

LINK

The magazine for the Diocese of Newcastle

SUMMER 2026

INSIDE:

PAGES 4&5 Meet our ordinands

PAGE 11 Claire joins Net Zero team

PAGES 12&13 Deaf Chaplaincy's 150 years

PAGES 16-19 Lottery funding for church projects



On tour with Beyond Youth

Exploring spirituality in glorious Northumberland

Full story plus more pictures: **Pages 8&9**



www.newcastle.anglican.org



@ncldiocese

Contents



Pages 6&7: St Aidan's Way pilgrimage

Page 3	A message from Bishop Helen-Ann
Page 4-5	Meet our ordinands Choral evensong for Parish Safeguarding Officers
Pages 6-7	St Aidan's Way pilgrimage
Pages 8-9	Mountain trek funds new defibrillator Exploring God's creation with Beyond Youth
Pages 10-11	The latest from our Net Zero team
Pages 12-13	Celebrating 150 years of our Deaf Chaplaincy A warm welcome at Christ Church
Pages 14-15	Supporting families in Belford
Pages 16-17	Lottery funding for projects at Seaton Delaval and Norham
Pages 18-19	New phase for Blanchland Abbey Project Leading worship at Wallsend church school
Pages 20-21	Organ restored and more at Killingworth An Indian welcome at Kenton
Pages 22-23	Memorial Garden blessed at Dinnington Sycamore Gap sapling for Byker church Peter Rabbit and Pride at Newcastle Cathedral
Page 24	Living the Lantern

Link and Link Extra

Link magazine is published quarterly and is also available digitally at newcastle.anglican.org/link. If you would like to submit content for Link, please contact communications@newcastle.anglican.org.

Receive news from the Diocese directly to your inbox by subscribing to our monthly Link Extra email at newcastle.anglican.org/link-extra

Contact us

www.newcastle.anglican.org

Email: info@newcastle.anglican.org

Facebook, Instagram & LinkedIn:

[@ncldiocese](https://www.facebook.com/ncldiocese)

Telephone: 0191 270 4100

Monday – Friday, 8.30am – 4.30pm

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

Safeguarding: If you have a safeguarding concern about an adult or child, please contact safeguarding@newcastle.anglican.org or telephone on 0191 270 4105.

For more information visit:

newcastle.anglican.org/safeguarding

Bishop's Diary: The latest diary can be found on our website newcastle.anglican.org/bishops-diary

Prayer Diary: The monthly prayer diary can be found at newcastle.anglican.org/prayerdiary



About this magazine

Feedback:

communications@newcastle.anglican.org

Sustainability: This publication is printed by a carbon balanced printer, in partnership with the World Land Trust (WLT). The WLT offsets CO₂ impacts from fossil fuels, transport, and electricity by supporting the protection and regeneration of threatened habitats.

A message from Bishop Helen-Ann

The Summer is upon us, and 'football's coming home' (best followed with an expectant '?').

Spare a thought for England Manager, Thomas Tuchel who even before he officially announced his squad for the 2026 campaign had to deal with disgruntled left-out players and even a disgruntled left-out player's mum who posted online that she was "disgusted" with the decision to leave out her son. It rather reminds me of the episode in Matthew's Gospel where the mother of James and John comes to Jesus to request places of honour for her sons in his Kingdom! Thomas Tuchel is in good company it seems! I was interested in one of Tuchel's reflections that in choosing his team, it wasn't about finding the best individual players but rather 'it's all about the team and the chemistry'. He didn't want an unbalanced squad; hard omissions were deliberate. I suspect Tuchel has a strong character that can hold himself steady in the storm of knee-jerk social media responses.

I am struck, writing in this season of Pentecost by the question asked immediately following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: what does this mean? I think giving space for that question in a noisy world, particularly at the moment is vital. Perhaps the role of the Holy Spirit is to calm and hold us steady rather than always demanding that we burst into action with bells and whistles. Pentecost did not end with spectacle. The deeper miracle was what happened after the wind had quietened and the crowds had dispersed. The Holy Spirit formed not simply a dramatic moment but a new way of living together.

That matters deeply for us now as we face multiple global issues that impact on our daily lives, not least of these the climate emergency. The climate crisis is often spoken of only as an environmental issue. But through the lens of Pentecost, it can also be understood as a fellowship issue. Across the world, it is often those with the least power who carry the greatest burden: communities facing drought, flooding, displacement, hunger and insecurity.



The Bishop of Newcastle, Helen-Ann Hartley

The early Church teaches us something vital: being faithful disciples begins by noticing need. Their response was not fear. It was shared responsibility. Resources were not hoarded. They were used so that life could flourish. That same Spirit also crossed boundaries, and this has profound implications for pressing issues of identity and nationhood and how might be drawn by hope not driven by the fear that underpins so much of our political discourse both locally and nationally.

At Pentecost, language barriers were broken. Cultural distance was overcome. People once far apart became intelligible to one another. So too today, we are reminded that suffering is never simply 'elsewhere'. Whether in island nations facing rising seas, farming communities enduring drought, or families living with floods and instability, the Spirit teaches us to see distant neighbours as part of the same human family.

Through the Holy Spirit, by proclaiming the Gospel, we still attend to the words of Jesus; in the church and in the world, we still attend to the acts of Jesus in his body.

We attend to the word of God that calls upon us still; but to do any of that effectively, we need to be able to notice the things that surround us, and to do that, we also need to slow down sometimes...and that...is not easy. For all its exuberance and obvious energy, the Holy Spirit isn't about dashing from one thing to the next, it's about attending to the still small voice, and noticing the signs on the road. Asking questions, and wondering why - why this and not that; why pain and not joy; why suffering and not victory; why and where is God? Holding people and communities in their questioning, replacing fear with the stillness of God who holds each one of us in value and in love.

Bishop Helen-Ann

Meet our ordinands



Lydia Padfield



Katherine Vacher Day



Fran Bell



Emily Emmerson-Finch



Andy Morsman



Phil Keates

Petertide ordinations will take place on **Saturday, 27 June and Sunday, 28 June at Newcastle Cathedral with four people being ordained as priests and two as deacons.**

Our soon-to-be deacons will be serving their titles in parishes across the diocese. Our new priests, who began ordained ministry as deacons last year, will continue to serve their existing parishes as curates.

More about our deacons

Lydia Padfield

Brought up in a vicarage, even as a young child,

Lydia had a strong sense that she would also be called to ordained ministry. After studying at Cranmer Hall, she is excited to serve her curacy at St Oswald's Walkergate and St Martin's Byker.

"I can't remember a time when I didn't feel some sense of a call to ordained ministry", she said.

Katherine Vacher Day

Katherine's path to ordination has been long and winding despite studying theology at university. She spent twenty years as a Religious Education teacher before a growing sense that God was calling her onto something else. Katherine studied at Lindisfarne College of Theology and is

excited to serve her curacy at St Bartholomew's and St Mary Magdalene, both in Longbenton.

"I chose to study theology at university, not because I thought one day I'd be ordained, but simply because I loved the subject, largely due to having two great RE teachers at school."

