

LINK

The magazine for the Diocese of Newcastle

OCTOBER 2024

INSIDE:

PAGES 6&7: Exploring the 'Season of Seeking'

PAGE 9: Environment – a quiet revolution is happening

PAGE 11: 'Schools of Sanctuary' status awarded to church schools

PAGES 16&17: Welcoming communities into our churches

Extra



Playing our part in the Great North Run

Full story & pictures: [Pages 4&5](#)



www.newcastle.anglican.org



@ncldiocese

Contents



Page 18: Large-scale embroidery exhibition at Hexham Abbey

Page 3	A message from Bishop Mark
Pages 4-5	Contributing to an 'amazing' Great North Run
Page 6	Our gifts and responsibilities in the 'Season of Seeking'
Page 7	Deanery planning in the 'Season of Seeking'
Page 8	Children & Youth – our incredible toddler groups
Page 9	Environment – The Revd Tim Mayfield on a quiet revolution
Page 10	Looking ahead to Generosity Week 2024
Page 11	'Schools of Sanctuary' status awarded to church schools
Pages 12-14	All the latest from Newcastle Cathedral
Page 15-16	Like a Metaphor with Tim Hardy Art & Eco Fair at St Mary's Monkseaton
Page 17	A great summer at Wallsend's Church of the Good Shepherd
Page 18	Open day welcomes community to Newburn church
Page 19	Large-scale embroidery exhibition heads for Hexham Abbey
Page 20	Christian Aid Gaza Appeal

Contact us

MAGAZINE TIP: Clicking on a website address or 'click here' will take you to the website, and clicking an email address will compose a new email.

www.newcastle.anglican.org

Email: info@newcastle.anglican.org

Facebook, Instagram, X & Threads:
[@ncldiocese](https://www.instagram.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

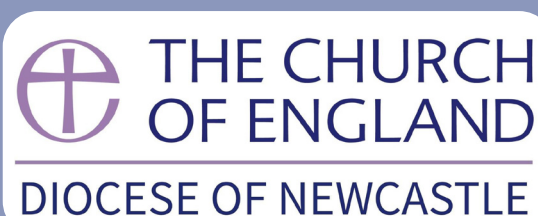
Safeguarding: If you have a safeguarding concern about an adult or child, please contact our archdeacons on 0191 270 4166 or visit: newcastle.anglican.org/safeguarding

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

Gospel Readings and Prayer Diary: The monthly gospel readings and prayer diary can be found at newcastle.anglican.org/prayerdiary

Comings and Goings: You can find a summary of all the latest appointments and departures from the Diocese of Newcastle here: newcastle.anglican.org/news/comings-goings/

eBulletin and Prayer Diary: Receive news about the Diocese directly to your inbox by subscribing to our monthly eBulletin at: newcastle.anglican.org/ebulletin



About this magazine

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

A message from Bishop Mark



The Rt Revd Mark Wroe,
Bishop of Berwick

Lighthouse or lifeboat?

Is the church more like a lifeboat or a lighthouse? That was one of the questions asked at a recent set of interviews when I was part of the interview panel. How would you answer?

You might think a lighthouse is a good description for the church: something firm and unshakeable, reflecting light into the darkness, guiding sailors away from perilous waters towards safe passage.

But you might prefer the notion of a lifeboat: sailing out into dangerous or stormy waters, navigating the perils of the sea to rescue people from harm and carry them to safety.

An alternative question might be to ask us if we'd rather be lighthouse keepers or lifeboat crew? I confess put that way, I tend to err

towards safe, warm and dry inside, rather than outside on the stormy waters in the wind and the rain. And it makes me very grateful for our life-saving heritage, and the likes of Grace Darling, as well as for our contemporary lifeboat crews and for the strong associations some of our coastal churches and clergy have with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) – some among them even serving as volunteer lifeboat crew.

Of course, if we're being terribly Anglican then we would have to say the Church is both lifeboat and lighthouse, regardless of which we might prefer. But I also wonder if the question might reflect a changing understanding of the way we join in God's mission. Where once we were largely more static, relying upon our worship and buildings attracting people to us and therefore to God, we now think more dynamically about the church going out in mission to where people are – we talk more about pioneering or seeking out where God is at work and joining in.

I wonder if we are in a time where thinking about our mission in terms of lifeboats might be fruitful for us? As a shepherd goes out to look for lost sheep, or as a farmer digs up treasure in a field, how are we setting out to seek the lost?

Lifeboats and lighthouses have one thing in common: they are concerned with saving lives. We share that common endeavour in the Church – we too are concerned with saving lives: enabling people to know the light and life of Jesus Christ and to discover life in all its fullness and abundance!

In the coming weeks we will be encouraged and resourced across the diocese to be seeking out where God is at work, who God is calling us to as we embark together on a 'Year of Seeking'. As we do that let's keep asking the question, is the church more like a lifeboat or a lighthouse? Or are you a lighthouse keeper or lifeboat crew?

Bishop Mark



Bishop Helen-Ann



Davi and Isabel

Newcastle Diocese contributes to 'amazing' Great North Run

Many people across Newcastle Diocese played their part in this year's highly successful Great North Run.

Churches along the route opened their doors to offer prayer, support and supplies to the 60,000 competitors, while the Diocese was represented by several runners who took part in aid of worthy causes.

Among them was Bishop Helen-Ann, who raised vital funds for **Newcastle Foodbank**, of which she is a patron.

"Wow, what an amazing day," said the Bishop on X. "Well done everyone!"

