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Bishop Mark has launched the Bishop's Christmas Appeal in aid of Walking With and the West End Refugee Service.

THE Church has always been a place of sanctuary for those in need and as Christians we believe we are called to break down barriers, to welcome the stranger and love them as ourselves (Leviticus 19:34).

The need for sanctuary seems to grow every year, with countless people seeking refuge from overseas. New figures revealed last month by the charity **Refugee Council** underline the scale of the asylum backlog crisis. The figures show that the asylum backlog has quadrupled in the last five years - in December 2017 it stood at 29,522. In June this year it was 122,206.

Thankfully, there are many projects that offer help to support asylum seekers and refugees in our Diocese, such as **West End Refugee Service (WERS)**, and **Walking With** in Wallsend.

They provide food and basic essentials to those on a very limited income and who are not permitted to work, as well as providing initiatives and activities which promote health and wellbeing.

There continues to be a substantial increase in the volume of clients needing support. If an asylum claim is refused, people are often sent eviction notices to leave their properties within 28 days. Many become homeless as they have no access to public funds. Projects like these try to help those who are destitute by giving them a small amount of money from their Hardship Fund. The Hardship Fund relies entirely on donations.

Bishop Mark is appealing to you to give a gift to help WERS and Walking With carry on helping those asylum seekers and refugees. Can you help to support their seeking of sanctuary here?

Donations can be made through the diocesan giving page for the **Bishop's Christmas Appeal**, or cheques made out to 'Newcastle Diocesan Board of Finance' can be posted to: Finance, Church House, St John's Terrace, North Shields, NE29 6HS. Please write 'Bishop's Christmas Appeal' on the back of the cheque.



► Top, Bishop Mark with Joan Hault, CEO of Walking With in North Tyneside, and above, with other members of staff and volunteers in their food store

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.

Bishop of Berwick and Acting Bishop of Newcastle

December

- 1 Interviews for appointment of a Vicar to Longbenton St Bartholomew
- 6 **Newcastle Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel Meeting**
- 7 Interviews for appointment of Priest in Charge of Cresswell and Lynemouth, and Widdrington, and Assistant Curate of Ulgham.
- 8 **Bishop's Staff Team meeting; Licensing and Installation of Priest in Charge of Fawdon and Kenton (Newcastle Central Deanery)**
- 11 Sunday Eucharist at Fawdon St Mary (Newcastle Central Deanery)
- 12-14 **Meeting of the College of Bishops, High Leigh Conference Centre (Residential)**
- 15 Interviews for Priest in Charge of Felton, Longframlington and Brinkburn, and Whittingham, Edlingham and Bolton Chapel
- 18 **Sunday Eucharist, Walkergate St Oswald (Newcastle East Deanery)**
- 19 Meeting with Diocesan Secretary
- 20 **Joint Bishop's Staff Meeting with Durham and Newcastle, Church House**
- 21 Meeting of Area Deans and Bishop's Staff
- 25 **Christmas Day Eucharist Service at Newcastle Cathedral**

January

- 9 Safeguarding Meeting, Bishop's House
- 11 **Bishop's Staff meeting**
- 12 750th Anniversary Founder's Day Service, Hospital for God, Greatham
- 17 **Meeting of the College of Bishops**
- 18 Transforming Communities Together: Tyne to Tweed Trustee Meeting
- 25 **Meeting of Area Deans and Bishop's Staff NEAT Annual General Meeting**
- 26 Children's Society Christingle Service, Newcastle Cathedral PELE Trust Annual General Meeting, Ponteland High School
- 30-31 **Northern Church Leaders Retreat**

Bishop Mark celebrates Botswana's 50th anniversary of becoming an Anglican Diocese



► Bishop Mark with Bishop Metlha

Earlier this month, Bishop Mark enjoyed a visit to the Diocese of Botswana to join their 50th anniversary celebrations of becoming an Anglican diocese, and to renew the Botswana-Newcastle Companion Link Agreement with Bishop Metlha.

Bishop Mark was accompanied by Father Allan Marks, Christ Church with Saint Ann Newcastle, and Revd Chris Minchin, Assistant Curate, Benwell and Scotswood Team Parish.

Father Allan commented on the relationship between the two

dioceses, saying: "Since the Anglican Companion Link with Botswana began nearly 20 years ago, we have benefitted immensely from our partner diocese, not least from the depth of their faith even when faced with challenges, and their joy in worship, especially amongst the young people who are proud to call themselves Christian in Botswana."

Bishop Metlha wrote in his thanksgiving message: "For 50 years we have been "God's great family", and in proclaiming the word, celebrating the sacraments and serving the needs of others, we have made Jesus present to the

world, as we have pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God."

"Indeed, this Anniversary is an opportunity for us to remember and celebrate all the blessings the Lord has given to our Diocese over the years, and how he has used the church as his instrument to serve and bless the community in which we live.

"The Church has inspired, educated, healed, sanctified, and served countless souls, Anglican and non-Anglican alike, all in the name of Jesus Christ."

Comings & Goings

Resignations

The Revd Annie Gray, currently Priest in Charge, Kingston Park and Newcastle University Chaplain is resigning with effect from 30 November and 31 December 2022, respectively.

The Revd Fiona Sample, currently Interim Minister, Bolam with Whalton and Hartburn with Meldonia and

Netherwitton, is resigning with effect from 18 December 2022.

The Revd David Twomey, currently Priest in Charge, Seaton Hirst is resigning with effect from 1 January 2023.

Retirements

The Revd Angela Maughan, Vicar at Weetslade will retire with effect from 29 November 2022.

Gospel Readings

December

- 1st **Matthew 7.21, 24-27**
- 2nd Matthew 9.27-31
- 3rd **Matthew 9.35-10.1, 6-8**
- 4th Matthew 3.1-12
- 5th **Luke 5.17-26**
- 6th Matthew 18.12-14
- 7th **Matthew 11.28-59**
- 8th Matthew 11.11-15
- 9th **Matthew 11.16-19**
- 10th Matthew 17.10-13

- 11th **Matthew 11.2-11**
- 12th Matthew 21.23-27
- 13th **Matthew 21.28-32**
- 14th Luke 7.18b-23
- 15th **Luke 7.24-30**
- 16th John 5.33-36
- 17th **Matthew 1.1-17**
- 18th Matthew 1.18-end
- 19th **Luke 1.5-25**
- 20th Luke 1.26-38
- 21st **Luke 1.39-45**

- 22nd Luke 1.46-56
- 23rd **Luke 1.57-66**
- 24th Luke 1.67-79
- 25th **Luke 2.1-14 [15-20]**
- 26th Matthew 10.17-22
- 27th **John 21.19b-end**
- 28th Matthew 2.13-18
- 29th **Luke 2.22-35**
- 30th Luke 2.36-40
- 31st **John 1.1-18**

January

- 1st **Matthew 2.13-end**
- 2nd Luke 2.15-21
- 3rd **John 1.29-34**
- 4th John 1.35-42
- 5th **John 1.43-end**
- 6th Mark 1.7-11
- 7th **John 2.1-11**
- 8th Matthew 2.1-12
- 9th **Matthew 3.13-end**
- 10th Mark 1.21-28

- 11th **Mark 1.29-39**
- 12th Mark 1.40-end
- 13th **Mark 2.1-12**
- 14th Mark 2.13-17
- 15th **John 1.29-42**
- 16th Mark 2.18-22
- 17th **Mark 2.23-end**
- 18th Mark 3.1-6
- 19th **Mark 3.7-12**
- 20th Mark 3.13-19
- 21st **Mark 3.20-21**

