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The magazine for the Diocese of Newcastle

FEBRUARY 2024

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THE CHURCH  
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# A message from Bishop Helen-Ann



The Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley.

**I'm writing this mid-January looking back at a week that has been all about hope and hospitality. Let me explain, and this starts some years ago with a memory of visiting a church in New Zealand. St Hilda-in-the-Woods is situated 50km up New Zealand's longest no-exit road. A small, beautifully kept white wooden building, surrounded by farms. Worship happens here only very occasionally, but the church is kept open as a place of welcome and respite, when needed. It doesn't attract large numbers; its presence is what matters.**

Fast forward to January 2024, and Britain's 'most brutal' Ultra Race: The Montane Winter Spine. Starting in Edale, Derbyshire, traversing the Pennine Way, all 268 miles, non-stop to the finish just over the Scottish border in Kirk Yetholm. In this case, the church is St Francis, Byrness, in Bellingham Deanery. If you watch the final daily round-up video of

the Spine Race (video 8), at its start you see the inside of the church, and most importantly hear the sound of gentle snoring.

This is not a response to an overly lengthy sermon, rather it is the sound of Spine Race participants sleeping in-between the pews, or in one runner's case, in-front of the altar. The church is open (as it so often is for walkers and runners along the Pennine Way) and offers respite and refreshment to those taking part in the race who need a pit-stop in the final miles before the finish line.

To me, this speaks powerfully of the vital importance of our rural churches, their presence and hospitality to (in this case) an international sporting event. Parables of hope and hospitality happen all across our diocese: in our churches, chaplaincies, and many projects like the newly commissioned Beyond Youth team that works with children and young people in South East Northum-

berland, for example.

It was a joy to celebrate this new initiative recently and I am looking forward to supporting it in this new season. I know how much the hospitality of St Francis' church meant to one competitor, a priest from Leeds Diocese who posted online how much it helped him at a crucial part of this most challenging of experiences.

The Apostle Paul often uses the imagery of athletics in his letters to describe the challenge of following Jesus, and it occurs to me that the resilience needed of ultra-runners is not far off that experience. As we prepare to enter the period of Lent, I am going to pay extra attention to the themes of hope and hospitality. I hope you will join me and amplify the good work so many are doing already to bring light and life to everyone we meet.

**The Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley**

# Bishop's Christmas Appeal



The WERS team.

**B**ishop Helen-Ann has thanked everyone who contributed to her Christmas Appeal which has raised £2,217.34 in aid of two charities which make a real difference to people's lives at Christmas, and at all times of the year.

The annual Bishop's Christmas Appeal was launched in early December, in support of the West End Refugee Service and the Farming Community Network.

Bishop Helen-Ann said: "The Church has always been a place of refuge and support for those in need. At Christmas I asked all who were able to join me in supporting the work of these two charities which make such a difference to people's lives.

"Thank you to all who considered my appeal and made generous contributions towards this vital work."

The **West End Refugee Service** provides information, advice and advocacy, together with



The Farming Community Network.

material and financial support to those who are seeking refuge in our area, and are waiting for their asylum claim to be processed by the State. They are on a very limited income and are not permitted to work. Many become homeless, as they have no access to public funds.

The **Farming Community Network (FCN)** is a

charity that supports farmers and families within the farming community through difficult times, including financial difficulties, animal disease, mental health and family disputes. Through a network of volunteers, FCN provides free and confidential, pastoral and practical support to anyone who seeks help, and also runs a confidential helpline.

# A 'great celebration' as new youth team is commissioned



**Beyond Youth team Becca Cooper and Dave Johnson with Bishop Helen-Ann**

**The ministry of an exciting new youth project in Newcastle Diocese has been commissioned by Bishop Helen-Ann.**

Members of the Beyond Youth team, which works with children and young people in South East Northumberland, joined the Bishop at a Service of Commission at St Bartholomew's Church, Newbiggin, on 16 January.

Bishop Helen-Ann said: "May God give you strength to fulfil this declaration made before him in the name of Christ. I affirm and commission your ministry with children and

young people and commend you to the love, prayers and support of the whole church."

Established last Autumn, Beyond Youth is all about creating Christian communities and developing ways of engaging with children, young people, and their families in Ashington; Seaton Hirst; Woodhorn and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea; and Cresswell and Lynemouth.

The team has visited schools and is also working with youngsters in the wider community. A new youth drop-in was launched in Lynemouth in mid-January.

The service was a celebration of the good

work which has taken place so far. It included contributions from local children and young people.

In a Tweet following the service, Bishop Helen-Ann said: "A great celebration at St Bartholomew's commissioning the Beyond Youth team. Congratulations and prayers for your work with children and young people in South East Northumberland."

Follow Beyond Youth on social media - (Facebook.com/BeyondYouthNE and @BeyondYouthNE on Instagram and Twitter).

# Introducing our new Acting Bishop's Advisor on the Environment

**At Diocesan Synod on 2 December, The Revd Tim Mayfield was announced as the new Acting Bishop's Advisor on the Environment for Newcastle Diocese. Here, Tim introduces himself and gives an insight into the role, while paying tribute to the work of his predecessor, the Revd Mark Nash-Williams, who has stood down after four-and-a-half years in the role.**

I'm honoured and delighted to have been appointed to this role. There is no more pressing issue – for any of us – than reaching carbon net zero just as soon as we can.

I joined the diocese in 2019 as vicar of Earsdon and Backworth, and Area Dean of Tynemouth. I'm finishing as Area Dean when my five years are up in April 2024. I'm finishing in part to be able to have much more time to devote to this new role.

I was first consciousness-raised at a seminar at Greenbelt. Once you become gripped by the impact of carbon dioxide on the planet there's no turning back. We owe it to those coming after us to build a low-carbon economy. We simply have to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. We're already seeing the catastrophic effects of the current level of warming, in drought, flood and wildfire. Anything much higher than 1.5 and we really do get into scary territory.

In Newcastle Diocese I was struck by a highly effective presentation at a Diocesan Synod given by Mark Nash-Williams, Bethany Hume and Ella Vickers. On the back of it, I volunteered to join the Envi-



**The Revd Tim Mayfield**

ronmental Working Group. Recognising the load on Mark, I offered to serve as Vice Chair of the Group. I manage a Zoom network of Parish Environment Champions. I recently delivered the Church of England's Carbon Literacy Project. This was the first time it had been rolled out in Newcastle Diocese.

On 12 December I had my first Zoom call alongside Diocesan Environmental Officers from across the country. The headline was a very helpful pamphlet, hot off the press. Called 'A short guide to carbon net

zero grants' it does what it says on the tin. The national church is making a lot of money available in various streams. Please email me at [tim.mayfield@btinternet.com](mailto:tim.mayfield@btinternet.com) if you'd like me to send you the pdf.

