

SPRING 2025

LINK

The magazine for the Diocese of Newcastle

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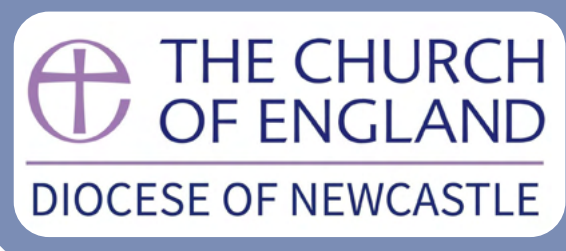
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About this magazine

Feedback: communications@newcastle.anglican.org

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

A message from Bishop Mark

‘Space. The final frontier. These are the voyages...’

So began umpteen adventures of Star Trek as we journeyed with the crew of the Starship Enterprise into strange new worlds.

I have been struck by ‘space’ in various ways recently.

First, by the space afforded by my recent sabbatical. The first part put serious space, 10,000 miles, between me and the UK as I journeyed in Australia with family, friends and colleagues, including our sisters and brothers in the Diocese of Newcastle, New South Wales. Much of it felt like a strange new world: wildlife, flora and fauna, layers of history and culture, discovering familiar place names in an unknown landscape, and heading towards Christmas in the summer! But even in strange places, still a sense of our Creator God working out Kingdom purposes, bringing people and places to life.

Secondly, by the gift of space to simply stop, think and pray. When so much of life is pressured by diaries or instant demands, sabbatical offered me a generous sabbath. Sabbath for all of us is the privilege of a rest, which doesn’t demand productivity or achievement. When Psalm 31 speaks of God setting our feet in a ‘spacious place’ another Bible version addresses God who ‘gave me room to breathe.’ Sabbath is something we are all called to, not as a ‘nice to have’ extra when we ‘find the time’, but regularly as part of a lifestyle dependent on God and not on ourselves. How do we offer this gift to one another?

Thirdly, I am struck by the space God offers us to be ourselves. For me on sabbatical, it was space to catch up with myself and remember who I am. Over the years, I find myself asking, ‘What’s the Bishop of Berwick for?’ Maybe you’ve asked the same question! I am reminded to rephrase the question, and to ask instead, ‘Who am I for?’



**The Rt Revd Mark Wroe,
Bishop of Berwick**

(Re)discovering ourselves is not something we do in a matter of weeks or months; it takes a lifetime lived before God. Psalm 18 reminds me:

*‘He brought me out into a spacious place;
he rescued me because he delighted in me.’*

God gives us a space to discover we are redeemed and to recognise the truth that God delights in us. This space doesn’t require us to travel great distances, but does need our effort to stop and make time to breathe and prayer. The Church’s liturgical calendar offers us the period of Lent and Holy Week where we might be more intentional about making space. Yet the sheer reality of life is that too often space is squeezed more and more by all sorts of things, many of them

even good and valuable.

Lent ends with a dramatic reality check at the foot of a cross, which dares us to stop and look up to see the blood, sweat and tears of the star-maker and space-giver. Does that give us pause to stop and breathe?

And if not the pause of life on Good Friday afternoon or the stillness of Holy Saturday, how about the breaking open of a tomb on Easter Day? A new age invading our space, breaking open the final frontier and inviting us into the new creation: God’s resurrection life right here and now. Space for a new world and a new adventure – a space to breathe.

Bishop Mark

Bishop Helen-Ann praises 'incredible' bag pack for Love Grace Appeal



Bishop Helen-Ann pictured with volunteers at the bag pack

Diane Bayley, Elizabeth Lee (Grace's cousin) and Bishop Helen-Ann

Bishop Helen-Ann has hailed a memorable bag pack which concluded a very special campaign in support of Love Grace – Handbag Appeal.

The Bishop's Christmas Appeal boosted the Love Grace campaign in the North East, with no fewer than 376 handbags filled at the Tyne-mouth bag pack, following collections at our churches and at other venues across the region.

The Bishop's Christmas Appeal ran well into the new year, with churches collecting handbags and other items to go inside them, until 31 January.

In early February, a team of 50 volunteers gathered at Holy Saviour's Village Hall in Tyne-mouth, where each handbag was filled with both essential and luxury items, ranging from toiletries to knitted hats and gift sets - and each one finished with a Love Grace tag.

The Love Grace appeal was set up in memory of British backpacker Grace Millane, who was tragically murdered while backpacking in New Zealand in 2018, aged just 22.

Grace loved handbags, which inspired the appeal. Handbags are filled with useful items and donated to women in need, including

those who have suffered domestic abuse.

Bishop Helen-Ann, who was pleased to meet members of Grace's family on the day, said: "It was wonderful to visit the Love Grace grand bag pack at Holy Saviour. It was an incredible morning and the bags will go to local refuges for women affected by abuse.

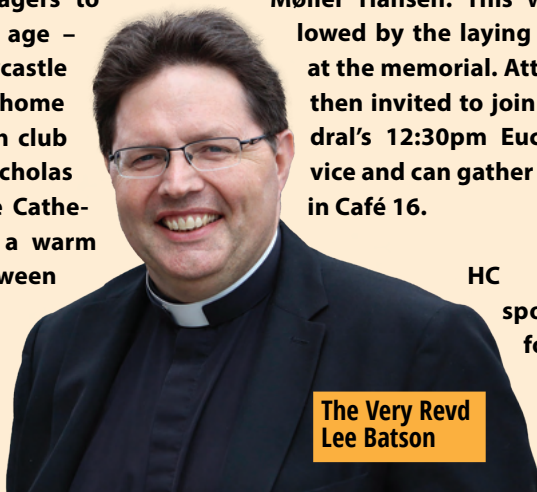
"Thanks to everyone in our churches who have generously donated handbags and other items, and organised collection points. The appeal has been so well supported and as a diocese we have helped to make a difference."