St Thomas' and St Luke's churches in Newcastle used their close proximity to the route to support runners before they reached the start line,

covering all bases to ensure they were prepared for the 13.1 miles that lay ahead.

St Thomas' hosted a Great North Run café, offering refreshments and much needed toilet facilities! The church described the event as a lot of fun, saying "It was so nice to meet many lovely people and have some great conversations."

Continues on page 5



John Laws



The St Thomas' Great North Run Café



Over 100 people visited St Luke's prayer station

Continued from page 4

Meanwhile, St Luke's set up a support station on Claremont Road, offering water, sweets and other essentials, including plasters and safety pins for race numbers, as well as refreshments and toilet facilities.

The Revd Adam Smith said: "We had a prayer station and in terms of interactions, we prayed with about 100 individuals directly. Half of those people were not churchgoers and some of them had questions about whether they believe in God at all.

"Nobody refused prayer. I asked them that if at any level they achieved what they were praying for, they go and find their local church. People were saying that if they achieved their personal best, or if a particular injury didn't trouble them, that they would certainly go and ask questions. It was very much worthwhile, and we already have a few ideas about how we can improve things for next year."

Bishop Helen-Ann was delighted to receive encouragement at the start of the race from two of her running heroes, Great North Run founder and Olympian Sir Brendan Foster, and BBC newsreader Sophie Raworth, who like our Bishop is a dedicated long-distance runner.

Leanne Conway-Wilcox, diocesan Generous Giving Adviser (pictured on front cover), received her finisher's medal while competing for **United 24**, an organisation dedicated to supporting Ukraine through medical aid and rebuilding devastated communities.

Elaine Breen, diocesan Finance Assistant, joined the race with her nephews as part of 'Team Breen'



Elaine Breen with 'Team Breen'



St Luke's set up a support station on Claremont Road, offering water, sweets and other essentials

running in support of **Prostate Cancer UK**.

Davi and Isabel, attendees of St George's Jesmond, participated to raise funds for **Animal Free Research UK** and the **National Autistic Society**.

John Laws, churchwarden at St Cuthbert's Blyth, was sponsored by parishes in Bedlington Deanery to compete in the run alongside his daughter Joanne. Monies raised will be used to develop ministry outreach opportunities across the deanery.

Sharon Williams, a reader at Morpeth Parish and volunteer hospital chaplain, ran the race with her daughter Rachel to raise funds for **Bright Northumbria**, a charity that supports their local NHS by providing facilities for patients and their



Sharon Williams and her daughter Rachel

families, as well as offering support to staff. So far, they have raised over £1,000!

Others from Newcastle Diocese who took part in the Great North Run include: The Revd Dan McCarthy (Holy Cross Fenham), the Revd Phil Medley (Walker Parish Church), the Revd Claire Lewis (St Mary's Monkseaton), the Revd Lee Kirkby (St Thomas' Newcastle) and Joel Barwick (St Thomas' Newcastle).

Very well done to everyone!

Discerning Mission - our gifts and responsibilities in the 'Season of Seeking'



By The Revd Canon Dr Ric Whaite
Diocesan Director of Mission and Ministry

At the heart of the year of "Seeking" is a shared discernment across the Diocese. This sharing is amongst individuals, groups, parishes, chaplaincies, worshipping communities, deaneries and the Diocese as a whole. Our discernment together is seeking the ways and places God is at work in our lives and shared contexts.

The primary way we are called to do this is prayer. At the forthcoming Diocesan Synod (28 September) we will offer a prayer resource as an invitation to every participant across our diocese, to engage in noticing where God is working in our lives, communities and in the lives of those we have been placed alongside.

Though it is important to pray attentively to notice moments of insight and positivity in our journeys together, the purposes of prayer and discernment need to include enlarging our imaginative capacities to notice God's gracious work in circumstances that might appear to be unpromising.

The invitation of our prayer resource is a simple one. To pray and to discern together. It will be followed later in 2024 by a collection of other resources we can use to develop, amplify and celebrate our prayerful attention to God's activity in the "Season of Seeking". The fruit of such discerning prayer will be in shifting us towards a deeper

engagement with how God is with us and enable us to resist those narratives that emphasise what we feel (or fear) we lack.

The focus is on joy and thanksgiving, sharing and amplifying where we notice God with us and with others. Discerning prayer begins not with problems to solve or anxieties about scarcity but prayers that grow our awareness that we are loved by God. God created you in all your uniqueness, beauty, gifts and weaknesses, and all the parts of us are for God to work in and with. The listening and looking that follows in discernment begins from this compassionate love from God towards us, our neighbours, communities and all creation.



The Revd Canon Dr Ric Whaite

Deanery Development Group planning in the 'Season of Seeking'



By The Revd Canon Dr Ric Whaite
Diocesan Director of Mission and Ministry

A Deanery Development Group (DDG) planning day will take at St Aidan's Morpeth on Saturday 5 October. The focus of the day will be the intergenerational aspects of the Church's mission. We are delighted to welcome as a guest speaker, Mary Hawes.

Until 2022, Mary served as the National Children and Youth Adviser for the Church of England. Since then, she has spoken on children, theology, spirituality and ministry at a variety of diocesan, national and international conferences. Ordained in 2000, she serves

Dates for your diaries



Saturday 15th February 2025

DDG planning morning focused around Generous Giving

Saturday 5th July 2025

DDG Celebration with Bishop Helen-Ann, Newcastle Cathedral

as a priest at St Mary with St Alban, Teddington. In her spare time, she is a school governor and reading support volunteer.

We will also be joined on this occasion by our own Youth and Children's team, Tara Russell and Susan White, and will be hearing brief stories of Good News from around our diocese from DDG members.

