn't mean that life as a teenager was without its challenges, both personal and in society too. In the North East this was the time of the miners' strikes and the closure of the shipyards. North East industry was battered, and whole communities lost their identity and people once employed lost their own communities of work. I also remember the fierce rivalry between Sunderland and Newcastle football teams (and their supporters). For me though, this was also the time of my faith growing and developing, and while I wasn't always a huge fan of going to Church, I



The Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley

had a profound sense of God's love that kept me going, and curious, and that was really important. Growing up I think I quite liked the idea of either being an archaeologist or an astronaut! Both are about discovery, and I suppose what I do now is all about discovery too and encouraging others to discover God in their daily lives.

What does Jesus mean to you?

Well you can't have Jesus without the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), so Jesus as God is a guiding light. Jesus' heralding of God's Kingdom is the thing that drives me, and all I seek to do with others here in our diocese.

Why do you go to church?

I've been going to church since I was born, but that doesn't mean there haven't been times when I've questioned that. For me, going to church isn't necessarily always a Sunday morning thing because I see the Church (the whole Church of God across the world) as both the building and the community beyond its walls. I love that the Greek word in the New Testament that we translate as 'church' means 'called out'. That's the point of our faith: we are to get out and about and seek the Kingdom of God with all whom we encounter. I think sometimes people imagine Sunday must be my busiest day of the week, in fact every day is filled with God (and for me that also means times for rest and

play too). Saturday morning parkrun is also (for me) a type of church experience too, one that I love to share with lots of other people around me.

What question would you like to ask God?

Are we alone in the Universe?

Is there any point in prayer?

Yes! Prayer is about tuning into God's presence; it's not a list of things I would like expecting God to deliver! I always try to remind myself to be surprised by prayer and what I sense God telling me in it.

Meet the clergy who are taking on volunteering roles in their local communities

Air cadets is a lot of fun for 'padre' with supporting role

A vicar is making the most of her role with air cadets in her local community.

Better known as 'padre' to the young members of 861 Wideopen Squadron, the Revd Dr Pauline Pearson is not there to fly, glide or take part in adventure training.

Instead, the vicar at St Columba's Church, Wideopen, offers a supporting role to youngsters and is there for anyone who wants to talk.

"It's a joy to be involved," said Pauline. "They are a great bunch and are full of fun. The squadron is popular and some new recruits joined earlier this year."

The squadron, which caters for youngsters aged 13-plus, has a long-standing association with St Columba's and when Pauline was



The Revd Dr Pauline Pearson is pictured drumming with the cadets.

asked to get involved prior to the pandemic, she was only too pleased.

"I'm very passionate about making links with the community," she said. "You have to reach out to people and I certainly enjoy being there to help and support."

Pauline has given talks on various topics, from the impact of drone use on pilots and their families to raising awareness of the suffering experienced by Ukrainian refugees in the

wake of the ongoing conflict with Russia.

She has also accompanied the cadets on big occasions, such as at Newcastle Cathedral for a Thanksgiving service for the Coronation of King Charles III back in May.

An emerita professor in nursing, Pauline previously worked at Northumbria University. She was associate priest at St George's and St Hilda's, Jesmond, before moving to St Columba's in 2019.

Vicar swaps collar for neckerchief



The Revd Nigel Taylor on Beaver Scout duty on the sea front at Whitley Bay.

A vicar has reached out into his community by taking on the role of Beaver Scout leader.

The Revd Nigel Taylor, of St Mary's Church, Monkseaton, now swaps his clerical collar for a neckerchief on Tuesday evenings.

He has become one of the leaders of the Beavers at 6th Whitley Bay, after stepping up to help out when new volunteer leaders were needed.

"The Scout leader asked me to do it," said Nigel. "St Mary's has a long-standing relationship with the Scouts, Cubs and Beavers here, so I was very happy to get involved. I have done the initial training and have really enjoyed it so far."

A former Cub Scout himself, Nigel said he was keen to carry out a voluntary role with the Beavers, which is for children aged six to eight.

Nigel, who came to the North East from Worcester a year ago to become vicar at St Mary's, added: "I've always enjoyed camps and other activities, and I have always wanted to support uniformed groups. As a vicar, it's important that I get to know the community, so working with children, parents and other volunteers is a good way to do this."

As Beaver leader, Nigel attends hour long sessions on Tuesday evenings, which are planned in advance. Therefore, his voluntary commitment extends to at least two hours per week. Nigel, who is a father-of-four and has two grandchildren, said his own sons were in the Boys' Brigade.

