

WINTER 2024

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The magazine for the Diocese of Newcastle



## Christmas cheer

Sharing food, friendship and faith

Full story plus more pictures: Pages 4&5



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## About this magazine

**Feedback:** [communications@newcastle.anglican.org](mailto: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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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 CO<sub>2</sub>.

# A message from Bishop Helen-Ann



The Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley

**don't know about you, but I have noticed Christmas seems to be arriving earlier this year. A colleague posted a photo online of Eldon Square's 'how many sleeps to Christmas' clock in Newcastle City Centre a couple of weeks ago. And there is a house near Bishop's House that I think has had a Christmas tree up all year round.**

Perhaps more than ever we are 'longing for light', to quote from one of my favourite hymns *Christ be our light* by Bernadette Farrell. It is true that Christmas seems almost crowded out at times by a multiplicity of other 'key days' not least when we enter retail shops and supermarkets. In November, I hear distant strains of 'Silent Night' on a fairground ride and we aren't even in Advent yet! I think what this says to me is a reminder that God's time, liturgical times invites a different rhythm where the drum beat of life is slow and steady, only to quicken at the birth of a child who lit-

erally changed (and changes) the course of history. Jesus' birth that we celebrate again and again tells a story of deep hope and enlivening wisdom for all peoples. More than that, it serves as a reminder that the babe in a manger brought the Kingdom of God right into the midst of our lives and we are changed because of it. Jesus' birth did not and does not remove pain and challenge, but God's embracing our humanity does mean that God goes before us and works in and through us when we experience the very best and the very worst of times. That is the good news of Christmas and it is both urgent and for all time.

This year, for my Christmas appeal I am inviting us to support *Love Grace* which was set up by the family and friends of Grace Millane who was murdered in Auckland, New Zealand in December 2018. Grace's cousin worships at one of our churches in Tynemouth Deanery. *Love Grace* aims to help women

whose lives have been impacted by domestic violence, raising awareness through supporting the work of a number of charities in the UK and specifically providing handbags filled with suitable items for affected women. To help the work of *Love Grace*, I'd like to encourage churches to do their own collections and then drop donations off at either Swalwell Cricket Club or Church of the Holy Saviour Tynemouth. Donations can be gently used or new handbags, any items that can contribute towards making a lovely handbag gift for victims of domestic abuse. Do look on the *Love Grace* website at the Amazon wish list also, which allows you to purchase items and get sent directly to their HQ to go straight into the bags. **Please see page 7** for further details.

With my great gratitude, prayers and best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

**Bishop Helen-Ann**

# Serving up Christmas cheer to support families in Denton



Members of the local community enjoy mince pies



Meg Fisher and Sheila Lewis volunteer in the kitchen

**A** church project that supports families in need is reaching out to bring them some Christmas cheer. The Pantry at Holy Spirit Church, Denton, opens every Tuesday to hand out food parcels to about 40 families.

But the initiative, which runs in partnership with Newcastle Foodbank, is more than just a takeaway service, with hot drinks, scones and biscuits served as part of the warm welcome.

At Christmas, this is upgraded to a special festive party, where visitors are greeted with mince pies and a carol sing-a-long. The Christmas tree and decorations go up and the season is very much underway.

"It was lovely and it was fun," said Jac Atkinson, Children and Families Community Missioner, following this year's party. "This project hap-

pens every week and we get to know people, so we are a community and it is wonderful to share this time together as we look forward to Christmas.

"While it was great on the day to celebrate and sing a few carols, we know that Christmas can be a difficult time so we also wanted everyone to know that they can talk to us if they need to, and that our support is there."

The concept of the pantry was born during the coronavirus pandemic, when Holy Spirit wanted to provide food parcels to those who needed them from the church pantry. Getting the foodbank on board made the scheme sustainable, and it continues to be a success today.

Jac explained: "The Revd Allison Harding at Newburn was my support vicar during Covid - and was until the Revd Neil Heslop became



Revd Allison Harding and Jac Atkinson



Sharon, Foodbank volunteer

vicar at Holy Spirit. We spotted a hidden food poverty and started to deliver the food parcels. Now the pantry is established and it is a safe place for people to come, not just for food but also for friendship and fellowship.

“Allison still works with us in the pantry and we now have a team of volunteers. The wonderful thing is that some of our volunteers originally came to us for food. Now they are helping either in our pantry or with our other community initiatives.”

## A warm welcome for our new readers



Joseph Lawrie, Alison Edwards, Bishop Mark, Fiona Boyd and Nicholas Beale

Newcastle Diocese is pleased to welcome four new readers.

Nicholas Beale, Gosforth St Nicholas; Fiona Boyd, Parish of Morpeth; Alison

Edwards, Holy Trinity Jesmond; and Joseph Lawrie, Bedlington, Cambois and Sleekburn; were licensed by Bishop Mark at Newcastle Cathedral on 12 October.

Jac said that every week, the physical food is complemented by the ‘spiritual food’ of a church environment.

She added: “There’s plenty of opportunities to talk. We also have a Café Church and we now have some new worshippers. We are both community and church – and as we reach out to

engage with people it’s wonderful to see them engaging with us.”

There is also a Warm Hub at Holy Spirit, while children attend the Sunday Jam (Jesus and Me), which is similar to a Sunday school based on Bible stories and crafts. There is also the popular Lego Lunch Club during school holidays.

# Building work reveals a glimpse into Byker's exciting future

**A**n exciting project to transform a church into a state-of-the-art youth and community hub is beginning to take shape.

Building work is rapidly progressing at St Michael's Byker as part of an ambitious £4.2m project, which got underway earlier this year and will be finished in time for a grand opening in March 2025.