If you have any questions about the DGG planning itself, please do get in touch with the Archdeacons. You can do this via the diocesan website [here](#).

Thank you once again for all you are doing in your deaneries and parishes to ensure the flourishing of mission and ministry as we begin our year of Seeking.

From your children, youth
and families team



Seeking  Sharing  Sending

By Tara Russell
Children and Youth Team Leader

“It’s only a toddler group!” Have you ever heard someone say this in your church? All around our diocese there are churches running toddler groups, some of which have been going for decades.

A group aimed at young families and their children is never just a toddler group. It’s a place where children learn to play well with others, to share the toys without coming to blows. It’s a place where children learn vital communication skills and how to express their feelings in an appropriate way for the setting. It’s a place where children can gain new skills, such as manual dexterity when cutting out and sticking.

For the grown-ups, it’s a place where lifelong friendships can be made. It’s a place where they can be supported and listened to. It’s a place

God is at work with our ‘amazing’ toddler groups



where they can be looked after for a short while. Toddler groups provide the church with the opportunity to impact and transform the lives of individuals, families and the entire community.

For churches, toddler groups are an amazing missional opportunity, a chance to place the foundation stones that can be built on for a life of faith. We can tell the Bible stories, pray and model a life of love and grace.

But it shouldn’t all be one-way traffic. We are not the gatekeepers of God’s love or of the work of the Holy Spirit! God moves and speaks through our children just as much as adults. The Growing Faith Foundation has been supporting some research into holiness in early years, and it is so inspiring to hear stories of God working through children under the age of five.

The two-year-olds who took part were observed spontaneously choosing to explore their Bible, pray and/or worship God through song and dance. They were not always able to explain verbally what was happening, but the researchers concluded that both God and child understood each other perfectly. To read more visit [here](#).

Isn’t it wonderful that we worship a God who is able to communicate to everyone, no matter their age, experiences or skills? I wonder how our faith will be strengthened by observing and listening to our small children?

If you would like some support for your existing group or to start a new one, contact Tara at t.russell@newcastle.anglican.org



Environment



By The Revd Tim Mayfield
Bishop's Advisor on the Environment

Harvesting the sun and the wind

Here's an extract from Hannah Ritchie, in her book *Not the End of the World*.

'In just a decade, solar and wind energy have gone from the most to the least expensive. The price of electricity from solar has declined by 89%, and the price of onshore wind has declined by 70%. They are now cheaper than coal. Leaders no longer have to make the difficult choice between climate action and providing energy for their people. The low-carbon choice has suddenly become the economic one. It's staggering how quickly this change has happened.'

And a quiet revolution is happening. I was recently put onto the excellent website **National Grid Live**. National Grid Live updates itself every 15 minutes. It shows how much of our electricity is being generated by coal, gas, wind, solar, nuclear, hydroelectric and biomass.

I've been watching this website closely and keeping records. When I woke up on Thursday June 27th June, my record score for the proportion of our electricity generated by renewables was 66.5%.

Then, across lunchtime that day, the records began to tumble. At 12.20pm, 67.6% of our nation's electricity was being generated by renewables (solar, wind and a very little bit of hydroelectric). By 12.30pm, this had gone up again to 69%... then to 69.7% at 12.45pm, and then to 70.3% at 12.50pm. By 12.55pm the proportion of our electricity generated by renewables was up to 71.3%. And it maxed out at 1.05pm, when 71.7% of this nation's electricity supply was being generated by renewable sources.

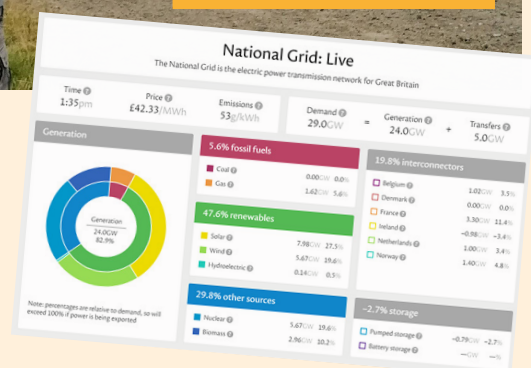
It bears repeating that at 1.05pm on Thursday June 27th, over 71% of this country's electricity needs were being met by renewable sources of energy.



The Revd Tim Mayfield celebrating at Lynemouth Windfarm, and below, a screengrab from the website 'National Grid Live'

For the record, 26.4% of this total was from solar energy and 45.2% from the wind. At this point the grid was generating electricity at £26.50 per megawatt hour and emitting 46 grams of greenhouse gases per kilowatt hour.

There is no downside to this harvesting of the sun and the wind (except perhaps that the grid needs a major overhaul to cope with electricity generated by renewables). The sun sends us wildly more energy than we need. We



live in a windy corner. Why not harness all that free power – crucially with zero carbon emissions once the infrastructure has been manufactured.

Do something exceptional this Generosity Week and beyond



Generous Giving Team – Leanne Conway-Wilcox, Dennis Fancett and Joanne Christie.

By Dennis Fancett
Giving Ministry Adviser

Newcastle Diocese Generosity Week (29th September to 6th October) is about to get underway.