- 22nd Matthew 4.12-23
- 23rd Mark 3.22-30
- 24th **Mark 3.31-end**
- 25th Matthew 19.27-end
- 26th **Luke 10.1-9**
- 27th Mark 4.26-34
- 28th **Mark 4.35-end**
- 29th John 2.1-11
- 30th **Mark 5.1-20**
- 31st Mark 5.21-end

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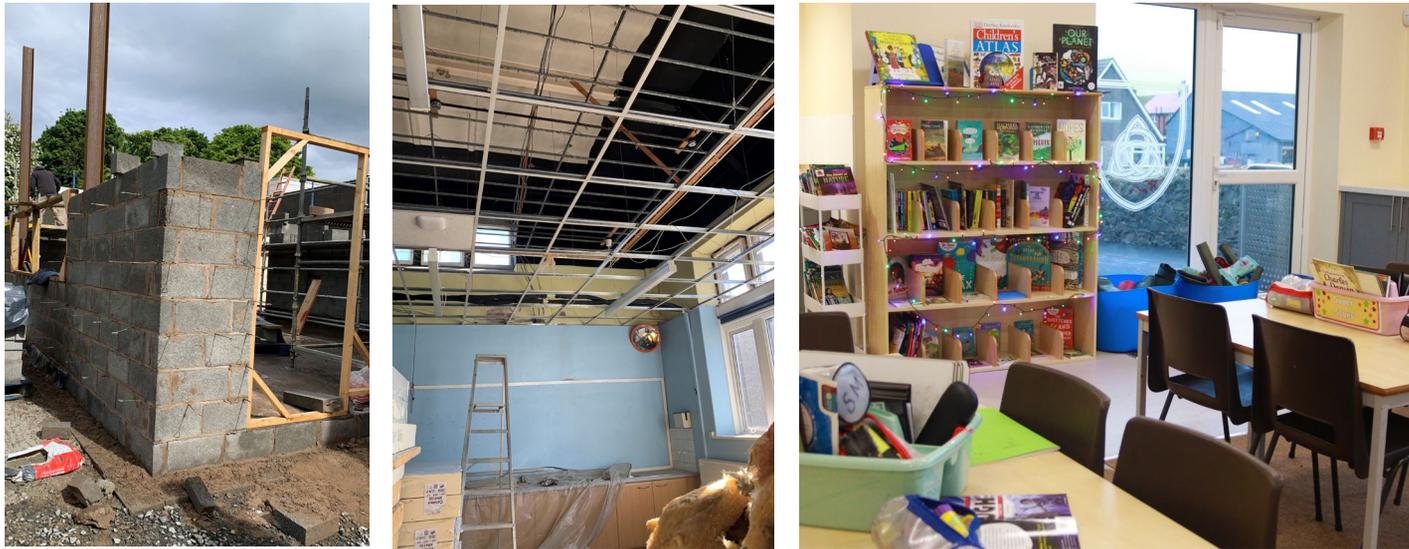
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For advertising rates and deadlines see www.newcastle.anglican.org/link
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Primary school reopens after £700k investment to future proof the school



► Embleton Vincent Edwards Church of England Primary School during building work and a finished classroom



► Bishop Mark with Headteacher Nicola Threlfall and some school children and Bishop Mark during his visit



THE Bishop of Berwick officially reopened Embleton Vincent Edwards Church of England Primary School on 24 November, after significant investment updating and extending the 100-year-old building to ensure it is fit-for-purpose for many years to come.

The building has been completely transformed with a new classroom extension to accommodate new year groups and a new entrance way to meet modern safeguarding requirements.

As well as the planned extension, the 100-year-old building was completely gutted and rewired and LED lights have been installed to reduce the school's carbon footprint.

The governing body worked with the Diocesan Board of Education to secure over £500k of capital funding for the project, supplemented by almost £250K of funding from the Vincent Edwards Education Trust, chaired by Priest in Charge of Holy Trinity Embleton, Revd Alison Hardy.

In 2016, the school was under threat of clo-

sure with only 17 pupils. A huge community effort prevented the closure and a firm commitment from the Diocese, Local Authority and the local community has seen the school go from strength to strength over the last six years.

As part of the reorganisation of schools in Alnwick, Embleton changed from being a First School with children leaving at the end of Year 4 (age nine), to becoming a Primary School, providing local education for children until they reach Secondary School age.

This has led to an increased number of pupils from 17 to 70 in six years. The additional numbers created a need for more space and a new classroom for the children in the two new year groups, to provide the quality of education the children deserved.

The Embleton community again stepped in to help during the seven-month project, with the entire school moving into the Village Hall.

Head teacher Nicola Threlfall commented: "The local community has, as ever, bent over backwards to support us whilst we have been

relocated - from guitar lessons in church, to the Pilates group moving to the Parish rooms to enable us to carry on teaching."

Director of Education, Paul Rickeard said: "The Diocesan Board of Education has been delighted to support this project, safeguarding the provision of education for children living in Embleton and the surrounding area.

"Rural schools are the cornerstone of their communities, attracting families to the area and contributing to the local economy.

"Local people have told us of the importance of having a village school at the heart of Embleton's community. This fantastic building will provide children with a place to learn and flourish for many years to come."

Christine Hunter, Church Warden and Trustee of Vincent Edwards Education Trust, is "delighted that the Trust has been able to contribute in such a significant way to the ongoing legacy of Revd Vincent Edwards, a former vicar of Embleton who believed passionately in the education of children and founded the first School in Embleton in 1688."



Bishop's Letter

With Bishop Mark Wroe

'Do not be afraid', the Angel of the Lord proclaimed to the shepherds, who were terrified at the sudden angelic appearance. *'I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people; to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is the messiah, the Lord.'* The story in the Gospel of Luke continues with the Shepherds travelling to Bethlehem (the city of David) to see for themselves the new born baby that the angel had told them about. There they told Mary and Joseph what the angel had said, and we are told that, *'Mary treasured all of these words and pondered them in her heart.'* The meaning of the extraordinary events of the preceding days and months suddenly becomes visible, in a child born in a manger.

The Christmas story is not just about celebrating the birth of a special baby, though all babies are special and are to be celebrated, it is about the incarnation of God. The enormity of what this means can easily be lost in the festive celebrations, where lights and decorations bring a welcome relief to the long winter nights, but can also distract from the event at the heart of it all. God became human, in the life of Jesus, for the sake of humanity and all of creation amidst all of its challenges and concerns.

We will all be aware that there are plenty of things to be concerned about in our world today: war, climate change, global poverty, to name but a few, and we will each have cares of our own. It is right to be concerned, to do what we can to change things, and as Christians to be Christ's light in situations of darkness. No matter how challenging the situations in our world might be, the Christmas story is a profound story of hope, and the words of the angel are for us too, *'Do not be afraid'*. We have a God whose love is stronger than anything we may face, and whose relationship with God's people is eternal. May we treasure the Christmas story, and ponder it in our hearts this Christmas.

*Lord Jesus Christ,
your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth:
accept our heartfelt praise
as we worship you,
our Saviour and our eternal God.
Amen*

+ Mark

MONTHLY E-BULLETIN...

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



You can sign-up at www.bit.ly/ebulletin-resub or via our Facebook page @ncldiocese

Advent and Christmas – Follow the Star



The Church of England recently launched their Follow the Star campaign and resources. This year's theme is The Big Invitation, encouraging everyone to share the joy of gathering together to celebrate the birth of Jesus with their family, friends and neighbours - especially after two years where this has been impossible for many.

The national digital team have suggested some great ideas to engage using social media, which include:

- Share photos of how you're decorating your churches, halls and other venues.
- Film some videos of your clergy and others in your church sharing their favourite Christmas memories.