All of this has just become even more personal. My wife and I recently heard that we're going to be grandparents twice in 2024. What will the planet look like when my grandchildren are 70? That's the kind of question that makes me want to hit the ground running full tilt in this new role.

**The Revd Mark Nash-Williams will continue to serve as vicar of Alston Moor.**

He said: "In 2019, when Bishop Mark Tanner asked me to be the Bishop's Advisor on the Environment, I was only just beginning to understand the magnitude and urgency of the climate emergency, and it wasn't really on the diocese's agenda. So much has changed since then. Together we've begun to rediscover our core Christian calling to care for God's creation; the Church of England has committed itself to being carbon net zero by 2030, and we as a diocese have made significant progress towards that goal; 80 churches in the diocese have become Eco Churches and nearly half have earned a Bronze or Silver Award – as has Church House and Lindisfarne.

"We still have a very long way to go, both in limiting our environmental impact and in building resilience to meet the changes which the climate emergency will undoubtedly bring. But I'm more hopeful now than I was four years ago, and thrilled that Tim has taken on this responsibility: I know he has the energy and commitment to guide us on the next stage of the journey, and I look forward to supporting him in that."

# Revd David Glover becomes Honorary Canon of Newcastle Cathedral



The Revd Canon David Glover (centre) with the Very Revd Lee Batson and Bishop Helen-Ann.

**B**ishop Helen-Ann is pleased to announce that the Revd David Glover has accepted her invitation to be an Honorary Canon of our Cathedral Church of St. Nicholas.

David, who is the Rector of Hexham Abbey, was installed at the Cathedral on Sunday 14 January.

Bishop Helen-Ann said: "Hexham Abbey is a significant focal point for civic life within the County of Northumberland, and it is right that this is formally acknowledged in the year when the Abbey marks its 1,350th anniversary."

The Dean of Newcastle, the Very Revd Lee Batson said: "David will bring immense wisdom to the College of Canons, and strengthen the voice of Lindisfarne Archdeaconry, and county of Northumberland, in the College as it seeks to be a key part in enabling the Cathedral to serve all of the people of the Diocese of Newcastle."



The Revd Canon David Glover.

**A**t the beginning of another new year, it's easy to feel the pressure of the 'new', the prevailing 'new year, new you' culture, and the promises and resolutions we feel we must make. When so much around us in the world feels as if it is in flux, newness can feel all the more unwelcome.

On the other hand, there continues to be much welcome change here at the Cathedral. In welcoming our new Dean, we are reminded (as we all need to be at times) that newness can bring much joy too – new energy, fresh insight, a different perspective. Here at the Cathedral, these are the gifts of the 'new' we continue to carry into this new year.

We are committed not to change for change's sake but to the newness God calls us to make: to being with those who feel as though they are in the



## View from the Lantern

### By Canon Peter Dobson



Canon Peter Dobson.

dark; to noticing the people and experiences we have pushed to the margins; acknowledging the gifts in our midst and, in all of this, noticing what needs to be different.

Already in 2024, the work of the Cathedral's Lantern Initiative – our commitment to mission and ministry alongside those in dark times – is helping bring fresh insight and renewed challenge to our common life and, we hope to others too. Filming has begun on a series of videos that will live on

our website, sensitively telling the stories of those who join in the work of the Lantern Initiative through projects such as 'Recovery Church'.

Looking ahead to 2024, we are providing a space for the 'Speak Their Name' North East Suicide Memorial Quilt from 5 February until 27 March (see page 10). We are also on the brink of working with a local composer and musicians who have sought refuge in our country, enabling members of the asylum seeker community in Newcastle to tell, sing and perform their own Stories of Sanctuary.

Collectively, we hope the work on the Lantern Initiative will help others notice, as we are, the experiences of those we sometimes find too easy to turn away from.

If you are interested in learning about any of this change-making newness, please visit [newcastlecathedral.org.uk/whats-on](http://newcastlecathedral.org.uk/whats-on). You can read more about the latest work of the Lantern Initiative **here**.

## Engaging with children and young people this year

By Tara Russell  
Children and Youth Team Leader

The end of a year, and the start of a new one, always gives the impetus to reflect on what has been, whilst looking forward to what could be. Over 2023, we have been blessed to see lots of imaginative, thought-filled, faith forming activities across our diocese. Our schools, communities and families are benefiting from an increased focus on 'growing younger and more diverse'. So we want to say thank you. Thank you for your commitment to sharing the good news, thank you for your faithfulness to the mission of God, thank you for sharing your lives, time and hearts with those who need deeper connection.

We want to encourage and support you. You know your community, your context. You are the local expert. We will be filling this year

From your children, youth and families team



with opportunities for learning, connecting with others and supporting each other. One of the new things will be a Youthscape Essentials training course. Sue White and Tara Russell will be hosting 10 sessions, which will help you to engage more effectively with children and young people. Look out for the

starting date in the spring.

We will be holding our Regional Roadshow in three places around the diocese. Two years ago we heard from Growing Faith leader Lucy Moore, last year we shared our stories and looked at engaging with schools, recruiting volunteers and starting a youth group. This year we want to ask you what you would like to see as the focus of the tour? Please contact Tara Russell with your suggestions.

And we will be doing more of what we love most – visiting parishes to see first-hand what you are doing and the difference you are making to the lives of your communities. If you would like us to visit you, contact either Sue or Tara and we will be delighted to add you to our list.

[t.russell@newcastle.anglican.org](mailto:t.russell@newcastle.anglican.org)  
[s.white@newcastle.anglican.org](mailto:s.white@newcastle.anglican.org)