More about our priests

Fran Bell

Moving her family up from Lincoln in 2024, Fran is glad God called her to serve her curacy at St Michael's Alnwick where she feels at home. Her year as a deacon has flown by but Fran has really enjoyed the opportunity to walk with people on

A joyful choral evensong for Parish Safeguarding Officers



Picture: Tim Watkinson

A warm and uplifting choral evensong filled Newcastle Cathedral on Sunday, 3 May, as Bishop Helen-Ann commissioned Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs) from across the Diocese.

The service marked an important moment in the Diocese's ongoing commitment to ensuring that churches remain safe, welcoming spaces for everyone - especially children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Parish Safeguarding Officers play a vital voluntary role in supporting this mission, helping to create places where people can grow in faith with confidence and care.

Bishop Helen-Ann expressed her appreciation for the PSOs and the diocesan safeguarding team during the service: "We are charged and recharged anew with our work of safeguarding, and I give thanks for it and for you."

Sharon Devlin, Director of Safeguarding for the Diocese thanked all those who serve as PSOs, offering their time and dedication to this essential ministry:

"Our Parish Safeguarding Officers are at the heart of creating safe and welcoming church communities. Thank you for your commitment, compassion and the vital role you play in protecting and supporting others."

their faith journey. As Fran prepares to be priested, she's nervous but excited to be able to celebrate the Eucharist, nourishing people to live out their Christian lives in their own communities. "One of my favourite times of day is when I unlock the church door and say a brief prayer for all those who will pass the threshold that day, for whatever reason and that they will come to know Christ in this place".

Emily Emmerson-Finch

Emily is very thankful to God for placing her alongside the wonderful people of Holy Saviour Tynemouth for her curacy. A particular highlight of her deacon's year has been encountering God in His creation at St Edward's Bay, including the joy of a sea baptism and the formation of a regular prayer group held on the beach. Emily feels this year has deeply affirmed her calling and she can't wait to be priested.

"It has been great to walk with people alongside the ups and downs of life, to pray with people, to be involved in our local schools, and to see our children's and families work growing, which has been lovely for my family to be part of."

Andy Morsman

Andy has really enjoyed serving in his home parish of Alston Moor and wants to thank all those who have supported him this year. A particular highlight for Andy in his deacon's year is the connections made in the local community including great relationships with local schools and care homes, and flourishing ecumenical partnerships. Andy is looking forward to being ordained priest and feels strongly that Alston Moor is where God is calling him.

"My year as deacon has been very enjoyable and it's flown past". He continues: "We have wonder-

ful relationships with all the Christians across the moors with whom we are planning our first holiday club."

Phil Keates

Phil has felt privileged to serve his curacy at St Mary Magdalene in Prudhoe, to witness the work God is doing in and around the community. A particular highlight was the reaffirmation of multiple adult baptisms at Easter earlier this year. As he looks forward to being priested, Phil expects God to continue transforming lives and is excited for more learning opportunities.

"The year has been marked by learning and people, and exceeded expectations."

● You can watch our ordinands videos at newcastle.anglican.org/meet-our-ordinands-2026



The pilgrims begin the first leg on Holy Island with Bishop Helen-Ann

Four stages of the diocesan pilgrimage walking route, St Aidan's Way, have now been completed since its launch earlier this year, with pilgrims enjoying prayer, fellowship and stunning Northumberland scenery along the way.

Pilgrims journey along St Aidan's Way

The first stage began on 7 March at Holy Island, where a wonderful turnout of pilgrims gathered on a glorious spring morning to make the crossing from Lindisfarne at low tide. Blessed with bright sunshine, walkers travelled across the causeway, enjoying the opportunity to begin the pilgrimage route together.

Waiting for the pilgrims on the mainland was Bishop Helen-Ann, who led an out-

door Eucharist beside the causeway before the group continued onwards to Belford. The day was marked by a joyful atmosphere.

The second stage took place on 11 April, when around 25 pilgrims journeyed from Belford to Seahouses. The day began with a service at St Mary's Church in Belford, before walkers travelled through the his-

toric village of Bamburgh and along the coastline to Seahouses.

Pilgrims were able to share time for prayer and reflection as they walked, building friendships with both familiar faces and new companions along the route.

Stage three was completed on 3 May, taking pilgrims from Seahouses to Craster.



Pilgrims gather outside St Paul's Church in Seahouses



A quick stop in Beadnell, where some enjoyed a swim



Pilgrims gather at St Mary's Church in Belford



Buddle Bay, near Bamburgh

Starting at St Paul's Church in Seahouses, the group travelled through Beadnell, where some embraced the opportunity for a bracing sea dip. They then continued onwards along the coastal path, taking in dramatic views of Dunstanburgh Castle before arriving in Craster.



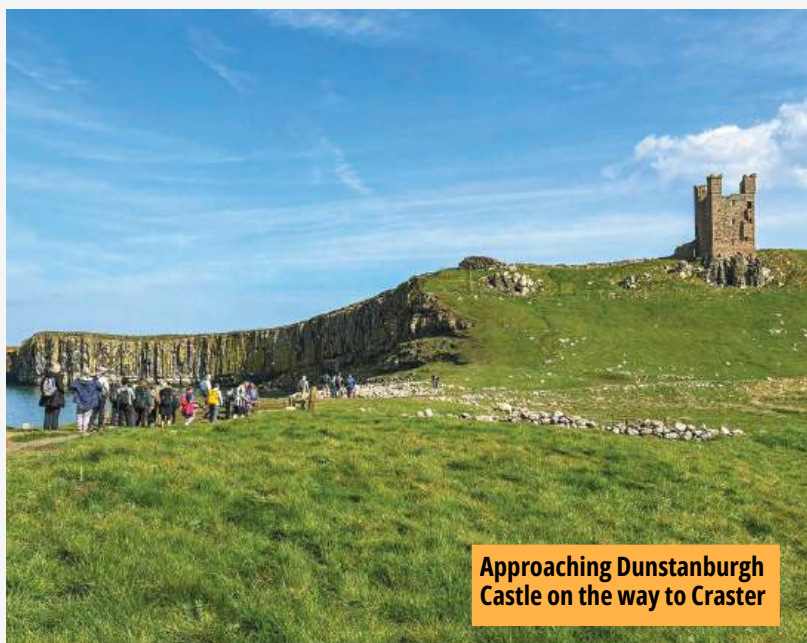
Walking through Bamburgh

Most recently, stage four took place on 6 June, from Craster to Warkworth.

St Aidan's Way continues over several more stages throughout the year, walking in the footsteps of St Aidan, starting at the 'first cathedral' on Holy Island and ending

in October at the 'new cathedral' in Newcastle.

● **Further information and upcoming dates are available on the diocesan website at newcastle.anglican.org/st-aidans-way.**



Approaching Dunstanburgh Castle on the way to Craster



Arriving in Craster

A small team of climbers scaled England's highest mountain to raise vital funds for two much-needed defibrillators in North Tyneside.

The life-saving devices have now been installed at East End Youth & Community Centre in North Shields and at St Mary's Church in Monkseaton.

