

# NEWCASTLE READER

ISSUE 19 Spring/Summer 2022



Diocese of Newcastle  growing church bringing hope



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## JERUSALEM, PART 2

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# EDITORIAL

## Greetings from the members of the Communications Group:



**Olwyn Black,**  
Reader with PTO at Gosforth St Nicholas, the group's minutes secretary.



**Gwyn McKenzie,**  
Reader at Riding Mill St James, writer and gatherer of information for Comings and Goings.



**Chris Hudson,**  
Reader in the Scremerston, Spittal and Tweedmouth Benefice, writer and roving reporter.



**Louisa Fox,**  
Reader at Longbenton St Mary Magdalene, responsibility for website matters and liaison with Bethany Browning at Church House.



**Jan Porter,**  
Reader at Monkseaton St Peter, ex officio member as Secretary to the Executive Committee of the Readers' Board.



**Gloria Bryant,**  
Editor and writer and chair of the Communications Group.

We hope that you will enjoy the latest edition of Newcastle Reader, planned to be with you at some point during Eastertide, whose content, we believe, is varied and interesting. The Communications Group meets regularly, and we are already planning edition 20. As always, we rely on the willingness of people to share information about what they are doing in church, at home, in their community and in the workplace to build up the kingdom of God in this place and time, whether or not they are Readers. For edition 20, Chris has suggested we commission a collage of material contributed by those who wish to share with others any initiatives/activities in their church or their work as a Reader which are bearing fruit.

The information does not have to be in the form of a full article: offerings of 300 words or thereabouts, accompanied by some photographs would be wonderful. We will do the work of collating and

editing all the material we receive. If you would like to contribute to and have your voice heard in any way through Newcastle Reader, please initially make contact through [gcadman054@gmail.com](mailto:gcadman054@gmail.com)

Finally, as always, may I express our gratitude to all who make Newcastle Reader possible, in particular the diocese, our designer Jon Kirkwood and our printer Shiremoor Press. Last, but not least, many thanks to our present Warden Bishop Stephen for his unfailing enthusiasm and encouragement.

**Correction:** In the last edition we welcomed Ian Farrimond back to the diocese after he had been working in Mali. In fact, he had been working in Malawi. Many apologies.

# EASTERTIDE GREETINGS

FROM  
BISHOP STEPHEN



**Happy Eastertide to you all! By the time you read this, many of us will have been together for the Conference in March, when both our own Rob Saner-Haigh and Professor Simon Oliver gave us fresh pause for thought.**

We are enormously fortunate to have such an able diocesan staff, amazing colleagues with Lindisfarne, and to have one of the world's leading theological faculties, at Durham, on our doorstep. Hopefully, we are ready to build on that as we look forward, and, especially remembering that Easter is our annual opportunity to celebrate new life given in Christ our Lord.

Reflecting on new life, then, we have a new opportunity to demonstrate to all, within our extraordinarily spread and varied diocese, the freshness and significance of Reader ministry. Soon we shall look forward to the annual selection day where new candidates for training await the process. We have some promising candidates but we could do with many more - and of all ages and backgrounds. The pandemic has taken its toll in convincing some of our more senior Readers that it is time for them to lay down their blue scarves. We are hugely grateful for all they have given and look forward to their company as Readers Emeriti, but simply by their retirement, our enthusiasm is triggered to seek out others who may wish to offer for this crucial ministry of preaching and teaching.

Please let me and others on the Executive know of your ideas for encouraging recruitment. Similarly, let us know if you feel that there are people who could offer much as Readers. But there is more excitement to come. Now we can gather again,

we look forward with real longing to our Annual Service in the cathedral. Were you there last year? If not, please do put the 8th October into your diaries now. It would be marvellous to have a bumper number there to celebrate together. Bishop Gordon Mursell, who was

Bishop of Stafford and before that Dean of Birmingham, and one of the Church of England's great communicators will be our preacher. Excitement is in the air - we are all freed to work together again. Alleluia!

**THE RIGHT REVEREND STEPHEN PLATTEN IS THE FORMER BISHOP OF WAKEFIELD AND ASSOCIATE BISHOP AND WARDEN OF READERS IN THE DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE.**

## COMINGS AND GOINGS IN MEMORIAM:

Joyce (Joy) Stocks

Helen Bishopp

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

# JUST A SEC

JAN PORTER IS SECRETARY TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE READERS' BOARD AND A READER AT MONKSEATON ST PETER.



**Recently the Area Dean asked me to visit a neighbouring church, currently in Vacancy. I was to lead a service of the Word because no priest could be found who was available to preside at the Sunday morning Holy Communion service.**

As I drove to the church, I realised that I was driving to the birthplace of George, our upstairs neighbour from the time we first came to live in the north-east. Mic and I were married on a Saturday morning and after a celebration at my Mum's house took the train from London to Newcastle Central. Mic had been living in the Tyneside flat we were renting for a few months. Mic would be leaving on the Monday for three weeks working away. As I descended from the train it happened that George's wife, Ella was waiting for another train on the platform and she welcomed us to Newcastle. Then she asked, "Are you a Church of England girl?" When I replied in the affirmative, she continued "So you'll be coming to church with me in the morning then?" I did go to church with Ella and joined the gathering and worshipped in Byker until we moved to the coast some years later. Ella and George were the kindest neighbours one could hope to have. They taught us lessons about welcome and were always warm and direct but never intrusive or overwhelming. We built up trust and friendship with them and through them with the community.