Named the Lighthouse Project, the new centre will provide a safe and central meeting place in the heart of Byker where young people and the community can flourish, with access to a wide variety of community activities and services for around 1,500 young people and families each year, alongside a reimagined worship space.

It is being made possible with the award of a grant from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Youth Investment Fund, and through the generosity of the Lord Crew Trust and the Squire's Foundation.

The sizeable church was too big for its con-



Scaffolding is a sign of the progress at St Michael's, Byker

gregation and had become increasingly difficult to heat. Now it is being sensitively remodelled to include a smaller worship space, which can be expanded when required, as well as a large area dedicated

for use as a youth centre.

Next to the church, a purpose-built annex is being constructed, where young people will access vital services and take part in a broad range of sessions and activities. There will also be an all-weather sports facility outside.

Area Dean, the Revd Phil Medley, who is also chair of the St Michael's Centre Partnership, said: "This is absolutely transformative for Byker. The church was previously large and cold, and we couldn't use the space efficiently.

"Now we are having under-floor heating installed, which will make a huge difference. There's a smaller, dedicated worship space which can be extended when necessary, and this will enable a large area of the church to be used as a youth centre for five or six days of the week, which will include after-school sessions."



The Revd Phil Medley (front centre) joins project leaders and diocesan representatives as they look through what will be a new serving hatch

# Bishop's Christmas Appeal 2024

Bishop Helen-Ann is delighted to launch her Christmas Appeal for 2024 – in aid of Love Grace - Handbag Appeal.

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

Grace was known for her love of handbags and now, handbags are being collected and filled with useful items for women in need. More than 7,000 women in the UK, New Zealand, USA, Canada and Singapore have received a Love Grace handbag.

Hannah O'Callaghan OBE, of the Love Grace team, said: "We cannot thank Bishop Helen-Ann enough for choosing Love Grace as her 2024 Christmas Appeal. With the support of the parishioners and people of Newcastle Diocese we can raise awareness of the issues many face, and help offer practical empowerment for those who have experienced domestic abuse."

Churches are being encouraged to start their own collections, for people to bring handbags and / or toiletries if they are able. Handbags can be new or lightly used and large enough for a selection of toiletries. Donations can be dropped off at Swalwell Cricket Club or Church of the Holy Saviour Tynemouth.

For more information visit: [lovegrace.co.uk](http://lovegrace.co.uk)



## HANDBAG APPEAL

### EMPOWERING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE IN HONOUR OF GRACE MILLANE.

GRACE LOVED A HANDBAG, IN HER NAME WE ARE COLLECTING YOUR PRELOVED HANDBAGS AND FILLING THEM WITH USEFUL ITEMS FOR WOMEN IN NEED.

Basic	Extras	Luxuries
Toothpaste	Wipes	Make up
Toothbrush	Tissues	Perfume
Shower gel	Plasters	Hairbands / clips
Shampoo	Soap /hand gel	Gloves
Conditioner	Lip balm	Scarf
Deodorant	Cotton buds	Notebook /pen
	Face cloth/sponge	Playing cards
	Torch	Purse
	Hairbrush / Comb	Sunglasses
		Jewellery

[WWW.LOVEGRACE.CO.UK](http://WWW.LOVEGRACE.CO.UK)



@LOVEGRACE\_UK



@LOVE GRACE X



Phil, who previously served as parish priest at St Michael's, was part of a small group from the church who got the project started, after establishing that Byker was in dire need of specialist facilities, with much of the youth work taking place on the streets as a result.

"It's such a joy to see things at this stage," he added. "We are very excited for what this will provide for the community here."

Ben Roman, Operations Director for the Lighthouse Project said: "For years there has

been a shortage of dedicated community facilities in Byker and for too long, young people have had to make do with makeshift alternatives.

"This will be a brand-new offering, which will inspire our children and young people – giving them access to everything they need and hopefully help-



ing to set them up for a bright future." Architect Keith McClure, of Bradley McClure Architects in Belfast, Northern Ireland, said: "This project is creating a great environment for these exciting plans. As an architect, it's very rewarding to think that this process will lead to so many people benefiting from all we are creating here in Byker."

**Architect Keith McClure**

# Embracing a Year of Seeking as church looks to the future

**A** church is embracing a Year of Seeking in Newcastle Diocese as it prepares to make positive decisions for the future.

Holy Trinity in Jesmond is actively engaging with the recently launched Year of Seeking, which invites us all to pray and discern together to gain a deeper understanding of how God is with us.

Vicar, the Revd Tim Sanderson said: "The Year of Seeking is a great opportunity to seek afresh from God where he is at work, what he is calling us to do next and also what he is asking us not to do. It is also a wonderful moment in the life of the Diocese for us to be seeking together right across our region."

Holy Trinity is doing this in three ways.

Firstly, through praying together. At 10am on Saturday 30 November, a 24-hour session of prayer got underway at Holy Trinity, ending at 10am the following day, Advent Sunday (1 December) and running straight into the Sunday morning service. Prayer stations were set up in church as people took their turn to pray at different times of the day. During nighttime hours, participants prayed at home but their time slots were strictly adhered to.



The Very Revd Lee Batson at Holy Trinity in Jesmond

"Alarms were set and some people even woke up in the dead of night to pray," explained Tim. "Everyone played their part, praying for the Diocese and our churches. We also prayed about our own church as we seek to support our community in the best way possible. Right now, we are exploring re-developing our church hall into a community hub, and making sure our

finance and staffing reflect the priorities God has for us. Seeking God together is a fundamental part of this process."