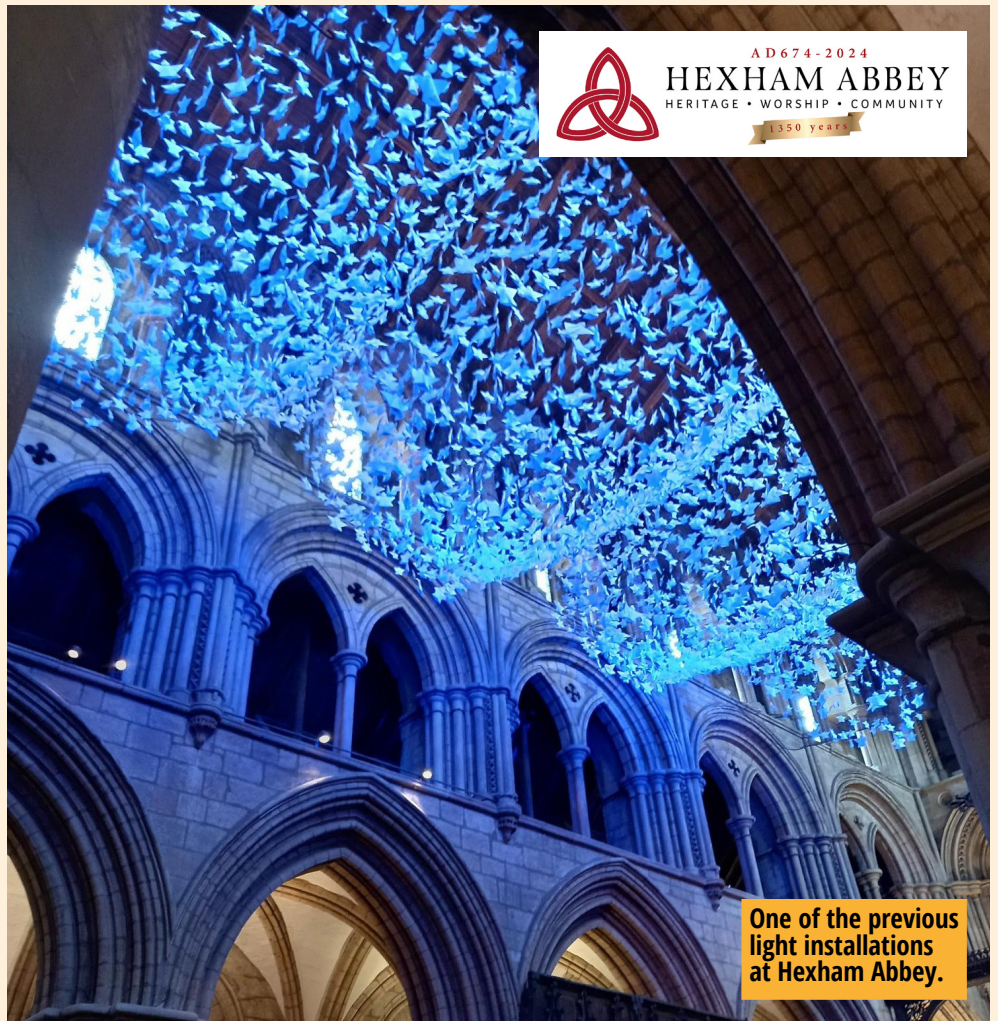


# Lighting up Hexham Abbey's rich history for special anniversary in 2024

**A** year of celebration is underway as Hexham Abbey marks its 1,350th anniversary throughout 2024. A spectacular schedule of events is being planned as one of the earliest seats of Christianity in England reaches this significant milestone.

It will get started on the weekend of 2-4 February, when a *Festival of Flame* will see a light display both inside and outside of the Abbey. The installation, which will include candles and music, will be accompanied by music.

The opening weekend will begin with a series of 10-minute talks on Saturday 3 February,



One of the previous light installations at Hexham Abbey.

where leading historians will give an insight into the Abbey's remarkable history. The talks will also take place on Saturdays 10 and 17 February.

A special service to mark the start of the anniversary celebrations will take place on Sunday 4 February at 10am, when the Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley will be joined by the Rector of Hexham Abbey, the Revd Canon David Glover.

February will also see the launch of *Stars for Eternity*, which will see no fewer than 5,000 origami stars suspended high above the Abbey's old choir stalls – with each star representing someone special from past or present, nominated by local people. The art project is involving schools and community groups and will be similar to the *On Angel Wings* display, which was successful during the pandemic.

More events, including festivals and concerts, are planned for later in the year and David is

excited for what lies ahead.

He said: "Not many institutions in the world get the chance to celebrate 1,350 years of life and so this is a really exciting year for the Abbey. Over the next 12 months we will give thanks for all who have contributed to the Abbey's long history. But we also want to look ahead and remember that God is calling us, in this generation, to keep alive the light of the Gospel. I do hope you will visit the Abbey during the year and find a wonderful welcome."

Last year, the Abbey launched a series of organ recitals titled *Phelps at 50*, to celebrate the 50th birthday of its Phelps organ – installed to mark the building's 1,300th anniversary back in 1974. These are continuing in 2024 with recitals every other Thursday at 1pm. They will culminate in August with a guest appearance from James Lancelot, who was organist at Durham Cathedral for 32 years before his retirement in 2017.

To find out more click [here](#).

# Newcastle Cathedral to welcome 'Speak Their Name' suicide awareness and remembrance event



The North East Suicide Memorial Quilt

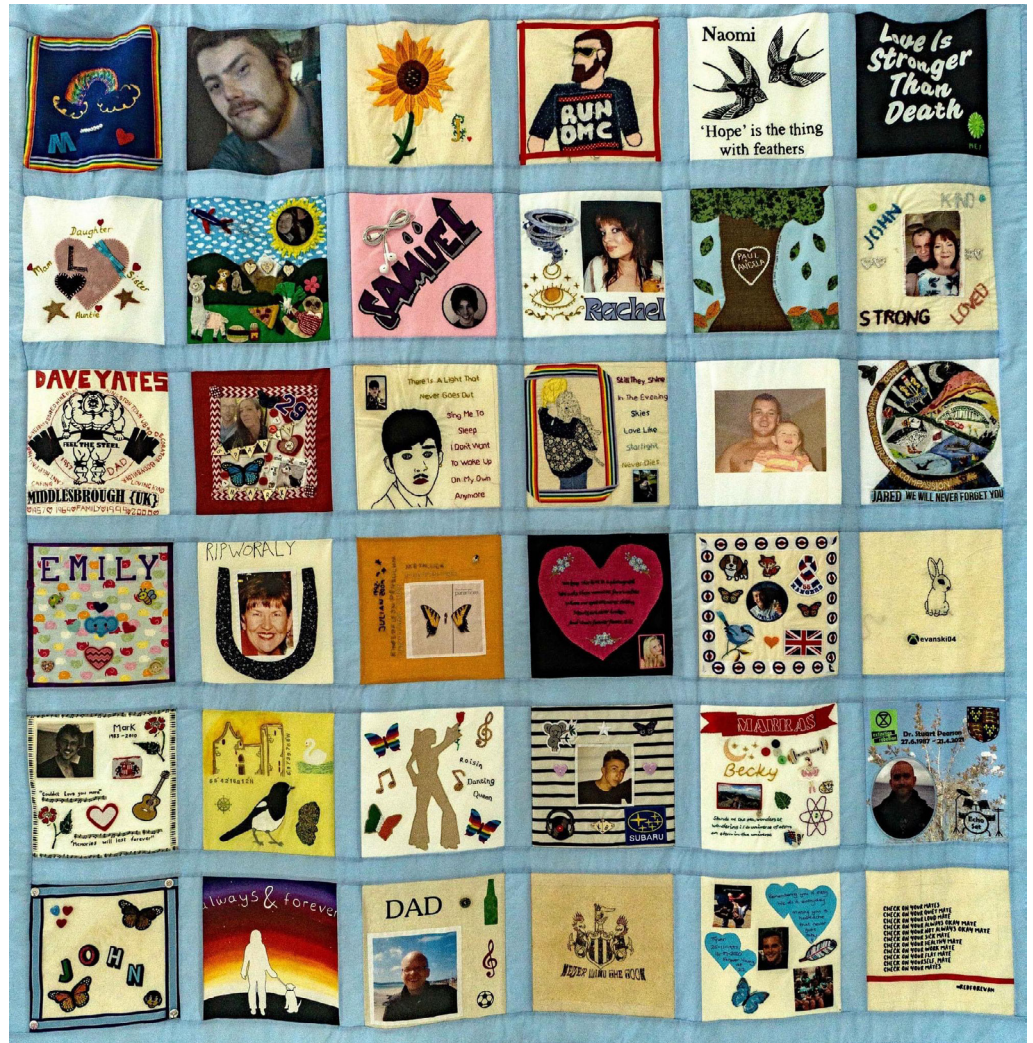
**T**he organisers of the North East 'Speak Their Name' Suicide Memorial Quilt have announced a Suicide Awareness and Remembrance event at Newcastle Cathedral at 7pm on Wednesday 20 March, coinciding with the quilt's display at the city centre landmark.