Newcastle's bond with Denmark to be celebrated in VE Day service

VE Day 2025 marks 80 years since the end of World War II, with churches and communities marking the occasion through special events and tributes. Newcastle Cathedral will commemorate the date with a unique service honouring Danish merchant seamen, known as the 'war sailors', whose international memorial is housed within the Cathedral.

After Germany occupied Denmark in April 1940, more than 6,000 Danish sailors – ranging from teenagers to those nearing retirement age – supported the Allies. Newcastle became their designated 'home port' in 1941 and a Danish club was established in St Nicholas Buildings, across from the Cathedral. Many sailors found a warm welcome in the city between voyages.

Tragically, around 2,000 lost their lives. Their bravery is remembered



The Very Revd Lee Batson

in a Cathedral memorial unveiled in 1982, alongside a commemorative window added in 2002. Each year, the Danish Church in Newcastle holds a service, typically near 5 May, Danish Liberation Day.

This year, due to the significance of the anniversary, the service will take place on VE Day, Thursday, 8 May. It will begin at 11:30am with a short service in the Quire led by the Danish pastor from the Danish church in London, Mr Karsten Møller Hansen. This will be followed by the laying of wreaths at the memorial. Attendees are then invited to join the Cathedral's 12:30pm Eucharist service and can gather afterwards in Café 16.

HC Anderson, spokesperson for the Danish Church in Newcastle,

says, "We are deeply grateful to Newcastle Cathedral for continuing to keep the stories and experiences of these sailors and their families alive. All the surviving war sailors had to live with the memories of convoy duty. Normal life was hard to resume for the many who returned to Denmark and many chose to stay in the UK, which had been their home for five years."

The Very Revd Lee Batson, Dean of Newcastle, adds, "Newcastle has long been a place of sanctuary and this tradition continues today through the Cathedral Lantern Project. It's an honour to be part of commemorating Danish Liberation Day and the national VE Day celebrations".

The service will honour the contribution of the Danish war sailors, remember those who lost their lives, and celebrate the enduring bond between Newcastle and Denmark. All are welcome. More details at newcastlecathedral.org.uk/whats-on.

Hannah O'Callaghan, of the Love Grace Team, said: "A total of 376 bags were collected and distributed to women's charities around Newcastle, Sunderland, Middlesbrough and as far down as Thirsk.

"I have received messages of thanks from the charities and individual messages from ladies who received a handbag. Many saw it as a sign of hope, so that's 376 smiles you all created."

Hannah expressed her thanks to Bishop Helen-Ann, organisers Diane Bayley and Elizabeth Lee (Grace's cousin), and all who volunteered to help on the day of the bag pack, and to everyone who generously donated to the appeal, which was a huge success.

Since the Love Grace appeal's inception, more than 23,000 women in the UK, New Zealand USA, Canada and Singapore have received a Love Grace handbag.



Handbags are filled with useful items and donated to women in need

High acclaim for the Maundy Money recipients from Newcastle Diocese

Congratulations to the recipients from Newcastle Diocese who have been chosen to receive this year's Maundy Money! His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen will attend the service on 17 April, at Durham Cathedral, where they will present Maundy Money to 152 recipients - 76 men and 76 women - honouring their exceptional Christian service and reflecting the King's age.

We invite you to read more about some of the inspiring individuals receiving this special Maundy gift.



Canon Alan Hughes MBE TD VR, pictured above, was nominated directly by The Crown for service and asked to be accompanied by his wife Susan for her unfailing support.

Sally Milner

Long-serving chaplain Sally Milner is among those from Newcastle Diocese to receive Maundy Money this spring.

Over the years, Sally's listening ear and compassionate tone have supported many people, including school pupils and staff.

Sally has served as chaplain to Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust since 2012, working across seven primaries, one secondary, and one specialist school.

The honour comes 20 years after Sally initially joined the diocese as secretary to the director of education, a role she held from 2005 to 2008, before moving on to work as school chaplain at St Aidan's Church of England Secondary in Darlington.



"It is a blessing to be a chaplain," said Sally. "I have two ears and a mouth, and people have to be really listened to. You must give them time and space and look at them with compassion and the steadfast love that God shows so supremely."

Originally from Coventry, Sally studied theology at Durham University and she feels at home in the North East.

Her local parish is Seaton Hirst, Ashington, where she is a member of the PCC and occasionally gets invited to preach. She is also a member of Morpeth

deanery synod.

"I would never expect to receive Maundy Money," said Sally. "But it's nice to have that recognition."

Janice Robinson

Janice is a lay minister in the Benefice of Mitford and Hebron and the Upper Wansbeck Churches, and a churchwarden in the parish of Mitford.

She is Morpeth Deanery lay chair and has taken an active part in supporting the Deanery Development Plan, helping to build up relationships between laity and clergy and facilitating the sharing of resources across parish boundaries.

In addition, Janice is a hospital chaplain for Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust at Alnwick Infirmary and serves

as an Anna Chaplain.

She has an active funeral ministry throughout the deanery and feels that supporting and helping people through bereavement is both rewarding and a privilege.



Over the years, Janice has been involved in Tritlington Church of England First School in the parish of Hebron, where she served as a governor, helping with collective worship and supporting pupils and staff.

"It was overwhelming to find out I am to receive Maundy Money," said Janice. "It's such a wonderful honour."

Peter Brown

Architect Peter Brown has used his professional skills in support of the Diocese, its churches and schools over many years.

Peter is deputy chair of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), a role in which he advises parishes on architectural matters.

Although now retired from his day job, Peter was a partner with Darbyshire Architects in Newcastle and during a fascinating career, he worked with both English Heritage and the National Trust on conservation projects.

Carol Griffiths

Carol's home church is St Paul's, North Sunderland, where she has served as PCC secretary and safeguarding officer. She also worships at St Aidan's, Bamburgh.