Do share your upcoming events and services with us, so that we can share them on social media. It's a good idea to add them to your A Church Near You page too, using tags such as #Christmas, #Midnight Mass, #MulledWine, #Christingle, etc. Remember to include the

#FollowTheStar hashtag in your social media posts, as well as our @ncldiocese for Facebook and Instagram and @NclDiocese for Twitter.

Digital Resources

The Church of England has released the following resources to help you invite your community back into your church this Advent and Christmas:

- Reflections, an app, liturgy, an online service, and a collection of pre-prepared services on the

Church of England website:

- A webinar hosted by the national Digital team presenting the resources.
- Colours, fonts, logos, printed designs, and social media graphics (ACNY login required);
- A catalogue of recording music, carols and songs, free to use, recorded by St Martin-in-the-Fields, London, and the Royal School of Church Music (ACNY login required).
- A YouTube channel dedicated to resourcing and inspiring young people (wider than just

Christmas).

Printed Resources

There a number of items you can order including:

- Reflection booklets
- Prayer bookmark cards
- Family prayer cards
- Christmas Invitation cards

Order online from CH Publishing.

And remember there is a cost of living crisis so make sure people know your events and services are free of charge.

Farewell to the Dean



THE Very Revd Geoff Miller gave his last service as Dean at Newcastle Cathedral on Sunday 20 November. Geoff retires after serving in the North East since 1983. In 2005, Geoff became Archdeacon of Northumberland, remaining attached to the Cathedral until becoming Acting Dean in 2018. He was installed as the Dean of Newcastle in the following year and in this capacity, has served the community in a wide variety of civic roles.

Geoff said: "Throughout the years, I have received so much undeserved support and genuine affection and hopefully played a small part in the extension of the Kingdom of God."

"My prayers and good wishes will be with the Diocese as it prepares to welcome a new Bishop and, of course, with the Cathedral as it continues to enhance and enjoy its ministry in the region."



Conference brings a message of hope for rural churches as project draws to a close

By Philippa Carter, Rural Churches for Everyone Project Manager

WE were so pleased to welcome over 80 people to St Bartholomew's, Kirkwhelpington to celebrate and share the work of the Rural Churches for Everyone (RCfE) project, on 9 November.

A whole range of people from across the rural diocese including our project partners, local stakeholder groups, clergy, PCCs and volunteers came together and it was wonderful to see people meeting and making connections. Archdeacon Catherine commented that she felt overwhelmed and humbled that so many people had come to be a part of the day, the content of which was "rich, helpful and encouraging".

The morning saw talks from Yvonne Conchie, Rural Development Specialist for RCfE, who outlined the research basis for the project and the key findings and tools developed. Yvonne was followed by Revd Dr Claire Maxim and the keynote speaker The Right Reverend Dr Dagmar Winter, Bishop of Huntingdon. Bishop Dagmar was formerly the Priest in Charge at St Bartholomew's and commented on how wonderful it was to be back amongst familiar faces. All three of the morning talks will be available to watch on the Diocese website in due course.

Over lunch, the **RCfE project video** was shown for the first time. You can watch it here to find out how the churches involved have benefited from the project. Afternoon break-out sessions gave attendees the chance to find out more about developing partnerships and how to understand and capture the heritage of their church buildings.

In the concluding session, Archdeacon Catherine explained how the diocesan Rural Strategy Group will take on the legacy work for RCfE. A toolkit of resources will be available on the Diocese website, but most importantly, Catherine highlighted the importance of communications and of working together. She said:

"The value of partnerships has spoken so loudly today and it's been fantastic that so many of our partners have been able to be here. I think what they've all collectively communicated is the value of trust, of relationship, and of how that builds the most valuable commodity anywhere ever, which is hope.

"My sense is that one of the biggest things that's been generated by RCfE, is the collec-



> Bishop Dagmar returns to Kirkwhelpington to give the key note speech



> Archdeacon Catherine



> Rev Dr Claire Maxim

tive hope that there is a way forward."

She went on to encourage people to use the RCfE Toolkit when it becomes available, and to get in touch with her, or your local clergy or deanery to discuss what you find there.

■ To receive updates on the work of the Rural Strategy Group, including being notified when the Toolkit becomes available, sign up for the mailing list here: <http://eepurl.com/ht4bjj>.



View from the
NEWCASTLE CATHEDRAL Lantern

By Revd Canon Clare MacLaren,
Canon for Music and Liturgy



> Dean Geoff, left, using the new ambo

It's not often that one gets a chance to be involved in the design and production of a new set of liturgical furniture – and yet, thanks to a very generous bequest, alongside the Cathedral's recent re-ordering, we have had the joyful opportunity to do just that! And, with great excitement, as I write, we are preparing for our new altar and ambo (a large lectern) to arrive this week – just in time for Dean Geoff to preach from, and preside at them, for the first time, at his final Sunday Eucharist before he retires.

When we put it out to tender, the Cathedral Chapter had a clear remit in mind. Ideally, we wanted two pieces that would form a threesome with our beautiful medieval font – with its grey stone surround, and deep blue and gold heraldic emblems on the side. We wanted the new altar and ambo to reflect the history and heritage of Newcastle – the long traditions of skilled craftsmen and women, seafarers, miners and metalworkers who have made this city great. We also wanted the designs to be bold – to reflect the ongoing drive for excellence and technological innovation which continues to spur Newcastle on.

In keeping with these goals, we were delighted to be able to offer the design contract to a local Ouseburn-based firm of designer/fabricators, called RASKL Art + Architecture, who have a significant track record of national and international standing.

Dan Rose, the designer, has worked closely with us, to create what I think are a stunning couple of pieces. Picking up the imagery of a geode – that dull stone, which, when broken open, reveals a glittering and magical interior, he has created an altar and ambo which are concave, and a rich cobalt blue inside. They draw the eye in and invite closer inspection, just as we at the Cathedral pray that visitors will want to examine the riches that the Christian faith has to offer when they enter our doors.

The pieces have been designed using state of the art computer-aided design. They have been cast in aluminium, with enamel inlays, to reference the metalworking and glassmaking heritage of our region. Our proximity to the sea is reflected in the textured waves inside both ambo and altar, while, in the lee of each wave burns a candle – the Light of Christ. So many rich layers of metaphor and symbolism – everyone seems to see something different!

I wonder what you will see when you encounter them for the first time?

Do come to the Cathedral soon, and see for yourself!

PICTURES: JOSHUA TRICKEY

It is better to give than to receive

A Christmas message from Giving Ministry Adviser Dennis Fancett



CHIRSTMAS is a time when our thoughts naturally turn to giving. Many of us are blessed with deeply appreciated relatives, friends, children and grandchildren. It's an absolute pleasure to see excited faces as presents are unwrapped. This can be a particular time to experience the truth of the words the Lord Jesus himself said when he commented, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," recorded in Acts 20:35.

It can be difficult to find a path through the commercialism, the racing around from store to store, or daily trips to the courier company's pick-up hub. The pressure to keep up, and make sure no-one is overlooked can tempt us into spending money we haven't got, spiralling into New Year debt.

For some, Christmas can be a lonely time when we particularly miss loved ones now departed, or the families we never had. Some may be separated from those they cherish, perhaps because they're refugees, aliens in a safe but unfamiliar country, unsure even if close family members are alive or dead. While others might have family working abroad, only able to connect virtually and sorely missed in person.

What a challenge for those of us who are people of faith! How can we celebrate Christmas with all the passion and excitement of society as a whole, yet somehow show that we can have quality family time without being excessive with our personal spending?

Can we demonstrate that we can still make it a special time for our own family, whilst at the same time reach out to include the lonely



and isolated – those without families or those whose families are far away?

Can we remember the mission of our own local parish or benefice by lending support to the extra Christmas activities?

And above all, can we pray that within the hubbub and excitement of this special time, we actually get an opportunity to share with at least one person why Christmas is so special to us – and point to the one who is the

centre of it all?