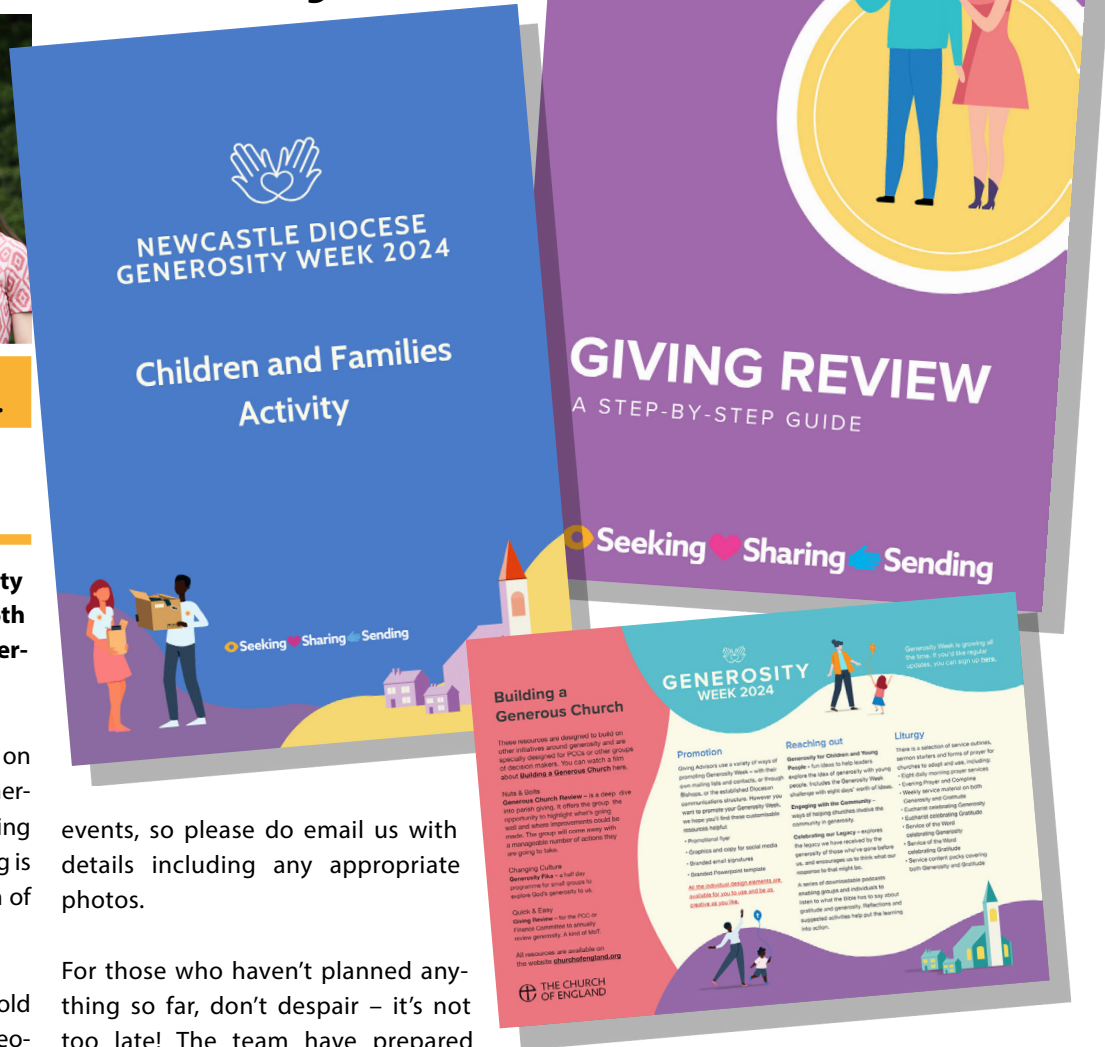
Churches are choosing this week to focus on deepening our understanding of God's generosity to us and our response to Him, reflecting that we are made in his image, and our giving is part of our worship as well as an expression of our commitment to our vision.

Many churches choose this time of year to hold a Giving Review – an opportunity to thank people for what they have given in the last year as well as to take an honest look at overall parish income, the expenditure we need to fulfil the church's vision and mission, and how any shortfall between projected income and expenditure can be addressed.

The Generous Giving Team would love to hear how different churches have got on with their Generosity Week activities and

events, so please do email us with details including any appropriate photos.

For those who haven't planned anything so far, don't despair – it's not too late! The team have prepared generosity focused service plans for both a **Service of the Word** and a **Eucharist Service**, along with an activity to involve children and families. Additionally, on our **Generosity Week web page** you can find a choice of sermon plans or pre-recorded sermons for Sunday 6th October based on either Job 2 (for those following the continuous lectionary) or Psalm 8 (for those following the related pattern).



Contact the team if you need help downloading any of this material or would like the original files of the pre-recorded sermons so they can be used without having to rely on Wi-Fi.

Should your parish wish to hold its **Giving Review** at a different time of year, please do contact the team as there are several resources available both to help you better understand your parish's financial position and any vulnerabilities more easily, and to clearly and effectively communicate your need and vision.

Finally, don't let Generosity Week pass you by. Do something exceptional. Maybe buy someone a gift or do something to meet a need, and prayerfully consider whether you can make a regular gift or increase your existing giving to your church at this time. Remember the words of Jesus; 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' (Acts 20: 35).

Church schools named ‘Schools of Sanctuary’ in North Tyneside

Two church schools in North Tyneside have been awarded Schools of Sanctuary status – recognising their solidarity with and welcome for people seeking safety from war and persecution.

Christ Church CofE Primary School in North Shields, and St Peter’s CofE Primary in Wallsend, have received the title from City of Sanctuary UK, a national network of organisations and services, which welcome and support refugees and those seeking asylum.

The two church schools are among five in North Tyneside to receive the status, following work over the past year with the Wallsend-based refugee support charity Walking With and North Tyneside Learning Trust.