At both PCC and diocesan level, Carol is utterly committed to all things green and eco. She was delighted when St Paul's recently received planning permission for solar panels.

Carol is a member of the Diocesan Environment Working Group, the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC), the diocesan minor repairs group, and attends both deanery and diocesan synods – duties she describes as "real red-letter days."

As deanery secretary in Bamburgh and Glendale, Carol has a great sense of community and is currently sharing in the Authorised Lay Ministry (ALM) core module training, which she hopes to follow with pastoral ministry.

Empathy and good listening are among her many qualities. Carol has



experience of pastoral visiting for people who are housebound due to illness or age.

Carol works at Bamburgh Castle, where she is entranced by the history, and volunteers weekly as a Citizens' Advice Bureau advisor.

"Never, in my wildest dreams did it cross my mind I would be invited to receive Maundy Money in Durham Cathedral," said Carol. "It was the biggest shock of my life and such an honour."

His main expertise, however, was in school buildings. He undertook many projects, designing new schools, school extensions, alterations and repairs in both Church of England and Catholic schools and was architect to St John's College and Cranmer Hall, Durham, for quarter of a century. In retirement, he is a member of the St John's College Estates Committee and continues to offer advice on building matters.



Peter has a long association with Newcastle Central deanery. He was a member of the PCC at All Saints

Church, Gosforth, for 41 years, most as lay chair, until stepping down last year, but he remains an active member of the church and continues to worship there.

Peter's membership of Newcastle Central deanery synod lasted for over 30 years, serving as lay chair for six years overlapping as deanery finance officer, a post he then continued to hold for almost 25 years.

"I was absolutely astonished to receive a letter from Buckingham Palace," said Peter, "but it is a tremendous honour."

Liz Kerry

Following a career in public service, Liz retired from Yorkshire to Northumberland and played a key role at both parish and diocesan level.

In the Parish of Upper Coquetdale, Liz has served as a PCC member for 17 years in roles including PCC secretary, vice chair and churchwarden.



She served in various diocesan roles until stepping down last year. These included chair of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, vice chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, trustee of the Diocesan Society, as a member of Bishop's Council and both deanery and diocesan synods.

Liz had a distinguished career in civil service regional offices – including a number of external secondments – finally serving as Director of Regeneration for six years.

Liz left the civil service when she was appointed chief executive of the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly. She was also a non-executive director of Yorkshire Water plc, a university governor, a member of various national public policy forums, and a commissioner developing standards of good governance.

This range of experience all fuelled Liz's interest in and commitment to partnership working, 'joining up', governance and service.

Liz, who is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and remains active at Upper Coquetdale, said: "I was absolutely stunned when the letter came from the Palace. It is most certainly a huge honour."

Behind the headlines: a thriving worship community at Bamburgh's historic church

A church with a rich history made national headlines after being named among the top village churches in Britain.

St Aidan's, Bamburgh, which attracts over 20,000 visitors every year, was named as one of the Daily Telegraph's 15 finest village churches.

Tourists flock to the site, dating back to AD635, to see its many historic features, including a fascinating crypt, the Bamburgh Bones project and St Aidan's shrine, as well as a monument to local heroine Grace Darling.

But while the Revd Canon Louise Taylor-Kenyon, Vicar of St Aidan's, is delighted with the recognition, she is keen to stress that it is far more than a tourist attraction.

"This is wonderful recognition," said Louise. "It's great that our history is appreciated and celebrated and we enjoy welcoming visitors from near and far every year.

"First and foremost, however, we are a parish



A concert in St Aidan's at Bamburgh

church and a place of worship. There is a thriving worshipping community here, with a dedicated congregation of local people, together with regular and one off visitors, and we have strong links with the community. Many local

people who don't come to church on a Sunday value St Aidan's and see it as an integral part of the village, spending quiet time here during the week and helping out in various ways.

"As well as tourists, we have regular visitors who have a special connection to the church. Many couples who get married here like to come back because they don't feel like strangers, they feel welcomed as part of the church community."

St Aidan's continues to educate the younger generation, with school visits a regular part of church life. These have been enhanced by a recent project, which has led to a new kitchen and toilet facilities at the back of church.

"We've revamped the old vestry and storage space to accommodate the new facilities," said Louise. "We now have an accessible toilet while the kitchen allows us to have hospitality after



Angela Nixon, Gillian Bardgett and Linda Kirby serve tea and coffee from the new kitchen



Enjoying food and company in St Aidan's

services and at events such as when renowned music critic and musician David Cairns (aged 98) conducted a very successful orchestral concert here in March, and at a forthcoming Earth Hour supper by candlelight.

"We have a regular programme of talks, concerts and other events, but the building is primarily a place of worship, of prayer and of pilgrimage, and I don't think we have a day in the year when no one lights a candle. We welcome people to this remarkable space every day to visit and to pray."

St Aidan's is one of three churches in the Bamburgh Belford and Lucker benefice, the other two being St Mary's Belford and St Hilda's Lucker.

For more information visit:
www.staidanbamburgh.co.uk/



Linda Kirby lights a candle in the prayer space

Reaching for the skies as an air cadet chaplain



Dr Malcolm Toft

Air cadets are hungry for knowledge and working with them is so invigorating. That's the verdict of Dr Malcolm Toft, chaplain of 131 City of Newcastle Squadron of the RAF Air Cadets, and Deputy Wing Chaplain for Durham and Northumberland (north of the Tyne).

Malcolm has just returned from a special service and parade to mark the 84th anniversary of the Air Training Corps (ATC), which was formed in February 1941.

He was joined by Cllr George Gallagher, High Sheriff and Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear, 120 cadets, civilian instructors and uniformed staff at the event, which took place at St George's Jesmond, where Malcolm also serves as a lay reader.

It is one of several big services where they proudly represent the squadron each year, with others including the Battle of Britain commemoration in September and Remembrance services in November.