The 'Speak Their Name' North East Suicide Memorial Quilt will be on display from Monday 5 February until Wednesday 27 March 2024 at the cathedral. Comprising 120 individual intricately crafted fabric squares, the quilt represents and honours loved ones lost to suicide.

The 'Speak Their Name' movement originates in Greater Manchester, where the first memorial quilt was made during the pandemic. The project has been led by Tracey Beadle of the charity Quinn's Retreat and Suzanne Howes. Both have lost children to suicide and are determined to make a difference and bring hope, in their children's names.

The North East quilt's creation was a collaborative effort within the local community. Over 200 individuals participated in workshops held across Darlington, County Durham, Tyne and Wear, and Teesside. Since debuting at Newcastle City Library in November, the quilt has begun a tour of the region, starting with Tyne and Wear. It was exhibited in Wallsend Library in December, followed by Whitley Bay Library in January 2024.

Speaking of the event on Wednesday 20



A section of the quilt which represents and honours loved ones lost to suicide.

March, Suzanne said: "We want to host a community event where those bereaved by suicide can remember their loved ones in beautiful surroundings. We also invite our community to join us in both remembrance and in solidarity to raise awareness about mental health and suicide loss".

The evening will include a Candle Procession for those who have lost loved ones and musical performances by the Ryton Singers. Speakers including Sam Allen, Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS) who will talk about the drive to address the mental health and suicide prevention agenda in the region.

Also speaking will be the inspirational Andy

Airey of 3 Dads Walking, a trio of suicide-bereaved fathers "raising suicide awareness across the country one step at a time".

Those wishing to attend the event are asked to RSVP to [northeastsspeaktheirname@gmail.com](mailto:northeastsspeaktheirname@gmail.com). This will help the organisers provide light refreshments while attendees take the opportunity to view the quilt.

Suzanne added: "We hope the event will unite the whole community by providing space to connect, reflect and foster hope. We encourage everyone to join us at this truly special evening."

For more information click [here](#).

# ‘Twilight Tranquillity’: Three evenings of after-dark calmness at Newcastle Cathedral

As the days grow longer and before the clocks change, Newcastle Cathedral invites visitors to experience the building’s peaceful atmosphere after dark across three evenings from Tuesday 20 February to Thursday 22 February. Attendees will be able to take a leisurely stroll, find a quiet spot to sit and reflect, or join guided tours to discover the hidden treasures of the Cathedral.

The main attraction will be the ‘Look into the Light’ art installation, created exclusively for the crypt and returning due to popular demand following its debut last spring. Created by Newcastle designer-makers Multiminded, this projection-mapped audio-visual artwork draws inspiration from the Cathedral’s architecture and beloved regional landmarks. The tree at Sycamore Gap was a memorable part of the animation and will remain as a poignant symbol of its continued significance to so many.

For those interested in history and art, the ‘Torchlit Cathedral Creatures’ tour,



Art installations will bring another dimension to the evenings.

*Pictures: Victoria Wai*

running at 7pm and 8pm across the three evenings, will uncover centuries-old depictions hidden in the Cathedral’s monuments and carvings.

As visitors pass through the chancel, they will be immersed in recordings of music sung by the Newcastle Cathedral Choir. This recording is part of Regent Records’ long running ‘A Year At’ series, showcasing outstanding choirs from around the country. The album will be available for purchase at the event from the Cathedral retail area.

Café 16 in the Cathedral Refectory will offer a place to relax and indulge in delicious food and drink. Operated by Northumberland charity the Oswin Project, the café provides prison leavers an opportunity to learn new skills and find a new direction upon release.

In addition, the Refectory will host ‘the Lantern Film Reel’, a captivating compilation of videos that delve into the rich life and history of the Cathedral. Visitors can watch vintage news footage courtesy of the North East Film Archive, discover the story behind the iconic Lantern Tower,



and learn about the inspiring work of the Lantern Initiative, which supports individuals facing difficult circumstances in life.

Timed slot tickets for ‘Twilight Tranquillity: Newcastle Cathedral After Dark’ are available via TicketSource, with the Cathedral open from 6:30pm until 8:30pm. Tickets operate on a ‘Give as You Feel’ basis with a suggested donation of £7 for adults and £4 for concessions.

For more information click [here](#).

# Fresh focus on generosity for 2024

By **Joanne Christie**  
Generous Giving Team Leader

*'Everything comes from you, we have given you only what comes from your hand'*

**1 Chronicles 29:12-16**

As God's children we are responsible for all things He has given us, sometimes referred to as stewardship, and a key to good stewardship is our call to live and give generously.

By giving we enable and resource God's mission through our churches and in our lives. Giving, in its broadest sense, enables our churches to flourish and grow. Giving our time can help create places of welcome and hospitality, facilitating encounters with God through prayer, worship and fellowship. Financial giving resources mission and ministry and it enables us to grow as communities of faith across the whole diocese.