He added: "We have an excellent troop here in Whitley Bay, which is very well led. I'm really excited and very pleased to be involved."

Ordination service for Ruth



The Revd Ruth Stradling was ordained a priest on Sunday 1 October.

It was a joyful day at St Nicholas' Church in Gosforth on Sunday, 1 October, when the Revd Ruth Stradling was ordained a priest by Bishop Mark Wroe. Having previously served as assistant curate at St Mary's, Blyth, until the summer, Ruth is now assistant curate at St Nicholas, Gosforth.



The Revd Ruth Stradling pictured with Bishop Mark Wroe.

Police service is a childhood ambition for Newcastle vicar



The Revd Mark Edwards (pictured right) receives his police award from Insp. Jonathan Caisley.

A vicar in Newcastle Diocese has a voluntary role with Northumbria Police, serving as a special constable.

The Revd Mark Edwards, Team Vicar for the Benefice of Christ the King, has recently been presented with an award which recognises his work with the force.

Mark's association with Northumbria Police has been quite a journey. He initially served as force chaplain from 2008 to 2012. Now he is realising a childhood ambition of serving as a police officer, as a voluntary member of the Blyth Neighbourhood Policing Team.

The award recognised Mark's many hours of service, his outstanding composure and resilience while on duty, and his deep commitment to creating safer communities.

Mark has a long history of community work and in 2009 he was awarded an MBE for services to the voluntary sector. Since 2010, he has been a volunteer medic with the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) as a first responder.

Last year, he was awarded the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his work with the NEAS - a decade after he was awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal back in 2012.

Plans have been unveiled for St Michael's Church in the heart of Byker to be transformed into a state-of-the-art youth and community hub.

Named 'The Lighthouse Project', the new centre is being made possible with a £4.2 million grant from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Youth Investment Fund and through the generosity of Lord Crewe's Trust and The Squires Foundation.

The Lighthouse Project at St Michael's will provide a safe meeting place where young people and the community can flourish with access to activities and services and a reimagined worship space.

St Michael's will continue to be a place of Christian worship in Byker, which it has been for more than 150 years.

Ben Roman, Operations Director, said: "We plan to start the redevelopment works on this stunning development before the end of this year and expect to be commissioning the finished building and grounds in early 2025, in time for our grand opening in March 2025."

Chair of St Michael's Centre Partnership Byker, the Reverend Phil Medley said: "In searching for a new lease of life for the building, we spent a lot of time consulting in the community and what came back loud and clear was

Multi-million pound transformation of St Michael's Byker



Mark Squires, Trustee of The Lighthouse Project and The Squires Foundation; Ben Roman, Operations Director, The Lighthouse Project, Chair of St Michael's Centre Partnership Byker; the Reverend Phil Medley; Keith McClure from Bradley McClure Architects and Lighthouse Project Trustee, Stacey Davidson.

that there were no facilities for young people in Byker. Quite literally, there is no proper youth club here and much of the youth work takes place on the streets as a result."

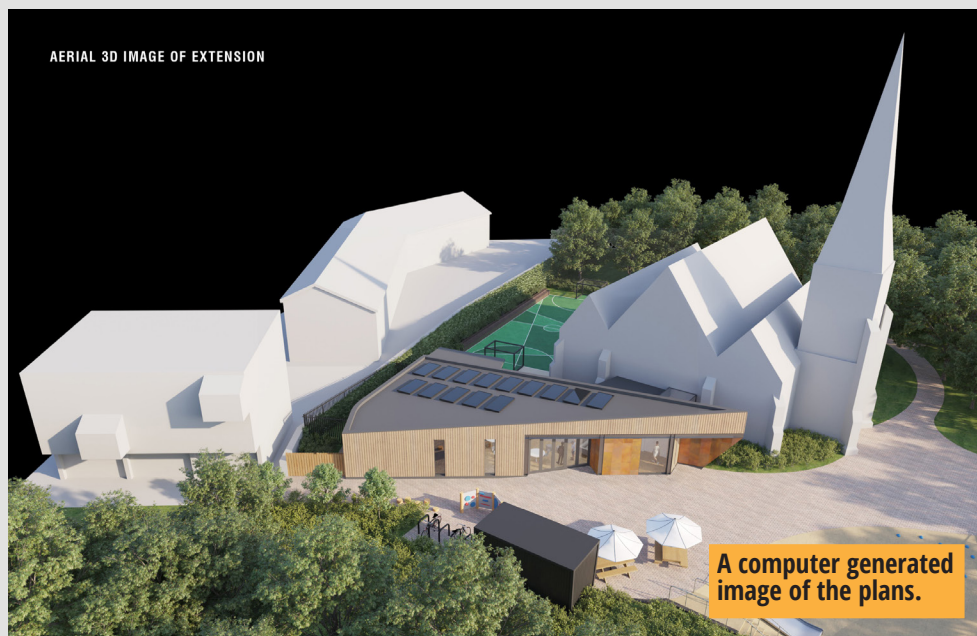
The Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt Revd Dr Hel-