Approaching my destination, I considered that the congregation might be feeling sad that they would be unable to receive Holy Communion that morning. At the same time, it was moving that they were joining the refugees who were currently fleeing from missiles or sheltering in bunkers and were in solidarity with them. I felt grateful that we might gather together safely to offer praise and thanks to God and join our prayers with the many who were praying earnestly for peace. During the service we pondered on the image of a mother hen gathering her chicks under her wings which Jesus used in the Gospel passage we had shared. The artist Stanley Spencer painted "The Hen" in his series of Lent pictures. He depicts Jesus lying curled on the ground propped up on one elbow watching the hen gathering her babies. Archbishop Stephen has written a book

of reflections on these paintings<sup>1</sup> and he says of the message it conveys that it is highly significant that the circle Jesus makes around the hen is not closed and notices that a small sparrow is flying into the safety provided there. We used responses from the Iona community<sup>2</sup>:

**Under your wings You gather us  
You wrap us around with your love.  
In the family of God  
You gather us  
You wrap us around in your love**

All this thinking led me to ponder on some conversations we have been having at our Readers' Board executive committee meetings about the importance of greeting, gathering, and supporting each other in our Reader Ministry. Some of you have told us that you miss the various opportunities to gather we had in the past – book groups, talks and other events such as "A Canny Day Out". In some Deaneries Readers are gathering again for study, prayer, and fellowship. On the first Tuesday of each month all are invited to say Night Prayer together on Zoom if they are free to do so. A good number of you signed up to attend the Conference that took place at the end of March which provided an opportunity for a sharing of views. If you were unable to attend, we should still like to hear about your ideas for the future and talents you might be able to offer in planning and organising them. We should also like you to tell us what it is that discourages you from attending Reader events, for there are some Readers who have said that they do not desire to attend such gatherings at all. Whilst respecting the opinions of others, I do believe that it is good for us all to meet together on occasion as in the words of John Daniel's hymn:

**"As we are gathered Jesus is here  
One with each other ...  
Bound as one people rooted in love."**

1. Cottrell, S. (2012) Christ in the Wilderness: Reflecting on the paintings by Stanley Spencer London : SPCK
2. Burgess, R & Polhill, C. (2004) Eggs and Ashes Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications

# LINDISFARNE TALES – TAKE ONE MAD IDEA'...

CHRIS HUDSON IS A READER IN THE SCREMERSTON, SPITAL AND TWEEDMOUTH BENEFICE.



**It all started with the virus. Covid-19 had ended my current employment as a schools' worker, but the world was emerging from the first long winter of lockdown- and I'd heard that St Mary's Parish Church on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne was struggling to raise funds due to a lack of pilgrims and visitors, due to it being**

**either shut, or restricted in access.** I've always felt a deep affection for the island, shared the inspiring stories of our Northern Saints with schoolchildren, and somehow made a living out of being a teacher and storyteller. And so, a mad idea grew: to create a guided walk for island visitors of all ages, storytelling the tales of Oswald, Aidan, Cuthbert and others, and making it pay, as donations to the church.

It was completely crazy, of course. I visited the island, pacing out a possible short route using key locations (the view of Bamburgh castle, the recently rediscovered foundations of Aidan's original church, St Cuthbert's Isle), creating the 'pegs' on which to hang the different parts of the long story. I could be dressed as a monk, and use theatrical props... and there would have to be jokes. But there was something else- I wanted my audiences to hear positive accounts of how Christianity shaped our nation. Initially, I pondered finishing with a prayer, then ditched it for being too obvious- the history would have to speak for itself. But the Christian story, definitely had to be in there too. Jesus would be mentioned.

For 'content', I decided to cover the vivid tale of a Saxon family fleeing from Bamburgh to Scotland for sanctuary, their arrival in Iona, a startling conversion, their return, the battle of Heavenfield, their request for a teacher, the arrival of Cormac, his replacement by Aidan, a confrontation with another king, the stories of Cuthbert, Eadfrith and Bede – and all in 60 minutes.

I discussed it with Rev Sarah Hills, (Vicar and Area Dean) walking the suggested route, and she approved. There were practical details to consider: Health and Safety (Would we

be responsible for any accidents, or Covid infections?), accepting donations by credit card as well as cash (How? Into which account?), advertising and marketing (Facebook, signboards, anything else?). So, a Sum-it card reader was purchased, signboards designed and constructed, and a Facebook page was devised (Could it be linked to other Facebook pages?) Would businesses and the local tourist board be interested? What about the local inhabitants themselves? Gradually, the developing plan took shape and on June 2nd, I ran my first tour.

There were 19 people, all adults. They laughed at the right moments, showed appropriate awe and wonder at others, and by the end had donated £54.57. It was a start. Over the next few sessions, the style and content of the tour were adapted and adjusted in the light of experience. I acquired a map to show key locations of the wider story, a Roman helmet, plastic swords, cuddly toys and a portable signboard for displaying times and tour details, all needing to be carried with me in a large bag- but there was no alternative to that! One prop was crucial- a large bodhran (Irish drum) and beater, for attracting a crowd at the beginning, then doubling as a 'Saxon shield'. All these little details were important for keeping the story moving. Anything that didn't, was ditched.

“so wherever we've come from, we're all part of the island story”

Through the summer, the Lindisfarne Tales acquired other 'pegs': the war memorial on the Heugh, seals wallowing on the sand in the distance, the changeable weather, Lindisfarne Castle itself, lines from famous films, my past experience as a teacher, archaeological digs, the current refugee crisis.... and even the rivalries of Newcastle and Sunderland football fans. Groups varied in size, and the Facebook posts were starting to attract



wider audiences. All the time, money was rolling in (That Sum-it card reader paid for itself many times over.) On some days, I ran two sessions, timing everything to fit with the island tides and the ebb and flow of tourists across the causeway. I missed a whole month through having to look after my frail father too, but by the end of October, we'd made £3000 over 35 sessions (a far better result than I'd ever dreamed), and the most gratifying part was the interest being shown by visitors, their questions and comments. Most had never heard these stories before, and it was bringing the significance of the island alive for them.

One marvellously multi-ethnic family group from Sheffield were deeply taken by the idea that these islands have attracted incomers over many centuries, so we've always been a 'mad mix' of ethnicities, as I put it- 'so wherever we've come from, we're all part of the island story'. There was an American blogger researching pilgrimages in England, who booked a detailed interview with me for a future podcast. Another walking group from the Midlands booked a private tour, then afterwards made a massive donation. Some visitors afterwards confessed to crying at one point in the story, because they'd felt so 'moved'. There was even a primary school class who joined me for one tour, their teacher afterwards saying it was 'the best bit' of their visit. What's more, there were occasional 'kairos' moments when after a private conversation, I would find myself praying with people.