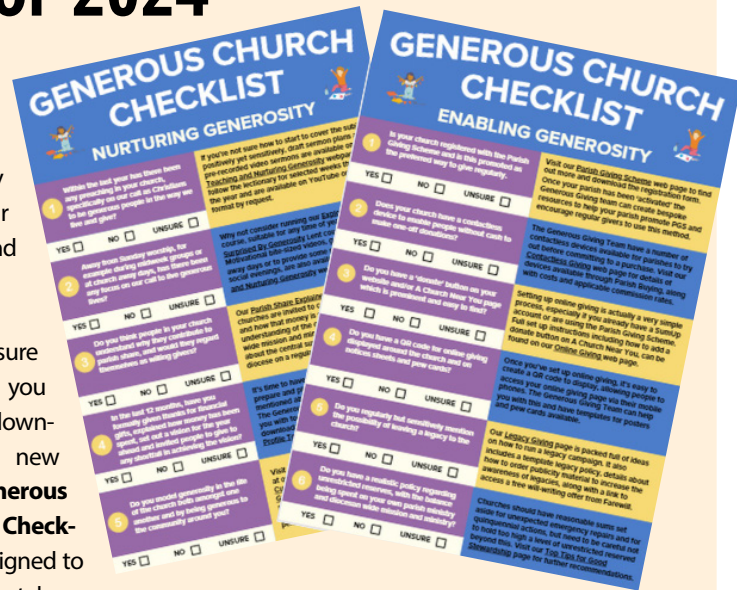
**Joanne Christie**

But generosity can take time to nurture and grow and often it can be tricky knowing where to focus our invariably limited time and resource.

If you're not sure where to begin, you might like to download our new 2024 **Generous Church Checklist**, which is designed to enable parishes to take an

honest look at whether they are regularly nurturing a culture of generosity and at the same time making it easy for people to give.

The checklist includes details of the support available for any area where a parish feels it might be able to do more. It can be completed individually or as a PCC activity, so you can compare different perceptions of church life.



The checklist is designed as an internal tool, so there is no need to send the completed form to anyone but remember the **Generous Giving Team** are here to help and to advise as required. The Team is a resource for the whole diocese and are here to serve parishes and welcome every opportunity to do so. We really hope to hear from you this year!

# Taking Hold of Purpose

By **Dennis Fancett**  
Giving Ministry Adviser

It's about now (or so I'm told) that the number of people down at our local gyms starts to return to their normal, pre new year levels. For many of us, our New Year's resolutions, made with such enthusiasm, start to slip. Not just keeping fit or volunteering more but all sorts of other lofty ambitions gradually take a back seat once again as the usual pressures of life re-surface.



**A tree similar to the Wilberforce Ash**

Picture: Andrew Shelley / Unsplash

That's partly why I've never been big on New Year's resolutions. But that's quite different to saying I'm against resolutions per se. Far from it. Quietly resolving to do things before God is surely an important part of our Christian discipleship. And that's something we can do at any time of the year.

As a teenager growing up in London, I often used to go for walks across the North Downs, the vil-

lages of Downe, Keston and Westerham being just a bus ride from where I lived. And so, frequently, I passed the old oak tree where a somewhat rusty plaque reveals that it was the spot where William Wilberforce resolved to give his life to bringing about the abolition of the slave trade.

It was about the same time as I was becoming more aware of the spiritual side of life and taking my first shaky steps into adult faith. Often, I would

sit on that stone bench and wonder: What do I resolve to do? What is God's call on my life, and how will I respond?

Maybe you're not called to be a great social reformer like Wilberforce. There may never be a blue plaque pinned to the wall of your house listing your achievements. But God will see, and He will notice. And even tiny little things, like each of us resolving to live more generously, or to increase our gift to our local parish church year on year in line with inflation or increases in our earnings, can have a huge impact in terms of allowing the mission and ministry of our Diocese to expand and grow, way beyond our understanding or awareness at the time.

The Apostle Paul wrote: "I will take hold of that for which the Lord took hold of me"<sup>1</sup>. So let's ask ourselves, for what purpose has God taken hold of me, and let's resolve this year to take some steps forward into that purpose.

<sup>1</sup> *Philippians 3:12*

# The Lindisfarne Gospels in South Tynedale

**The Lindisfarne Gospels have been on tour in South Tynedale after a local vicar took a facsimile of the famous illustrated manuscript to schools, community groups and even a pub in his parish. Here, the Revd Canon Stephen Wright, vicar of Parishes by the Wall West, talks about taking the gospels into Haltwhistle, Henshaw and other places during an inspirational month.**

It was an interesting experience having the Lindisfarne Gospels during the month of December. I've taken them to four different primary schools for assemblies, and had two class visits with them, I took them to a gardening club, craft and chat group, six home visits, a Deanery planning meeting, two carols services, two Christingle services, nine 'normal' church services, and also to our local pub.

I saved the Stonyhurst Gospel, which comes with the Lindisfarne Gospels, for Christmas proper and the services afterwards. Each week for my sermons I tried to think of a different starting point arising out of these gospels – the reliability of the witness and of our inheritance, the adornment and how we draw attention to our gospel, the colours and design and how we are to reflect the colours of God, and with the Stonyhurst gospel, the desire to keep God close and to walk in fellowship with the saints of God, and finally, something of what I'd learned showing these gospels in different contexts.

At the schools the younger children were mostly interested in feeling (with the special cotton gloves on) the jewelled cover and the smoothness of the pages. The older children were more able to see and appreciate the tiny intricate designs of the artwork. At the local pub someone commented that the decoration on the front was a bit over the top really. But then it wasn't designed to be read in a small pub but in a huge priory church with all the pomp and ceremony that a large church can do. But God humbled himself and found it fitting to be discovered in a humble house in Bethlehem, except of course he shed his outward glory before entering. Having



Whitfield

the wonderful decoration and artwork of the Lindisfarne Gospels in the small rooms of the local pub felt a bit like Jesus visiting in some back room stable – we might think it incongruous, but God was content to be found in humble surroundings in Bethlehem.

For more on the Lindisfarne Gospels and other resources, visit the North East Religious Resources Centre website [here](#).

Read the full story [here](#).



Haltwhistle

# Church's history remembered as it celebrates a special anniversary



The cake is cut to celebrate the anniversary.

**A** church which has evolved with its community over the decades has marked a significant anniversary. St Francis' in High Heaton hosted a special week of events to mark the 70th anniversary of the consecration of the current church building, back on 3 October 1953.

These included a sung eucharist with Bishop Helen-Ann preaching and presiding, as well as a Feast of Dedication eucharist followed by bulb planting and a display of photographs and memorabilia.

The Revd Robert Lawrance, Vicar at St Francis' since 2015, said: "This anniversary has been quite a milestone for the church and it has been a privilege to remember and honour those who worked so hard to establish a church here before and after the Second World War."

Until the 1920s, High Heaton was predomi-



Bishop Helen-Ann with the Revd Yvette Daniel.

nantly farmland. After housebuilding began, a mission hut for the church of St Francis was built on Cragside, High Heaton, in 1935. Housebuilding continued after the war and

land was set aside for a new church building, which was completed in 1953.

It was an ambitious project, costing an estimated £12,000 to build (over £400,000 in today's money), with £1,200 (over £40,000 in today's money) raised within the community for furnishings.