en-Ann Hartley, is delighted to see the church re-purposed to benefit the community.

She said: "St Michael's has for more than 150 years been the beacon of our Christian presence in Byker and we are overjoyed to see this major investment in the building which will reaffirm its crucial importance to the local community.

"This funding will allow The Lighthouse Project to offer life changing services, particularly for young people, and be a safe and secure place to come and meet. I am so grateful to the team who have secured this funding which will undoubtedly help transform lives."

The Revd Helen Gill, Priest in Charge of St Michael's, said: "The PCC of St Michael's and St Lawrence, Byker, are very excited about the development of The Lighthouse Project. It has been our ambition for many years to bring our wonderful building to life, and fill it with people. The opportunity to do this feels like a real gift, and is a source of great joy."



A computer generated image of the plans.

Abbey project brings 'a sense of belonging' to rural community

The 12th century Blanchland Abbey and its medieval history has long captured the imagination of local people and visitors alike. Over the past five years, two successful National Lottery bids and support from other organisations have enabled the community to plan a bright future for the Grade 1 parish church.

Here, Revd Dr Helen Savage discusses an initiative, which has led to revealing archaeological digs this year with much more yet to come.



On the A68 you'll see signs to Blanchland Medieval Village. People are intrigued but when they arrive - around 40,000 visitors every year - they ask 'what is it?'

The whole village is built on the footprint of the 12th-century Premonstratensian Blanchland Abbey. No other village in Britain has such a heritage.

Five years ago, a successful Lottery bid by the PCC and the Blanchland Community Development Organisation (BDCO) enabled us to realise more of its potential.

We held out a vision of heritage-led regeneration. Could the Abbey itself help to breathe new life and purpose into a rural community that felt isolated and stagnating?

We decided to test out if major capital works to the church to make it warm, light



and more welcoming could attract people to the village to spend more time there. We began to explore the potential for new audiences, examine the apparently amazing acoustics of the building, understand its history better through an archaeological dig, look closer at the archives and see if we could recreate the spirit of artisan creativity that was once part of monastic Blanchland.

We won a second, much larger National Heritage Lottery grant and another from the Lord Crewe's Charity and now have almost half the village on board as volunteers, led by our brilliant project manager Yvonne Conchie.

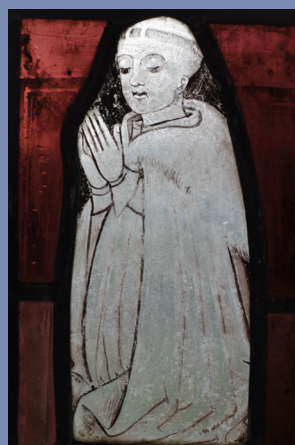
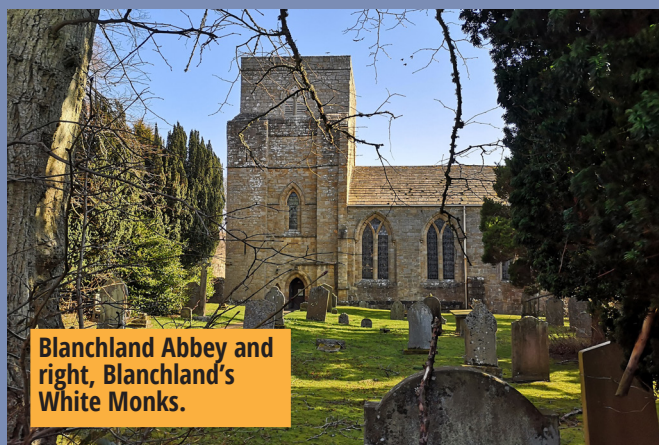
An archaeological dig revealed a palimpsest of culverts and water courses. Were they built just before Henry VIII's commissioners demolished the nave or later? They had been forgotten by the time John Wesley preached here in 1747.