Let's be generous this Christmas. Not just with presents or with special charitable appeals but with our time; with our willingness to reach out to those on their own and those who are hurting; with renewed passion and commitment to support our local Church; and with our willingness to put thought into how we can use this season to share our gospel message - and in so doing, give someone the greatest gift of all.

Generosity at Christmas



By *Leanne Conway-Wilcox*,
Generous Giving Adviser

As you are busy planning your advent and Christmas services, buying up mulled wine, shortbread, oranges, and sweets – it's also important to find some time to remember that in amongst the busyness – Christmas is a time of remarkable generosity.



Christmas sees us remember the greatest gift of all from our Generous God – his son Jesus Christ. So, let us find the time and space to share this generosity with all we encounter in our parishes.

There are some fantastic resources available on the [Church of England Generous Christmas webpage](#) to help you prepare.

These include:

- Ensuring a warm welcome - Offering advice if you look at offering warm spaces, managing the impact of fuel bills, or taking events somewhere outside the church building.
- Making giving easy - People are very generous, but also very busy. Here you will find some great guides and resources to ensure people can give to your parish quickly and easily. This could be:
 - Online via your social media or website
 - QR codes that can be scanned on your pew sheets, carol service booklets or simple posters
 - Contactless giving devices for your church building

For more advice contact Joanne or Leanne in the [Generous Giving Team](#).

And don't forget there are some great [Advent and Christmas resources here](#) that show just how generous our God is as we anticipate and celebrate the birth of Jesus.

The Roost is seeking two new trustees

The Roost is looking to recruit two volunteer trustees to join their board, as they move into a new stage of development and growth to nurture spirituality and wellbeing with young adults in Northumberland.

They would like one of the trustees to oversee safeguarding and support their designated safeguarding lead in her work.

For more about the organisation please see: www.roostcommunity.org and for information and more details about the volunteer trustee posts, please contact beth@roostcommunity.org.

Morpeth Parish experiences Ubuntu in Botswana



> Ellie Owen pounding Pap at Bahurutshe Cultural Village



> Revd Canon Simon White blessing trees at St Andrew's, Mmopane before planting

By Revd Canon Simon White, Rector of Morpeth.

THE word Ubuntu is the Zulu word for "I am because you are." Father Celestino, the Dean of Holy Cross Cathedral, Gaborone, Botswana told us that we had all experienced Ubuntu and that through our visit to Botswana we had all learnt something new from each other and we would take a little bit of each other home. We would never be the same!

How right he was. In November, 11 members of the Parish of Morpeth embarked on a long-awaited exchange, delayed for two years due to Covid. Many of the young people who were due to go were now at university or unable to make it, and those who could come were no longer young people anymore but adults, although in Botswana a young person is under 35! So, everyone was young apart from me!

We arrived after 27 hours of flying and were met by our driver and youth chaplain Father Bonnie. He was known to many of us as he had been several times to Staying Alive, our diocesan youth event.

Our hosts very generously welcomed us into their homes, which ranged from simple to affluent. Every home seemed to have Wi-Fi much to the relief of some of the younger members, so communications were very

good. This enabled us to post each day on the parish Facebook site and update everyone at home. My host was ex-cabinet minister Dik-gang Makgalamele.

The following day it rained and rained but with the temperatures at 18 degrees, it felt like home but a little warmer. Rain in Botswana is called Pula, it's the same word for there currency. Pula is the most valuable commodity in Africa, so unlike the UK, there were lots of smiles when it rained.

Some of us visited Holy Cross Hospice that like many organisations had been devastated by Covid but was getting back on its feet slowly. We were fed by the Women's Fellowship almost to bursting. Such hospitality! Over the next few days, we helped at St Augustine's theological college, planted trees at St Andrew's Mmopane, and were fed a few times by the amazing Mothers Union! I visited a little village 240km to say a prayer and ended up being asked to preach and pray for half an hour!

We visited youth groups throughout the diocese and were invited to several projects and church fellowships. We visited a cultural village set up to remind local school children about their culture and roots as western culture has started to erode and take over traditional values and customs. We ate local dishes Pap and Seswaa and experienced every aspect of Botswana life.

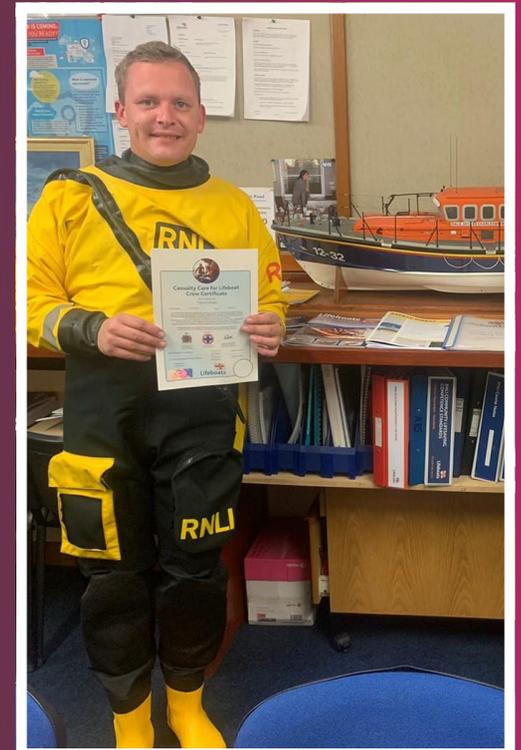
On Sunday, I was asked to preach at both the 7.00 English speaking service and the 10.00 Tswana service, two and a half and three hours respectively. With an expected preach of 25 minutes, it was culturally an eye-opener! However, it was a joy and a delight, with the black hatted MU singing with much gusto and the Women's Fellowship in purple responding with beating bibles and whistles. What a joy! I so hope when I get to heaven the angels are singing and praising in Tswana!

We finished out the week with the more athletic playing in the church football league (and winning), with Morpeth parish hosting a Braai (BBQ) with about 60 invited guests to say "thank you" but about 100 turned up! Thoughts of the three loaves and five fishes seemed to be appropriate as everyone was fed...in the end!

The following day we visited St Peter's day care centre in the pouring rain, and said our goodbyes. We went to the airport realising that Ubuntu had happened and we would have Botswana forever in our hearts and that the friendships made would last for a very long time.

Dear Lord, we give thanks for our link diocese and all those who serve and worship in the diocese, bless them and us, now and always. Amen.

Berwick curate learning to save lives at sea!



> Thomas Sample received his Casualty Care Certificate

Revd Thomas Sample, assistant curate of Berwick, Holy Trinity and St Mary, decided to help his local coastal community by joining the RNLI. He's undergoing rigorous training to learn lifesaving skills at sea and has been involved in a real-life rescue off the coast of Berwick.

This September, Thomas was involved in the rescue of six people including two young children, who had broken down at sea in their RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat). Thomas and the crew located the boat one-mile North of Berwick Pier, assisted the mother and two young children on board the lifeboat, before towing the RIB and remaining passengers back to safety.

Thomas trains regularly with the Berwick crew both in the station and at sea, undergoing training exercises to learn boat handling, navigation and map work, search and rescue, radio communications, anchoring, and man overboard scenarios.

As a Casualty Care Crew Member, he's learning specialist lifesaving skills including first aid, triage, support and care for casualties, and determining whether medical situations are urgent in an operational environment.

Thomas has joined the crew in rescue scenarios involving other emergency services such as the Coastguard and fire and rescue services. He's also taken part in training to learn how to deal with cliff casualties.

Training focuses on operating the new Atlantic 85 B-Class boat the station are expecting to receive in March, which will replace the current D-Class boat. The new boat is one of the fastest in the RNLI fleet and is perfect for carrying out a search or performing a rescue.