Ross Gladwin, who is a member of the congregation at St Mary's, climbed the 10 highest peaks in the Lake District, including Scafell Pike, which stands at 978 metres (3,209ft). He was joined by friends Ryan Coe and Jack Parker for the challenge, over a 10-month period.

The team raised £2,536, which paid for the defibrillators and will also cover the cost of training 20 people in how to use them and in CPR. The remaining funds will be used to maintain the devices over the next five to ten years.

Ross and his wife Abby were keen to improve access to defibrillators in North Tyneside following the loss of Abby's nana, Maggie Chambers, who lived in Monkseaton.

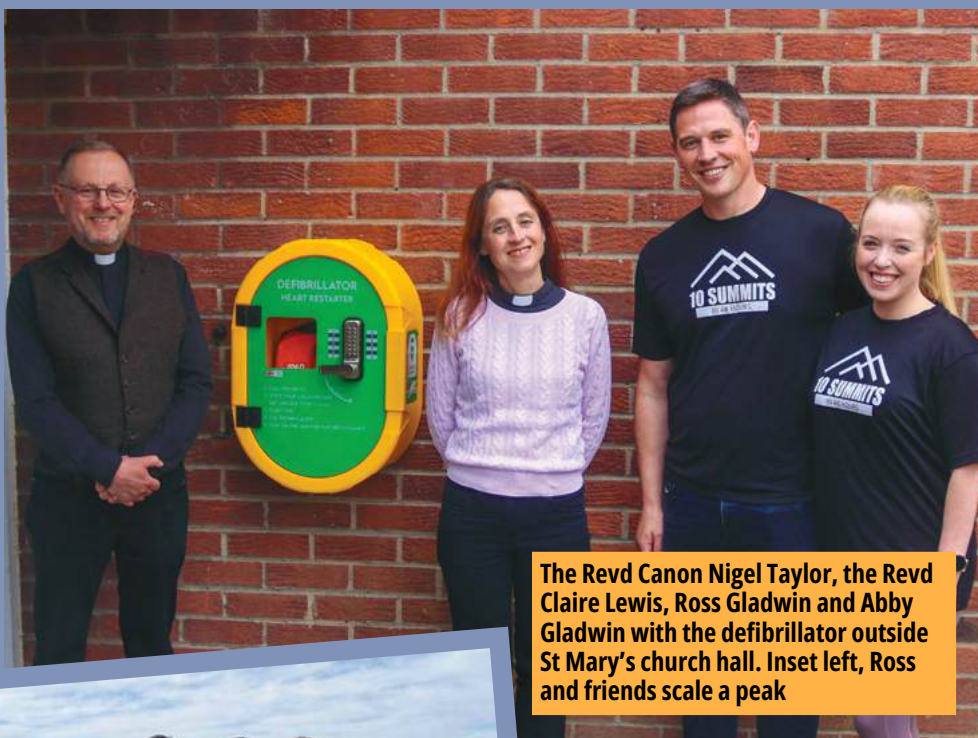
Abby, who also attends St Mary's, said: "My nana was healthy but she suffered a blood clot. A defibrillator was available but unfortunately, she couldn't be saved.

"It stressed the importance of having accessible defibrillators in the community and it made us identify other areas where they could be located.

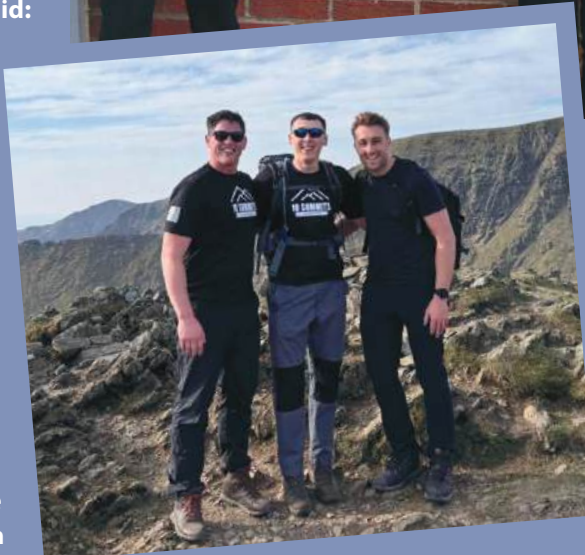
"St Mary's is a popular church and has a busy hall which is used by the community, so we felt this was an important location. It has been installed on the outside of the building where it is more visible and accessible."

The East End Youth & Community Centre in North Shields was another

Scaling the peaks to help save lives in North Tyneside



The Revd Canon Nigel Taylor, the Revd Claire Lewis, Ross Gladwin and Abby Gladwin with the defibrillator outside St Mary's church hall. Inset left, Ross and friends scale a peak



obvious location for the couple. Abby runs a theatre and dance academy there, which is attended by 300 students, while Ross presides over a kickboxing and sports medicine clinic at the venue.

The fundraising mission was quite an adventure, taking in some of the Lake District's most picturesque and challenging climbs, including Helvellyn and Skiddaw.

Abby continued: "I didn't take part because I was pregnant at the time, but as a family we do a lot of hiking and this was an interesting challenge that appealed to Ross, as well as Ryan and Jack.

"I was part of the support team and they did incredibly well. We are very grateful to everyone who contributed and made this fundraising possible. It is reassuring to have these two defibrillators in place."

Beyond Youth

Spirituality and more during Seahouses residential

Children and teenagers have been exploring spirituality in some of Northumberland's most stunning locations.

They attended a residential at Seahouses across three days at the end of May, which included visits to Holy Island, The Alnwick Garden and Druridge Bay.

It was organised by Beyond Youth, a diocesan initiative that works with children, young people and their families in Ashington; Seaton Hirst; Woodhorn and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea; and Cresswell and Lynemouth.

Dave Johnson, Youth and Children's Coordinator for Beyond Youth, said the trip included team games, including a scavenger hunt, a visit to magical Lindisfarne Castle, one of the most iconic landscapes in the UK, and well-deserved fish and chips at Seahouses.

But there was also a more studious element to the residential. On Holy Island, the young people visited sites of spiritual significance, including St Mary's Church and Lindisfarne Priory to learn more about Christianity.

A memorable Palm Sunday

Back in the spring, Beyond Youth joined together with St Bartholomew's Church, Cresswell, for a memorable Palm Sunday (29 March).

It began with a well-attended church service led by the Revd Julia Lacey, followed by bacon sandwiches and hot drinks. Beyond Youth



Young people take part in a photo challenge at The Alnwick Garden

members, staff and volunteers were then joined by clergy and members of the congregation for a 4.5km beach walk from Cresswell to Lynemouth.

It was an overcast day, with a constant threat of rain, but it didn't prevent everyone present from pausing for prayer and a short period of reflection during the walk.

An afternoon of Palm Sunday themed games



Kayaking at Druridge Bay



A reflective art activity at St Cuthbert's Centre

and crafts followed at the Lynemouth Institute, where light refreshments were served. Games included 'pin the Jesus on the donkey' and placing treasured items into a jewellery box to represent the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem. There was also some themed biscuit decoration.