York Glaziers Trust tell us that our surviving panels of medieval glass are of the highest national significance – the only glass-work images of Premonstratensian canons in Britain.

More archival work and artisan workshops are planned as well as concerts and art installations, but the main achievement so far has been the sense of belonging the project has brought to the village.

Blanchland Abbey received support from the Rural Churches for Everyone (RCfE) project, which went on to assist 35 church buildings in Newcastle Diocese before it drew to a close last winter. Earlier this year, a step-by-step guide was launched to help churches build sustainable futures for their buildings.

Visit newcastle.anglican.org/rcfe



BBC Songs of Praise brings joy to

The BBC's Songs of Praise team has delivered a special thank you to Newcastle Diocese after a highly successful filming session this summer.

St George's Church in Jesmond provided a fitting venue for the three-hour session on 21 August, when churchgoers from far and wide were invited to join the congregation to sing a selection of hymns.

It saw 500 people descend on St George's - atmospherically lit for the occasion - which included contributions from the church's choir. Drew Cantrill-Fenwick, director of music and organist at the church, conducted the singing while Kris Thomsett, assistant director of music at Newcastle Cathedral, was on hand to play the organ during the session.

Songs of Praise producer Charlotte Hindle said: "It's always great to come to Newcastle. We received a warm welcome and met so many lovely people. We are grateful to everybody who turned out to sing - and they did so with such enthusiasm.

"St George's is such a beautiful church and it looked so wonderful when it was lit. The stewards and the church wardens worked incredibly hard, while the church choir were magnificent, as were both Drew and Kris."

The Revd Ollie Dempsey, curate at St



George's, said an opening prayer before the singing got underway.

"It was a really wonderful evening," he said afterwards. "Everyone felt greatly encouraged by the opportunity to sing the hymns - sometimes up to three or four times per hymn. This enabled the BBC crew to get different camera angles and just make sure the filming was as good as it possibly could be. There was a great atmosphere and it made for a really lovely and memorable

evening."

"Drew and Kris did a remarkable job. The music was excellent and Drew had a great way with the congregation. He got everyone into the singing and it was a joy to be part of.

"Such a lot of work went into this behind the scenes. We had a lot of people stewarding on the day and before that, we had people turning up to clean and make the church even more beautiful than it already is."



Newcastle



It was an evening to remember for those who attended.



The Revd Ollie Dempsey, curate at St George's.

Individual songs from the filming session at St George's will be shown in various episodes. You can find out songs and places featured on the BBC Songs of Praise Facebook page.

The evening also included the hymn, *When a Knight Won His Spurs*, which was filmed with a view to being used ahead of St George's Day next year.



A total of 10 hymns were sung by the congregation.

A happy return for Victoria



Victoria Eyre (pictured right) with her son William and great auntie Alex.

The BBC Songs of Praise recording session at Jesmond was extra special for one member of the congregation.

Victoria Eyre had been there when the popular show previously visited St George's back in 1997.

Back then she was an eight-year-old member of the church choir, and vividly remembers the excitement of the occasion.

This time around, Victoria wasn't part of the choir, but the now 34-year-old was in full voice as part of the congregation.

She also brought her 12-week old son William, who had been baptised at St George's the day before filming, as well as her great auntie Alex and mum Alison, who was in the choir.

"It was a wonderful evening," said Victoria. "The excitement brought back so many memories of 1997 and I am so glad that I was able to be part of it again, and to have William with me."

It was a special few days for the family,

with the baptism and filming followed by Victoria and her husband Andy's wedding anniversary.

Having grown up in Jesmond, Victoria went on to live in London, Germany and Switzerland, before moving back to her home city and church six years ago. During her time in Germany, Victoria sang in the choir at Berlin Cathedral.

Casting her mind back to 1997, she said: "I remember having to do quite a few rehearsals with the choir after school and it felt really exciting to be on TV. Back then, Songs of Praise had a different format and they would do a full show based in one church. It's a bit different now, but it was exciting to have the cameras back at St George's and I look forward to watching it."

With baby William to look after, Victoria isn't currently in the choir but hopes to join again in the future – perhaps even with William alongside her.

As well as her mum, her dad Peter, brother Henry and sister Anna have all been in the choir at one time or another.