From the formality of ceremonial occasions to the front lines of flying, training and taking part in a variety of sports, Malcolm supports girls and boys aged 12 and over in every aspect of their journey.

But while the cadets focus on the adventures of service and action, Malcolm and his chaplaincy colleagues are there to support them through the everyday challenges of life.

"It's a huge privilege to be an air cadet chaplain," said Malcolm. "It's an exhilarating environment and we are alongside them. We are there to support and encourage, and also to guide them through any difficult issues they may be facing."

Like all young people, cadets can be faced with bereavement. Problems at school can include bullying, while there may be other challenges related to gender and sexuality.

"It really can be anything at all," said Malcolm. "We are there to listen and to talk - and being part of what they do as cadets helps us to earn their trust."

"Not all cadets will embark on a military career. Some will remain with the cadets as volunteers and in some cases, find that they want to become chaplains themselves."

Air cadet chaplains deliver the core values of

A padre's role as Air Cadets tackle life's big issues

From escaping a warzone to surviving in poverty with limited food and medicine, cadets simulate real-life crises through team games with their chaplain.

The Revd Catherine Macpherson, of St Mary's Church in Blyth, is chaplain for the 1,000th Blyth Squadron, which she has served for the past four years.

In her monthly Hour with the Padre sessions, Catherine tackles tough topics like bullying, using cadet principles (RISE) and her faith to connect real-world issues with humour and camaraderie.

"Being a cadet helps them to develop leadership skills and responsibility. It prepares them for life," said Catherine.

"I'm there for all cadets, regardless of faith, so I don't lay God on too thick but I

share a Christian perspective, and they ask questions. Sessions have included Godly play and Christian Aid's work.

"Of course, there are fun aspects, like building paper aircraft to protect six dozen hard boiled eggs! At New Year we looked at what they are seeking to achieve in the next 12 months, as they wrote a letter to their future self.

"I link in all that I do with their ethos. We look at the practical, relational, ethical and spiritual aspects of our lives and their challenges.

"One thing I really appreciate is how the senior cadets have a big role. They lead sessions and they command an authority among the other cadets."

She added: "I came to St Mary's in 2020

during the pandemic, inheriting the role of squadron chaplain from my predecessor. I wasn't too keen at first, but I've grown into the role and now look forward to squadron nights.

"I feel the relationship between the cadets and the church is growing stronger. The cadets faced challenges after the pandemic but over the past year, our numbers have increased to around 32. With this growth, they've resumed helping at church events like the Harvest collection for the foodbank and the Christmas fair. They've also attended church for the town nativity, Air Training Corps (ATC) Sunday, and their annual dining-in night.

"It's great that through the ATC-church link, we can help each other and the wider Blyth community."

respect, integrity, service and excellence (RISE). Some chaplains focus on the pastoral aspects of the role (supporting staff as well as cadets), while others are also involved with the leading of cadet-based activities.

Outside of church and cadet life, Malcolm is a professional engineer. He is evidence that becoming a padre need not be overly time consuming – unless you want it to be!

"We need more chaplains," stressed Malcolm. "To become one, you'll need to do 16 hours of training up front (which really helps those who start off knowing little about us!), but after that the core commitment is one evening per month.

"Those who do get involved find it invigorating. We are reaching people who the church is not reaching in other ways."

To be a chaplain, you must have an authorised ministry, which does include authorised lay ministry, and retired clergy who have permission to officiate.

For more information email Malcolm at: depchap.dnl@rafac.mod.gov.uk or Wing Chaplain Revd Alun Hurd at: chaplain.dnl@rafac.mod.gov.uk.



Air Cadets attend a service and parade held at St George's Church in Jesmond for ATC Sunday

Photo: Michael Moyle of 1156 (Whitley Bay) Squadron

Light display draws the crowds to Whitley Bay



A spectacular light display both inside and outside of a Whitley Bay church attracted more than 1,000 people.

Lightwaves took place for the second year running at St Paul's Church, featuring a series of sculptures of various shapes and sizes, ranging from an illuminated church ceiling to colourful creations of animals, robots and other themes.

The exhibition, which took place on the evening of Saturday 15 February, featured sculptures made by local artists accompanied by specially composed calming music (inside only), as visitors walked a light trail around St Paul's and its grounds after dark.

"It was a wonderful day," said the Revd John Vilaseca. "The weather was a bit cold and damp but it didn't stop a remarkable number of people turning out and supporting this community event. It brightened up everyone's evening and there was a real sense of community."

"The sculptures were stunning. People were amazed by them and it is no surprise that Lightwaves proved to be so popular."

"Last year we had 800 people for the inaugural event, so we were delighted to welcome over 1,000 this time. There were people of all ages and it was great to see children enjoying the display with their parents and relatives."

The exhibition started as darkness was falling at 5.30pm but it was an all-day event for the

Community schools and leavers' celebrations



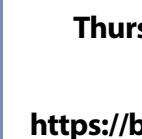
Does your parish have a link with a community school? If so, please consider inviting them to join you for the Leavers' Celebrations at Newcastle Cathedral in June.

These events are for Year 4 and Year 6 students who will be leaving their current schools in the summer. The celebrations include prayer space activities and a special service.

Please encourage interested schools to book using the link below or email Tara Russell at t.russell@newcastle.anglican.org. Please note places are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment.



Wednesday, 18 June,
1pm-3pm
<https://bit.ly/4d9Ibli>



Thursday, 19 June,
10am-12pm
<https://bit.ly/3LldqOy>



artists and event organisers. Volunteers were on hand to help the exhibitors as they set up the sculptures.

"Everyone did a fantastic job," said John. "We really want to thank everyone who made it happen. The artists, those who made the soup and other refreshments, our stewards and the people who helped to set up and take down the installations."

Lightwaves is part of a collaborative project involving the church and wider community – organised by Fiesta Whitley Bay - which organises four events each year. The Fiesta initiative was born out of the Covid pandemic and supports local artists, craftspeople, community organisations and local businesses.