Sometimes afterwards, there would a pointed question from visitors: 'Why are you doing this?' I ducked these moments at first, then decided to become more forthcoming. 'Because I'm a Christian, and I want people to know how

Christianity has shaped our world.' Occasionally, someone would whisper with a smile, 'This is evangelism, isn't it?' 'Yes', I replied, quietly. 'Just don't tell anyone. They're paying for it.'

So yes, it was a mad idea that played to my strengths (Licensed Reader, storyteller, public speaker, Northern Saints nerd), but was there anything broader to learn from all this? Perhaps:

- God can use the things that give us delight (even crazy ideas) to further his Kingdom.
- Our Christian story can (surprisingly) be much more interesting for others, than we in the Church might think.
- Evangelism (sharing the good news of Jesus Christ) doesn't have to be threatening, but we do need to find our own voice for it. I don't believe that silence ('Preach the Gospel, and if necessary, use words' as St Francis didn't say...) is a good option today, when so few people know what Christians actually believe.



So, as our diocese works through its next steps with our new Bishop when they arrive, here's a question for you, Dear Licenced Reader, with all your gifts and talents: are you up for trying something new as well?

NB Lindisfarne Tales will happen again this year on Holy Island once the weather has warmed up. For dates and times, visit Lindisfarne Tales on Facebook- and do bring your friends.

# THE NEWCASTLE READERS CONFERENCE, 2022.

GWYN MCKENZIE IS A READER AT RIDING MILL ST JAMES

## Three of us set off from the west of the Diocese bright and early on 26th March heading for Blyth and the first Readers' Conference in three years.

We were in high spirits! This would be a face-to-face event not on Zoom – we were looking forward to it as I'm sure others were. For some a chance to meet new people, for others a chance to catch up with old friends. For all of us an opportunity to pray together, to hear some good speakers and to put the world to rights in discussion groups.

After an introduction from Bishop Stephen Platten, our Warden of Readers, we were led in Morning Prayer by Lynne Craggs. Then onto the first session of the day. Rob Saner-Haigh, Director of Mission and Ministry for the Diocese, on the role of the Reader in the Diocese. He started by stressing how vital Readers are in enabling Parish Ministry and confirmed the Diocesan commitment to local Parish Ministry. As Readers, he said, we are key – we know the place, the people, the dust of the area.

Rob reminded us of the National Church's Strategy – that is to be simpler, humbler, bolder – and then went on to talk about the Diocesan Vision. There are a number of aspects to it:

- **Turning outward in mission in every place**
- **Energised and equipped with missional leaders**
- **New Christian communities and new Christians**
- **Making disciples who build up the Church for mission**
- **More children and young people**
- **Financially flourishing where we give generously, plan strategically and build sustainably**

Underpinning the delivery of the vision are Churches working together, sharing resources so we have individuals doing what they do best in Church. It's key to helping everyone to find their calling, recognising that not all ministry is Church based. Church will be the place that equips and enables individuals to be a Christian 'whatever' be that surgeon, bus driver, teacher or tax collector. He reminded us of the roles of Nicola Denyer and Ce Pacciti. Nicola is there to support people as they work out what their vocation is, be that coffee maker, worship leader or perhaps Reader. Ce provides ongoing support to those in licensed ministry in going deeper in their relationship with God.

Rob stressed that Authorised Lay Ministry is not a cheaper way of doing Reader training. ALMs are to be a specialist in a place in, for example, pastoral care or leading worship. It could be a step on the road to more ..... perhaps Reader ministry or Ordination. Readers, who are theologically trained and ministerially formed and in whom the Church has invested time, are seen as leading lay leaders. In closing Rob likened the Church to a gardener tending a vineyard or garden. There are seasons in the gardening year, but the gardener works throughout, in winter to prepare for summer. If the church is in winter, it is vital that we, the body of Christ, do the same.

It was then into discussion groups to discuss how we, as Readers, could help tend the vineyards where we are. The report back raised a number of points too numerous to list here but I've included some that seemed to come up from more than one group:

**There are those who don't understand what we do.**

**There are places with an embarrassment of riches, whilst in others Readers are not able/allowed to play to our strengths.**

**To be 'simpler, humbler, bolder': could there be a dismantling of some of the structures/policies allowing us to operate across boundaries? Could Readers be a resource on a wider area?**

**What about Communion by extension? Baptism?**

**Three years training is a long time and might restrict younger people being able to commit, could there be 'training on the job'?**

**Covid has encouraged innovation – outdoor worship, shorter services – which must not be lost.**

**Zoom has also been an enabler in worship and in meeting others. Distance no longer need be an object in getting together. These things should not be lost.**

**And the comment that every group made -**

**The relationship with the incumbent is not always what it might be.**



Session two was Theology and Collaborative Ministry, led by Rev Professor Simon Oliver, the Van Mildert Professor of Divinity at Durham University. He started by talking about the relationship we, as Readers, have with the bishop. We hold the bishop's licence and therefore we share the bishop's ministry – as do clergy. As a result, we shouldn't be describing our role in what we are allowed or are not allowed to do. We should look at how we share ministry with the bishop.

We then stepped back for a delve into the history of the church and a look at what unites God's people. Starting with being a race descended from Abraham in a geographical area – the Promised Land- spreading through the religions of the Ancient Near East which were concerned with political power to the Roman and Greek paganisms involving the cultural, political and intellectual elites of the time. In answer to the question, who is Christ saviour of? Simon talked about 'radical inclusivity' pointing at Galatians 3:28-29 where Paul says 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ. And if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs to the promise'. He then reminded us of Paul's call to the Ephesian elders to 'keep watch over their flock as overseers' (episcopoi). The episcopoi, or bishops make visible the unity of the church; they are one of three visible signs of unity in the church – the other two being the Cathedral and the eucharist.