Moon installation part of a packed schedule at Hexham Abbey

It's an exciting time for Hexham Abbey as it hosts the large-scale installation of the moon this autumn. Luke Jerram's renowned artwork *Museum of the Moon*, which has previously been exhibited at Durham Cathedral, as well as elsewhere in the UK and abroad, is at the Abbey over a six-week period concluding on 12 November.

Hexham Town Council is a key supporter of the installation and has generously contributed a grant of £5,000 towards the costs of the project. North of Tyne Combined Authority has also made a significant contribution towards the marketing and delivery of a number of aspects of the project, including science talks and education activity packs.

Entry tickets are available to purchase in advance online, with pricing at £3 for adults and £1 for children. For a full programme of events during the Hexham Abbey exhibition, and more information, visit www.hexhamabbey.org.uk/museum-moon

But the exhibition is not the only event taking place at the historic Abbey between now and Christmas.

Hexham Abbey will also host the eagerly-anticipated *Royal Northern Sinfonia* by Candlelight on 6 December, and host *London Film Music Orchestra* on 7 December.

On 15 December, Tyneside musicians *The Unthanks* will perform, while *G4*, the four-piece vocal troupe will bring a selection of timeless Christmas classics to the Abbey on 27 December.

In the run-up to Christmas, the Abbey will also host carol services and crib services. More information will be available soon at www.hexhamabbey.org.uk



Dogs take the lead in supporting hospital chaplains

Viewers of the Channel 4 series *Geordie Hospital* will have seen the Revd Captain Katie Watson in action.

The Head of Chaplaincy at Newcastle Hospitals has appeared in the observational documentary, which follows the extraordinary work of NHS staff as they seek to save and transform lives.

Katie, who served as a British Army officer for a decade, has been a chaplain since joining the Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in 2007.

She heads a team which supports 15,800 staff members across Newcastle's Freeman Hospital, Royal Victoria Infirmary, the Great North Children's Hospital, Dental Hospital and Centre for Life.

In addition to staff, the chaplains support patients and relatives as they cope with all levels of trauma, from injury and illness to crime and bereavement.

Key to the role is the involvement of service dogs who lift the spirits of those in need. Poppy Jingles, 11, is nearing retirement, and is currently assisting the training of her young replacement, Fern.

But despite all the love and care that the dogs bring, Katie stressed that the job of a hospital chaplain is far from a walk in the park.

She explained: "Even after being an army officer, this is still one of the biggest gigs I have done. It is an enormous privilege but it is also a huge responsibility because you are working to support people who have experienced, in many cases, unimaginable circumstances."

Hospital staff have worked through the rigours of the pandemic in recent years and are faced with a multitude of pressures daily.

The chaplains, which include two Muslim



The Revd Captain Katie Watson and above, Fern the young service dog.

imams, two Jewish community leaders from the orthodox community, a Hindu Priest and a Sikh priest, support staff not only with the demands of work, but with welfare and other matters, including industrial action and in some cases, food poverty.

"The dogs are great because they are a mood enhancer," said Katie. "They are happy to see anyone without any expectation. They will always know when somebody is struggling and will offer a friendly paw."

The on-call rota means Katie and her

team could be called into action at any time of day and night. Now, years after serving with the Army in Bosnia and Northern Ireland, Katie now spends her time providing a wide range of support, accompanying people to chapel of rest appointments and leading memorial services.

"We are spiritual social workers," she added, "supporting people with what they are going through, regardless of their faiths or beliefs."

To watch *Geordie Hospital* follow www.channel4.com/programmes/geordie-hospital

'Story Chair' empowers women in



Dr Angelika Strohmayer (pictured left) with Dawn Harrison, Changing Lives Service Manager for Criminal Justice, Northumbria; and Alice Varah of the British Academy at the Story Chair launch event.

A unique 'Story Chair' was unveiled in the Crypt of Newcastle Cathedral as the focal point of an innovative project during the autumn.

Throughout September, the chair was a place for women with first-hand experience of the criminal justice system to tell their remarkable stories, shed the past and shape new futures.

This pioneering initiative was the result of a collaboration between national social justice charity Changing Lives, the School of Design at Northumbria University, Newcastle Cathedral and the North East Probation Service.

As part of the project, over 50 participants from Newcastle, Ashington, North Tyneside and Sunderland joined in eight weeks of workshops, honing storytelling and craft skills to illustrate their experiences – including many marked by domestic violence and trauma.

