



# The Way

The FREE newspaper of the Church in Cumbria – Spring 2019

Help puppeteers in schools' mission

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New Bishop of Penrith: consecration pictures

CENTRE PAGES



**United in faith:** Hannah and Thomas with their two children - Thomas, three, and Samuel, eight months  
DAVE ROBERTS

## GOD SAYS: 'GO FOR IT!'

By Dave Roberts

### ■ One couple's calling to return to Africa to support mission hospital

THOMAS Ashley can clearly remember sitting in a darkened room, studying at medical college, as gunfire rang out around the building.

It was the final days of a bloody civil war in his native Sierra Leone which had raged for ten years, a conflict which had claimed the life of his mother at the hands of rebel soldiers.

Yet despite such atrocities

Thomas never lost sight of his life's goal, to become a surgeon.

That's how he met his wife, Hannah, who is a GP in Penrith, and who travelled to Africa in 2013 as part of a Government scheme to help train health workers in new skills.

They met on ward rounds in a district hospital and later married. The couple, who have two small children – Thomas, three, and Samuel, eight months – are

currently back in Cumbria, where Hannah had previously bought a house in Wetheral in the north of the county.

But, driven by a strong faith, both say they are committed to returning to Sierra Leone to support a mission hospital which provides vital medical care to tens of thousands of people.

Thomas said: "When I think about my background and how I've progressed, I can honestly say

it's not because of my strength or wisdom, it's all due to God and how he has helped me through. I feel blessed to be able to help others."

Thomas currently works at Carlisle's Cumberland Infirmary as a registrar, but only a few weeks ago the family returned to Africa to visit the Kamakwie Wesleyan Hospital which was built in 1959.

Hannah understands that their

call to mission is a joint one. She said: "My faith has always been strong but being in Sierra Leone, has had a renewing effect on it.

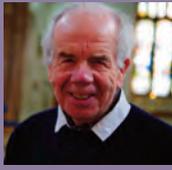
"It's become so much more for me and I realise our commitment to the country is a real pivotal moment in terms of faith and vocation. God has told me, 'Just go for it'."

■ For their full story, turn to page 7

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*The Way* is the newspaper of the Church in Cumbria. It is produced in partnership between the Church of England Diocese of Carlisle, the Methodist District of Cumbria, the United Reformed Church in Cumbria and Churches Together in Cumbria. Through Churches Together in Cumbria, we ensure coverage of and distribution to the Roman Catholic, Salvation Army, Quakers and independent churches. The editorial team is made up of representatives from across the denominations.

The purpose of *The Way* is to reflect the Church in Cumbria to itself and to our communities more widely.

We do not seek to promote any particular theological viewpoint, but rather aim to stimulate debate by featuring writers from a variety of church traditions and from society more widely.

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**The Way**  
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in Cumbria



**Tour:** From left, Bishop James talking to schoolchildren in Grange-over-Sands; with Sarah Moore and Richard Teal at Lazonby; and near the foot of Cat Bells with Paul Rose, a youth worker at Penrith Methodist Church

# Bishop James leads way around county

■ Senior clergy spend 24 days walking between all the mission communities

By Rev Mike Talbot, Evangelism Enabler

TAKE a pair of walking boots. Ensure you have a waterproof. Add a shepherd's crook and gather round a group to go with.

Throw in clothes for the journey, and Bishop James Newcome was ready to set off from Brampton on Wednesday March 13 to start the senior leaders' walk round Cumbria.

Over 24 days, joined at intervals along the way by Roger Batt (Salvation Army), Sarah Moore (URC) and Richard Teal (Methodist) they visited every mission community, from Lanercost to Millom, and from Hensingham to Kirkby Stephen.

And hot foot from her installation as Bishop of Penrith, Bishop Emma Ineson (along with her husband Mat) linked in with them at Holme Cultram as they headed for Silloth and then down the west coast. She then caught up with them again in Barrow as they journeyed to Millom and on up the west coast.