David Baldwin, a local lead for Schools of Sanctuary in North Tyneside alongside Clare Campbell, said the schools have embraced the opportunity to get involved.

“They have been an absolute joy to work with,” he said. “There is such a caring, inclusive feeling the moment you walk through the door. That has been evident in supporting the children’s understanding and the children being at the heart of this process.

“They have had a lot of good things to say



Christ Church CofE Primary School, North Shields

about their schools – but they have also understood why people are being forced to migrate. The children have met people with lived experience, not just talking to them about the reasons for having to migrate, but about them as real people with real talents.”

Gill Booth, Interim Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) said, “As Church of England schools, our vision is for all children to flourish and to work together for the common good of the whole community.

“The Schools of Sanctuary status aligns so well

with our vision as it specifically welcomes children and their families into local schools who need a haven from war and persecution. I am delighted that two of our Church Schools have been successful in achieving this award, having seen at first hand the impact that this has already had. The children and staff in both schools are very proud of the difference that they are making and are keen to continue to listen compassionately and to learn from one another.”

In addition to the two Church of England schools, three other schools in North Tyneside have been awarded the status – Marine Park and Rockcliffe first schools in Whitley Bay, and St Mary’s Catholic Primary School in Forest Hall.

They have all been supported by five schools which became Schools of Sanctuary last year – John Spence Community High, Marden High, Norham High (all North Shields), Richardson Dees Primary, and St Columba’s Catholic Primary (both Wallsend).

Elsewhere in Newcastle Diocese, Central Walker CE Primary School in Newcastle was awarded Schools of Sanctuary status in October 2022, followed by St Paul’s CE Primary in the city in September 2023. Christ Church CE Primary in Newcastle is currently working towards the status.



Wallsend St Peter's CofE Primary School

Illuminated Sheep set to shine at Newcastle Cathedral

A flock of 30 illuminated sheep sculptures, previously seen at Hexham Abbey, will take centre stage in Newcastle Cathedral's autumn programme. The display is part of an urban adventure with two other Tyneside locations: Segedunum Roman Fort in Wallsend and the Toffee Factory, a hub for Newcastle's creative and digital industries.

Led by Queen's Hall Arts, the Illuminated Sheep project first lit up Northumberland to celebrate the arrival of the Lindisfarne Gospels in the North East in 2022.

The flock will visit Newcastle Cathedral in October, with artist Deepa Mann-Kler's multi-coloured light display and specially commissioned soundtrack.

The Very Revd Lee Batson, Dean of Newcastle, said: "We look forward to welcoming visitors and members of the Cathedral community to experience the meditative soundscape and witness the unique sight of the sheep in the historic Cathedral nave.

"The Cathedral serves more than just the city. It is the Mother Church for the entire Diocese of Newcastle, which covers 2,110 square miles, including many rural areas in Northumberland. It's great, therefore, that we're able to celebrate and recognise rural



The illuminated sheep

life in the city centre."

Illuminated Sheep was inspired by the Lindisfarne Gospels' themes of light and pilgrimage. Since their debut, the flock has adorned locations such as The Alnwick Garden and Bamburgh Castle.

The 'illuminated' evenings take place on Tuesday 22 October, Wednesday 23 October and Thursday 24 October – with slots

available from 6:30pm to 8:30pm.

Before the main event, the Cathedral will host a 'Sheep Fest' Family Fun Day on Saturday 19 October, from 10am to 3pm. Families can enjoy craft activities and demonstrations from the Tynedale Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers and even meet real farm animals – all while surrounded by the soon-to-be-illuminated flock of 30 sheep.

For tickets and more information visit [here](#).



Artist Deepa Mann-Kler with flock of illuminated Sheep at Bamburgh Castle



The illuminated sheep were inspired by the Lindisfarne Gospels

Choirs to unite from Newcastle and Cologne cathedrals



Newcastle Cathedral Choir

Newcastle Cathedral will host 'Voices United', an extraordinary evening of choral music, on Wednesday 16 October at 7pm.

This special event will bring together Newcastle Cathedral's Girl Choristers and Senior Girls' Choir with the esteemed Cologne Cathedral Girls' Choir for a unique and joyous, celebration of music.

Founded in 1989, the Cologne Cathedral Girls' Choir is one of Germany's premier youth choirs, led by cathedral cantor Oliver Sperling. Known for their exceptional performances, they are regularly heard during Sunday services and concerts at the iconic Cologne Cathedral and the Cologne Philharmonic Hall on the stage of the Cologne Opera and across nearly every continent through extensive international tours.

Newcastle Cathedral's choristers are a testament to the Cathedral's dedication to nurturing young talent from across the region. The choristers, drawn from various local schools, benefit from a high-quality musical education programme that reflects the Cathedral's commitment to welcoming people from diverse backgrounds.

In line with many Anglican cathedrals, girls were welcomed into the Cathedral's music department in the early 2000s. The Girls' Choir has quickly grown in prominence and now plays an integral role in the cathedral's daily life. The musical foundation at the Cathedral is led by Director of Music Ian Roberts, and the female members today outnumber their male counterparts.

The concert will feature a joint repertoire performed by the combined choirs, promising an evening of unforgettable music in the Cathedral's stunning surroundings.

For more information visit [here](#).