Secondly, church services running up to Christmas are focused on the theme of seeking. The Dean of Newcastle, the Very Revd Lee Batson, was at Holy Trinity on Sunday 17th November to start the series as he spoke on 'Seeking and Trusting.'

Thirdly, members of the church have recorded daily advent video reflections on Bible passages exploring the theme of seeking. These will be broadcast each day from Advent Sunday to Christmas Day.

Tim added: "There are many promises in the Bible that if we seek God, he will be found by us and will draw close to us. That is our hope and prayer this Advent season and beyond as we enter this Year of Seeking."



Revd Tim Sanderson and The Very Revd Lee Batson





Seeking postcards



## Celebrating the Year of Seeking: sharing and amplifying God's presence

At the launch of the Year of Seeking at Diocesan Synod in September, we shared a prayer resource that aimed to focus us on noticing where God was working in our contexts. The prayer spiral was for use by individuals, groups, parishes and deaneries. Part of the prayer spiral encouraged us to notice and then note where and how God is with us and pairs of postcards were provided so that we could share something of what we'd noticed.

With the help of members of our worshipping communities nearly all the 750 pairs of cards have been shared. There have

obviously been a lot of postcards circulating at services and at other gatherings, and it's been encouraging to receive more than 40 replies back during the month of October. More than the number of responses, however, has been the care, detail and honesty in the responses.

One of the important parts of the Year of Seeking is to take time not only to notice when and where God is with us, but also to celebrate and amplify God with others

in the seeking going on across the diocese.

We hope this will be an encouragement to keep using the spiral and the postcards and that we can look forward together to a second resource for use in our seeking prayers at the beginning of Advent 2024.



# Anniversary celebrations begin at historic Corbridge church

**C**elebrations are underway as one of the oldest churches in Newcastle Diocese marks its 1,350th anniversary. While the exact date is not known, St Andrew's in Corbridge was founded by St Wilfrid in around 674-5.

It means a year of celebrations began on St Wilfrid's Day (12 October) and will continue long into 2025 with a full programme of events planned.

"This is a very exciting time for our church and our village," said the Revd Canon Dr David Kennedy, who has served as vicar for six years. "It's a great opportunity for us to tell the story of St Wilfrid and to commemorate the original monastery at Corbridge."

On Saturday 12 October, the church was open for people to explore information boards depicting the history, while guided tours took place.

Later the same day, David formally launched the anniversary celebrations with a talk about St Wilfrid and how he sent his monks to Corbridge to build the original monastery. There was also a cutting of the cake ceremony, afternoon tea and a short act of worship.

There was a special service of thanksgiving with Bishop Helen-Ann on Sunday 13 October. It included music from the augmented church choir and the choir from Corbridge Church of England First School, followed by a drinks reception and a light lunch.

David added: "We had a wonderful launch weekend during which we welcomed Bishop Helen-Ann, as well as local school children and many other people from the community. It was very engaging and we look forward to more people getting involved over the next year."

From 29 November to 3 December, the annual Corbridge Christmas Tree Festival took place inside St Andrew's. The church was decorated with 135 trees, and 135 Christmas carols were sung during the festival.

Next year, there will be a series of exhibitions – focusing on St Andrew's and Corbridge, culminating with Heritage Week in September 2025, when local businesses and organisations will be invited to put up a display representing their heritage.

During the 1350 Flower Festival (19-22 June), it is hoped that a cascade of crafted flowers will be



Bishop Helen-Ann and clergy with pupils from Corbridge CE First School

*Pictures: Ian Wylie*

## Colourful artwork inspires children to learn about the Bible

Children have played their part in an interactive exhibition at Hexham Abbey, which explores the story of creation in the Bible.

The *Threads for Creation* exhibition saw 12 enormous embroidered silk panels go up in the Abbey from 9 October to 23 November – each one inspired by the first pages of Genesis.

School groups from Newcastle Diocese and beyond have been visiting the exhibition to study the works, by textile artist Jacqui Parkinson, and to take part in related workshops.

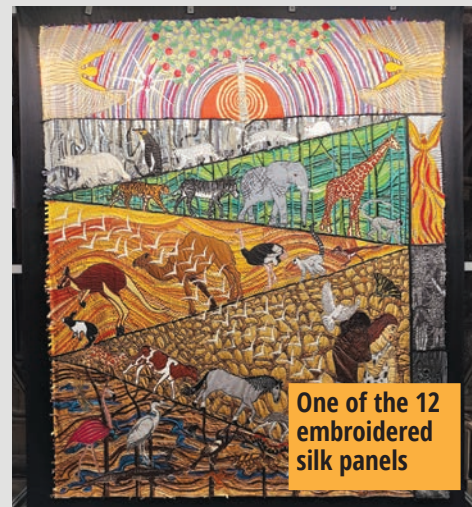
Children were invited to walk around the panels before producing their own artwork based on the themes, which journey from the early days of creation to the Garden of Eden.

Community Engagement and Fundraising Manager at Hexham Abbey, Cath Newson, said: “We’ve had 12 schools here during the course of the exhibition and the children have really enjoyed learning about the Bible through this amazing artwork.

“The illustrations bring the themes to life. It was fun and engaging for the children and they were able to get creative themselves with some art and craft



Children explored the themes of the exhibition



One of the 12 embroidered silk panels

work based on what they had learned.”

The exhibition was one of the final events at the Abbey as part of its 1,350th anniversary during 2024.

The Rector of Hexham, the Revd Canon David Glover said: “It has been wonderful to welcome the school groups to the Abbey and we are also grateful to Jacqui for bringing her exhibition here. It has engaged not only children but people of all ages, with visits from Mothers’ Union and Women’s Institute groups, among others.