The south aisle and chapel were added in 1957 and cost £4,000 including furnishings. The vicarage was built in 1958 following a successful tender of £7,332.

Robert added: "There were a lot of dedicated lay people who were committed to the mission church and it was their vision and hard work which raised such a lot of money. High Heaton is a well-established suburb now and their legacy is a church which continues to flourish and serve today's community."

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St Francis' has a healthy congregation, with between 50 and 100 people attending two services on a Sunday. The church currently runs an after-school club for teenagers and is a weekly Place of Welcome, offering warm space, hot drinks and social interaction for those who need it, as well as a popular baby and toddler group. There's also a monthly soup lunch on offer at St Francis', which is open to all and is often frequented by staff at the nearby Freeman Hospital.

St Francis' has good relations with other organisations in the neighbourhood, including the local football club, residents' association and Heaton Churches Together, as well as the local mosque. Indeed, the church has an icon of St Francis greeting the Sultan of Egypt, marking this historic act of inter-faith dialogue in 1219!

"It is part of our mission to engage with the community, to be a place where lives are transformed," said Robert. "It's about being a place of service and offering something to the community. Our values are the Franciscan values of love, humility and joy."

St Francis' has always moved with the times and like many other churches in the diocese, is environmentally focused. It currently has a silver A Rocha Eco Church status, following a number of successful initiatives. There has been a switch to low energy lighting, while the church manages its heating carefully, uses green electricity and carbon offset gas, of which it uses as little as possible.

In addition, there are bird boxes and bat boxes at St Francis', while trees, hedgerows and wildlife within the church grounds are carefully managed. Eco fests have taken place on the church field, and initiatives include a bee project to promote pollination, with three hives in the vicarage garden at present.

Robert said the church always aims to recycle, to reduce its carbon footprint, while members actively support environment campaigns.

During 2023, the church bid farewell to the



St Francis' Church as it is today.



St Francis' Church pictured in 1956/57.



Bulb planting at St Francis'.

Revd Yvette Daniel who has headed for Melbourne in Australia to serve as a vicar at St Margaret's Anglican Church, Eltham, after three years as curate at St Francis'.

The week of celebrations to mark the 70th

anniversary also included the Transitus of St Francis - a unique Franciscan service marking the death of St Francis in 1226.

To find out more about the church, and St Francis himself, click [here](#).

# Ruby anniversary for 'new church' – 40 years after bringing both ends of a community together



**Bishop Mark with the current church wardens, Marjorie Fairbairn and Bill Lomas; and wardens involved in the planning 40 years ago, Donald Forster, left, and Edgar Ridley, second left.**

**A** church has been celebrating the Ruby anniversary of a building which has served the community for 40 years.

When St Columba's Church in Wideopen first welcomed worshippers in 1983, it replaced two other churches in nearby Seaton Burn and Woodland Park. It was also shared for many years with local Methodists – some of whom continue to worship there today.

To mark the milestone, a series of special events has taken place in recent months.

One was at the Feast of Christ the King, 40 years on from the laying of the foundation stone, at which the Archdeacon of Northumberland, the Venerable Rachel Wood preached.

Another was on St Columba's Day – 40 years on from the dedication of the new church, at which Bishop Mark Wroe presided. Both services were followed by buffet meals.

Other highlights have included an exhibition of photos, a successful Christmas tree festival, two challenging quiz nights (with pies and peas), Hymns and Pimms with a focus on weddings, an exhibition with Greenfields Community Primary School exploring the past 40 years, and a strawberry tea with a concert by the Ravenswood Singers of mainly 80s music.

St Columba's has also enjoyed some Ruby musical evenings, and is set to end the year with the launch of a book combining favourite recipes with memories of the church and community, as well as a look forward towards

the next 40 years.

Edgar Ridley and Donald Forster are founding members of the new church, having joined from the original St Columba's in Seaton Burn, and St Chadd's at Woodland Park, respectively.

Edgar has fond memories of the old church of St Columba's, which dated back to 1859.

He explained: "I was christened there," he said. "My parents were married there and so was I. It was an old Victorian building and it had survived two world wars, including the dropping of a bomb very near to it during the Second World War.

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The new church under construction in 1983.

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“But it needed a lot of work to keep it going. There was a vision for a centralised church rather than two at the extreme ends of the parish, and that is what we ended up with.

“The Methodists wanted to use our building and they contributed towards the cost of the new building project. For many years their services followed ours on a Sunday morning.”

The opening of the new church saw the congregation grow, peaking at about 100 communicants about a decade ago. Over the years, the building has accommodated a Sunday school, drama groups, youth groups and also provided community space. It has also hosted the Women’s Institute (WI) and toddler groups, while local schools also visit.

“In many ways the new church was like a paradise,” said Edgar. “The old one didn’t have a toilet or kitchen. Now we have all of these wonderful facilities which are used by people of all ages.”



Bishop Mark with the Ven. Peter Elliott (who was vicar in 1983) and his wife Evelyn cutting a celebration cake.

Donald recalls moving to the area shortly after getting married and starting to worship at St Chadd’s.

Despite happy times there, he said the new building breathed new life into both churches,

with congregation numbers suffering at the time.

Donald added: “I think it’s always a challenge to uproot a church and make changes, but this new building was central and it very quickly became established. It brought people together and it was, and still is, a fantastic church and all-round facility for the whole community.

“Despite the change to a new building, the faith was always strong and that remains the case now. It was the right thing to do and the legacy, we hope, is a church here and a building for the next 40 years and beyond.”

Both Edgar and Donald have served as church wardens and in other roles. Edgar served on the District Church Council (DCC) as lay chairman while Donald served on Deanery Synod.

They both thanked the Revd Pauline Pearson and all involved at St Columba’s for all it offers and for the collective efforts which made for a memorable anniversary year.

**A** lay reader in Newcastle Diocese has become a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to young people and the community.

Gwyn McKenzie was recognised in the King's New Year Honours List in recognition of her voluntary work over the past 50 years.

During that time, she has served the Scout Association in a number of influential roles both regionally and nationally.

"I was stunned," said Gwyn, who is a PCC member at St James' Church in Riding Mill. "When I received the letter, I couldn't believe it."

"I thought it was a mistake, but the Cabinet Office told me it wasn't and it's really nice to be recognised for something you have enjoyed doing for so many years."

"Scouting is wonderful. I have had the opportunity to work with amazing young people and adults and it is a very inspirational environment."

A Girl Guide herself as a youngster, Gwyn became a Scout leader at the age of 18 and went on to spend 11 years at commissioner level. In 1987 she was appointed as assistant county commissioner in Northumberland.

The following year, she was invited to take up the position of UK Commissioner for Cub Scouts, taking on the responsibility of developing the training section for 250,000 eight to 11 year-olds across the UK and dependent territories.