Cologne MC Dom

Cathedral organ appeal aims to preserve our musical heritage

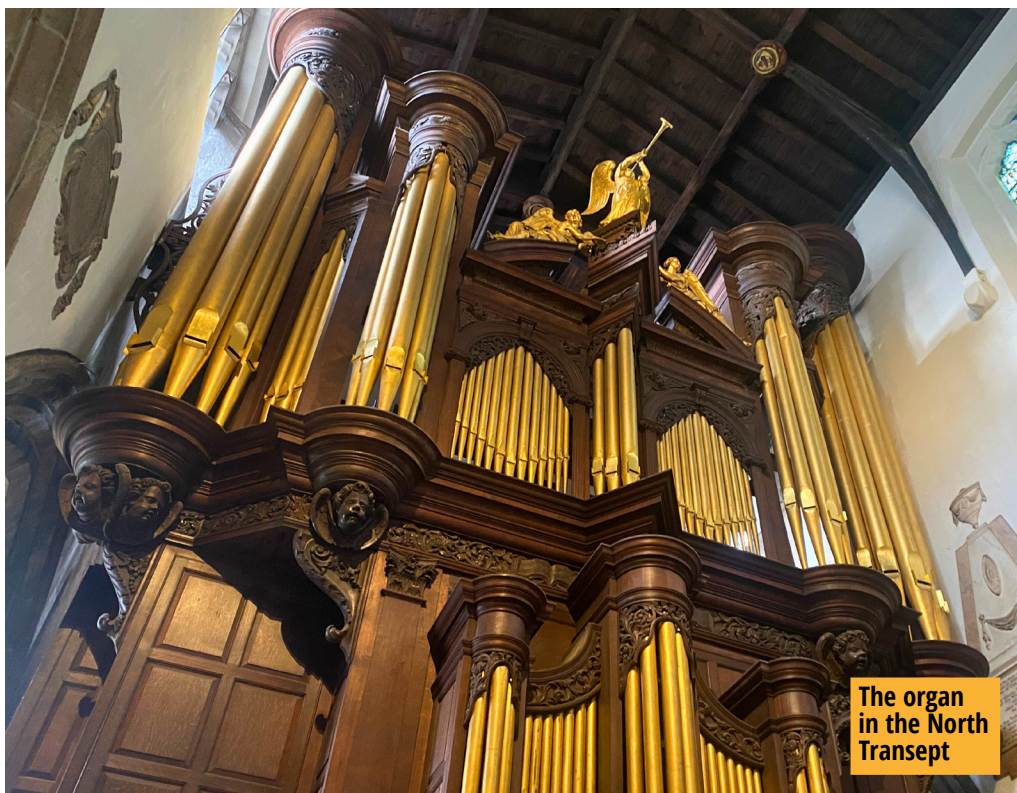
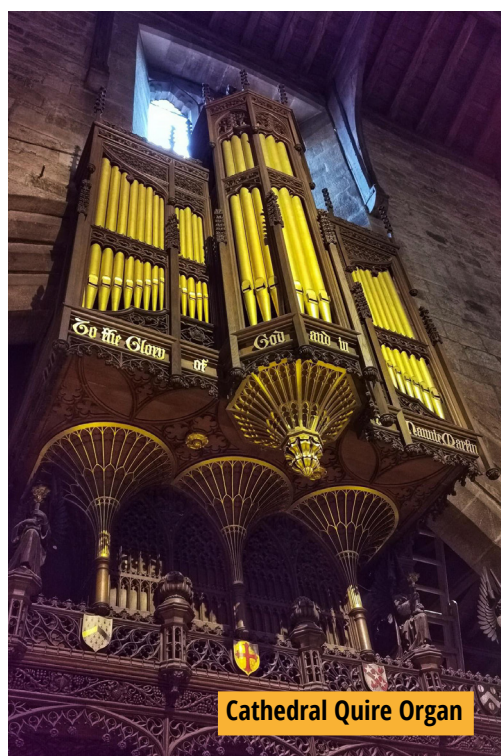
Newcastle Cathedral has recently launched its 'Not Just a Pipe Dream' fundraising appeal to preserve its historic organ.

A vital part of daily worship, choral performances and special services, the organ has served the community for centuries, but it is now in need of a significant rebuild to ensure its continued role in the Cathedral's life.

The organ's origins date back to the Harris organ of 1676, famously played by composer Charles Avison. Over the centuries, it has undergone numerous renovations, reflecting both changing musical tastes and the practical needs of choirs and congregations.

Today, the organ boasts over 5,600 pipes and 94 speaking stops, making it one of the largest in Northern England. However, parts of the instrument have not been updated for decades, making it increasingly unreliable.

Ian Roberts, the Cathedral's Director of Music, said: "The organ is central to our music programme, which includes over 100 children in our training choirs and Schools Singing Pro-



gramme. Our vision is to enhance lives through musical education and singing opportunities."

The instrument comprises two distinct entities in separate areas of the Cathedral. The first phase will focus on rebuilding the Quire organ, followed by an overhaul of the main sections in the North Transept. To achieve this, the Cathedral has various fundraising initiatives underway as it seeks to raise £500,000.

Supporters can make donations, sponsor a pipe, or even enjoy a grand organ playing experience.

The project will benefit individuals such as James Watson, the Cathedral's second-year organ scholar and an undergraduate music student at Newcastle University.

He said: "The organ is very important, because as well as the services that we do every week, there's all the extra things that happen – there's Monday recitals and services like the ordinations.

"My scholarship has been really useful for my



development as a Cathedral musician, which is what I hope to pursue as a career."

Contributions to the organ appeal will help preserve the organ's ability to inspire and enrich the community and the life of the Cathedral for generations to come.

To learn more and donate, please visit [here](#).