Simon continued by reminding us that, at their consecration bishops are called to pastor, teach, proclaim, evangelise, celebrate, feed and build up the body of Christ. Earlier Rob had listed things we do as part of our Reader ministry – teach, encourage the gifts of others, lead in church and in society. In Newcastle Diocese, he said, Readers are leaders, teachers, evangelists and encouragers. Simon drew out that in doing these things we share in the ministry of the bishop, we collaborate in humble service and that humility is a central virtue of Christianity. It's about recognising our dependence on one another and on God.

Readers hold the challenging space in the middle between the bishop and the clergy. We have to recognise we all need each other to maintain the unity of the church. We are all part of one body – the body of Christ.

Then we moved into discussion groups again, to think about the kind of training we need, how we build up the unity of the church in our locality and how we deal with the relationship with the incumbent. No report back after this so it was straight on to questions for the panel – Simon, Rob and Bishop Stephen. There were a number of questions in the Reader/clergy relationship arena – for example, who is responsible for teaching clergy to use Readers more, to work with volunteers? Bishop Stephen commented that it's evident we haven't worked hard enough to train either Readers or clergy to make collaboration work and that the Readers' Board needs to work with the Diocese on doing this. There was a request for a process outlining what to do when things go wrong in the Parish and more understanding of the role of Authorised Lay Ministers along with training to prepare Readers for an interregnum and for retirement.

Bishop Stephen then brought the conference to a close thanking the speakers for outlining the challenges for the future they had laid out. He thanked Ce, Nicola in her absence and Jan Porter for all their work in making the event run smoothly. Frances Stride then led us in Evening Prayer and the Conference was over for another year

So, the three of us from the west headed back west, weary but in high spirits. We had had our ministry affirmed as valued and seen as key for the future by the Diocese. There is work to do but everyone seems to recognise that and want to do it. We talked about the unity of the church during the day but the unity of the Reader community in the Diocese is equally important. We need to support each other in our challenges and share together in our development as we strive to work for God's kingdom in this place. I think we do that best when we come together so .....what do we do next?

# Alleluia

“he has risen”  
Matthew 28:6

Taken from  
Easter  
Reflections  
by Mary Fleeson

## Easter REFLECTIONS

Meditations and prayers  
inspired by art from  
Lindisfarne Scriptorium  
by Mary Fleeson



### DESIGN NOTES

This piece uses flowers, foliage and knotwork to tell the story of Easter Day. Flowers often have meanings and in this piece I have used Bay leaves, Tulips and Lily of the Valley, they represent, victory and wisdom (Bay), Mother Mary's Tears (Lily) and deep love and rebirth (Tulip).

The colours of the Tulips are white, red and purple, they have meanings too, white = purity, virginity, innocence, and birth, red = action, fire, charity, spiritual awakening and purple = royalty, fasting, faith, patience and trust.

The resurrection is depicted in the strands emerging from the tomb, they are rising, carrying the message of hope, a barrier (the world and its lies) attempts to stop that hope, but it fails.

## To The Heights

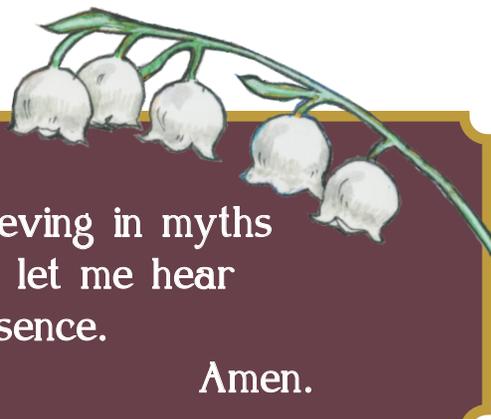
The message of hope must not be stopped or restricted and if that message is passed, one to another in actions of love, then it will not be stopped.

When we repeat the message 'He is risen' we are not only telling the world about a miracle but we are declaring that we believe in the story of Jesus, that we believe in the man, His message of love and His divinity.

He is risen indeed, Alleluia!  
What does that mean to you today?

God of Miracles,  
When the world tells me I am believing in myths  
rather than truths, let me see You, let me hear  
Your voice, let me sense Your presence.

Amen.





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**PAMELA NOBBS IS ANNA CHAPLAIN COORDINATOR FOR THE NORTH EAST AND A READER AT ST JOHN LEE IN HEXHAM DEANERY.**

**As we emerge (hopefully) from the pandemic we know that some things will never be the same again.** The way

we 'do' church has changed and some of those changes will continue. One thing that has not changed is the challenge of an ageing population. Around a quarter of the UK's population is now over the age of 60 and this figure is set to rise. However, this does not necessarily mean 'doom and gloom'. Some measures show the over sixties to now be healthier and wealthier than ever. But this is not so for many of our over 80's. Loneliness in the elderly is well-recognised. This has been thrown into sharper relief by the pandemic which has led to a fresh appreciation of community and concern for our neighbour. Some commentators have also perceived a new spiritual hunger.

Anna Chaplaincy has grown since 2010 from small beginnings in Hampshire to establish a network all over the UK under the umbrella of BRF (Bible Reading Fellowship). The term 'Anna' directly relates to the elderly prophetess who appears with Simeon in Luke's Gospel. She has experienced life fully, including widowhood, and now in her later years is privileged to meet the baby Jesus whom she and Simeon recognise as the long-awaited Messiah.

Many of our churches have an understandable bias towards youth work - 'the church of the future' etc. Advertisements for such church workers fill the back pages of many Christian magazines. Yet when we look around our actual churches (mine anyway!) we see mostly older faces. It has been shown that whilst physical and mental capacities wane with age spirituality does not. Anna Chaplaincy seeks to meet the spiritual needs



of older people: there is a supportive wealth of published resources (mostly by BRF) and a vibrant social network.