“It really has been a stimulating exhibition, bringing a lot of colour, light and life to the season. We have all enjoyed

engaging with it and so have the public. It has been very popular indeed.”

A memorable year for the Abbey, which was founded by St Wilfrid in AD674, concluded with a celebratory 1350 Gala Dinner on Friday 29 November, with members of the public and friends of the Abbey joining the congregation, clergy and church officials.

On Saturday 14 December, the annual Hexham Abbey Christmas Fair will take place - inviting people inside for a wealth of festivities, including Christmas stalls and activities.

● More information is available at: [www.hexhamabbey.org.uk/](http://www.hexhamabbey.org.uk/)

*“We had a wonderful launch weekend, It was very engaging and we look forward to more people getting involved over the next year”*

- Revd Canon Dr David Kennedy

draped over the roof of the church porch, while information boards detailing the history will remain inside St Andrew’s throughout the year.

Corbridge is celebrating its 1,350th anniversary shortly after Hexham Abbey, which was founded in 674 – also by St Wilfrid. The Abbey has enjoyed a high-profile programme of related events throughout 2024.



**A** church has turned a negative into a positive after a bundle of stale bread was dumped in its car park.

The Church of the Good Shepherd (COGS) at Battle Hill, Wallsend, has endured several instances of fly tipping in recent years, with items including garden waste, kitchen appliances and office equipment.

But after an industrial-sized package of old bread was discarded on church premises this autumn, it sparked an online campaign, which has led to a number of new faces in church.

The Revd Julie Mooney said: "I think I may have spiritually fed a number of people in the community when I posted a message on Facebook, asking if anyone knew anything about the bread. Several of the responses were witty and focused on Jesus – *'Are there any fish? Bread of life? It was crumbs on Friday but a visit from the Lord turned it into bread buns.'*

"It generated some good discussion with the wider community about faith and church and, never one to miss an opportunity to invite people into church, I invited everyone to our church services for 'in-date' bread and wine."

Julie said the bread dumping incident was all the more intriguing given that in the weeks leading up to it, Lectionary Gospel readings in church were all from John's Gospel and all concerning bread.

Volunteers from the church have also been reaching out to the community in other ways. They delivered leaflets through letter boxes, inviting residents to name people or situations they would like to be prayed for in church.

It was part of the church's aim to be "generous with our time" during this year's Generosity Week (29 September to 6 October).

# Bread of life: stale rolls help church to reach out into the community



The Revd Kim Wears shares bread with members of the congregation



Julie explained: "Several of us, including some new friends, met in church for brunch and a time of fellowship. We then listened to the scripture reading of Jesus sending out the 72. Following prayers and a blessing we left church, armed with hundreds of invitation and prayer leaflets between us. Everyone was advised to take as few or as many as they felt called and no-one was to feel burdened by the task. The leaflets were posted through doors in our local com-

munity. Our aim, aligned to that of the Diocese, was to make contact with local people seeking Jesus."

There was an encouraging response from the community, which resulted in a "joyous" prayer day and a request for a baptism.

## Solar panels to go up after planners back church's green agenda

A church is looking forward with optimism after a four-year plan to install solar panels was finally given the go-ahead.

Northumberland County Council's planning committee approved the proposals for St Paul's Church, North Sunderland, Seahouses – despite being recommended to refuse them by conservation officers.

The officers had argued that the plan to install 33 solar panels to the south side of the roof, could be to the detriment of the Grade II listed church and the surrounding Conservation Area, of which it is part of.

But the committee ruled that any impact would be “less than substantial” and that any identified harm had not been clearly and convincingly justified.

It backed the proposals, which also received 36 letters of support, as well as a petition signed by 18 supporters – ruling in favour of the environmental benefits and the cost savings it would bring to a local community church.

The news has been welcomed by parish priest, the Revd Canon Tony Macpherson.

He said: “We are delighted that the members of the planning committee had the common sense to see that this is a sensible proposal to play our part in the green agenda. It will have benefits for the church in terms of giving us a fixed energy price for the medium term and helping us to contribute to the Church of England's target to be net carbon zero by 2030.

“We are grateful to the members of the committee and to everyone else who has supported this scheme. They have recognised that buildings such as ours must be fit for purpose in the



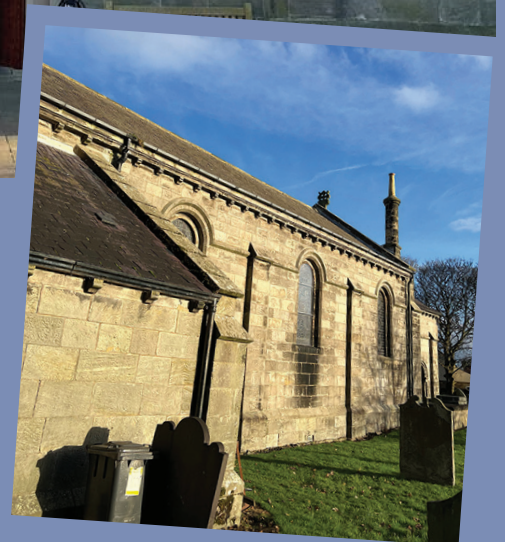
St Paul's Church, North Sunderland, Seahouses

21st century.

“You cannot promote a green agenda unless you are prepared to take action and put in the infrastructure required.”

Tony, who has been at St Paul's for five years, said installation would not begin before Easter 2025 to allow for a survey of the roof and to avoid disturbing bats in the area during winter - but it will be completed by November next year.