LIKE A METAPHOR

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



Photographs of God

Many years ago, I travelled the length of the country to help run a youth camp on a farm in the middle of nowhere in Cornwall. I brought back a banner we had made by stapling a bed sheet to a pair of bamboo canes and spray-painting in bright colours: “Remember your creator, while you are still young” (Ecc. 12:1). It remained part of my home decoration for years and, although it is long gone, I can see it now.

I’m no longer “still young”; I wouldn’t say I was living through the “days of trouble” that the rest of the final chapter of Ecclesiastes describes but there’s more space for looking back in my life than there once was.

In his poem, “Where Jesus Touched the Earth”, Steve Turner describes attempting to connect with Jesus on a visit to the Holy Land but finding himself frustrated by the industry and the sheer accretion of history that had built up around and over the holy sites before realising that Jesus still touches the earth - through us.

My church is celebrating its diamond jubilee this year. One of the events during the year of celebrations is a photographic exhibition. It opened whilst we were out of town, so I walked into church on Sunday morning, not quite sure what to expect - probably boards with a few large prints of the church building through the years, which had been moved out of the way for the service.

I was not expecting hundreds of four-by-six snapshots arranged thematically ALL around the walls of the sanctuary. The church was covered in pictures of people from every step of its history. I’m a relative newcomer to the congregation and I don’t recognise the faces or remember the events but seeing the scale of the life of this congregation stretching back in time was quite an experience - reminder after reminder that, although the building is important, it is the people of the congregation who are celebrating 60 years of being the living body of Christ in their small suburb.

As we carry on living our lives in our neighbourhoods, not knowing what pictures will be taken, what keepsakes will be brought home, or whose lives we will touch, may we respond to the image of God in those we meet and may our feet be placed where Jesus touches the earth.

Volunteering vicar honoured with King’s Medal



The Revd Mark Edwards MBE received his medal from Paul Brolly

A parish priest in Newcastle Diocese has received the prestigious King’s Medal for his outstanding commitment as an emergency service volunteer.

The honour was bestowed upon the Revd Mark Edwards MBE, vicar of St Matthew’s Dinnington and St Cuthbert’s within Christ the King Team Ministry, acknowledging his dedication to public service through his work with the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS).

For over a decade, Mark has served as a volunteer community first responder with NEAS, offering crucial medical assistance and support to individuals facing medical emergencies within his community. His dedication to responding to medical emergency calls, even amidst his responsibilities as a priest, exemplifies his extraordinary

commitment to the service of others.

Paul Brolly, community resuscitation officer and community first responder co-ordinator and trainer for NEAS, presented the King’s Medal to Mark.

Paul said, “Mark is not only skilled in offering medical assistance, but he also provides invaluable support and comfort during challenging times for service users and their families. His presence as a first responder on and off duty has been an immense asset to the community, and we are incredibly fortunate to have him as part of the NEAS team. He is an excellent ambassador for the Church.”

The King’s Medal is a special commemorative honour bestowed upon serving front-line members of the emergency services, prison services, and the Armed Forces.

Art and Eco fair brings together creativity and sustainability

The whole community joined together as St Mary's Monkseaton hosted an art and eco fair on Saturday 7th September.

The environmentally focused event welcomed no fewer than 27 stallholders, who showcased various community projects with art and eco themes.

Organised in line with the Caring for God's Creation initiative and as part of the church mission at St Mary's, the day was a resounding success. Eco champion Marion Oakes said the event engaged both the Church and the wider community.

She explained: "We wanted to bring together people who are passionate about sustainable living, combating climate change and caring for nature.

"We were excited by the diversity of stalls. It was an amazing gathering of talented, caring people. The unknown factor was whether the community would come to the fair. Thankfully, the advertising and the grapevine was effective, and it was well attended.

The event was co-organised by Marion Oakes (eco) and Kate Taylor (arts).



St Mary's Art Eco Fair

Footsteps in Faith by Mothers' Union



The recent Footsteps in Faith day at Morpeth

Mothers' Union (MU) members from north, south, east and west of the diocese gathered in Morpeth for an exhibition and to share tales of their own 'Footsteps in Faith'.

Shoes of all shapes and styles made an appearance as members reflected on their faith-in-action journey together.

The stories were woven into midday prayers along with songs, smiles and even a dance. MU members pray that everyone in the Diocese will be blessed as they make their own 'footsteps in faith'.

Summer was brill in Battle Hill

Many churches often pause their regular activities during the school holidays. This year, Church of the Good Shepherd in Battle Hill, North Tyneside, decided to use this opportunity to reach out to their local community in new ways.

The Revd Julie Mooney said: "I really like the changing seasons in ministry. Whilst many of our regular meetings stop during the school holidays, it gives us an opportunity to reach out in mission in a different way."

Over the summer, the church forged a stronger partnership with local Girlguiding Brownies and Rainbows groups.

Julie added: "This is wonderful because one of the Girlguiding leaders, Jo, is the granddaughter of the late Norman Fritze, who was a dear member of our church family."

The two groups were able to help the Church of the Good Shepherd as it strives to take better care of God's creation, building a range of beautiful bird and insect huts for the church.

They also joined forces to host a bingo night with prizes of sweets and soft toys.

The event was well attended by members of the congregation, members of the local community and friends from Charlton Court Care Home.

A family fun day at the neighbouring Northumbria Police headquarters in Battle Hill provided another opportunity to promote the church and its activities. Invitations to

church were distributed and police vehicles tested out. The team spent time speaking to police officers, thanking them for all the work they do and assuring them of their prayers.