Anna Chaplaincy is wonderfully inclusive. The Chaplains themselves are drawn from a mix of lay (mainly) and ordained; male and female (mainly) of different denominations; they are volunteers (mainly) or paid; they reach out to church-going people of faith, those of other faiths and those of none. They work with those in residential care and those people still in their own homes.

**"The Course covers topics ranging over the spirituality of ageing; communication skills; the power of storytelling; dementia and loss: loss whether through bereavement or of your own home"**

Many Anna Chaplains come from a background of Reader or other licensed ministry but it is now recommended that all those feeling called to this work should undergo more specific training in the spirituality of the older person. Some of us in Newcastle were highly privileged to act as 'guinea pigs' for a new course developed in Sydney, Australia by the 'Health Television Network' a not-for-profit producer of high-quality training courses. The 8-week course we did was part of their Spiritual Care series; there was online registration and support with brilliantly produced video sessions, a Participant's Handbook and we were led in person by Donald and Harriet Mowat, whom some of you



“Many of our churches have an understandable bias towards youth work - ‘the church of the future’ etc. Advertisements for such church workers fill the back pages of many Christian magazines. “



## Messy Vintage in action - think Messy Church for oldies!

may recognise as they now live in Newcastle. Both have great professional (medical and sociological) experience with older people. BRF have now taken on the use of this Course nationally as the backbone of training for Anna Chaplaincy.

The Course covers topics ranging over the spirituality of ageing; communication skills; the power of storytelling; dementia and loss: loss whether through bereavement or of your own home. Present throughout the course is Professor John Swinton, a theologian with a health service background whose name you may recognise. He chairs Divinity and Religious Studies at the School of Divinity at Aberdeen University.

As Readers you may look at the Course contents and realise that there is considerable overlap in required skills. For instance, the section on ‘Active Listening’ applies to all of us in any kind of pastoral work. You may have done the Funeral module in your training which obviously includes the subject of bereavement. Those who have done the Course do not necessarily go on to become Anna Chaplains. But all who have done it comment on the way it has spoken into their own lives to beneficial effect. After all we are all getting older ourselves! It is likely that we will be running the Course again later this year, possibly in the Morpeth area.

There is still a lot of development going on as to how we guide prospective Anna Chaplains through the application process and then how we supervise and monitor the work going on. There have been changes in personnel in Newcastle Diocese over recent months including the appointment of the Revd. Canon Rob Saner-Haigh as Director of Mission and Ministry. The whole area of ‘Authorised Ministries’ (of which Anna Chaplaincy is one) is being re-examined. We have been helped by our fellow Reader Nicola Denyer in her role as Lay Ministry Development Officer as we look at application forms and look to the future of how such ministers are supported and supervised.

We were delighted to welcome two new Anna Chaplains on March 6th who were commissioned at Newcastle Cathedral; they will join the thirty plus of Anna Chaplains in our area. We continue to pray that others may sense God’s call into this vital ministry. Some Readers felt somewhat underused during the pandemic and if any of you feel that there are some unused hours in the week that God might be calling you to fill in this ministry, please do get in touch, or look out for notices concerning a local ‘northern Gathering’ of people interested in this work. At least have a browse on the excellent website. [www.annachaplaincy.org.uk](http://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk)

# WORKSPACE CHAPLAINCY: CONTINUING TO SUPPORT PEOPLE THROUGH THE PANDEMIC.

**FIONA USHER IS CHAPLAIN  
TEAM LEADER (NIM), LEAD  
CHAPLAIN, NEWCASTLE  
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT,  
PRINCIPAL CHAPLAIN, TYNE  
AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE  
SERVICE, AND INTERIM LEAD  
CHAPLAIN, NEAS.**



**'Chaplaincy is a significant resource for the church, offering significant insight into the world of employment (and Christian discipleship in that context); a resource for the common good, extending the work and mission of the church into a range of contexts, social settings and generations less touched by other areas of ministry... This is a continuing bold engagement with the secular and an important part of the Church's contribution to civil and wider society.'**

Northumbrian Industrial Mission (NIM) supports and trains voluntary workplace chaplains, ordained and lay, from various denominations - enabling them to be Christ's hands and feet in a range of contexts where, increasingly, many people have little connection to Church. Over the years a number of workplace chaplains have also been Readers who have brought their skills, training and often years of work experience to the role, as well as a faith tested by the joys and struggles of daily life. Our chaplains view their chaplaincy role as an expression of their ongoing discipleship, and we value and support their ministry.

NIM's chaplains visit a range of workplaces from retail stores, manufacturing, Hexham Mart and Government Offices to Nexus Metro, Newcastle International Airport and Emergency Services (Fire & Ambulance). This 'on the ground' help and support often provide timely and welcome care when individuals have been struggling with the demands of workplace stress and mental well-being, or personal issues such as illness, bereavement, caring roles, and financial pressures. During these last two

years lockdowns and restrictions have meant that chaplains have had to adapt and devise more creative ways of keeping in touch with people, for example a 'Chaplains Reflections' monthly article was produced, circulated electronically & added to workplace intranets - it proved popular and is being continued. Although not always easy, throughout this period chaplaincy has been a unique avenue of support for people at work where so many challenges have been faced including; redundancies, furlough, working from home, illness and added pressures and concerns for the safety of family and colleagues - and of course so many questions about suffering and the meaning and purpose of life!

Within all of this people have appreciated having someone they trust to talk over their concerns, and sometimes this has prevented a problem becoming more serious. As one senior manager in a large organisation put it, "In my experience they (the chaplains) are exceptionally good listeners and invaluable in terms of being confidential, impartial and a friendly ear.....so don't underestimate the value they bring."