St Paul's currently has an old oil heating system, which is nearing the end of its natural life, so the church



can now look ahead to replacing it with an eco-friendly alternative.

Tony is a trustee at Seahouses Hostel, which has also been granted permission to install solar panels on its roof.

**S**t Thomas' Church in Newcastle recently celebrated its fifth anniversary as the diocesan resource church, reflecting on a journey marked by spiritual growth, community service and transformative outreach since its relaunch.

"We've been blown away by God's faithfulness and all He's done here," said the Revd Ben Doolan, vicar at St Thomas'. "It's been such a privilege to journey with people of all ages as they've discovered the love of Jesus."

A major highlight has been baptising over 70 people - many of them young adults - each testimony revealing personal transformation and newfound faith. These stories are available on St Thomas' website. For those who would like to read more visit: [www.stthomas.church/stories](http://www.stthomas.church/stories).

St Thomas' has also established community initiatives, including the Eden Team in Byker, which serves one of Newcastle's most under-resourced areas. Additionally, a team was sent to support St Luke's Church in Spital Tongues, revitalising mission and ministry in that area.

The church's outreach to students has been profound as well, with more than 10,000 freshers invited to experience church, leading many to come to know Jesus.

The church has seen substantial growth in its youth and children's ministries and continues to partner with other churches in the Diocese on various initiatives. Recently, St Thomas'

# St Thomas' Newcastle marks five years of growth and community impact in Newcastle



Bishop Helen-Ann with the leaders of St Thomas' and members of the church who shared their stories during the fifth birthday celebrations

also completed a long-anticipated building project, enhancing their space for worship, fellowship and outreach.

To mark the fifth anniversary on 6 October

2024, St Thomas' held special services led by Bishop Helen-Ann and Bishop Mark. Bishop Helen-Ann celebrated the church's impact, saying, "It was a wonderful morning at St Thomas' celebrating five years of being our



St Thomas' baptism pool



Members of the St Thomas' youth group



Free pizza is readily available during freshers' week

diocesan resource church. Huge gratitude for all that is happening here and for all that is to come!"



Scan QR code to read St Thomas' baptism stories

Grateful for the support of the Diocese and the bishops, St Thomas' leaders expressed excitement about the future.

"We're looking forward to the next five years," said Ben. "We'll keep following Jesus, building community and loving Newcastle."



The St Thomas' worship team

## A new LGBTQI+ Lead Chaplain for the Diocese



The Revd Emma Duff with Bishop Helen-Ann

Bishop Helen-Ann recently announced the appointment of the Revd Emma Duff to lead a new chaplaincy service for LGBTQI+ communities within Newcastle Diocese.

The service will provide a safe space for people to talk about matters relating to sexuality and the church and will also assist parishes and deaneries in fostering radical Christian inclusion and welcome.

It will listen to, support and offer prayerful affirmation for those who identify as LGBTQI+ and their loved ones, helping them to feel confident about being part of diocesan and church life.

Emma, who has been licensed by the bishop to carry out this work, was a lawyer before being ordained in 2014. She was Curate in the Willington Team for four years, then Priest in Charge at Wallsend St John's until 2023.

Emma, who took up her new role from 1 October, said: "I'm delighted to have been appointed as Lead LGBTQI+ Chaplain and am looking forward to recruit-

ing a team to provide welcome, support and safe spaces.

"In our churches and in society at large, LGBTQI+ people face discrimination and danger. Recent Stonewall research found that less than half feel safe holding their partner's hand in public. Church of England bishops have acknowledged that we have often received a hostile and homophobic response in churches and apologised for not loving us as God loves us. The bishops' recent apology is very welcome, and this chaplaincy has grown from a desire in Newcastle Diocese to live out that apology and make it a reality. I am looking forward to getting started and putting into action my belief that we are all beloved children of God."

Bishop Helen-Ann, said: "I am delighted that Emma has been appointed as LGBTQI+ Lead Chaplain in our diocese. A major part of this new role will be to establish a chaplaincy service that provides a safe space for people to talk about matters relating to sexuality and the church and will also assist parishes and deaneries in fostering radical Christian inclusion and welcome."

# Celebrating fresh starts: Café 16 marks its fourth Christmas at the Cathedral



*Pictures: Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales*

**S**ince opening in August 2021, Café 16 in Newcastle Cathedral's refectory has cemented its place as an integral part of the Cathedral and the wider community. The core mission of the Oswin Project, the Northumberland charity that runs the café, is to provide meaningful employment pathways and skill-building opportunities for individuals with criminal records who are ready to turn their lives around.

Over the past year, the café has welcomed a visit from Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester in May and national media coverage highlighting its mission. Through the Oswin Project's partnership with the Cathedral, the café has become a welcoming space for various community groups, including a group of folk musicians and artists and many groups and individuals supported by the Cathedral's Lantern Initiative.

For many 'Oswinners' – team members from the Oswin Project – Café 16 is more than a workplace; it's a fresh start. Those who begin working with the Oswin Project inside HMP Northumberland may join the café team on day-release or after their sentences. The Café's assistant manager is one such example, having followed this pathway.



On Friday 20 December, Café 16 will partner with Changing Lives to support the national charity's North East Christmas Meal Appeal. Oswinners will prepare and serve meals in the café to support people facing homelessness, unemployment, addiction and other challeng-

es. Changing Lives invites the public to donate £5 to provide a warm meal.

The Oswin Project's support is especially resonant when prison leavers often face the risk of homelessness without the stability of employment.



Major restoration and repointing work is to get underway at a historic church, which was damaged during Storm Arwen.