The day attracted people of all ages, with three generations of one family attending the games and crafts session.

● To find out more about Beyond Youth visit: newcastle.anglican.org/beyond-youth



A game of cricket by the beach



The Poison Garden at The Alnwick Garden

Meet our Net Zero team



Diocesan net zero team. From left: Robin Talbot, Marion Schooler and Claire Thompson

Newcastle Diocese has strengthened its commitment to environmental sustainability with the development of a dedicated Net Zero team over the past year.

The team was established following the appointment of Marion Schooler as Net Zero Carbon Manager in spring 2025. She was joined later in the year by Renewable Heating and Energy Adviser Robin Talbot, while Claire Thompson recently took up the role of Net Zero Fundraising Adviser.

Together, they support churches across the diocese in reducing carbon emissions, improving energy efficiency and exploring greener alternatives for their buildings. Their work contributes to both diocesan and national Church of England ambitions to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

To date the team has worked with 35 churches and is looking to engage more. Initiatives already delivered include a partnership with Northumberland Community

Energy Ltd, securing grant funding to support churches interested in installing solar panels, and helping Hexham Abbey become the diocese's first Net Zero Demonstrator Church.

Marion said: "I'm delighted to see the original vision for the team become a reality, bringing together specialist expertise to help churches navigate the challenges of decarbonisation and sustainability." She highlighted the value of planning ahead, encouraging churches not to wait until heating systems fail before seeking advice on replacement options and funding opportunities.

Over the coming months, the team plans to offer a series of webinars, develop practical resources on funding and grant applications, create opportunities for churches to share experiences and continue providing one-to-one support and site visits.

Robin works with churches to identify suitable heating and energy solutions that

improve efficiency and support progress towards net zero. Claire advises on funding opportunities and helps churches develop applications to secure financial support for projects.

The Net Zero team works closely with colleagues such as the property team, Church Buildings Support Officer, Tim Lewthwaite and Diocesan Advisory Committee Secretary, Lucy Burfield, to ensure projects align with wider diocesan requirements and priorities.

Tim also manages the Net Zero Quick Wins grant, which funds small-scale decarbonisation projects such as LED lighting, insulation, heaters and electrical upgrades up to £5,000. To date, 16 grants have been awarded to 12 churches across the Diocese, and a further £149,000 has now been secured for the next two years.

● For more information and contact details visit: newcastle.anglican.org/caring-for-gods-creation.

Guiding our churches to a more sustainable future



Claire Thompson, Net Zero Fundraising Adviser

Claire Thompson Net Zero Fundraising Adviser

Claire Thompson was appointed in March as Net Zero Fundraising Adviser, bringing a wealth of experience in environmental and sustainability work.

"I've been made very welcome," said Claire. "There's a lot of parishes and churches here and I look forward to working with them. It can be challenging to explore options for sustainable energy and heating, but we can help churches to visualise what would be the ideal scenario for them, to investigate possible funding streams, to develop plans and start making that journey."

Claire holds a degree in management science and biology and began her career in the pharmaceutical industry, launching

and supplying essential products to GPs and hospitals.

She later joined the Nurture Partnership, a regional initiative hosted by Durham Wildlife Trust, leading project development and securing funding for environmental schemes worth between £10,000 and £2.5 million.

Building on this experience, Claire founded Genee, a North East sustainability consultancy that helps organisations integrate sustainable business practices. She subsequently served as sustainability lead for social housing in Durham, securing grant funding to make homes more energy efficient.

Claire has also worked with local businesses, helping them to overcome sustainability and business operation challenges.

She added: "Over a decade ago I went back

to my degree roots and have loved working on environmental projects. Now I want to bring skills from my previous roles to help improve the energy efficiency of our church estate.

"I want to help individual churches and parishes, to help them to understand their options and to encourage them to work together. Sharing ideas can be really effective. I am interested to hear from churches who have already undertaken successful sustainability projects, and from those who have a vision for what they could achieve.

"I have a strong passion for the environment and sustainability, but it's important to me to make that meaningful at a local level. My role is to help churches and parishes understand what sustainability looks like in practical terms for them, and to support them in communicating that clearly to funders so their buildings can be sustained for the long term."



Inspirational Deaf Church celebrates 150th anniversary

A chaplaincy which supports the spiritual and social needs of the Deaf is marking a significant milestone this year.

Northumbria Deaf Church (NDC), formerly known as Northumbria Deaf Mission was founded back in 1876. A special Pentecost service to mark its 150th anniversary took place at St Andrew's Church in Newcastle on 24 May.

This momentous occasion included speeches from church members and staff, who welcomed many friends of the organisation from past and present. They were joined by Bishop Helen-Ann, Archdeacon Rachel Wood, and the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Cllr Henry Gallagher.

"This was an excellent service and it was a joy to share it with so many guests," said the Revd Canon Glyn Evans, Diocesan Chaplain for the Deaf. "A key thing for me was to see up to 50 people there from our Deaf community. These inspirational people are the reason we have



NDC and they represented all the generations who have been part of our church for 150 years."

Members of local Scout groups, who are studying Deaf Awareness as part of their Disability Awareness Activity Badge, also attend-

ed the service and took part by signing the National Anthem with the congregation.

The 150th anniversary follows a long and eventful journey dating back to 1876, when a small group of Deaf people approached a

body of religious people in Newcastle asking for help regarding church services.

One of the founders was a Mr William Walter Adamson, a young man who worked as a clerk on Newcastle's Quayside. He was seeking church services for his sister Ann, who was deaf, but in doing so was driven to study theology and he was eventually ordained as a priest. Canon Adamson became the first Chaplain for the Deaf and later went on to become vicar of Wylam.

Northumbria Deaf Church, which operates across both Newcastle and Durham dioceses, was originally based at St Mark's Church on Newcastle's Westgate Road. The office and church moved into other places during its lifetime, but in recent decades, the Parish Church of St Andrew's in Newcastle has been its home. The work of the NDC is led by Vikki the wonderful and inspirational Office and Project Manager.

Over the years, branches of the Deaf Church were established in places such as Sunderland, Hartlepool, Durham, South Shields and Blyth and these were served by full time chaplains. In the early days, there were no social workers, so the church became responsible for the social, industrial, spiritual and individual welfare of the Deaf. Nowadays the chaplain's role is voluntary and new chaplains are always needed.

British Sign Language (BSL), which was first used in the Church of England back in the 16th century, has always been the primary language for worship and fellowship in the Deaf Church.

Today, NDC hosts a monthly Sunday afternoon service at St Andrew's, as well as regular prayer meetings. There are craft sessions, a woman's health group, weekly coffee mornings and many other activities. There are events with Signs of God the National Christian BSL signing organisation. A Deaf Awareness Course will run later in the year for people interested in welcoming Deaf people to their churches.

Glyn, who leads many of the services, added: "We have a loyal team of volunteers and staff, who play a huge part in what is wonderful community. We laugh a lot! It's both spiritual and social, as well as being a great support network for all involved."