Alongside our work we provide placements for ordinands and other individuals interested in learning more about chaplaincy and this year we are providing seven placements, including four students from Lindisfarne College of Theology. One of the students, Chris Wilson, is training to become a Reader and has just completed a placement at Newcastle International Airport. Reflecting on his time with the chaplaincy team at the airport Chris writes:

"The Australian country and western singer Slim Dusty famously wrote the song, 'The pub with no beer' which contains the lyrics, "But there's a nothing so lonesome, morbid or drear than to stand in the bar of the pub with no beer". I was reminded of this song during my placement with the chaplaincy team at Newcastle International Airport. The airport was slowly returning to being a living, breathing workplace, following the pandemic and all the travel restrictions that came with it ..... just like the pub with no beer its most essential ingredient had been missing - people! Although the pub with no beer had limped along with the presence of a few wine drinkers, its heartbeat was missing and so it has been with the airport. No passengers equals limited interactions for the chaplaincy team, or so I thought.

A chaplaincy placement formed an important part of this year's Reader training, and if I'm being honest, I was a little puzzled as to what interactions

I would encounter within an airport setting. What I hadn't thought of, which very quickly became apparent, was that due to the pandemic and the lack of passengers, the opportunity for prolonged interactions with airport staff was a door that had been very much opened to the chaplaincy team. When the airport was operating pre pandemic and passenger numbers were at normal levels interactions with airport staff took place, but at times they were limited in their depth due to the workload of the staff. Yet here, via a route no one would have chosen to travel, an opportunity for more prolonged and deeper conversations to take place had presented itself.



During my time on placement a visible change took place in the airport as more staff returned and retail outlets reopened, more passengers were passing through the terminal and a sense of normality, which the staff and chaplaincy team had not seen for over two years, was once

again a very real possibility. The one thing which will stay with me from my time at the airport was the reaction of the staff and the chaplaincy team to being able once again to move around without masks. The lifting of this one restriction suddenly enabled the chaplains to fully engage with all those they met - as if a final barrier had been removed. In some cases, they had only ever known some members of staff from behind a mask - imagine a masked ball, yet when the clock struck midnight no one revealed their faces and wouldn't for another two years! Yet this is effectively how things panned out in many of our workplaces these past two years, relationships formed yet not quite fully formed.

It was wonderful to observe how valued by the airport and its staff the chaplaincy service is, the service is only there with agreement of the airport, so in theory this invitation could be removed at any time. Yet as I spent more time with the chaplains, and observed their interactions with everyone from airport management to cleaners and car park attendants, it became apparent that this invitation was very much a two-way street as the chaplains and staff very much gained from one another.

The position of the chaplains being there by invitation, and not employed by the airport is a blessing, as in many ways they can build bridges

in some very difficult and sensitive areas such as repatriations. Imagine arriving back in a country you've not set foot in for many years and have little or no family connections, at this point a member of the chaplaincy team may be all you have as you are faced with leaving the airport building, perhaps without the security of a place to stay. On many occasions airport chaplains all over the country are the first point of contact for those in this situation and by being the invited hands and feet of God they are ideally placed to be that non threatening presence for those in need.

As I came to the end of my placement, I reflected on how much the service is valued - yet in many ways quietly flies under the radar (pardon the airport pun) - and that it is by flying under this radar that the chaplaincy service gains the trust of all those they serve."



As Chris has highlighted, alongside all the challenges and difficulties of the pandemic, it has also afforded chaplains a crucial opportunity to listen to and support many physically and emotionally distressed workers - beyond the walls of Church but alongside ordinary people in their daily lives. One chaplain commented, 'In trials and tribulations chaplaincy comes into its own'.

Workplace Chaplaincy is part of God's mission in the world and for the last two years that has meant responding to the effects of the pandemic and finding ways of providing hope in difficult times - blessing our communities and 'responding to human need by loving service'.

If you feel called to chaplaincy or would like to learn more about NIM please contact Fiona at: [fiona-nim@btconnect.com](mailto:fiona-nim@btconnect.com)

# JERUSALEM PART 2

ANNE HORNE IS A READER AT BERWICK HOLY TRINITY AND ST MARY.



This is the second part of Anne Horne's account of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the first part appeared in the last edition of Newcastle Reader.



In the region of Ein Gedi.

Beyond Jerusalem Luke 10:30 – 34: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers....' Jerusalem, standing on a plateau, is over 2,000 feet above sea level. Jericho, the lowest inhabited place on the earth's surface, lies 1300 feet below sea level. These 2 cities are only 17 miles apart as the crow flies, but with a height difference of over 3000 feet. There's a new road now, fast and straight, but the old road twists and winds through the mountains with sharp turns, dips and narrow passes. Excellent places for bandits to waylay travellers. Even in the time of Jesus this road was called "The way of blood" or "The Bloody Pass." It was famous as the roughest, rockiest, most robber-infested road in the Middle East. There's very little on the road, but at one point stand the remains of a Roman fort and inn with a central courtyard. Jesus would have known this route well. Tensions between Samaritans and Jews made the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem safer by travelling down the Jordan Valley than by the shorter route through Samaria. The Inn of the Good Samaritan could well have been based on this very place. Alas, all closed up the day my Reader friend and I passed by as we wandered around Israel.

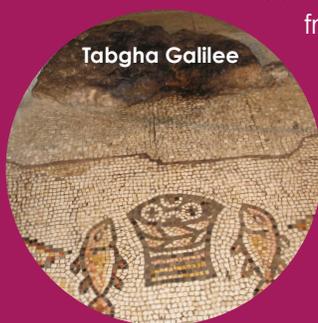
Instead, we headed for Jericho. After viewing the 7000-year-old walls and 'Zacchaeus's tree', we

stopped in the centre to watch people smoking hookahs and playing backgammon. We also heard from locals how the Dead Sea was receding rapidly. How, when they were young, there were spa resorts on its shores that were now deserted as they were high and dry. This seemed to be mainly from overuse of water from the Jordan River upstream, for expanding agriculture, especially date palms. From Jordan, we headed to Ein Gedi for relaxation after the bustle of Jerusalem. There are photographs, never to see the light of day, of me covered from head to foot in Dead Sea mud. Dead Sea water tastes foul and forget swimming. You just bob about on the surface like a cork.