The 'Story Chair' addressed the harsh reality that many women in the criminal justice system return to oppressive and exploitative environ-



The Cathedral Choir will feature prominently this Christmas and will also release a new CD. *Picture: Chris Strickland.*

Newcastle Cathedral has a full programme of festive activities throughout December. It gets underway on Sunday, 3 December at 4pm with an Advent Procession of Light – an atmospheric candlelit service of choral music, readings and prayers. It's an opportunity to experience the Cathedral Choir as they process from darkness to light, representing the journey we are about to embark on towards the coming of Christ.

On St Nicholas Day, Wednesday, 6 December at 6pm, the Patronal Festival will feature the Choir of Durham Cathedral alongside Newcastle Cathedral's own and mark the 90th anniversary of the Friends of St Nicholas, who fundraise to support the Cathedral. From 6 until 23 December, families can get creative with fun drop-in craft activities about St Nicholas.

Candlelit Carols with the Cathedral Choir will be held twice, on Friday 15 and Wednesday 20 December. This annual event will provide

the Criminal Justice System



Crafting during the Story Chair launch event at Newcastle Cathedral.

ments, leading to repeat offending.

At the end of September, the chair, created by carpenter Nick James, moved on to the National Trust property Seaton Delaval Hall. The women will be involved in selecting other future venues which will host the chair. The project has received support from The British Academy.



Bishop Helen-Ann with the Revd Jon Canessa.

Advent and Christmas at Newcastle Cathedral

a chance to purchase a copy of 'A Year at Newcastle', the Choir's first CD album in more than ten years, set to be released by Regent Records.

Throughout Advent, there will be numerous concerts and one-off events, including A Choral Nativity on Tuesday, 5 December at 7:30pm – an opportunity to experience the Christmas story through music performed by the Chorus of Royal Northern Sinfonia.

On Thursday, 7 December at 7:15pm, there will be a concert in support of Crisis Newcastle; while on Sunday, 10 December, Marie Curie Lights to Remember will be an opportunity to remember loved ones who are no longer with us.

Mediaeval Baebes – the chart-topping folk/classical choir will return to the Cathedral on

Monday, 11 December at 7:30pm, with their 2023 'The Procession' tour.

Join the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation for its annual seasonal celebration Christmas at the Cathedral on Thursday, 14 December at 7pm; while on Thursday, 21 December at 7:30pm, Vivaldi's Four Seasons At Christmas will see The Piccadilly Sinfonietta return with Vivaldi's timeless classic.

Christmas By Candlelight, featuring a West End cast and a live big band, will take place on Thursday, 28 December at 7:30pm

A crib service will take place on Saturday, 23 December at 11am – an interactive service telling the story of the nativity.

On Christmas Eve, at 6pm, the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols will be a traditional

service of uplifting readings telling the Christian salvation story. At 11.30pm, Candlelit Midnight Mass will celebrate the first eucharist of Christmas Day and the birth of Jesus.

Festal Eucharist for Christmas Morning (10am) will be an opportunity to celebrate 'God with Us' at a joyful service with readings, carols, choral music and a festive sermon from the Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley.

You don't need to book in advance to attend any of the Cathedral's services and most will be live-streamed via the YouTube channel. Pre-booking is required for most Advent and Christmas concerts.

For ticket prices and booking information, please visit: www.newcastlecathedral.org.uk/christmas-2023

From your children, youth and families team



By Tara Russell, Children & Youth Team Leader

The Diocesan Children and Youth team would love to encourage and support you this year to try something new in the run-up to Christmas.

Maybe you can take your nativity into the community rather than in the building? Put some twinkly lights on an outside space, hang some baubles on a tree and invite people to take one for their tree at home.

Create an advent trail in the church yard or make postcards advertising the seasonal events for people to use to invite their friends and families (stick a candy cane on them and they will definitely be well received)! How about a Christmas tree decorating competition, where all the



Ideas to engage with children and young people this Christmas



Nativity at St Mary Magdelene, Prudhoe last Christmas.

people who have taken part are invited for a Christmas lights switch on event?

If you would like to have a better relationship with your local school, baking cakes and leaving them for the staff with a Christmas card will be a strong first step. Or maybe you have a couple of volunteers who can help with the Christmas dinner for the pupils, which usually means sitting and enjoying the meal with a group of children.

Sometimes we can treat this special time of

year as if it's a marathon – something we just need to get through. If we can reframe it as the best opportunity we have to engage with our community, then maybe we will enjoy it more too.

Youth Adviser, Susan White added that churches and congregation members can play a role in supporting schools in the run up to Christmas.