The Deaf Community Coffee Morning is a real social hub



The Deaf Community Coffee Morning at Christ Church

There's something special brewing at Christ Church North Shields and it's more than just a cup of tea or coffee.

Throw in some tasty bacon sandwiches, delicious homemade cakes and a friendly, welcoming environment, the Deaf Community Coffee Morning is a vital social hub for all who attend.

The monthly coffee morning is supported by Northumbria Deaf Church (NDC) and is open to anyone who is deaf and their carers.

"We have such a lovely community here," said Sue Kir-sopp who runs the sessions on a voluntary basis alongside her daughter, Sarah Douglas.

"It is supported by the Deaf Church but it's not a formal faith group. The sessions

are very social and relaxed. It's a place to meet friends, to support each other and to enjoy some nice food. For some people it's a great opportunity to get out the house and they enjoy the fellowship and camaraderie."

Sue volunteers for the sessions outside of her role as parish administrator at Christ Church. Sue and Sarah spend time in the

kitchen serving homemade soup during the winter months, and bacon sandwiches in the summer, as well as a selection of other sandwiches, cakes and biscuits all year round.

"It's a real privilege to be part of this and to help in a small way," she said. "I don't use British Sign Language (BSL), but we usually have people present who can,

including Sarah. The carers who attend are very supportive and help if there is a communication barrier"

"The community are very helpful ensuring we can join in the conversations and that we understand what they are asking for. We have the tables set out in a big square so everyone can see each other and it makes for a friendly, inclusive environment."



Church volunteer Sue in the kitchen

The coffee mornings began in 2018 with around 12 people attending. Despite the interruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the sessions have grown and now attract 20-25 people. The sessions run from 11am to 1pm on the second Tuesday of each month.

● For more information, email Sue at northshieldsparish@gmail.com

Fun-filled initiatives are supporting



A church in Belford has teamed up with its local community to provide vital opportunities for families with children, toddlers and babies in rural Northumberland.

Holiday At Home is a school holiday activity afternoon for families with games, crafts, themed lunch, and other activities.

The community-led initiative is supported by St Mary's Church and based at Belford's Bellview Resource Centre.

The Revd Canon Louise Taylor-Kenyon, vicar of Bamburgh, Belford and Lucker, said Holiday At Home was established two years ago and has grown in popularity ever since.

She explained: "During Lent 2024 we held a Christian Aid Lent Group focusing on poverty. As a result we looked at hidden poverty in our communities and identified that some families can't go away during the six-week summer holiday, and that there was a real lack of affordable children's activities. We felt it was worth introducing a club to take place once a week during school holidays.

"Since then, it has gone from strength to strength. It's a real community effort for all families in the area. We have a wonderful team of dedicated volunteers while our local school supports it and advertises the sessions among parents."

The success of Holiday At Home is built on existing church-based initiative - Roots & Shoots - which is based on the Messy Church model. This takes place monthly at St Mary's with crafts and games connected to a Bible story, a short act of worship, and afternoon tea. It is primarily for children under-12 but older children are also welcome. Several babies have been baptised and more families are coming to special church events.

One mother, Rhys, whose daughter attended Roots & Shoots, recognised the need for a baby and toddler group in the area following the



Holiday At Home is an activity afternoon for families that takes place during the school holidays

families in rural community

birth of her son. It led to the start of Little Roots & Shoots, which has operated since March 2025.

Now a thriving weekly group for babies and toddlers in the church meeting room, it has the full backing of the church community, which offers practical support with administration, safeguarding arrangements and encouragement.

Rhys said: "When I told Revd Louise about my idea, she said straight away that the church would love to help make it happen."

Little Roots & Shoots has benefited from £200 raised in seed funding from Come and Meet Each Other (CAMEO), a social group based at St Mary's. It is a place not only for babies to play, but where parents in a rural area can support each other and forge friendships.

The church also offered Rhys free, unrestricted use of the church gallery as a permanent home for the group and church members offer practical support with administration, safeguarding arrangements and ongoing encouragement.

Rhys added: "Without the support and generosity of St Mary's, Little Roots and Shoots would just have been a nice idea. Instead, we have a warm space to meet every week with the facilities we need and our own storage, so it feels like it's really ours. The church continues to support us financially too, helping with things like crafts and snacks."

Another key development from the joint initiatives has been the creation of the Roots & Shoots larder at St Mary's, which provides essentials for parents who need them. These include baby food, nappies, sanitary products, fresh fruit and snacks. Information is always available for additional support for families.

● For more information email louisetk@greenet.org.uk

● If you are interested in helping the Diocese support initiatives such as these, read Rhys story at: newcastle.anglican.org/rhys-story



Rhys with her son who inspired the idea of Little Roots and Shoots

The familiar sound of a 500-year-old church bell will ring for the first time in 15 years later this summer.

The bell at the Church of Our Lady, located in south-east Northumberland near the site of the Saxon village of Seaton, fell silent in 2010 due to professional concerns that its vibrations could increase damage to the stone structure of the Grade I church.

Now, thanks to a £350,000 project, extensive repair and conservation work is being undertaken at the historic church and on its bell tower, with £245,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

A range of other funders have also contributed, including Northumbria Historic Churches Trust, The Historic Houses Foundation, ChurchCare and The Friends of the Church of Our Lady, together with generous donations from local people and visitors to the church.

It's a significant project for the old church which the Normans extended incorporating an earlier Saxon church. Its newer east end and Norman arches are receiving professional help to ensure they successfully reach their 1,000th birthday - since the landings at Hastings in 1066.

The single bronze bell, which dates back to about 1490, has temporarily been removed. It will also be repaired, given a newly-cast clapper, a retune and a clean-up. The bell will soon be carefully re-hung, rededicated and be ready to ring out for worship - just in time for the next wedding booked for 13 August. More weddings and services follow on quickly keeping the heritage bell in very good voice.

The exciting project will future proof this heritage church to enable it to continue its mission of worship and hope for years to come. The wide scope of the project will also include improvements to the churchyard, enhancing the biodiversity of its beautiful, tranquil location.

The Revd David Atkinson, priest in charge of Seghill and Delaval Parishes, said, "The

Bell to sound again as part of exciting church project



From left: George Jackson, Friends of Church of Our Lady; Revd David Atkinson; Eleanor Kermode, Friends of Church of Our Lady; and Geoff Horsman, member of Delaval PCC



Bob Kermode, Project Group Lead, with the 500-year-old church bell

initiative is a powerful symbol of the strong link between the local community and their historic parish church."

He added: "We are delighted to have received welcome support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and so many different organisations, residents and visitors to assist the Parish of Delaval with repair of this much-loved, respected

and long-lived place of worship."

The project launched with a successful, well-attended churchyard trail over the Easter weekend. It was the first in a series of events where visitors can find out more about the heritage and enjoy the church and its setting.

Heritage Activities Coordinator, Philippa Carter said, "There will be lots of opportunities for people to enjoy the church and churchyard over the summer including art and crafts drop-in sessions, storytelling, bat walks and wildlife themed workshops."