One day, we headed south and took a cable car to Masada. The views were stunning, but more poignant, the sites of the Roman camps around the base, the ramp built by the Romans up to the fortress and the breached wall, all still clearly visible after nearly 2000 years. 967 people tried to defend Masada against the Romans, and, when all seemed lost, rather than surrender, they all committed suicide. Qumran was another must

from Ein Gedi. Constructed about 100 BC, it was destroyed by the Romans in 68 CE. In 1947, 2 young Bedouin shepherds – throwing stones into caves, heard pottery breaking. Nearly 900 scrolls were discovered in a series of 11 caves. When you stand and look about, there are miles of steep sided hills and endless unexplored caves. More finds to come?

Leaving Ein Gedi and heading north, we saw signs for the Jordan crossing near Jericho. I'd read somewhere that this was a more likely site for Christ's baptism than the tourist honeypot near the Sea of Galilee. It was also the place where it's thought the Israelites crossed into the promised land, and near where Elijah was taken up to heaven. Now it's a heavily militarised zone. We turned down a narrow road, only to be stopped by the inevitable armed guard, so explained to the young man that we just wanted to go down to the river. His only comment 'Stay on the road, the rest is mined'. On the Jordanian side of the river there were several people, only feet away. Somewhere in Jordan or beyond, there is a video of two ladies singing (badly and out of tune but very enthusiastically) 'Guide me, O thou great redeemer, Pilgrim through this barren land'.



Another place that I wanted to visit is Jacob's Well. I'd been turned back on my previous trip, so, when we saw a sign for Nablus by a different route, I took a left turn towards Samaria. Not the best road, and after about 10 miles, we were stopped by Israeli soldiers. Again, from this direction, they wouldn't let us through. Retracing ourselves – all 10 miles - we

headed north again, bypassing Tiberias, and towards the Lebanese border and Kibbutz Kfar Giladi just south of the city of Metula. Israel serves some of the best iced coffee, and our barman Boaz excelled at the skill. He lived even closer to the border and knew exactly what to do if the rocket alarms sounded. I'm not sure if it was reassuring or worrying that

we had our own private rocket shelter outside our room. Our main reason for coming so far north was to visit Caesarea Philippi. This involved another drive through minefields.



Looking over the Jordan

Caesarea Philippi. There's not much of it left now, a few fallen pillars, but stand among the ruins and you hear running water in the distance. Close by, an impressive cliff face, and the entrance to a cave. Here is the source of the river Jordan, as it bubbles up from underground springs. In the days of Jesus, Caesarea Philippi was a centre of Greek-Roman culture, a city known for its pagan worship, and this rock face was home to an impressive temple complex dedicated to the God Pan. Pagan worship was often conducted near running water and at Caesarea Philippi, historians have found at least 14 temples already. Carved into the rock face are several niches dedicated "to Pan and the nymphs." Stand at the rock face now, and the notice boards show how it looked 2000 years ago, but alas, very little is left. Still, I wanted to see it. I left Israel after my first trip feeling as though I'd missed something fundamental to our faith. That's partly why I returned. Because that name, the name of Caesarea Philippi, that once great city will live on for ever. Here was one of the most crucial moments - in Christ's life, in Peter's life, in the life of Christianity. Here at Caesarea Philippi was Peter's great confession of faith. "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God".

From the Golan Heights, it was back to Galilee for a few days, to the place where it all began. Buildings and villages change over time, but hills don't.

They stay the same for millennia. You stand almost anywhere in Galilee, look around, and you see hills. You know, you just know, that Jesus saw them too. At night you live Matthew 5:14. Towns on every hilltop shine out for miles. This is a green and pleasant land, so different from the wilderness of the south. We again stayed on a kibbutz – Nof Ginosar, where, within strolling distance, a boat was discovered by two fishermen from the kibbutz in 1986. It's an ancient fishing boat that has been carbon dated to 40BCE give or take 80 years. It's commonly called the Jesus boat.

So many places to visit in Galilee, where to start. On my friend's 25th anniversary day, we recalled her husband, and her years as a Reader on the shores of Galilee at Tabgha, at the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes. We visited Nazareth and Cana, Mount Tabor and Kursi, Capernaum and Peter's house (at least 3 times), paddled in the Sea of Galilee and took a boat across. A small sign saying Widow of Nain took us off the main road to a small village. But more exciting, just outside the village, an easy stroll, is a cemetery. It consists of a series of burial caves, dug into the hillside, and it dates to well before Roman times. It was to this very spot that the widow's son was being carried that day when Jesus encountered the funeral party.



The Source of the Jordan

On our last night, we ate St Peter's Fish on a deck over the Sea of Galilee. We tried again to get to Nablus. Different route, same result. Turned away by a soldier with a gun. This one did tell us that the road was open on a weekend. Too late, we had to head home. I would like to go again. Finally visit Nablus, walk again by the shores of Galilee, wander around Jerusalem. Sadly, my friend and fellow Reader died a year ago. Her son and I scattered her ashes in September in her favourite spot, the sea at Sandsend near Whitby. If I do return to Israel, it will be alone, to walk along the Kidron Valley in the early morning when all is still.

# LAST WRITES

## PILATE'S WIFE

GLORIA BRYANT IS A READER WITH PTO AT NEWCASTLE ST FRANCIS

Last year, I read a novel by Marius Gabriel called *The Testament of Marcellus*. Marcellus is an early first century Roman lawyer who mixes with the great and powerful, including Emperor Tiberius. In 33 C.E., Marcellus is sent to Palestine by the emperor with a letter for the Procurator Pontius Pilate. Once there, he becomes acquainted not only with Pilate but also King Herod, Herod's wife Herodias and Jesus of Nazareth. However, he also befriends Pilate's abused wife and learns of her fascination with Jesus. Ultimately, according to this story, she becomes a Christian and ends her days in southern France among a community of followers of The Way.