She explained: "Churches are in an ideal position to share the Good News during the Christmas season. It's a lovely way to build up extra connections with local community, it doesn't have to be complicated or time consuming.

"PCC members who are DBS checked and safely recruited could visit their local school or nursery for storytelling from the Bible or the Lion Storyteller Bible for younger children or to talk about Christingle. You could also leave some mince pies for school staff!"

If you would like some support whilst you think of and plan anything new, the team is here and happy to help.

Visit our website for Christmas resources www.newcastle.anglican.org/children-young-people-families/ or email the team at t.russell@newcastle.anglican.org or s.white@newcastle.anglican.org

Half a century of making music in Newcastle



Aidan Evans has played the organ at St Matthew's Church, Elswick, since 1973.

An organist has been recognised by his church community after clocking up 50 years of dedicated service.

Aidan Evans has been the man behind the keys at St Matthew's Church, Elswick, Newcastle, since the summer of 1973.

The 71-year-old was the subject of a special presentation during a jubilee mass in September, which was attended by his family and friends.

"It was a very special day," said Aidan. "The people at St Matthew's have always been very warm-hearted to me and it was lovely that they wanted to show their appreciation this way. Other organists came along to support me and it added to the occasion."

Aidan, who is originally from Newcastle's West End, was a student at Durham University

when he first started playing the organ at St Matthew's during a time when the late Revd Canon Harvey Walker was vicar. He went on to become the full-time replacement for the late Andrew Worton-Stewart, who left to embark on a musical career in America.

There was a historic change at St Matthew's four years later, when in 1977 the church's original pipe organ had reached the end of its natural life and a decision was taken to replace it.

Aidan explained: "We bought a second-hand organ, dating back to 1874, from a church in Cheshire, which happened to be collapsing into a salt mine! The organ is tracker action - almost entirely mechanical and can be maintained. It is working well today having undergone some recent repair work."

Some of the pipes from the original organ at St Matthew's were retained, much to Aidan's delight.

He explained: "My grandparents were married at St Matthew's back in 1911, so I like to think I'm sounding the same pipes - some of them at least - which were played on their wedding day."

Only three vicars have been stationed at the church during Aidan's half century of service there - with the late Father Walker followed by Father Ian Faulkner and the current incumbent, Father Richard Deadman.

He added: "We have traditional services where music is important. St Matthew's has a good combination of Anglo-Catholic liturgy and an outreach to the people of Elswick.

"It is a parish church working for this community and that has never changed. It provides stability in this part of Newcastle and is very inclusive."

Generosity Week has made an impact across the whole Diocese – with prayers, conversations, Giving Sundays, clinics and more making it a week to remember!

The week (Sunday 24 September to Sunday 1 October) was given extra momentum a day before it officially got underway, when the team delivered two sessions as part of churchwarden training at St Aidan's, Morpeth. Parishes from around the diocese came along to listen to talks about encouraging generosity and enabling giving.

On Sunday 24 September, many churches preached about generosity during Sunday worship. Some launched 'Giving Reviews' or 'Stewardship Sundays' - a key focus this year – with many more set to take place in the coming weeks.

Another key element of the week was clinics which took place at St Michael's, Alnwick, and St Bartholomew's Longbenton, with sessions covering Nurturing and Preaching Generosity, Running a Giving Review, Legacy Giving, Digital Giving, Parish Giving Scheme and Making the Ask.

"The clinics were both well received and productive," said Generous Giving Team Leader Joanne Christie. "They proved to be a really effective way of engaging with people, allowing for lots of hands-on practical discussion. We were able to speak to church representatives about matters which were specific to their own parish and advise accordingly. We were also able to answer questions on a one-to-one basis that people

Generosity Week 2023



Generous Giving Team Leader Joanne Christie said it was great to have face-to-face conversations during the week.

might not want to ask as part of a larger group."

Based on attendance this year and growing demand, the team will look to schedule more clinics in the New Year.

Joanne was pleased to report that many parishes are taking forward plans to inspire and encourage generosity, whether through the availability of new giving mechanisms or by looking at new ways to nurture and teach the spirit of generosity. This follows the launch of 'Pathways to Generosity' packs, which were gifted to churches over the summer.

"We are collectively making progress in so many different ways," said Joanne. "This was our third annual Diocesan Generosity Week and there's a real sense of momentum growing. As a team we've been really encouraged by levels of participation and engagement and we're excited to see what fruit may bear in the coming weeks and months."