The project will also recruit and train volunteers to research the history of the churchyard and help with churchyard maintenance. Oral history interviews will be recorded, enabling local people to share their memories of the church and its significance for the community.

● Visit the Delaval PCC Facebook page @DelavalPCC

St Cuthbert's Church in Norham has almost reached its £380,000 fundraising target for an ambitious regeneration project.

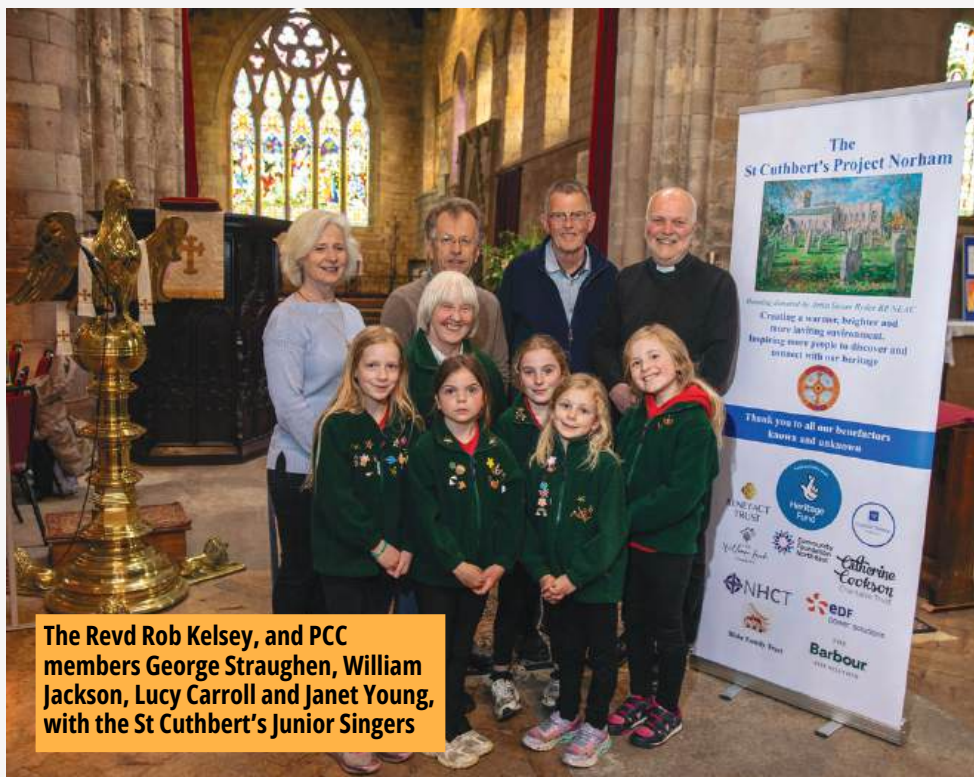
The National Lottery Heritage Fund has contributed £245,000 towards the exciting initiative, which will make the Grade I listed church more welcoming, accessible and inspiring for all who visit.

The transformational investment will enable vital improvements to heating, lighting, seating, and heritage interpretation. Known as the St Cuthbert's Project, it will revitalise the building, allowing it to become a vibrant year-round hub for community life.

The enhanced facilities will support a rich programme of events, activities and learning opportunities, while innovative interpretation will bring the church's fascinating heritage to life for new generations.

Local vicar, the Revd Rob Kelsey, Chairman of the St Cuthbert's Project, is delighted to have received such generous support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, as well as numerous charitable trusts and individual donors, including The Barbour Foundation, The Benefact Trust, The Catherine Cookson Trust, Community Foundation North East, EDF RE, Barmoor Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund, The Garfield Weston Foundation, The Blake Family, The Steel Family, The Northumbria Historic Churches Trust, The William Leech Trust, and The Rothley Trust.

Funding to preserve the past and serve the future at St Cuthbert's Norham



The Revd Rob Kelsey, and PCC members George Straughen, William Jackson, Lucy Carroll and Janet Young, with the St Cuthbert's Junior Singers

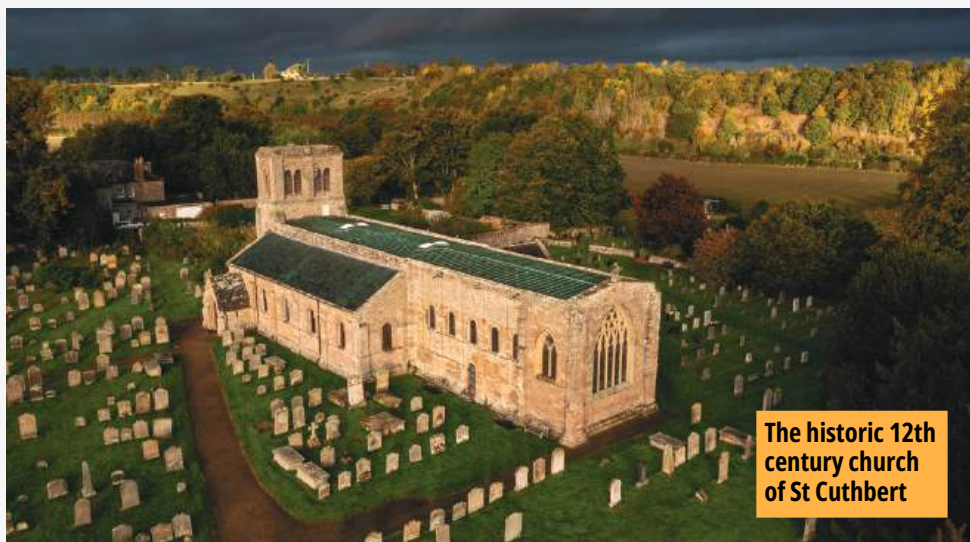
Rob said: "We now have a wonderful opportunity to safeguard the future of St Cuthbert's Church, ensuring it remains a place of inspiration, welcome and community engagement."

Helen Featherstone, Director, England North at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "We are delighted to award St Cuthbert's in Norham with a grant to facili-

tate capital works to the church that will improve access to the building, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players. The project will enable St Cuthbert's to welcome new visitors and ensure the important heritage of the Church will resonate with the community and beyond for years to come."

As a result of the improvements, the building will become a more comfortable, welcoming and fully inclusive venue for concerts, performances, exhibitions and community gatherings throughout the year. Volunteers and local partners will play a vital role in shaping a lively programme of events that brings people together and enriches community life.

During 2026 and 2027, a series of special celebrations and activities will mark the progress of the project. Everyone in the community is warmly encouraged to get involved — whether by attending events, volunteering or supporting the work in other ways.



The historic 12th century church of St Cuthbert

Looking towards a bright future with the Blanchland Abbey Project

An exciting project to revitalise the village of Blanchland and build a sustainable future for its Abbey church is entering a critical new phase.

The Blanchland Abbey Project was launched back in 2019 as a partnership between the PCC and the locally based Lord Crewe's Charity.

It has included archaeological investigations at the historic site, which dates back to the 12th century, while extensive research has gone into heritage interpretation, enhancing the visitor experience, as well as community engagement and a wide range of activities.