Thomas said, "The training is a big commitment but very rewarding and it's wonderful being part of the crew of 30 at Berwick station. I was out on the boat one evening recently under a beautiful sunset with dolphins leaping out of the water near the boat, and I thought I'm really blessed to be part of this."



> The team at St Augustine's cleaning out a new donated classroom.

Wellbeing

by **Patty Everitt**,
Counselling
Adviser



ROCKS, PEBBLES, SAND AND COFFEE

In the run up to Christmas it is easy to feel overwhelmed by preparations, so that when Christmas actually arrives there is exhaustion and not much feeling of goodwill!

My invitation to you is to take a little time each day of Advent, 10 minutes perhaps, to do something that feeds and nurtures YOU.

Here is a story ...

A professor stood in the lecture hall, at his lecture desk one morning looking up at his students. On the desk was a large, toughened glass tank, three different containers and a mug of coffee.

The professor took three rocks from one of the containers and placed them carefully in the tank.

He looked out at his class and asked: "Is the container full?" The students who were awake at that time in the morning nodded. Oh yes, the container was full. You couldn't fit another rock in there that's for sure.

Our professor then took pebbles from the second container on his desk and carefully loaded them into the tank, shaking it gently so that the pebbles found their way into the spaces between the rocks.

Again, he asked his students: "Is the container full now?" More heads nodded as more students had finally come to and joined the lecture. Oh yes, the container was now definitely full. No way would more pebbles fit.

Our professor now scooped sand from the last container on his desk and emptied sand into the tank. The students watched the fine grains trickle into the spaces between pebbles and rocks.

"What do you think now?" he asked. "Is the container full now?" Almost everyone was now awake and nodding. OK, they had not really been paying attention before but now the container really was full. Nothing else would fit. The container was definitely full now.

Our professor looked at the container and pointed to the rocks, the pebbles, and the sand in turn. The rocks, he explained, are the important things in our lives; they are few but big and stay with us for a long time perhaps even the whole of our lives.

The pebbles are our challenges and goals in life. They change as we achieve them. There are more of these than the big-ticket items in our lives and we make room for them between and around those big rocks.

The sand represents our day-to-day life, the challenges we face, the joys we experience. These things fill the spaces around the big-ticket items and the challenges and goals in our lives.

Silence filled the lecture hall for a few heart beats.

Then the professor took his mug of coffee, took a sip and then poured the remaining coffee into the container. The liquid found its way into the spaces between the grains of sand.

He smiled, pointed to the container and said: "But remember, however much is going on in our lives there is always room for coffee!"

Whether your 'coffee' is actually coffee or whether it is reading a book, a meditation or a few minutes of dancing in the kitchen, remember that there is always room for 'coffee'.

I hope you find room for that 'coffee' in the days running up to Christmas so that you arrive at Christmas with the energy to be excited, feeling at peace and able to both give and receive seasonal goodwill.

I wish you a Happy Christmas full of Peace and Goodwill.

Vicar of Holy Island backs local fisherman



> Holy Island

Revd Sarah Hills is working with her small community on Holy Island to stop the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) proposed fishing ban on the Island.

DEFRA has proposed that the island should be a designated Highly Protected Marine Area, intended to allow nature to recover and for ecosystems to thrive.

The local community oppose the idea and claim environmental sustainability and stewardship are already high priorities for the Lindisfarne community. Fishing in the area is small scale and sustainable, low impact lobster and crab potting with no fish being caught commercially. Seal populations are thriving, a sign of a healthy ecosystem. The fishermen have a vested interest in conserving the waters on which they depend.

Fishing has been part of Holy Island's history for hundreds of years and is still an essential part of its economy.

The impact on the island of a total

fishing ban is claimed to be huge. The fishing families are a major part of the Island's population, providing workers in the village and children at the Church of England primary school.

The Revd Sarah Hills said: "The community and an increasing number of supporters including many experts, believe the proposal is both misguided and inequitable based on the criteria DEFRA themselves have set.

"The fishermen on Holy Island are also keen to emphasise that it shouldn't be positioned as 'fishing against environment'. They are important allies, not enemies, in protecting the oceans. There is shock and dismay at the short amount of time allowed to put forward their case."

If you'd like to support the campaign you can [respond to this survey organised by Holy Island's MP](#) or contact Revd Sarah Hills by emailing incumbentholyisland@gmail.com.

Our interns tell us why they joined The New Wine Discipleship

In our last edition of Link we introduced our New Wine Discipleship Year interns, who are taking part in an internship that allows participants to exercise and nurture their spiritual gifts and passions, learning at St Thomas' Newcastle and at another local church.

This month, we hear from three of our interns, who tell us why they decided to join the scheme.

Jess Woollett

Jess decided to join the New Wine Discipleship (NWD) and Ministry Experience Scheme in her final year of university, when she had returned to Church after becoming distant from her Christian faith in her teen years.

Explaining why she was attracted to the internship, Jess said: "I felt God was calling me to

deepen my faith and allow time to grow in my discipleship. The Internship allows me to take a step back from the fast pace of life with formal education and jobs and put my time and efforts into rooting myself in Jesus.

"I think that even putting aside the academic and theology teaching in Discipleship Year and Ministry Experience Scheme, simply being able to volunteer and be part of the running of a church community is so special and something not always prioritised in everyday life, so I feel very blessed to be able to do it myself. I am also very excited to see what God will do in my life to grow in my skills but also my faithfulness and love for Him."

Brandon Thomson

Brandon, originally from the Scottish Borders but now living in Newcastle, is doing the NWD

internship and youth ministry at St Thomas. Speaking of why he decided to be an intern he said:

"I decided to do the internship because I have a passion to tell young people about Jesus and share with them the Bible in a relative way for them."

Rachel Turner

Like Jess, Rachel returned to Church in her final year at university and wanted to dedicate more time to her faith and her relationship with God. She expresses why, saying:

"I loved the community at St Thomas' and wanted to continue to be a part of this before I finally moved away from Newcastle. I wanted to really dedicate a year to my relationship with God, so that I could have a good foundation for my faith and have an opportunity to learn more."



> Rachel Turner



> Brandon Thomson



> Jess Woollett

From your children, youth and families team



Children and Youth Regional Roadshows

By Susan White, Youth Adviser

THE Children and Youth annual roadshows took place earlier this month and we were delighted to be joined by Lucy Moore, formally of Messy Church and now Head of the Growing Faith Foundation.

Lucy shared the Church of England's commitment and vision for growing younger and more diverse congregations. On her appointment as Head of Growing Faith, Lucy said: "The Growing Faith Foundation will do its level best to help all parishes be even better at helping everyone meet, love and follow Jesus, especially those under the age of 16."

She talked about what it means to 'grow younger' and how that could be addressed locally and individually. How deepening the relationship between school, home and church impacts young people, and the importance of understanding what it means to put young people at the centre of a church's mission.

The roadshow focused on thinking about the future of our worshipping communities and what that might look like across our churches and services.

The regional evening meet-ups took place in Newcastle, Alnwick and Hexham, where we heard stories from local people who have a passion for seeing young people thrive.

We were able to show Lucy a wide variety of church projects, children and youth work and the contrast between a very small Church of England primary school and the large Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust in Ashington.

She was able to build a picture and understand the uniqueness of our diocese and the diversity within it. From our inner-city work to the rural landscape of Northumberland and the challenges that come with meeting and serving across the entirety of the area.

Following Lucy's visit to MINE Youth, Byker, Dave Johnson, project coordinator commented: "Lucy has an absolute gift of seeing, celebrating and inspiring pockets of youth and



> Children and Youth roadshow



> Lucy Moore visits Duke's Secondary School in Ashington

children's work and it was a joy to spend time with her and others thinking about how we can continue to walk with young people through their lives."