John explained: "Fiesta started as we were trying to bring people together again after Covid.

The events provide a broad programme of entertainment, with a mixture of attractions including dancing, music, sports attractions and market stalls.

"Some of the stalls offer eco-sustainable products made out of recycled materials, while the parish nurses are on hand to offer free health checks."

Night Skies run is a powerful reminder of God's wonderful creation

Bishop Helen-Ann was joined by a team from St Thomas' Newcastle as runners from across the country descended on Kielder for a magical running experience beneath the stars.

The Revd Lee Kirkby from St Thomas' joined Bishop Helen-Ann in taking on the 10k run in March, while Joel Barwick, Youth Minister at St Thomas', ran in the 11 mile event the day before.

Runners set off in the early evening after nightfall, enjoying wonderful views of the stars.

Commenting after the run, Lee said: "The Night Skies 10km event at Kielder Water was the most stunning backdrop for a unique running event. The run was set against the spectacular night skies of Kielder, and was a powerful reminder of the gift to our diocese when it comes to God's creation.

"I had the privilege of accompanying Bishop Helen-Ann on the run and we had a wonderful time exchanging stories of where God is at work across our diocese. I was impressed to see how much Bishop Helen-Ann's love for running is a gift for being able to connect with people from all walks of life."



The Revd Lee Kirkby and Bishop Helen-Ann



Runners turned out in numbers for the 10k event

Art explores complex journeys through motherhood

Women have shared their journeys through motherhood in a powerful art exhibition on child removal, resilience and healing.

'A Story of Hope' took place at Newcastle Cathedral throughout March, coinciding with Mothering Sunday on 30 March.

Led by support organisation Her Circle, the exhibition featured artwork created by and in collaboration with women who have experienced complex motherhood and child removal.

Displayed in a striking, tall circular structure within the cathedral, the exhibition included large-scale works, sketches and smaller pieces, and poetry, which the women produced with Newcastle City Learning. A full anthology of the poetry is now available to purchase at the cathedral.

Themes of sisterhood and resilience were explored through self-portraits, fabric-based art and symbolic imagery. Digital art was also made,



A Story of Hope banner



Artist Harriet Mee

Photos: North Star Images

with support from Digital Voice for Communities.

'A Story of Hope' was the culmination of six months of workshops led by artist Harriet Mee and Her Circle, which supports mothers at risk of child removal, in collaboration with Newcastle City Council.

The exhibition premiered at a special event at the cathedral about women and child removal on Thursday, 6 March, ahead of International Women's Day.

It was hosted by the Cathedral's Lantern Project, which supports people facing difficult life circumstances.

The Revd Canon Zoe Heming, Newcastle Cathedral's Canon for Mission, said: "The Cathedral Lantern Project embodies our mission to uplift voices that are often marginalised. We hope that by bringing these narratives to light, we created a safe and compassionate space where stories of struggle and resilience could be shared and heard."

New community music group premieres 'Palms to Passion'

A new community group, Pilgrim Voice, will soon debut their first production, Palms to Passion.

Formed in September 2024, the group was born from a simple Facebook post asking whether anyone wanted to join a pop-up rock choir.

Led by Martin Colam, an organist at St. John's Lowick, Pilgrim Voice has brought together villagers, churchgoers and people from surrounding communities.

Martin said: "In the beginning, nobody had any idea what to expect or what the end product would be."

Despite some initial hesitation from members about their lack of experience, the project quickly grew into a dynamic performance, blending rock, pop, classical, jazz and blues music.



Explaining the meaning behind the group's name, Martin said: "North Northumberland is a haven for pilgrims. The group is deliberately spoken of in the singular. It speaks with one voice, as each one pursues their own journey. Hence Pilgrim Voice."

The two-hour production, with 14 original

songs, a narrator and multimedia elements, offers a fresh perspective on the last week of Jesus' life. Blending history with modern music and media, it aims to engage audiences in a powerful, contemporary way.

Martin said: "It's been a truly blessed experience, bringing together a group of people from many walks of life who have made Pilgrim Voice a vibrant expression of Christian outreach."

Tickets cost £10 and can be booked at:

● Saturday, 12 April, 7pm
Ancroft Memorial Hall (TD15 2TE)
07801 822 851
dee@dmspartnership.co.uk

● Sunday, 13 April, 3pm
Wooler URC Church (NE71 6LW)
07354 419303
woolercrcw@gmail.com

Historic parish hall is powered into the future by solar



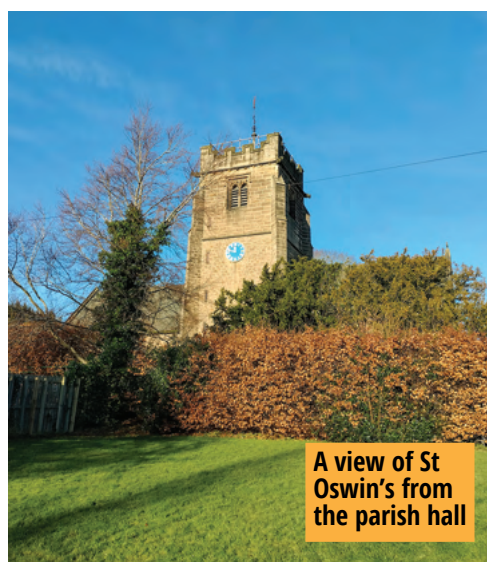
From left, Andrew Major, the Revd Tom Birch and Craig Little

A rural church is aiming to drive down electricity bills 'to carbon net zero and beyond' thanks to an ambitious new solar power scheme.

St Oswin's, Wylam, has installed 19 solar panels to the roof of its neighbouring parish hall – a hub of village life, which hosts a multitude of community groups each week and serves as a much-needed warm hub during the winter months.