The story set me thinking about what I actually knew about Pilate's wife, and whether there might be sources from which Marius Gabriel had drawn that I was unfamiliar with. There is, of course, a single reference to her in the Gospels: in Matthew, Chapter 27, verse 19. She is not named, but Matthew tells us that she interrupted Pilate's judgement of Jesus by sending a message to him, warning her husband to have nothing to do with Jesus, 'that innocent man'. Pilate then goes some way in trying to persuade the Jewish authorities and the crowd they have stirred up to allow him to release Jesus. As we know, however, they insisted on the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus. So, Pilate, fearful of a riot, which might prove dangerous to Roman authority and would certainly damage his reputation with the emperor, gives in to the demand to crucify Jesus.

After reading Matthew's short account, I considered why Matthew alone mentions Pilate's wife's dream. A simple answer to that might be that he alone among the Evangelists had access to the story, a scoop in modern journalistic language, or he was the only one of the four who thought the story worth mentioning. He might merely have wanted to add to his story a traditional element: after all dreams regularly occur in Bible stories and are a particular feature of Matthew's Gospel. Perhaps Matthew thought something so unusual as

a woman interrupting a judgement in order to influence her husband would be very unusual and had to be worth mentioning. Indeed, that would be so. Women had no legal status in Roman society, and the wives of imperial officials did not normally travel with them. And, even if Pilate's wife had travelled with him to Palestine, it is surprising that she left the comfort of the official residence at Caesarea Maritima to go to dusty, noisy, overcrowded, Jerusalem at Passover time. So, if she was there, perhaps that indicates something about Pilate's relationship with his wife: was he a controlling husband who needed to know where his wife was at all times (the contemporary Jewish writer Philo called him a 'violent thug')? Or, did Pilate value his wife's advice? After all, we know that Emperor Augustus' wife Livia exercised considerable influence over her husband's decisions. Did Pilate wash his hands to show contempt for his wife's urgent advice, or to prove to her that the crucifixion of Jesus was not something he wanted to do?

"The story set me thinking about what I actually knew about Pilate's wife, and whether there might be sources from which Marius Gabriel had drawn that I was unfamiliar with."

It is a pity that Matthew did not reveal the name of Pilate's wife; he may not have known it, of course. As a consequence of her anonymity Western Christians have no name for her, though some have suggested that Claudia mentioned in the final greeting of the Second Letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 4: 19-21) is Pilate's wife. Claudia or Procula is venerated in the Greek and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches, and also the Coptic Church as a saint, but the texts upon which the belief that Pilate's wife became a Christian and possibly a martyr are apocryphal. The Gospel of Nicodemus/The Acts of Pilate and The Letter of Claudia to Fulvia are two such texts, the former dating from the fourth century CE. Legends about Claudia abound, for example, that Claudia was the granddaughter of



Emperor Augustus, which would, if true, mean she was from a higher class of Roman society than the man she was married to. Claudia, and in particular her dream, fascinated Medieval Christians: she appears, for example in the York Mystery Plays. But what of more recent times?

Well, in spite of appearing in only one verse of scripture, Pilate's wife has inspired a considerable amount of attention in modern poetry, fiction and drama, including a portrayal of her in *The Life of Brian*, where she was played by John Cleese! She has even inspired a pop song. In poetry, for instance, Charlotte Bronte wrote a twenty-seven-verse work on the subject of Pilate's wife's dream, whilst Carol Ann Duffy produced a much shorter poem in a 1999 anthology. In both poems Pilate's wife detests her husband:

**'In whose gaunt lines the abhorrent gazer reads  
A triple lust of gold, and blood, and power;'<sup>1</sup>**

**and whose**

**'Indolent hands. Camp hands that clapped  
for grapes. Their pale, mothy touch made me  
flinch. Pontius.'<sup>2</sup>**

The difference between the two poems, however, is that Charlotte Bronte's Pilate is unsympathetic to and contemptuous of Jesus, though his wife becomes a believer, whilst in Carol Ann Duffy's poem Pilate's wife, though fascinated by Jesus, does not believe that he was God, whereas

**'Pilate believed he was.'<sup>3</sup>**



**St Procula (courtesy of Wikipedia)**

Was there any point, other than self-interest, for me as a Reader to delve into the life of someone about whom we can have such little certainty? Well, the reading inspired a reflection for an

annual Lent evening with my parish branch of the Mothers' Union. I have done such an exercise on the 'supporting cast' in the drama of the Gospels on previous occasions. It usually works well because most of us have an interest in people and their stories. During our Lent evening we listened to Scripture, heard Carol Ann Duffy's poem and considered Pilate's Wife, one of the reflections in *The Nail*.<sup>4</sup> Some interesting discussion followed which included questions and comments about Pontius Pilate himself.

And that leads me to the discovery I made about the Procurator of Judea, which was surprising and initially shocking: Pontius Pilate is venerated as a saint in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and shares a feast day with his wife on 25th June. To believe that Pilate was worthy to be called a saint means that at some point before his death, possibly in 39 CE, he must have repented of his sins, including his part in Jesus' death, and turned to God.

"Pilate's wife has inspired a considerable amount of attention in modern poetry, fiction and drama."

As it happens, I was preaching on the Third Sunday in Lent. The readings included Isaiah 55: 1-9 and Luke 13: 1-9. The gospel passage includes the parable of the fig tree given a second (in fact a fourth chance) to produce fruit, whilst the wonderfully inclusive passage from Isaiah offers to all the chance to 'return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them.' As we were looking towards the Passion and at the same time aware that the Russian leader had unleashed a murderous war on Ukraine, I took the opportunity to challenge the congregation with the thought that it is never too late for those who do utterly wicked things to repent and turn to God. And so, at the heavenly banquet we may find ourselves sitting next to Pilate, or even Vladimir Putin. The challenge made for an interesting parish breakfast!

1. Charlotte Bronte: *Pilate's Wife's Dream*. The poem is in the public domain.
2. Carol Ann Duffy: *Pilate's Wife* from *The World's Wife*, Picador 1999, page 18.
3. Carol Ann Duffy, as above, from the final line of the poem.
4. Stephen Cottrell: *The Nail*, SPCK 2011, pages 55-59