In 2021, the storm struck the north side of the Church of Our Lady at Seaton, at 100mph, damaging the interior lime mortar surfaces as ice and water forced its way through the stonework.

Despite the setback, the Grade I listed church continues to hold services, while attracting a strong number of visitors each year.

But the essential work needs to be carried out and the huge project is being supported by the Northumbria Historic Churches Trust, The Joicey Trust, The Handley Charitable Trust, and community group The Friends of the Church of Our Lady.

Bob Kermod, treasurer of The Friends of the Church of Our Lady, is hopeful that the scheme will also receive backing from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

He said: "This church is a gem of Northumbrian heritage, which will continue to serve its communities as a respected and much-loved place of worship for many years to come thanks to the combined efforts of local residents and generosity of visitors and organisations who give their valued support.

"We're very grateful to the local grant funders who have already financially supported the development phases of the project.

"Services continue and visitor attendance to Our Lady remains strong thanks to unwavering support from our local

In October, three Oswinners spoke on BBC Radio 4's evening programme. 'Kenny' said, "Lots of people I know who've left prison are homeless now; sometimes you're better off in jail because you're in a hostile environment... Who's gonna employ you? When you say (you're homeless), they're just going to write us off. The Oswin Project and others make a huge differ-

## Storm-damaged 11th century church is 'a gem of Northumbrian heritage'



The Church of Our Lady Seaton

communities and from our National Trust neighbours at Seaton Delaval Hall."

The church is a survivor from early days of Celtic/Saxon worship in the Saxon Kingdom of Northumbria, and has faced many changes during its long existence, including development by the Normans.

It has been regularly monitored to check for structural movement since 1999, particularly at the east end, and extensive investigative work took place between 2010 and 2016.

Major repairs were carried out in 2017, which included the structural strengthening of the Norman east walls and

ence; they provide a step forward."

The Oswin Project's other initiatives include a second café at HMP Northumberland, a farm shop, and a bicycle repair shop, Changing the Cycle, which opened in August 2024. Café 16 is also offering three-course festive meals throughout December for the public to pre-

arches, with work undertaken by Historic Property Restorations Ltd of North Shields and funding provided by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England, The Northumbria Historic Churches Trust and Friends' group.

Structural monitoring, including a geological assessment of the coal mine to the north of the church, was undertaken before, during and after these repairs. Results confirmed that damaging, progressive movement had been halted and the church structure had settled to seasonal oscillating movement - more normal for a lime mortar building of this age.

book at £25 per person.

● For more details on the Oswin Project, the pre-bookable festive meals, and how to support the Changing Lives Christmas Meal Appeal, please visit: [newcastlecathedral.org.uk/cafe-16](http://newcastlecathedral.org.uk/cafe-16)

# Volunteers of all ages make a difference in our diocese

**F**rom enthusiastic teenagers to a 90-year-old stalwart of faith, volunteers across the Diocese are making a difference.

Tamsin and Meisha, young leaders at St Andrew's Friday Club and Beyond Youth, are inspiring their peers while supporting other young people.

In Dudley, 90-year-old Charlotte Brewis remains a cornerstone of St Paul's Church, dedicating decades to roles like PCC member and fundraiser.

These stories highlight the importance of volunteering at any age.

## Tamsin and Meisha

Tamsin and Meisha are passionate young volunteers who have been part of St Andrew's Friday Club in Ashington for many years and their dedication is having a real impact on other young people.

The teenagers started volunteering with Beyond Youth before it was even officially launched and have since helped with a wide range of events including holiday clubs and Prayer Spaces in schools.

As Lynemouth Club has grown, they've committed to volunteering each week and have played an essential role in the club's success.

Dave Johnson, Children & Youth Coordinator, said: "It's been amazing to see them grow in confidence and welcome other young people.

"They spend their time running particular activities within a wider club, getting to know young people, and making sure that young people's voices are heard in every part of our planning."

Tamsin's enthusiasm has even inspired many of her friends to join Beyond Youth, meaning that even more young people get the opportunity to learn about God's love.

When asked why she volunteers, Tamsin said: "It helps me get experience for what I want to do when I'm older, which is youth work. My favourite part is seeing the children having fun."

Meisha said: "Working with children is my passion. My favourite part is seeing the children playing together and putting a smile on their faces."

## Charlotte Brewis

Charlotte Brewis, who recently celebrated her 90th birthday, has been a familiar face at St Paul's in Dudley for the past 40 years.

A faithful member of the church, Charlotte has served on the PCC as well as helping in a variety of roles.

Today, she continues to take the offertory on Sundays and hands out Bibles and service sheets to the congregation.

She's also regularly found in the church kitchen during coffee mornings and



Charlotte Brewis

other events, washing dishes and generally being a reliable helping hand.

"Charlotte helps with all that we do," said friend and churchwarden at St Paul's, Valerie Rimmer.

"We have fundraisers which include music nights, beetle drives and pie and pea suppers. Charlotte will always contribute in whichever way she can and is always very happy to."

Originally from Derry, Charlotte stopped attending church after moving to England until a bus ride inspired her return.

She explained: "One day I was on the bus and I saw the church and thought 'I must come back to church'. I came in and everyone was lovely and made me welcome. We all stayed friends for years."

Charlotte said she became part of a dedicated team of volunteers who helped with dances in the church hall, cleaning the church, handing out books during services and making tea – her favourite task!

There was a party at St Paul's for Charlotte in October for her 90th birthday.