Last autumn, £240,000 was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop the next stage of the project, known as The Treasures of Blanchland, which will be spearheaded by newly appointed project manager, Dr Chris Ferguson.

Over the next year, this will enable Chris and the Blanchland Abbey Project Group to prepare a grant application for £1.2m, which if successful will lead to a series of major works from 2028 onwards.

This will include new eco-friendly heating in the Abbey, disabled access at the front entrance, and the installation of a new win-



From left: Dr Chris Ferguson, the Revd Melanie Shilitto and Denise Herdman of the Blanchland Abbey Project Group

dow depicting the village with a Christian theme, while wood panelling will be removed to fully expose the sedilia, where monks used to sit after the building was founded as a Premonstratensian priory in 1165.

In addition, medieval grave slabs that form part of the Abbey's stone floor, featuring intricate carvings, will be lifted and bracketed against the wall to protect them from further wear and tear.

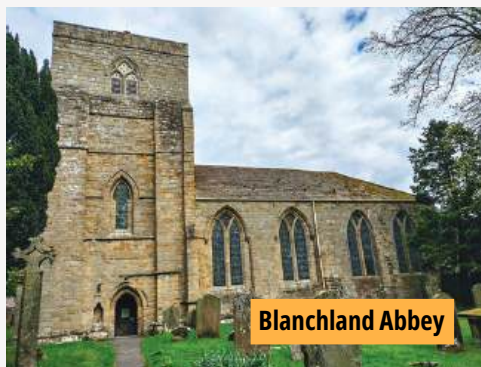
Another key development will see the con-

servation of a late-medieval, French embroidery, which was donated to the Abbey in 1896 and depicts Jesus on the cross. This will be a delicate process as the artwork has not been removed from its protective glass casing since its arrival.

Chris expressed his appreciation to the now retired former vicar, the Revd Dr Helen Savage, whose vision led to the creation of the project, as well as all others who have contributed along the way.

"A huge amount of work has been done over the past six years," said Chris. "I am delighted to be involved in what is a wonderful community project. My role is to help us navigate this next stage, which is crucial because once complete, this major work will benefit Blanchland for many years to come."

Chris brings a professional background in museums and heritage, regeneration and capital build projects. From 2012-2017, he



Blanchland Abbey



Medieval grave slabs inside Blanchland Abbey



An embroidered figure of Jesus on the cross, donated to the Abbey in 1896, which will be conserved



The Revd Melanie Shilitto with a 17th century coat of arms featuring King James VI of Scotland and I of England

served as curatorial director at the Auckland Project in Durham. He continues to work with the Bailiffgate Museum in Alnwick and the Ad Gefrin Anglo-Saxon Museum in Wooler.

He also knows Blanchland, having previously researched Lord Crewe, the 17th-century Bishop of Durham who purchased the estates of Blanchland and Bamburgh and left them to the Lord Crewe's Charity, which continues to support clergy, education and local communities.

● Find out more about Blanchland, the Abbey and the project here: blanchland.org/abbey

Christian ethos shines through at diverse school



Pupils at a Wallsend school led worship during a memorable visit by Bishop Helen-Ann and the Dean of Newcastle, Lee Batson.

There was a warm welcome at St Peter's Church of England Primary, where the school's vision of 'growing well together' was evident throughout.

Head of School, James Dey said pupils were inspired by the visit, with some of them expressing their own aspirations of ordained ministry.



"It was a wonderful morning," said Mr Dey. "The pupils really enjoyed leading worship and the school choir performed three songs, which they had previously sung in front of 600 people at Playhouse Whitley Bay, because they really wanted to share them with Bishop Helen-Ann and Dean Lee."

During the visit, Bishop Helen-Ann and Dean Lee learned about the 'growing well together' vision, which is based on the Parable of the Sower in Mark's Gospel. They also met staff and governors, local dignitaries and friends of the school.

Mr Dey added: "We are very proud of our

school community. We have children from all over the world and many different languages are spoken. As a school of sanctuary, we embrace all newcomers and ensure that all children can flourish.

"Our pupils are very Christian. They were really excited to meet Bishop Helen-Ann and Dean Lee. Some of our pupils are inspired to follow in their footsteps."

Bishop Helen-Ann is planning a return to St Peter's school in September to speak about her leadership role as a bishop. This will touch upon on her previous role as the Bishop of Waikato in New Zealand and on her current work as a Bishop in the House of Lords.

Organ restored to former glory as part of church refurbishment

A rare organ at a North Tyneside church has been restored as part of an ambitious project which includes a wider programme of improvements.

It means St John's in Killingworth also has a new kitchen, mezzanine floor, storage area and eco-friendly heating, with the old gas burners replaced with an infra-red system.

The organ is one of only 10-surviving instruments in the UK built by Robert Postill in the 19th century. Due to its national importance and significance, it is the only Postill organ awarded Grade II star status by the British Institute of Organ Studies.

Now it has been restored to its former glory by local specialists, Lightbown's of North Shields, and given the grand positioning it deserves thanks to the new mezzanine floor.

"We are absolutely delighted with how it has turned out," said the Revd Sarah Moon, Priest in Charge of Killingworth Parish.

"The organ looks and sounds wonderful. The restorers have done a remarkable job. We were already very proud of it and now it has an extra special positioning with the new mezzanine floor."

Postill built some 166 organs, largely across the North, although two were sent to South Africa and one is in the chapel of Blenheim Palace.

The organ restoration at St John's is particularly satisfying for the church's organist Nigel Brown, who memorably raised more than £2,300 towards the project in 2024 and 2025, when he cycled 1,490 miles across the UK to visit the nine other churches that have Postill organs.

Overall, the first phase of the project cost £320,000 with the National Lottery Heritage Fund funding contributing £196,470, with works approved and sanctioned by the Diocese of Newcastle.



The newly restored Postill organ in St John's Church



Nigel Brown at the Postill organ

The parish has raised funds thanks to numerous successful activities. Funds have also come from Northumbria Historic Churches Fund, the Rothley Trust, Banks Company, the National Lottery Community Fund, Benefact Trust, ON Organ Fund, Catherine Cookson Trust and Killingworth Christian Council.

Sarah added: "We are indebted to the funders

and particularly the Heritage Lottery Fund. They have helped to secure the relocation and restoration of our historic organ whilst creating new facilities in a refurbished church. We plan to make it available for organists to have access to play and for schools to visit and learn more about our musical heritage."

The completion of works was celebrated with an organ recital by Daniel Cook, the Master of Music and Organist at Durham Cathedral, on 1 May.

The next phase of the project will get underway in late 2026 or early 2027. This will include an additional new entrance on the North side of the church with step-free access, as well as toilets and a welcome space.

Sarah added: "We began with our plans six years ago. It is wonderful to see a major part come to fruition including a new kitchen, storage and general improvements including new heating. It is a great encouragement for us to get on with the final phase, adding toilets and a new entrance."

A celebration of Indian and Tamil hospitality at Kenton church



The sprinkling of rose water, a symbolic gesture of warmth and goodwill

Three families from a Newcastle church hosted a cultural evening for people to explore Indian and Tamil traditions.