It is anticipated that the panels will save £900 per year in electric bills – and make an additional £750 per annum by selling excess power back to the National Grid.

"It's a very exciting scheme and it's wonderful to have installed the panels and be producing our own electricity," said the Revd Tom Birch, who is vicar at St Oswin's and at St Mary's, Ovingham.



A view of St Oswin's from the parish hall

A Grade II listed church, St Oswin's dates back to 1886. The parish hall is also a historic building in its own right. Built in 1922, the hall celebrated its centenary just three years ago.

After a major refurbishment in 2016, the hall was further enhanced with an office extension in 2022, followed by the addition of a bike rack in 2023.

The building is used weekly by the local Scouts, Cubs, Brownies, Rainbows and Guides. It also hosts a dementia club, as well as ballroom dancing, karate, keep fit, yoga and Metafit groups. In addition, the hall is used for private functions, for coffee after church services, and has occasionally been used as a training facility for diocesan clergy.

The total cost of the project is £14,000. Andrew Major, treasurer at St Oswin's, said the Community Foundation has generously awarded

Survivors of church-based abuse have drawn on their own experiences to create artwork which will go on show at an exhibition in Newcastle.

Titled *Jagged Edges*, the exhibition will take place at Shieldfield Art Works from 9 - 26 April, featuring linocut prints, music and poetry.

A special launch event will take place on Wednesday 9 April from 6.30pm to 8pm, when survivors will be on-hand to discuss their exhibits and associated themes – which make meaningful connections between those harmed in Christian churches and the story of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection.

Visitors are invited to look at Jesus’ trauma and see his story as one of abuse – and of God’s love for and solidarity with those who have been abused.

Jagged Edges comes three years after the diocese launched *If I Told You, What Would You Do?* - a set of resources by Sarah Troughton and David Creese to engage with survivors and to help others in the church know how to respond to them, and build confidence in their ability to do so.

To keep the conversation going, there was a suggestion of an event related to the Stations of the Cross.

Maggi Creese, Lead Officer, Chaplaincy to Survivors in Newcastle Diocese explained: “The stories of survivors of abuse, in which they have been betrayed by the institution of their religion with the complicity of its leaders, is a very familiar one to Christians. “The stories at the heart of the Christian faith are those of the betrayal, condemna-

Art highlights the meaningful connections between church abuse survivors and Jesus



Sarah Troughton
making a linocut print
Photo: Órla Troughton

tion and crucifixion of Jesus with the complicity of the religious authorities. These commonly held stories, told in the New Testament in what are known as the Gospel Passion narratives, provide the contents of the form of Christian devotion known as the Stations of the Cross.”

In *Jagged Edges* each survivor has approached the Gospel Passion narratives from her or his own perspective and through a different medium – linocut prints, music, poetry – to co-create their own Stations of the Cross.

Maggi continued: “The title *Jagged Edges* reflects the unique elements of survivors’ individual experiences, which overlap but do not fit neatly together.

“It reflects the dissonant combination of God’s love and the harm done in and by God’s Church in those experiences, and it reflects the fact that survivors often engage with the Church from the periphery because that is where they feel safe.”

The launch on 9 April is a free event and includes a meal of soup and bread. Those wishing to attend are advised to email enquiries@saw-newcastle.org although walk-ins are also welcome.

Jagged Edges will also be on display at Newcastle Cathedral from 1 October – 26 November

For further information email: m.creese@newcastle.anglican.org

£10,000, with the remainder covered by church reserves.

“The parish hall is a vital part of church and village life,” said Andrew. “All that we do with the hall was considered as part of the application process and we are pleased that the Community Foundation recognised our work with the community.

“We are looking at a return on this investment in seven to eight years and we have committed to demonstrate the financial savings.

“We have also committed to working with youth groups to use this project as a tool to learn about solar energy, so it will also have educational benefits.”

The scheme has also supported a local business,

as the panels were installed by Craig Little of Tyne Valley Wind and Solar.

If the scheme is successful, more panels could eventually be added to the parish hall roof, allowing them to power the church itself. The parish is also investigating ways to electrify the church’s heating system when the existing gas system at St Oswin’s needs replacing.

A catalysing experience for those who work with children and young people



The Catalyst course, run by Ridley Hall in Cambridge, aims to equip and connect those who work with children and young people. Hilary Elder, Reader at St John's in Killingworth is among those in our diocese who are taking the course. Here she shares her experiences.

On Being Catalysed, by Hilary Elder

The course includes a national weekend conference and those of us who could make it found it well – catalysing!

Rachel Gardner from the Youthscape charity shared insights from research with young people. The giants in their landscape were pressure, anxiety and fear for the future, and unkindness.

In a society which is so risk-averse, Rachel asked, when we are being Saul to these young Davids, do we cover them with armour they

can't carry or do we let them go and find their stones?

And do we allow an understanding that God is with us, now, even in these anxious and fearful spaces? And can we share joyfully that we, like them, are on the adventure of a lifetime with God?

We also learned lots of practical tips from Nicola Rayner of the Child Behaviour Network about diversity and inclusion – something so important in our work.

Research by Carolyn Edwards, Ministry with Children and Young People Officer for the Church of England, into child spirituality challenged us to meet children where they really are, and not pretend their lives are as simple as we might hope.

Children, she said, have a great desire to express and explore their spirituality, but often have few resources or opportunities to do it.

We do them a disservice when, for example, we teach them the story of Noah as if it's a story about rainbows and animals and hide that it's a story about genocide.

For both Rachel and Carolyn, the starting point was that our job in supporting children and young people is not to give them all the answers but to equip them to explore the questions and walk alongside them as they do.

Oddly it's been a wonderful benefit to get to know each other. Even though we live and minister nearby, it took a weekend away for us to find time together and begin to develop a new support network.

The Catalyst course welcomes our own insecurities and worries, and encourages us to allow ourselves, as much as the children we work with, to be works in progress. Meeting and sharing with others really helps us to understand this better.