The Generous Giving team would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who contributed to Generosity Week 2023. If you would like someone from the team to support work in your parish, email: j.christie@newcastle.anglican.org



Generous Giving Adviser Leanne Conway-Wilcox speaks to church representatives at one of the clinics during Generosity Week.



The Pathways to Generosity packs have been distributed to churches this summer.

Stephen Tranter licensed as Newcastle's new Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations



Our new Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations, the Reverend Stephen Tranter was licensed by Bishop Helen-Ann at a service at Newcastle Cathedral, on Wednesday, 27 September.

His role will be to build and develop a team of assistant diocesan director of ordinands to encourage and support people through discernment and training for ordained ministry. He'll establish a vocations team to assist local churches and their leaders in raising awareness of the full range of ministry roles within the Diocese, and support people in their exploration of God's call to ministry, lay and ordained.

Stephen, who originally carried out his mis-



sonary training in Berwick-upon-Tweed, has been until recently team rector of a five-church benefice in Bolton, Greater Manches-

ter and served as archdeaconry chaplain of readers.

Speaking of his experience so far, he said: "I have been impressed by a warmth of welcome and openness from colleagues across the parishes and at Church House, and the sense of arriving at a moment of new opportunities and hope.

"I look forward to 'seeing what God is doing and joining in' as we seek to equip our churches with ministry and leadership to enable us all to be ready to do just that.

"Please do get in touch with me about anything to do with vocations, and think about inviting me to come and meet you where you are."

By Maggi Creese Support Volunteer

"Would you help me find others who understand and can offer me support?"

"I need you to be willing to help me seek peer support."

This question and statement appear in a set of resources entitled 'If I Told You, What Would You Do?' It was created for Newcastle Diocese by Sarah Troughton and David Creese, both survivors of church-based abuse. Now widely adopted across the Church of England, this project was launched last year at an event at Newcastle Cathedral. Its purpose is to help the Church respond to survivors with compassion and confidence and to promote the healing of the whole Church in the aftermath of abuse.

As a survivor-led project, 'If I Told You, What Would You Do?' made clear the need for dedicated peer support for survivors of abuse in a faith context. This year, the diocesan safeguarding team set out

Peer group established to support victims of church-based abuse

to establish such a group. Now up and running, it is facilitated by Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser Carol Butler and support volunteer Maggi Creese, meeting once a month on Zoom and less frequently in person in Newcastle. The peer support model was co-created with survivors, and participants made decisions together with the facilitators about how the group would work.

Peer support is unique among forms of mental health support because participants take an active role in creating a safe environment for each other. Each peer decides which parts of their own experience to talk about, seek support for, and use to support others. One member described their experience of the group so far in this way: "I suffered spiritual abuse which was different to the sexual abuse someone else in the peer support group suffered. It was only that person coming forward and describing how they felt in their

body and their feelings that made me realise that my trauma is just as valid."

It is through the development of meaningful peer relationships that members are able to feel less alone in their experiences and help each other find effective coping strategies. Though the group has only been meeting since April, participants are already feeling the benefits of the peer support model they helped to create.

By continuing the work that began with 'If I Told You, What Would You Do?', Newcastle Diocese is leading the way in developing survivor support for the Church of England. One member voiced the opinion, "Every diocese should be doing this. Come on Church, you've got to grasp the nettle!"

More information is available at www.newcastle.anglican.org/peer-support-group.

Peer Support Group

Who is it for?

People who have been harmed by any form of abuse in a church/faith context.

When does it meet?

Once a month for 90 minutes on Zoom, with less frequent in-person sessions in Newcastle.

How does it work?

Members come together to share their experiences and to give and receive support.

Occasionally, sessions are set aside for specific activities such as educational workshops, creative arts, outdoor activities and social gatherings.

The group is facilitated by Carol Butler, Newcastle Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, and Maggi Creese, Support Person.

New members attend an initial meeting with either Carol or Maggi before joining the group, to ensure the peer support group is appropriate and safe for them.

Carol and Maggi may offer individual support to members who need it and signpost them to other support services when appropriate.

If I told
you,
what would
you do?



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

Who do I contact?

You can contact Carol or Maggi with questions or to arrange an initial meeting.

Carol Butler: c.butler@newcastle.anglican.org or 07825 167 016

Maggi Creese: peersupport@newcastle.anglican.org

For more information visit: newcastle.anglican.org/peer-support-group