Alongside neighbouring churches and the local authority as part of the Rising Sun Neighbours Group, the church took part in

the annual Rising Sun Festival. Amongst the stalls, fairground rides and food, the group gave out invitations to church and provided craft stalls, where children had the opportunity to craft a sheep.

It was a very successful summer indeed!



Open day puts Newburn church on the map



Bishop Helen-Ann and the Revd Allison Harding with teddy bears made in their image



Bishop Helen-Ann with Labour MP Joe Morris

By The Revd Allison Harding

Jesus said that Christians should be like a city on a hill and should be seen by all around. One of the churches that I am vicar of – St Michael's and All Angels, Newburn – is on a hill but can't be seen from any distance, because of buildings and trees between the church and the road.

This was highlighted to me when a couple who live in the parish told me that they were getting married elsewhere - because they hadn't realised that there was a church close to them.

So, we decided that it was important to hold an event that would let the community know where the church was and that we are a great group of people. We opted for an open fun day with a focus on families, on the day when we would normally hold Messy Church.

Extensive planning, publicising and church cleaning took place in preparation for the day, but the rain came teaming down all morning. Thankfully, it didn't put people off and the church was packed. We were delighted to be joined by Bishop Helen-Ann and our new Labour MP Joe Morris.

Tours of the bell tower were sold out, the choir sang, and Bishop Helen-Ann spoke about being part of a team. She rang the mini bells and sang in the choir as well as having conversations with many of the people there.

The children took part in crafts and games, refreshments were served and even our dog Bailey was part of the entertainment, happily soaking up all the attention the children gave him.

The climax to the afternoon was a teddy bear parachute competition. Every child was given a

knitted teddy that had been made by people from the parish but mainly one person - Sandra Hope. Bishop Helen-Ann loved the special teddy knitted in her image!

Everyone was invited to make a parachute for their teddy and they were dropped from the top of the bell tower, with the aim being for it to take as long as possible for it to reach the ground. Isaac McClurg was a worthy winner of the competition, with a brilliantly designed parachute which caused his teddy to sway from side to side as it slowly made its way from the top of the tower. Bishop Helen-Ann and I were a long way down the field.

A good time was had by all. We would, of course, like people to join us every week as part of a worshipping community. But at least they now know where we are, which is a big step in the right direction.

Enormous embroidery heads to Hexham Abbey to explore creation in the Bible



From 9 October to 23 November, Hexham Abbey will play host to 'Threads through Creation', a stunning exhibition of 12 enormous, embroidered silk panels, which explore the story of creation in the Bible.

Inspired by the first pages of Genesis, textile artist Jacqui Parkinson re-imagines the story in a vibrant combination of layers of silk, hand-dyed materials, metallic leathers and gold leaf, miles of thread – and more than eight million stitches!

The panels are huge – almost 3m high – and vary from elemental pieces illustrating the first days, to highly complex, rich work as we enter the Garden of Eden. Touring English cathedrals and major churches this year, it's one of the largest ever textile art projects by a single person and took three years to complete.

Jacqui Parkinson's work is eye-catching and attractive, designed to be accessible for viewers of all ages. Whilst the serious context of God's good earth and man's



impact on it underlies the entire exhibition, the embroidery itself is bold and exuberant, and fun too with many delightful quirky details such as both accurate and fanciful creatures embroidered into the stories.

Jacqui said: "It's a pleasure to have the exhibition in Hexham Abbey, such a lovely gem of a building. And the creation story is a lovely gem in the Bible. I hope the panels will add a sparkle to everyone's visit here.

"My aim is to capture the wonderful extravagance of the creation story and to delight people who view it. Despite Adam and Eve's fall from grace, it remains a story of love and promise, something we can all do with these days."

Threads through Creation runs at Hexham Abbey from 9 October to 23 November. Admission is free.

For more details visit [here](#).

Christian Aid Gaza Appeal



A family in Gaza City looks at an apartment block that has been destroyed by a missile strike

Picture: Christian Aid

Over the past year, the conflict in Gaza has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and injuries, causing immense destruction. Nearly 2 million Palestinians have been displaced, facing severe hunger and disease. Civilians, including Israeli hostages, have borne the brunt of this violence.

Thanks to generous donations from churches in the Newcastle Diocese and across the UK, over £2.2 million has been raised to support humanitarian efforts in Gaza. Through trusted partners, Christian Aid has reached over 800,000 people, providing psychological support, medical relief, shelter, sanitation and food through community-led kitchens. However, with supplies running dangerously low, urgent help is needed.

The Agricultural Development Association (PARC), one of Christian Aid's partners, highlight-

By Helen Cunningham (Church Engagement & Fundraising Officer – North East & Cumbria) and William Bell (Christian Aid Head of Middle East)

ed the desperation in Gaza, with many people breaking into tears upon receiving food — often the first aid they've had in months.

Christian Aid is working with partners in dangerous conditions, delivering critical support where it's most needed. To prevent further loss of life, Christian Aid is calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire to address the humanitarian crisis.

Every donation and prayer makes a difference, offering hope to those caught in the conflict.

Churches are encouraged to continue supporting through donations, prayers and community efforts, including ordering emergency appeal envelopes for collections or hosting peace vigils. Churches can also host showings of *The Tinderbox*, a film exploring the ongoing injustice and conflict in Israel and Palestine.

If the conflict escalates across the Middle East, Christian Aid will direct resources to where they are needed most. By coming together now, we can help people survive and rebuild their lives, hoping for a peaceful future.

Visit caid.org.uk/gazaresources or call 08080 005 005 for more information, to order resources, or to join the Gaza online vigil on 7 October.