Guests were welcomed at Church of the Ascension in Kenton, with a beautifully arranged Kolam – a traditional floral display.

Each of the host families gave presentations, sharing personal stories of their journeys to the UK, as well as reflections on their cultural heritage.

At the heart of their talks was the meaning of Virunthombal, the Tamil tradition of hospitality, emphasising its role in fostering hospitality and unity.

Congregation members were also part of the welcome, offering flowers, sugar candy and a gentle sprinkling of rose water - symbolic gestures of warmth and goodwill.

Following a Tamil worship song, guests gathered for a communal meal that embodied the evening's themes of togetherness and Christ-centred fellowship. The menu, lovingly prepared by the hosts, showcased a range of traditional South Indian dishes, including Chicken 65, Masala Vadai, Biryani, Paneer Butter Masala and Raita, followed by Sweet Kesari for dessert.



The shared meal provided an opportunity for all present to experience the richness of South Indian cuisine while deepening connections within the community.

The event highlighted the Church of the Ascension's ongoing commitment to celebrating cultural diversity and strengthening bonds through faith, hospitality and shared experience.

A new memorial garden at St Matthew's Church was formally blessed and commissioned on Sunday, 19 April, during a well-attended service led by the Revd Mark Edwards MBE.

The ceremony, assisted by Deputy Churchwarden Tom Laidler, marked the culmination of more than a year of planning. Set within the church grounds, the garden has been created as a peaceful and dignified space for remembrance and reflection.

During the service, Mark blessed both the garden and its memorial stone, offering prayers of dedication before sprinkling holy water across the site. The act symbolised the setting apart of the space for sacred use, as members of the congregation stood in quiet reflection.

The project was initiated in response to growing demand, with the church's existing Garden of Remembrance nearing capacity. Careful preparation, including securing the necessary faculty and designing a layout in keeping with the surrounding churchyard, ensured the new space meets the needs of the parish while respecting its heritage.

Speaking at the service, Mark emphasised the importance of such spaces in church life, describing them as places that offer comfort, continuity and a connection between generations.

New memorial garden blessed at Dinnington church



Revd Mark Edwards MBE sprinkling holy water across the site

Church officials expressed gratitude to all who contributed to the project's development. The new memorial garden is now open

and will serve as a place of prayer, remembrance and peace for the community for years to come.

Sycamore Gap sapling planted at Byker church following £4.2m transformation



A sapling from the world famous Sycamore Gap tree has been planted in the grounds of a church in Byker.

St Michael's has undergone an exciting £4.2m transformation into a state-of-the-art youth and community hub, known as the Lighthouse Project, which opened last summer.

The new project has become one of 49 initiatives in the UK chosen by the National Trust to

receive a sapling from the iconic tree, on Hadrian's Wall.

Pupils from St Lawrence Catholic Primary School in Byker and Byker Primary School, were on hand to plant the 'Tree of Hope' sapling on 12 March. The official planting ceremony took place on St Michael's Mount in front of their family members, friends, teachers, local community leaders, church and Diocesan representatives.

Peter Rabbit at Newcastle Cathedral

This summer, Newcastle Cathedral will welcome a special Peter Rabbit sculpture as part of the citywide Peter Rabbit™: Tales on the Tyne art trail, organised by St Oswald's Hospice and running from 15 July to 14 September.

The Cathedral will host the 'Meadow of Memories' bench, created by local artist Julia Stafford. Inspired by Beatrix Potter's beloved character, the sculpture features colourful painted leaves dedicated to loved ones who have died, offering visitors a place for reflection and remembrance.

Steph Edusei, Chief Executive of St Oswald's Hospice, said: "It is especially meaningful for us to display our 'Meadow of Memories' sculpture in such a peaceful and inspiring setting. We hope everyone who visits will take a moment for quiet reflection."

Throughout the summer, the Cathedral will offer family activities linked to the trail, alongside opportunities for remembrance. Once the trail concludes, the bench will be relocated to the gardens of St Oswald's Hospice as a permanent memorial.

A Summer of Pride

Newcastle Cathedral is proud to support Newcastle Pride on 25–26 July. In the lead-up to the festival, visitors can enjoy a joyful concert by the Northern Proud Voices choir on 3 July, family-friendly banner-making workshops on 11 July, and a prayer trail created by the Diocese's LGBTQI+ Chaplaincy throughout the month.

The Dean of Newcastle, Lee Batson, said, "Newcastle Cathedral is committed to being a place where everyone

can encounter joy and peace, love and acceptance – or simply find a moment of quiet in the heart of the city. We are delighted to welcome all those visiting Newcastle for Pride this summer and are dedicated to extending this warm welcome throughout the entire year."

● For more information, visit newcastlecathedral.org.uk/whats-on



Peter Rabbit at Newcastle Cathedral



Northern Pride Voices Choir returns to Newcastle Cathedral for a joyful concert



Living the Lantern

By Vanessa Ward, Newcastle Cathedral's Volunteer Coordinator



Vanessa Ward, fourth from left, pictured with some of the Cathedral's wonderful volunteers

Picture: Tim Watkinson

While preparing this article, Volunteers' Week (1-7 June) is only a few days away. This annual celebration recognises the incredible contribution made by volunteers across the country. We always mark the occasion at the Cathedral, and this year we are hosting a citywide Volunteering Opportunities Fair, alongside a Volunteers' Celebration Service, where we recognise the gift of volunteering to the Cathedral and to organisations across the city and Diocese.

Volunteers are part of the lifeblood of the Cathedral, contributing more than 6,300 hours each year. Twenty-five per cent of our volunteers give over 100 hours of their time annually. Their roles include welcoming, event stewarding, flower arranging, tour guiding, retail support, monument cleaning, chorister supervision, historical research,

verging, chaplaincy and much more. Our cathedral has one of the smallest staff teams in the country, and volunteers are essential to supporting the large number of visitors we receive and the activities and services we offer.

As volunteer coordinator, I recruit, train and support volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds, aged 17 to 88. I never cease to be amazed by their enthusiasm, commitment and generosity, and by how much they enjoy being in the Cathedral, sharing its history, spiritual life and space with the many people who come through our doors.

Valuing our volunteer community is an important part of my role. Much of my time is spent providing pastoral support, hosting monthly 'Coffee,

Cake & Chat' drop-ins, and keeping volunteers up to date through a monthly newsletter. We are also fortunate to have a dedicated Volunteer Hub where volunteers have a recognised base to enjoy a cup of coffee, leave their belongings and take a break.

We work hard to make volunteering accessible to everyone, including providing training in Farsi for members of our refugee community and organising supported volunteering with Dilston College, which supports students with special educational needs.

Our volunteers are a very special part of the Cathedral community and the life of the Diocese, and it is both a pleasure and an honour to work with them.

● If you are interested in volunteering at the Cathedral, please visit newcastlecathedral.org.uk/volunteer or email vanessa.ward@newcastlecathedral.org.uk.



Vanessa Ward, Volunteer Coordinator

Picture: Lang Shot Photography