The role enabled Gwyn to travel across the UK and abroad encouraging leaders, as well as delivering training and monitoring the success of the Cub Scout Programme.

A significant highlight came in the late 1980s when Gwyn was part of a working group, which recommended that Scouting should be co-educational and that was the norm from 1991 in the UK.

Gwyn served as a member of the national Trustee Board of



**Gwyn dressed in Scout attire.**

# New Year Honour for Lay Reader Gwyn McKenzie



**Gwyn as a Lay Reader.**

the Scout Association. She was also engaged at assistant county commissioner level with responsibility for Beaver Scout and Cub Scout sections, and for community development.

In addition, Gwyn was active as acting district commissioner for five Scout districts in Northumberland, managing and maintaining those districts until outgoing district commissioners could be replaced.

As deputy county commissioner, she introduced and managed the county's major development programmes, namely the Lindisfarne Project and LookwideUK, projects which she then developed and enhanced as county commissioner.

Away from Scouting, Gwyn is a committed communicant of the

Church of England. A licenced Lay Reader, she is an active member at St James' Church, Riding Mill.

For the past six years, Gwyn has been a volunteer trustee of Walking With, the North Tyne-side based charitable organisation which supports asylum seekers and refugees.

She is also a trustee of Transforming Communities Together: Tyne to Tweed (formerly Together Newcastle), which offers church-based community development at grassroots level, working in the most deprived communities across the Diocese.

Gwyn joins her husband David as an MBE, who previously received the award for services to young people.

She added: "When he got his, I was just thrilled to be able to support David, and now he's thrilled to support me."

# New Year Honour for dedicated volunteer at St Michael's in Byker



**Penny Walters, member of St Michael's Church, Byker.**

*Picture: Byker Community Trust.*

**A** dedicated volunteer in Newcastle Diocese has received a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to her local community, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic.

For the best part of a decade, Penny Walters has dedicated countless hours to supporting vulnerable people in Byker, where she has been instrumental in the management of the community centre kitchen.

Penny, who is also a community campaigner and charity ambassador, is a member of the congregation at St Michael's Church, Byker.

"It was a huge shock to receive this honour," she said. "But I've always had a great team around me and this represents the incredible community that we have here."

Originally from Shotton in County Durham,

Penny arrived in Byker eight years ago and quickly became a familiar face at the community café, which is part of the St Michael's Church Centre, a community centre run by the church.

It's not just about cooking and serving up meals, the café is a place where people can access a wide range of services and support.

"The conversations we have with people can be life changing," said Penny. "A cup of tea and a natter can make a huge difference. You can identify what people need and guide them in the right direction."

"I find that generally, people are so grateful for the services we provide. Individuals and families will come to us and they can be going through very difficult times, but a good natter can bring joy to their faces and we try and help them to identify their next steps."

Penny's honour also reflects her work during the coronavirus pandemic, when the centre's services were crucial for supporting the community during lockdown. Penny and her team were producing up to 50 meals at a time and distributing them to those who needed them most.

An active campaigner, Penny is an ambassador for the Food Foundation, a national charity seeking a system where everyone has access to healthy food and a sustainable diet.

Currently, with the rising cost of milk formula for babies and toddlers, Penny is campaigning for affordable nutrition for infants and their families. She will be taking the cause to Parliament in early February.

Penny also volunteers for Church Action on Poverty, which has a vision that the UK should be a place free of poverty.

# Light party brings hope for the year ahead



The Revd Nigel Taylor and his wife Kate are pictured with one of the new noticeboards.

Hot food was served up with a generous helping of family fun at St Mary's in Monkseaton.

The church celebrated Epiphany with a light party, where people of all ages joined together for food and a variety of games, while candles were lit as a sign of bringing

light to the darkness.

The Revd Nigel Taylor, Vicar of St Mary's, said: "It was well attended with about 70 people there, both children and adults. We served baked potatoes with a choice of beans or cheese and there was a variety of games.

"Everyone lit a candle and there was a time of quiet where we could all reflect and think about our hopes for 2024."

It was the latest in a number of successful outreach activities at St Mary's. At Christmas, church members joined regulars at The Kittiwake Pub for carol singing. It was an ecumenical effort which also involved Whitley Lodge Baptist Church, and was attended by about 50 people.

Also at St Mary's, two new noticeboards have been installed outside the church – a large one at the front entrance and a slightly smaller equivalent at the side entrance.



The other new noticeboard at St Mary's Church.

Nigel said: "It's all about engaging with the local community. We want to let people know when our services are happening and to give them an idea of what they look like.

"People walk past our church. We want them to know we are open and active, and that they are very welcome here."



The culmination of the light party at St Mary's Church, Monkseaton.

## A very special act of remembrance



A church community has joined together once again for a very special act of remembrance.

Since 2020, St Bartholomew's Church in Newbiggin has hosted the end-of-year Memorial Carnations display, to remember those who are no longer with us.

The annual service has become a popular part of church life over the Christmas and new year period, and Fr Anthony O'Grady said it was both well attended and well received.

He said: "At Christmas time especially, we think a lot about those we have loved and who are no longer with us and the Memorial Carnations presents an opportunity to remember them fondly.

"I'm very pleased that we were able to offer this service again and hope they brought comfort and joy to those who were able to see them. Since 2020, we have held this very special act of remembrance and I'd like to think this will remain a tradition for many years to come."

## New church noticeboard is unveiled in memory of Jean

A new noticeboard has been installed outside a North Shields church.

The attractive board has gone up at St Aidan's Church, Billy Mill, providing service and contact details for the church. It also has space to promote events and share information with the community.

The Venerable Rachel Wood, Archdeacon of Northumberland, presided at a recent eucharist at St Aidan's and blessed the new facility.

Archdeacon Rachel is pictured (centre), with Lay Reader Gill Cunliffe, and the Reverend Stephanie Keates, Priest in Charge at St Aidan's, Billy Mill, and St Hilda's, Marden.

Revd Stephanie said the new board had gone up in memory of the late Mrs Jean Horton, a long-term supporter of St Aidan's. It was financed using money generously left by Mrs Horton for the church to put to good use.

St Aidan's now has a noticeboard which matches one installed at St Hilda's, Marden, within the past couple of years. Revd Stephanie expressed her thanks to church wardens Jacq Graham and Sandra Dunn who were instrumental in the arrival of the facility. It replaces an old wooden noticeboard which had reached the end of its natural life.





## Calling all crafters to support our LOUDfence display

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team is calling for crafting groups and individuals to make strawberries to display in Newcastle Cathedral as part of a LOUDfence display from 3 March. They want as many as possible!

LOUDfence is a movement that ties brightly coloured ribbons to fences in support of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

This initiative is swapping ribbons for strawberries to tie in with the artwork theme of 'If I told you, what would you do?'