Young people play an active role at Hexham Abbey

Youth Alpha – bringing young people together with pizza and fun-filled activities

An opportunity is being created in Hexham for young people to learn about life, faith and Jesus in a fun-filled environment.

A new Youth Alpha course will bring together pupils of secondary school age who attend different churches in the town, across all denominations.

The eight-week course will take place in the Priory buildings at Hexham Abbey, where discussions about faith will be complemented with generous servings of pizza and hotdogs, as well as various activities and games to help the young people settle in and make friends.

Youth Alpha is being co-ordinated by the Revd Abi Harris, curate at Hexham Abbey, with the support of Hexham Churches Together and Joel Barwick, youth minister at St Thomas, Newcastle, the diocesan resource church.

People from the town’s churches, including Hexham Community Church, Hexham Trinity Methodist Church and St Mary’s Roman Catholic Church, will contribute to the sessions.

“We’re all excited about it,” said Abi. “There are various churches of different denominations in Hexham within a relatively close proximity. This is aimed at secondary school pupils who attend those churches.

“The churches are all different but we want to create a space where the young people of the town can join together and thrive. It will be a place to hang out, to play some games and activities and enjoy some delicious food.

“But it will also be a place where they can ask the bigger questions of the world, to learn and to discuss different views.”

Hexham already has a thriving youth initiative, while children and teenagers are actively involved in the Abbey’s choirs.

“Momentum is growing in the town and we hope this will develop into something more beyond this initial eight-week course,” said Abi.

Exciting project will finally complete Killingworth's Victorian church

A Grade II listed church, which was left "incomplete" when it was built 156 years ago, will be finalised as part of a major project.

St John's Killingworth was built in 1869 but the northern aisle was never completed. It is understood the original Victorian project ran out of money and the northern façade became an unattractive and uninspiring wall.

Now an ambitious plan to finish the original proposal, whilst also bringing the church into the 21st century, has been approved by North Tyneside Council's planning committee.

It will see an extension added to the northern façade to create a new entrance with step-free access, as well as toilet facilities, a serving area, much needed storage space and an eco-friendly heating system.

In addition, the church's Postill organ, which pre-dates the church and is listed in its own right, will be renovated and relocated to its originally intended position at mezzanine level.

A huge fundraising campaign is ongoing for



Nigel Brown pictured with the Revd Dr Sarah Moon outside St John's

the project, which will cost in the region of £600,000. A grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund has been secured and will boost the church's other fundraising efforts.

"We are pleased to be at this stage," said the Revd Dr Sarah Moon, priest in charge of Killingworth Parish.

"Planning consent is crucial and we are so grateful for the funding that has been raised thus far. We still need more to cover the cost of the step-free access and the new toilets.

"The plans are very exciting. We will still be eastward facing but we also want to be visible from Killingworth town as well as Killingworth village. This will enable that to happen."

In recent years, St John's has achieved both bronze and silver eco status with A Rocha UK, which equips Christians, churches and dioceses to protect and restore God's creation. Now the church has its sights set on gold.

"The new heating system will be key to the church's future," added Sarah. "We want it to be more sustainable and in-line with our carbon net zero aims."



Artist's drawings of how the church will look from the inside

Heart-warming work in supporting vulnerable people

Transforming Communities Together (TCT) Tyne to Tweed is known in our diocese for its work in supporting churches with projects and helping them to receive funding from the Partners in Community Action (PICA) Fund, to improve church facilities.

But TCT, which is a member of the national Together Network of faith-based charities, also works with other organisations and individuals who need support.

Over the past 18 months, the charity's Development Worker, Lynda Telford has worked with 15 vulnerable people suffering with mental health, anxiety and stress, with their financial matters.

"The isolation and loneliness these clients feel is very overwhelming," said Lynda. "Gaining their trust is always important so that they feel able to discuss their difficulties

without feeling shame and without loss of pride."

Four of Lynda's clients had no income whatsoever and were facing eviction and homelessness due to rent arrears.



Lynda Telford

Two ladies had just lost their husbands, while another was a male refugee with severe mental health and loss of memory after being tortured in his home country.

Lynda's clients also included a blind person who was very distressed, as well as a man who had lived for many years off the proceeds of his late parents' home—but by the time he was

introduced to Lynda, most of the money was gone.

Her other clients did not have enough to support themselves and seven of the fifteen were owed a total of £4,500 in overpaid rent.

Fortunately, Lynda intervened to ensure each of her clients were fully supported, ensuring their financial situations were all put back on the right track.

But it was far from straightforward, as Lynda had to investigate each case, sometimes uncovering new discoveries and taking on the might of housing associations in the interests of her clients, who would otherwise be unable to navigate the complex process of benefit claims, appeals and complaints.

She added: "My clients are very relieved when it all comes together. They have told me they feel relief, happier and less isolated. They have commented on there being a light at the end of a very dark tunnel.

"My role at TCT is to address poverty, which in turn improves health and our aim is to set up money advice hubs, to train volunteers to work alongside families, build trust and improve health, wellbeing and break the cycle of poverty for future generations. This is our mission."



Organist Nigel Brown has played an active role in the church's fundraising for the project. Last year he began cycling to all churches in the UK that have Postill organs – all construct-

ed by the prolific organ builder Robert Postill in the 19th century.

Having already cycled to various parts of the

North East and ventured into North Yorkshire and Scotland, Nigel will begin the 2025 leg of his journey this spring. This will include rides to several cathedrals and Blenheim Palace.

Visit Nigel's fundraising page: <https://bit.ly/41oW9RZ> or scan the QR code below



Pancakes fuel worship and discussion on Shrove Tuesday

Shrove Tuesday was a real feast for young people across the Diocese – both spiritually and in terms of pancakes.

The day before Lent saw NCD Youth, Newcastle Central deanery's new initiative, host a pancake evening at St Aidan's church at Brunton Park, Gosforth.