Thank you to everyone who hosted Lucy and the children and youth team during the visits.

Everyone came away from the events with a better knowledge of how growing younger and more diverse is important to all of our church communities.

Reflecting on the events, Jess from Alnwick said "It was great to be at the roadshow last week. Listening to Lucy Moore speak was so interesting, I was really encouraged to think about how we can develop our work to increase connections between home, school and church providing a space for young people to flourish."

Growing Faith is the movement that exists to put children, young people and families

instinctively at the heart of all the mission and ministry of the Church by changing the culture of the Church of England.

It involves churches, schools and households working together to help children, young people and families live life in all its fullness.

If you would like more information on the Growing Faith Foundation - the work of Lucy Moore and her team you can sign up for the newsletter here: [Growing Faith newsletter](#).

Lay Ministry Service of celebration at Hexham Abbey

By Susan White, Youth Adviser

It was wonderful to come together in Hexham Abbey, on 6 November to celebrate and give thanks for all Lay Ministry carried out around the diocese. Bishop Mark Wroe presided over the service that was led by the Children and Youth Team, Tara Russell, Rachel Scheffer and myself Susan White.

This year the focus was on children and youth work, and we asked people to get involved in the service by choosing readings

and songs, offering prayers and encouraging words through their stories.

We heard stories from people around the area who are doing great children and youth work, groups that support families during school holidays with meals and activities, afterschool clubs, sports clubs and Christian residential holidays. What shone from each story was the recognition that Jesus is at the centre of the different ways we are engaging with our children and

youth communities.

Nineteen-year-old Sirandou from Morpeth told us how the positive experience of attending church and residential holiday camps had led her to want to give something back to her community. She now leads Sunday School at her local church and is taking part in growing young leaders in Durham Diocese. She is also involved as a young leader on ReNew Holiday Camps. You can find out more about these residential holidays here: <https://renewne.org.uk/>

breakthrough.

We heard how one club is connecting with young people through sport and are teaching about Jesus through games and challenges. They teach endurance, commitment, compassion in a way that strengthens the understanding of faith and mission.

The service was a celebration of all the commitment people give to lay ministry. It was a time to give thanks and be blessed for each of

our individual ministries and the service ended with Bishop Mark affirming and blessing everyone who gives to the life of our churches.

If you want to know more about how you can develop new initiatives to connect with young people, get in touch with the Children and Youth Team at our Diocese.

Contact details at: [Children, Young People & Families - Newcastle Diocese \(anglican.org\)](#)

HAVE YOUR SAY

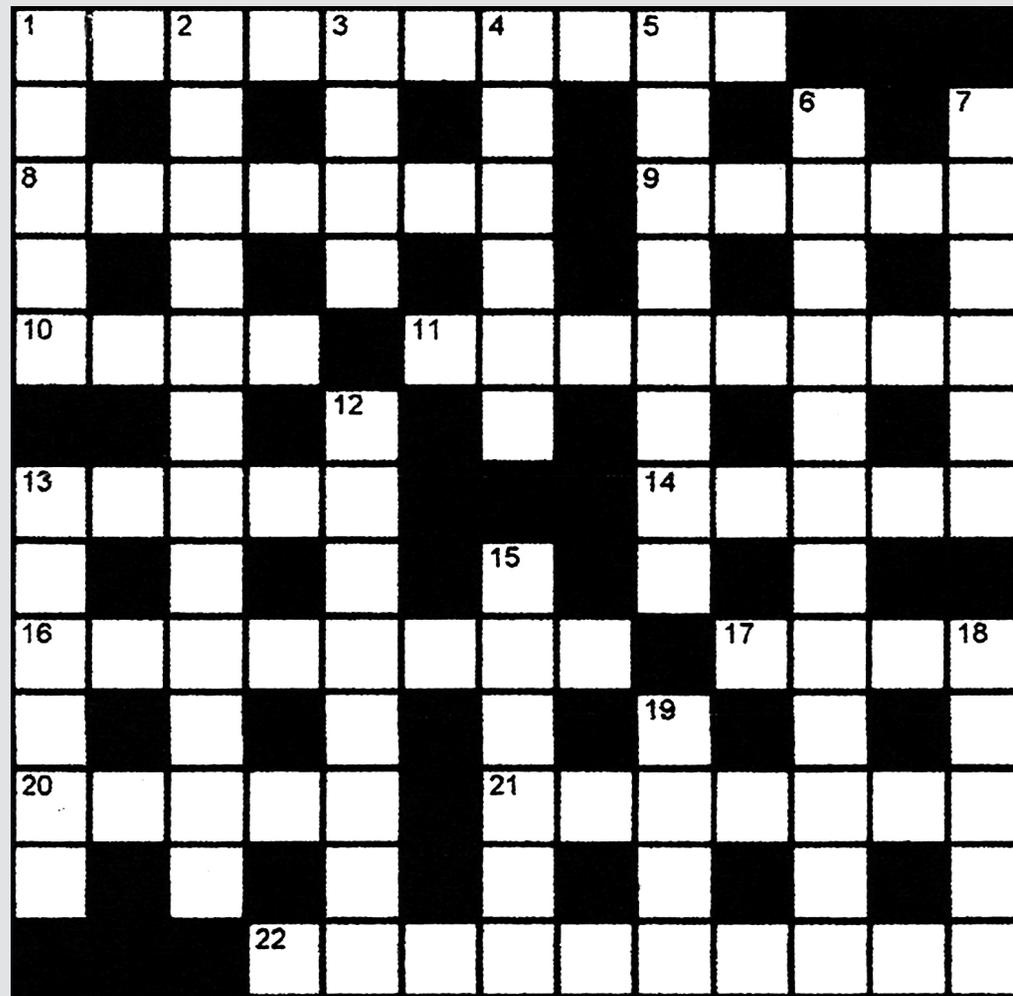
Anything catch your eye in this month's LINK? Something on your mind? Or in your prayers? Send an e-mail, message or letter to LINK and we'll publish the best of them:

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



Link Crossword 188 *Compiled by Mary Sutton*

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



ACROSS

1. Adornment provided a month before speech (10)
8. Excluding profit made from good deal (7)
9. Material essential to many Londoners (5)
10. Job for first of teenagers getting invite (4)
11. Member of the clergy returning opening wine (8)
13. For engineers, male, it's an area of responsibility (5)
14. Found in tin, Ailsa's metal spikes (5)
16. Robe and undergarment found by blokes ahead of time (8)
17. Girl appearing before a festive occasion (4)
20. Regret including Eastern verse in theatrical entertainment (5)
21. Skating area used by one Conservative with hesitation in Kent, initially (3,4)
22. Regret breaking centre pane (10)

DOWN

1. First appearance of woman, extremely unfit (5)
2. Man on time meeting graduate's girl when it's 24 December (9,3)
3. Study plant, say (4)
4. For vessels, the Spanish decoration (6)
5. Name torn off decorative object (8)
6. Light, bad, with hesitation given to one country (12)
7. Popular Conservative – he's getting small amounts (6)
12. Headlong rush disturbing dame's pet (8)
13. Royal always having energy for worship (6)
15. Popular team within a building (6)
18. Found in bank, leader's joint (5)
19. Food included by some athletes (4)

MONTHLY E-BULLETIN...

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



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

Noticeboard

Christmas at Newcastle Cathedral
The seasonal exhibition, 'From St Nicholas to Santa Claus', launches on Friday 2 December. Information is available [here](#). This will be followed, on Saturday 3 December, by their Patronal Festival. The preacher will be Revd Canon Dr Sarah Hills, vicar of Holy Island and previously Canon for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral (2014-2018). A full list of Advent and Christmas events can be viewed [here](#).