The strawberries will be displayed alongside creative work by survivors, who are leading the project.

Strawberries will be needed by 29 February, or



**Ribbons outside St Peter's Church, Kirkbampton, in the Diocese of Carlisle, where the peace and reconciliation movement was started in the UK by Antonia Sobocki.**

earlier if possible. They can be delivered or posted to Church House, North Shields. Details are on the website along with example patterns for you to use (but feel free to do your own).

To get involved with the project click [here](#).

For more information about LOUDfence click [here](#).

For more information about 'If I told you, what would you do?' click [here](#).

## Funding opportunities to keep your church building in good repair

Churches in Newcastle Diocese are being encouraged to make the most of funding opportunities this year.

The Northumbria Historic Churches Trust has been helping to keep places of worship in good order since it was established in 1980.

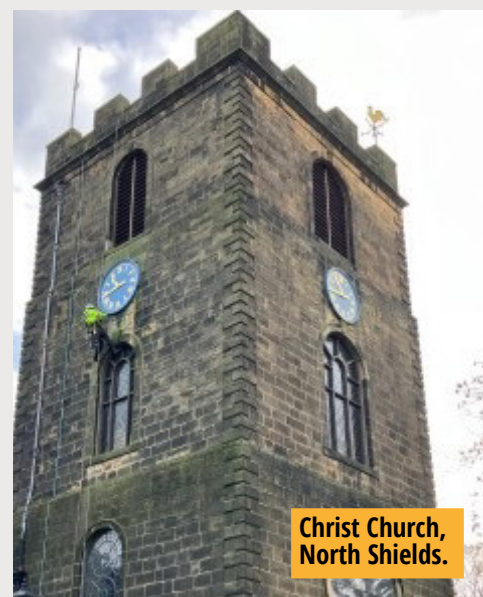
The deadline for the latest wave of funding on Monday 12 February is fast approaching, but there will be further opportunities to apply in the summer and autumn. Typically, the Trust awards grants in the range of £2,500 to £10,000.

The trust's chairman John Anderson said: "Following a successful re-launch of the charity in 2023, we are witnessing the fruits of our

labours with many more churches applying for grants; a significant number have already benefited. We are hoping that others, who have not previously applied in the past, will now be encouraged to come forward with worthwhile schemes that we can support."

To apply for a grant, to see this year's application deadlines and for further information click [here](#).

Last year, the Northumbria Historic Churches Trust was able to help 33 church projects of various sizes. They included stonework repairs at St Peter's Church, Bishopton, Stockton on Tees, repointing tower, repairs to glass and frames at Christ Church, North Shields; as well as a new boiler at St Mary Magdalene Church, Medolmsley.



**Christ Church, North Shields.**

# Christian Aid Changemakers' Conference

By Helen Cunningham,  
Church Engagement Officer,  
Christian Aid



The Changemakers Conference will also be streaming online, so if you can't make it to London or one of the watch parties, you can join from your home or office.

In the words of Hebrews 10:24 - '...let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works' ...

**Christian Aid** is inviting people to do just this by taking part in the 2024 Changemakers' Conference – and, this year, there are various ways you can join in!

This is your opportunity to hear about the amazing results from Christian Aid Week 2023, find out about the stories behind this year's appeal and meet up with other supporters and Christian Aid staff.

Among the guest speakers will be Burundi Country Manager, Philip Galgallo, who will give an insight into Christian Aid's Burundi programmes – the focus for this year's Christian Aid Week.

The main event takes place on Saturday, 2 March, from 10.30am-1pm, at St James' Church, Piccadilly, London.

This year, to complement the in-person event, there will be more than a dozen Changemakers Watch Parties taking place across the country where people can join with fellow supporters and Church Engagement and Fundraising Officers to watch the conference via live-stream. Each party will be followed by a free lunch!

Join with the Christian Aid family across the North East for our watch party in Sunderland at The Murray Library, Sunderland University, Chester Road, Sunderland, SR1 3SD. We'll meet at 10am and finish with a free networking lunch served at 1pm. Register now at [caid.org.uk/conference](http://caid.org.uk/conference)

Choose how you'd like to join us by registering at [caid.org.uk/conference](http://caid.org.uk/conference) - and if your church or Christian Aid group would like to host a local watch party, then let us know via [hello@christian-aid.org](mailto:hello@christian-aid.org).

The conference will equip you on all you need to know for Christian Aid Week 2024, when we will be focusing on Burundi. Burundi is one of the most densely populated countries in Sub-Saharan Africa; its people are welcoming, proud, and positive - and above all things, resilient.

Christian Aid partners have been working to support communities to set up savings and loans associations, meaning people living in remote villages can invest in a secure future.

Communities have been able to set up small businesses such as buying and selling casava, maize and seeds, and supplying local grocers or restaurants with fresh vegetables or fresh fish, depending on the season. Roadside shops selling produce have also been established, and women are supporting and empowering each other, gaining economic independence, and ensuring education for their children.

Alongside Philip, there will be other key speakers sharing news, ideas, and resources, plus Christian Aid staff, on hand to chat to about the organisation and its plans for 2024.



Christian Aid at the London Marathon in 2022.

Picture: Alex Baker Photography



## Upcoming RRC Events :

**Zoom event: Truth Be Told - Storytelling for Life – Tuesday 27th February, 1:30-2:30pm**

Truth Be Told (TBT) is an intergenerational project that brings together 0-4s, their parents / carers and older people. They help churches to connect with local families, older adults in care homes and the community, through creative storytelling sessions full of joy, hope and life.

TBT was born out of a passion to show that the church is God's beautiful display of family, of intergenerational love and devotion and exists to show everyone that they're invited to belong.

TBT equips churches with the resources, a full curriculum, training and support, making it really easy to encourage parents, children and older adults to belong as family, enjoying, appreciating and learning together - just as God intended.

This session will take you through an informative presentation including the background of TBT, a breakdown of our storytelling group sessions, what's involved, and time for questions at the end.

**From the Codex Sinaiticus to the Lindisfarne Gospels: An exploration with the Revd Dr David Bryan**



**Codex Sinaiticus from the 4th Century**

Tuesday 19th March, 6:00-7:45pm, Church House, St John's Terrace, Percy Main, NE29 6HS (Also running on Zoom)

## A Tale of Two Bibles

The North East Religious Resources Centre has copies of two of the most treasured Bibles — Codex Sinaiticus from the 4th Century and The Lindisfarne Gospels from the 8th Century.

David Bryan, the Principal of Lindisfarne College of Theology, will share something of the back stories of these precious gems from our Christian heritage.

He will reflect on the journey of God's word from Sinai to Holy Island. He will also look more closely at some passages from St Mark to illustrate how the study of ancient manuscripts and Bibles can enrich our reading of the scriptures.

To book a place on an event click [here](#).