It was an opportunity to enjoy some delicious food and play some games together, before spending time in worship and hearing a biblical reflection.

The Revd Gerard Rundell, vicar at St Aidan's said the successful evening was a great mix of pancakes and games before a service ahead of Ash Wednesday, on 5 March.

It was the third event organised by NCD Youth over the past 12 months. It started on Good Friday last year at St John's Kingston Park, when young people from across the deanery joined together for games, worship and prayer stations.

More recently, Newcastle Cathedral was the venue in mid-November, when young people from St Thomas' Newcastle led a talk about Jesus as light of the world. There was also games, food and discussion.

NCD Youth is tailored for young people within the deanery, with churches joining forces to nurture and disciple the young people within their congregations.

Gerard said: "NCD Youth provides an opportunity for young people within our churches to join together as a bigger group, and to get to know other Christian people from different contexts.

"The events highlight what it is like to be a young Christian at school and in everyday life. The young people can encourage each other with the support of leaders from our churches."



Living the Lantern



By The Revd Canon Ruth Hulse, Canon for Worship and Congregational Life

In the Middle Ages, Newcastle Cathedral's Lantern Tower guided ships along the River Tyne. Today, the Cathedral Lantern Project continues this legacy, serving as a beacon of hope for those navigating challenging circumstances – an ethos that shines through every aspect of Cathedral life.

I wasn't long in post when I received a WhatsApp message from a clergy friend who had just moved to Folkestone, Kent. He had been getting to know his new church and as he delved into the long-forgotten treasures of the church vestry, he found a document with Newcastle's iconic Lantern Tower on the front and the title, 'Verger's Notes: Newcastle Cathedral.'

This perfectly sums up my first six months at the Cathedral. Newcastle Cathedral finds its way everywhere and people from

everywhere find their way here! I'm no longer surprised by the sheer number or diversity of those who discover a place within its walls; I simply feel blessed to be part of what they find when they do.

Some come for the beautiful music that speaks to the soul. Some come for the social justice work carried out under the banner of the Cathedral Lantern Project. Some come because they have found a place of sanctuary. Some come to laugh, dance and sing. Some come because it is their spiritual home. And many come for various other reasons.

What is clear is that the Cathedral is a precious place for many people, and my role is to nurture those who feel this way, opening opportunities for faith to be explored or deepened, and oversee worship to help lead people into the presence of God.

Much like other churches across the Diocese, we are looking for ways to grow the congregation — in number, faith, age range and diversity. We, too, are exploring how we might be part of seeking, sharing and sending, encountering both challenges and moments of pure joy — like our recent confirmation service, where 26 members of the Cathedral community affirmed their faith and commitment to following Jesus.

I know I speak not only for myself but for everyone at the Cathedral when I say that we pray Newcastle Cathedral remains a precious place for all across the Diocese, no matter who you are or where you come from. Newcastle Cathedral is your Cathedral and we look forward to welcoming you, supporting you, being supported by you, and travelling onwards together.

Gathering for pancakes at Shrovetide



People of all ages turned out for a generous helping of pancakes at St Matthew's Church in Elswick.

St Matthew's hosts a community supper for Shrovetide every year, with a team of volunteers, including vicar Fr Richard Deadman, cooking up a special treat in the church kitchen on 4 March.

Aidan Evans, organist at St Matthew's said: "The attendance this time was the highest we've ever had. There were 50 people there for what was a wonderful evening and all the food was eaten and enjoyed.

"This event draws people from across the community. Even those who have moved away like to come back for Shrovetide. It's a great social occasion and everyone appreciated the work of the volunteer cooks who are all members of the congregation at St Matthew's, as well as Fr Richard."

Attending, Articulating, Amplifying – enabling authorised lay ministries across the Diocese

By Ric Whaite, Director of Mission and Ministry

There is a common emphasis—both within and outside the Church—on not having ‘enough’ money, time or people. In churches, this can be particularly challenging, as it may leave us feeling competitive with other aspects of people’s lives, as though church and faith are competing for time, money and resources.

As part of the Diocese’s Year of Seeking, we entered a period of discernment. This was not focused on what we could do next but rather on discerning prayer that sought to centre our attention on what God is doing in our lives and the lives of those we are alongside in church, at work and in our communities.

The idea of discerning prayer was to focus on noticing where God is working with us and in our contexts already. By beginning in this way, we first focused our attention on God’s activity rather than on any sense of scarcity we might experience. The invitation to discern God’s work within our Year of Seeking also encourages us to express and celebrate the moments when we notice how and where God is with us and others. Our sharing and celebration encourage us to focus again - not on what we feel unable to do but on what God is doing.

Noticing, expressing and celebrating God’s work in our life together is a shared calling for all baptised Christians. Like a number of dioceses across the Church of England, Newcastle has had different forms of lay enabling for particular roles for nearly a decade.

These Authorised Lay Ministry (ALM) roles serve alongside licensed ministers



The Revd Canon
Dr Ric Whaite

(readers and clergy), engaging in specific tasks such as pastoral care and leading public worship. In some places, they have enabled vocations and renewed conversations about collaborative ministry. In every case, the focus has been on enabling the many different gifts of people across the Diocese to follow their calling to serve.

This is a shared discernment between PCCs and those interested in serving, concerned with noticing, expressing and sharing (or attending, articulating and amplifying) the work of God in particular places.

In an effort to bring the dispersed community of ALMs together, we have offered weekly sessions in February and March, exploring the themes of our Year of Seeking alongside biblical study and further reflection on how we articulate faith collaboratively.

These weekly sessions, held at various venues across the Diocese, along with day-long engagements, have fostered fellowship among ALMs, encouraged reflection on our baptismal vocation, and enriched the diocesan seeking around the question: *“Where are we noticing where and how God is with us and those we are sent to live alongside?”*