Meisha and Tasmin

# Berwick community celebrates 400 years of historic bridge

**B**erwick-upon-Tweed commemorated the 400th anniversary of its iconic Jacobean Bridge with a grand celebration organised by the Berwick Parish Church Trust. Berwick Parish Church trust member Margaret Shaw, a devoted supporter of Berwick’s heritage, first proposed the celebration in 2022, recalling the bridge’s historic commissioning by King James VI of Scotland (James I of England) and its 1624 opening as a major River Tweed crossing, a vital link between England and Scotland.

A group was formed to devise a complex plan, which culminated in the highly successful ‘Bridge 400 Celebration’ to honour the bridge’s legacy.

A weekend of events in August, led by project manager Derek Sharman MBE, commenced with a procession from Berwick Town Hall, led by the Berwick Pipe Band, who guided dignitaries across the bridge to Tweedmouth. There, Pipe Major Andrew Smith continued the traditional Scottish tunes as officials gathered for an opening ceremony and bridge blessing.

Margaret welcomed guests before addresses from the Lord Lieutenant and the Leader of Northumberland County Council. The ceremony included a blessing by the Bishop of Berwick, the Rt Revd Mark Wroe, and Chaplain to The King in Scotland, Revd Dr Marjory McLean.

To mark the occasion, a wreath of roses



The Bishop of Berwick leads The Lord Lt to Bridge 400 celebration

*Pictures: Revd Canon Alan Hughes*

and thistles was cast into the River Tweed, alongside a commemorative plaque adorned with an artistic sketch of the bridge by Susan Hughes, a local artist and devoted vicar’s spouse.

Susan, who has contributed extensively to artistic projects throughout England and Scotland, created the sketch specifically for the plaque, cementing the legacy of Berwick’s Jacobean Bridge as both a historic and artistic landmark.



Susan Hughes with The Mayor of Berwick, at the dedication of a permanent commemorative plaque on Berwick Bridge, which includes her drawing of the bridge



Sketch by Susan Hughes

# St Mary's C of E First School achieves Global Neighbours Bronze Award

**S**t Mary's C of E First School in Berwick has achieved the prestigious Global Neighbours Bronze Award, recognising its commitment to global awareness and compassion among students. Awarded on 11 September, the accolade celebrates the school's initiatives to encourage students to engage with issues of global poverty and inequality.

The award is part of the Global Neighbours Scheme, created by Christian Aid in collaboration with the Church of England's Education Office. The initiative aims to empower young people to understand worldwide inequalities and to inspire them to become "courageous advocates for change," according to Alison Brown, Global Neighbours Schools Programme Officer at Christian Aid. "It's wonderful to see how staff and pupils at St Mary's have taken this to heart and are seeking to tackle injustice," she added.

To qualify for the Bronze Award, St Mary's undertook various educational activities, all designed to help students understand global challenges and their responsibility as global citizens. These efforts included school litter picks to maintain a clean environment, WaterAid workshops focused on hygiene and preventing germ transmission, and a project in which Key Stage Two students calculated their carbon footprints using World Wildlife Fund resources.

Students also participated in creative activities to explore global perspectives and environmental issues. One activity involved designing "worldview gog-



gles" to imagine how people from different backgrounds perceive the world. Students created art pieces of the Earth as their favourite foods, then reflected on the ways pollution could harm their 'perfect creations.' Another project, titled 'If Our World Was a Cup of Tea,' encouraged students to discuss the kind of

world they want to build.

These themes were woven into core subjects, with students writing poetry on pollution, using their own dialects to express the message in English lessons. Outside the classroom, students acted independently—some organised community litter pick-ups, while School Council representatives considered ways to reduce waste, such as by using less paper and opting for reusable items like water balloons.

St Mary's is committed to building on this momentum throughout the coming school year, expanding its connections with local and international communities to drive positive change.

## Join Education Team (JET) - introducing James Lewis

The team which supports schools in Newcastle Diocese has been boosted by the arrival of James Lewis.

A vastly experienced education professional, James took up the role of Assistant Director (School Effectiveness) at the start of the new academic year in September.

He brings a wealth of teaching and leadership experience, and has also worked with schools in the UK and abroad in training, research and consultancy.

“I am delighted to be here and I have started getting to know schools and headteachers in this beautiful part of the world,” said James, who is working with the Joint Education Team (JET) in both Newcastle and Durham dioceses.

“I’m there to offer all-round advice,” said James. “What I can bring in terms of strategy, leadership and knowledge of the curriculum will complement the support our schools receive from their respective local authority or academy trust.

“But it’s with a diocesan hat on – and that Christian distinctiveness is a key element in



James Lewis



New Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) David Akers with interim DDE Gill Booth, who semi retires at the end of this year

making our schools so special.”

Brought up in rural Shropshire, James began his career in broadcast media, working for the BBC. But he eventually fulfilled a long-term ambition by retraining to be a maths teacher and moving into teaching.

In more recent years, James has worked in consulting, training and research.

“It was very fulfilling work,” said James. “But something was missing and that was God. I

am a practising Christian and I am excited about this work with our Church of England schools which recognise everyone within their catchment as being their own children. There is a focus on RE and a religious ethos running through them. They are truly inclusive schools and have a welcoming approach to education.”

James’ wife Claire is already known in Newcastle Diocese. She was ordained this year and is serving her curacy at St Mary’s Monkseaton.

## Dinner to be served at St Luke’s on Christmas Day

St Luke’s in Newcastle will once again reach out to those who are in need this Christmas.

For the past eight years, the church, on Claremont Street, has opened its doors on Christmas Day, welcoming inside people who would otherwise have a much lonelier Christmas.

From 1pm, a Christmas dinner with turkey and all the trimmings will be served for those who need it from the local community, as well as others from further afield.