Christmas Tree Festival, 2-6 December, St Andrew's Corbridge.
Carol singing, service and refreshments. Please see www.corbridgechurch.org.uk for more details.

Lamont to Action, Newcastle Cathedral. Was planned for 29 November but has been postponed until next year. For more information contact [Lesley Hilary I.hilary@newcastle.anglican.org](mailto:Lesley.Hilary@newcastle.anglican.org).



West Newcastle Symphony Orchestra in Concert, 15 December, 6pm, St Matthew's Church Elswick. The young musicians will be performing Tchaikovsky, Mozart, and a lively item by Susato as well as some seasonal favourites. Donations appreciated.

ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD 187

ACROSS:

1. Amicable 5. Edit
9. Small 10. Sinning
11. Disagreement 13. Intend
15. Avenue 17. Christianity
20. Spinach 21. Image
22. Need 23. Spaniard

DOWN:

1. Apse 2. Iraqi
3. All Saints' Day 4. Lustre
6. Drive-in 7. Together
8. Intervention
12. Diocesan 14. Termite
16. Bishop 18. Tiara
19. Head

Newcastle Faith leaders share their reflections for Interfaith Week

The Voices of Faith Group met on a summer's day in the beautiful and peaceful setting of Minsteracres Retreat Centre, in County Durham. Religious leaders and people from some of the different faith communities

in Newcastle spent time reflecting on three themes: beauty; sacred and revered objects; and journeying and pilgrimage.

You can watch their reflections in three short videos available to

view on YouTube.

Reflections on Beauty: <https://youtu.be/o0j5MbgGoQs>

Reflections on Sacred and Revered Objects: <https://youtu.be/vPX2Hpr6bYo>

[be/vPX2Hpr6bYo](https://youtu.be/vPX2Hpr6bYo)

Reflections on Journeying and Pilgrimage: <https://youtu.be/zMjKpgiKJbo>

Working together created a winning outcome for St Matthew's shop and a family in need

By Aidan W Evans

The Nearly New Shop at St Matthew's, Elswick was opened in 1988 to help to fund a substantial appeal for the repair of the fabric of the church building. Following the successful conclusion of the appeal in 1992, it was decided to keep the enterprise running as we had uncovered a considerable need by the local Elswick folk, and some from further afield, for access to good quality clothes, footwear and household items at affordable prices. The opportunity to work closely recently with a neighbouring Anglican parish demonstrates one way in which our outreach has been assisted by much goodwill.

Whilst attending a lively Autumn sale and coffee morning one Saturday morning a couple of weeks ago at Holy Saviour, Sugley, I noticed a colourful bric-a-brac stall, well stocked with goods just waiting to be identified as 'potentially useful' by observant customers. Not wishing to pass by an opportunity, I enquired of Fr Neil who was in charge of the stall, what he intended to do with any unsold items. A characteristic warm smile spread across his face as he indicated that he fully understood my direction of thinking. "Yes, you can have them for St Matthew's shop, and in doing so will also be performing for us a useful service", was the reply.

On the following Tuesday morning I took with me Danny, to collect the donated items. He is one of our stalwart and loyal supporters, and always a ready and willing helper. The goods, including many types of toys in as-new condition, had hardly hit the floor of our Nearly New



➤ St Matthew's Shop

stockroom, situated within the shop, under the south aisle of the church - when one of our regular customers from the local community purchased most of it.

Later, I learned that the lovely and lively lady had sponsored a family from elsewhere on Tyneside, and that this family was the victim of some of the most dreadful of circumstances, too heart-breaking to be described in detail here. She was purchasing the toys for the children as Christmas presents.

As I helped her across the main road with the items she had purchased, and we had them safely delivered to her home, I reflected that this had turned out to be a WIN WIN WIN situation. Pretty rare in most commercial transactions! Our friends in the neighbouring parish had managed to clear some surplus good; we had generated a modest sum for St Matthew's; the generous benefactor had obtained quality items for a knockdown price; and lastly and most importantly, a family in difficult circumstances had been helped.

We are often entreated to work together outside of our parish boundaries with neighbouring Anglicans and with others, but it isn't always easy to identify and discern a practical way forward. Might I suggest that a small scale and low organisational demand approach like this is often the most effective.

St Matthew's Shop, Summerhill St, is currently open three days a week on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings from 10am to 12noon. There are refreshments on Tuesdays and baby and toddler clothes and toys - some free, others for sale.

We are always delighted to receive items of good quality fresh stock, clothes and household goods are always needed. In these difficult economic times, the need for locally based parish outreach enterprises like this are greater than ever.

If you or your church can help please don't hesitate to get in touch by emailing: aidan.w.evans@gmail.com

COP 27 AND THE NEED FOR CHANGE

"Cop 27 has begun at a time of global crisis which ranges beyond the climate emergency," writes the Church of England's lead Bishop for Environmental Affairs, Graham Usher.

"The tipping points we are reaching will lead to more human misery, more migration, more conflict, and devastating impacts on biodiversity." **Read Bishop Graham's full reflection on Cop 27 on the Church of England website.**

How do we convince people of the need for change? Mark Nash Williams, Bishop's Adviser for the Environment recommends reading **The Alternative**, which has a really good, practical piece from about how to connect the climate crisis and energy crisis in ways that people respond to.

Climate Resilience Workshop For people involved with church buildings in any capacity, there is a Climate Resilience Workshop on 28 November at Newcastle Cathedral. In this free workshop you can expect to:

Learn about climate resilience and the potential impacts of climate change on heritage buildings;

Learn of experiences of past

Going for Green

By Mark Nash-Williams, Bishops' Adviser for the Environment



PICTURE: MARION OAKS

MARCHING FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

Some members of our churches joined the Climate Justice march and rally in Newcastle on Saturday, 12 November. People assembled at Grey's Monument at noon and then marched to the Civic Centre, where there was a mini green festival with local stalls of local climate and social justice organisations. Photos can be viewed on the Newcastle Diocese Eco Champions Facebook group.

Saving energy and money The Church of England's website has practical tips and advice on heating your church this winter in an efficient way to save money and reduce your carbon footprint. **Heating your church this winter | The Church of England.** Also, a new booklet, "Practical Suggestions to Help Parishes Save Energy and Money" has just been created and is now available on the Church of England website. You can download it here: <https://bit.ly/cofesave>

projects from across rural/urban and geographic locations;

Generate ideas and fresh thinking to take back into their churches;

Create connections with those working on protecting their churches and enhancing their future mission.

Book your place on [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com)!

LIKE A METAPHOR

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



REVENGE OF THE BROKEN CLOCKS

Earlier this year, I wrote about a pair of broken clocks that it took me far too long to throw away - at the time, they were both still hanging on the wall, looking pretty but performing no other function. They have since been disposed of and replaced. The functioning clocks that have taken their place run smoothly: silently and accurately tracing the time and dividing each second, minute and hour from the one before. But they provide very little for the imagination - they just look like clocks which tell the time, and it's unlikely that I'll form an emotional attachment to them.

Which is all very well and grown up of me ("Look! - I own things that do what they should, without any messing around or trying to be two things at once.") but it feels a little bit like I've lost something that I can't quite put my finger on. It's almost like there's a gap there when I look at them.

Remembrance Sunday was yesterday, providing a chance to look back and honour the lives of those who lost their lives in war, and to renew our Christian commitment to work towards peace wherever we can. It followed on from All Saints' and All Souls', earlier in the month, when we looked back at those who had gone before - both the saintly and inspirational, and everyone else.

This looking back may well remind us that there are holes in our lives that can't be filled, that loss is a real and painful thing, that time still moves on and life continues to happen. We should also find ourselves encouraged by the examples that have been set for us (towards the good and away from the bad and indifferent), and that we want to join in the work to keep up the good going and avert the bad.