Everyone is welcome, although those who wish to attend should sign up in advance so the church can ensure enough food is provided.

Vegetarian options are available and dietary requirements will be catered for.

● For more information (and to sign up) visit: [www.stlukes.church/advent](http://www.stlukes.church/advent)



# Generous grant brings new opportunities for children to experience Northumberland Coast

Seahouses Hostel, nestled near the scenic coastal village of Seahouses in north Northumberland, has been awarded a significant five-year grant from Lord Crewe's Charity. The grant, designed to support a range of youth-focused programmes, will provide essential funding to help schools, registered youth groups, church groups and charitable organisations from Newcastle and Durham Dioceses visit the hostel and the stunning Northumberland coast at a reduced cost.

The hostel, which operates under a Christian foundation in the Diocese of Newcastle, offers groups of up to 42 visitors a comfortable, affordable base for exploration and adventure. Located within a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Seahouses Hostel provides panoramic coastal views, unspoiled beaches and abundant opportunities for outdoor activities. Thanks to the grant, the hostel can now offer subsidised stays, keeping costs low for visiting groups and making it easier for young people to enjoy the area's natural beauty, outdoor experiences and unique learning opportunities.

The hostel boasts a range of facilities,



Children having fun rock pooling in Seahouses



The outdoor play area is ideal for children and young people

including spacious dormitories, two en-suite rooms for group leaders, a secure garden area for outdoor activities, and access to a church hall for indoor events. Ground-floor rooms with accessibility features, such as an en-suite wet room, cater to guests with mobility issues. With a modern, well-equipped kitchen, the hostel is

well-suited for group activities and stays.

Karen Leadbitter, the hostel warden, expressed gratitude for the support: "Our heartfelt thanks go to Lord Crewe's Charity – this grant will make a real difference to the work we do and those we are keen to support in providing the opportunity for children and young people to take part in activities and teambuilding with peers, developing life skills, building confidence – and most importantly creating happy memories!"

With its affordable rates and well-equipped facilities, Seahouses Hostel continues to serve as an ideal destination for youth groups, church communities and educational programmes, bringing the beauty and opportunities of Northumberland to more young people.

● For more information, Seahouses Hostel can be contacted at 07531 305 206 or via email at [seahouseshostel@outlook.com](mailto:seahouseshostel@outlook.com). Further details are also available on their website at [www.seahouseshostel.org.uk](http://www.seahouseshostel.org.uk)



Children enhancing their culinary skills in the hostel kitchen

# Altar frontal is a fitting way to remember Lilian



Work by Lilian Hume has been adapted to create a new altar frontal at St James' Shilbottle

A church in North Northumberland has made a visual tribute to a long-serving volunteer who played the organ for more than 70 years.

Lilian Hume was a life-long member at St James' Shilbottle and served in a variety of roles, from church warden and PCC member, to pantomime producer.

But Lilian was also a renowned needleworker and craftsperson, and had crafted a set of square panels for a quilt before she died in February of this year, at the age of 96.

Now, instead of a quilt, the panels have



Lilian Hume played the organ for more than 70 years

been adapted to form a new altar frontal, which was proudly displayed at St James' in time for Creation-tide (1 September to 4 October).

"Lilian was first and foremost a lovely lady," said Margaret Weaver, a Reader at St James' and Anna Chaplain. "She did such a lot for the church and the community and her craft-work was held in very high esteem. There was a time when Lilian used to look after the linens and vestments at the church.

"The altar frontal looks fantastic and the work on these panels must be seen to be believed. A further two panels have been crafted into a pulpit fall. We are very proud of

Lilian and are grateful to her family for donating the work to us to use."

The unveiling of the altar frontal, which features squirrels, leaves and acorns in the design, was also timed to coincide with the quinquennial Flower Festival in September, which was held in memory of Lilian this year.

Lilian, from Shilbottle, began playing the organ at 17 on D-Day. She served for decades and led the Sunday School, Mothers' Union, and girls' guild, and organised community pantomimes for all ages. She retired during the COVID pandemic after a lifetime of service and dedication.

In 2012, Lilian was handed the ultimate honour when she received Maundy Money for her services to St James' Church and attended a garden party at Buckingham Palace.

## Christmas activity for families: make a reflection tag for your tree

Christmas is a joyful time, but it can also be busy and overwhelming. This activity helps children (and adults!) pause, think about God and reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.

What you'll need:

- ★ Card or gift tags
- ★ String
- ★ Pens or pencils

Think about how are you feeling about Christmas. Excited? Happy? Maybe a little stressed or even sad? Sometimes the rush of Christmas preparations can make it easy to lose sight of what's most important. Take a moment to think about what you've been doing to prepare for Christmas. Write or draw these thoughts on a tag to hang on your Christmas tree.

After you finish, take a moment to reflect on what you've written or drawn and to think about God. Then, hang your tag on the tree as a reminder of God's love and the joy of Christmas.

## A Christmas Eve prayer for children and young people

Heavenly Father,

We forget that at these busy times of lists upon lists you are at the centre of all we do. We sometimes get caught up in the rushing around and trying to fit everything in, and our hearts can feel so far away from what you want us to know about Christmas.

Lord, as we journey toward Christmas, help each one of us to pause and reflect on the special gift you gave in your Son, Jesus Christ. We ask that each one of us would feel a sense of your blessing on all that we do this Christmas, no matter how busy we feel.

Help us to radiate joy, and share in eager anticipation for all you have for us and those we are surrounded by. Help us find moments to share in celebration just as the angels did.

All the Glory is yours,  
Amen.