GK Chesterton says that tradition is the only democracy where the dead get a vote, which isn't saying that everything is set in stone for ever, so much as that each generation isn't starting again from first principles but continuing on the same journey begun by the first disciples as "it seems good to us and the spirit". I wouldn't go quite so far as to compare our faith directly to the Ship of Theseus (or Trigger's Broom, if you prefer) but anything living will grow and change over time - Jesus says that God will prune the living branches, and remove the dead ones. Part of our looking back must surely be to help us see which branches are which, and being prepared to be pruned or to see deadwood cut away - neither of which will be pain free experiences.

So, my old clocks are still gone and I miss them, but I have new clocks which work; in life and faith, looking back shows us where we're coming from, losses and all, and can help prepare us for whatever has to come next.

Marygate House, Holy Island and the 'Community of the Cross of Nails'



➤ The Cross of Nails was carried on the last stage of its journey over the Pilgrims' Way to Holy Island. Revd Gilly Maude, Richard Parker, Revd Mary Taylor (URC) and Iain Thomson.

By Andrew Duff, Trustee, Marygate House

Marygate House is a small ecumenical retreat centre on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne in Northumberland, offering hospitality and welcome in a Christian context. Since 1970, the house has welcomed groups and individuals from across the world and from every part of the church and society, offering a space for people to listen and talk to each other and to God.

Marygate House has recently become a partner member of the Community of the Cross of Nails (CCN). This is a worldwide network of some 250 churches, charities, chaplaincies, peace-building and retreat centres, schools, and other educational and training organisations, all inspired by the Coventry story of destruction, rebuilding, and renewal. Each partner organisation is active in reconciliation in their various ways.

After being blessed at the Eucharist in Coventry Cathedral on Sunday 25 September, a Cross of Nails was presented to the Trustees of Marygate House on 18 October - a symbol of its membership of the Community and its commitment to work and pray for peace, justice and reconciliation. For Marygate House the aim is to foster renewal, reconciliation and healing in those people this centre of retreat touches.

WARDEN VACANCY

The role of Warden of Marygate House is in vacancy as Don and Sam Quilty, who shared this role over the past eight years, is moving on. The Trustees are deeply thankful for their ministry of warm hospitality, practical service and pastoral care. The Trustees are inviting expressions of interest from potential candidates for this very special role. If this is of interest please contact the Trustees at marygatetrustees@gmail.com.

Christmas Hope

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



CHRISTMAS! A time of hope and presents. The celebration of the greatest gift – God wrapped up in a human body. The Word made flesh. “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity”, says the well-known carol.

And the importance of Emmanuel, God with us? Our very salvation. Christ, the Messiah, our Redeemer born into human life to experience every part of our daily lives (even unto death), and to bring the Divine into the ordinary. Heaven and earth combined, a touching point, opening our eyes to the Kingdom of Heaven present in the here and now.

This helpless Christ-child is the baby whose birth brings hope and Light for God’s people, whose eventual resurrection brings all the hope of eternal life, and is the one for whom we look to come again in glory. This is our hope.

And yet, through the Holy Spirit, given to dwell in our hearts, God is incarnated once again, enthroned in our own lives. As Teresa of Avilla said, “Christ has no body now on earth but yours...Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good.” Through us God is very much alive and at work, walking the earth, loving and redeeming.

Did we expect hope to take this form? Probably no more than anyone expected the Messiah to arrive as a tiny, helpless baby. Christ was born into the physical mess of the borrowed animal shelter, and into the political mess of Roman occupation and religious oppression. And today, Christ lives through us in the mess of our

lives and of world politics, and in the mess of the climate crisis and conflict.

Here is the glory of God and the hope of the heavenly Kingdom where all are loved, no one will go hungry and there will be no more tears of sadness. Here! On earth today!

Christian Aid believes that it is hope that unites us with each other and with our global neighbours. While injustice divides us, hope unites us. It is our hope for a better world that brings us together for a common goal, and with the Holy Spirit at work in us, that hope can become a reality.

If the Spirit is prompting you to do something or find out more, do visit www.caid.org.uk/hope and <https://caid.org.uk/campaigns> for ideas of how you can pray and act to make a difference in this world.

*God of our deepest hopes.
It feels as if we have been waiting for so long.
Dreaming of a better world,
holding on to the promise of justice and mercy for all,
for so long.
We were beginning to doubt that change would ever come,
to lose confidence and courage,
and then you surprise us with joy.
A faint heartbeat of presence,
a whispering of possibility,
awakening and stirring,
an answer to prayer.
Amen.*

■ **Prayer from the Christmas worship resources available at <https://caid.org.uk/christmas>**



► Johaira Herrera 15, daughter of coffee and cocoa farmer Angela Zelaya 41 who lives in Santa Rosa, Nicaragua holding her baby son.

PICTURE: CHRISTIAN AID / ESME ALLEN

Christmas Closure

The RRC will close for the Christmas break at 5.30pm on Wednesday 14 December and will reopen at 10am on Tuesday 3 January.

There will be no access to the Resources Centre and resources cannot be returned during this time.

Zoom event: Faith, Markets and Money: How economics forces us to think differently about religion and power – Thursday 16 March, 6pm – 7.15pm.

Mathew Guest has just published *Neoliberal Religion, Faith and Power in the Twenty-First Century*. In this accessible book, Mathew argues that contemporary Western culture has been formed by clear neoliberal economic principles and that these pervade every aspect of our lives including religion. In the discussion of religion and worldviews the economic lens is often ignored and yet, according to Mathew’s research, this is a hugely significant, and often ignored area of critical engagement.

In this online event we will be in conversation with Mathew exploring what these neoliberal economic principles are

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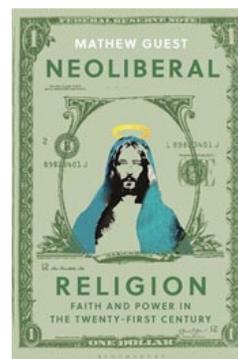
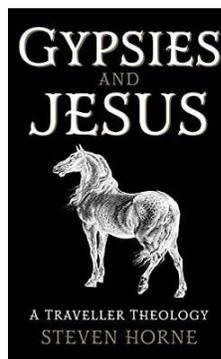
www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk

and how are they manifest in faith. Mathew will also be inviting critical thinking about whether these principles are a positive in the faith space and, if not, what might be done to challenge them?

To book fill out [this form](#). Please note bookings close at 12pm the day of the event.

Mathew Guest is Professor in the Sociology of Religion and Head of Department in the Department of Religion and Theology at Durham University.

Opening up God’s House: Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Communities and the Church – Saturday 18 March, 9am–2.30pm, Cuthbert House, Durham, DH1 3RY



Join Dr Steven Horne, author of *Gypsies and Jesus: A Traveller Theology* and the Durham Diocesan GTR Chaplain Revd Nicky

Chater for an in-person event.

Inclusive church and celebrating diversity can mean many things to many people. What might it mean for those in Christian contexts who wish to support, welcome and minister with people from Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities?

Welcoming and safe workshops will explore:

- The specific needs of participants in relation to their questions and queries about the historical, theological and ecclesial background to GTR communities
- The Theology of GTR communities and church engagement
- Traveller Friendly Churches
- Sanctuary Stopping Places
- What might the practical outcomes and actions be in the NE churches if they really do open up Gods house?

A simple soup and bread lunch will be provided.

To book, fill out [this form](#). Please note bookings close at 12pm the day before the event.

Copies of Steven’s book **Gypsies and Jesus: A Traveller Theology** are in the RRC or you can purchase it from all reputable retailers.