Walking for six to eight miles each day, the group stopped at lunchtime for events that ranged from meeting local community leaders to visiting schools before setting off again for their evening gatherings. These included Grill a Bishop, Cumberland Neet, Real Lives with Bishop Emma, Film Club, Songs of Praise and the Carlisle mayor's civic awards dinner among many others.

Conversations flowed – both on the journeys as well as at the



**Best foot forward:** Bishop James on the countywide walk

events. Each night saw the team staying with local church members, with the warmth of the hospitality in each place setting high standards.

They were sent off every morning with freshly baked sausage rolls and cakes, and then welcomed with tables groaning with irresistible food – so the walking became a necessity to work it all off.

Building on all that happened during Moving Mountains a year

ago, the aim of the walk was to encourage mission communities in their commitment to helping everyone discover more of God and his purpose for their lives, as well as providing pastoral equipping through the conversations that took place.

Both the level of anticipation for those looking forward to the team visiting them, along with the positive feedback from places the leaders visited suggests that it was 24 days very well spent.

## EVENTS AT CARLISLE CATHEDRAL

**APRIL**

**Sun 14** - 10.30am, Palm Sunday Plus Eucharist with Procession of Palms from St Cuthbert's Church; 3pm, Passiontide Devotion with music sung by the Senior Girls' Choir and Lay Clerks  
**Mon 15** - 7.30pm, Holy Week Eucharist sung by the Carlisle Choir Preacher in Holy Week: The Very Rev Dr Frances Ward, formerly Dean of St Edmundsbury  
**Tues 16** - 7.30pm, Holy Week Eucharist sung by the Boy Choristers and Lay Clerks  
**Wed 17** - 12.30pm, Lenten Eucharist with guest preacher The Rev Nick Mark, of St George's United Reformed Church; 7.30pm, Holy Week Eucharist sung by the Girl Choristers and Lay Clerks  
**Thurs 18** - 11am, Chrism Eucharist sung by the Lay Clerks, Preacher: The Bishop of Penrith; 7.30pm, The Eucharist of the Lord's Supper sung by the Girl Choristers and Lay Clerks, followed by Watch of the Passion  
**Good Friday** - 10.30am, Love Unstoppable. Thirty minutes of music, crafts, prayer and activities for all ages; 12pm, a meditation led by Senior Girls' Choir; 1.30pm, Good Friday Liturgy sung by the Boy Choristers and Lay Clerks; 9pm, The Cross of Lights with music by the Cathedral Taizé Choir  
**Easter Eve** - 7.30pm, Easter Vigil and Confirmation by the Bishop of Carlisle and sung by the Senior Girls' Choir  
**Easter Sunday** - 10.30am, Festival Eucharist sung by Cathedral Choir President: The Bishop of Carlisle. Preacher: The Dean; 3pm, Choral Evensong sung by Cathedral Choir, Preacher: Canon Michael Manley

**MAY**

**Sat 4** - 3pm, evensong sung by the Choir of St George's, Cullercoats  
**Sun 12** - 1pm, Annual Regimental Service of Thanksgiving  
**Sat 25** - 10.30am-4pm, Bell Tower Open Day  
**Tues 28** - 12.45pm, Informal Recital by Ad Hoc Baroque (free)  
**Thurs 30** - 5.45pm, Sung Eucharist for Ascension Day, sung by the Carlisle Choir

**JUNE**

**Sun 16** - 3pm, Choral Evensong and Cumbria Dialect Service  
**Fri 21** - 7.30pm, Cathedral Choir Summer Concert  
**Thurs 27** - 6.30pm, Outreach Concert  
**Sat 29** - 2.30pm, Ordination of Deacons Service

**JULY**

**Thurs 11** - 7.30pm, The Sixteen  
**Thurs 18 & Fri 19** - 5.45pm, Choral Evensong with guest choir The Lynwood Singers  
**Sat 20 & Sun 21** - 3pm, Choral Evensong with guest choir The Lynwood Singers  
**Tues 23, Wed 24 & Thurs 25** - 5.45pm, Choral Evensong with guest choir Lay Clerks and Scholars of Isle of Man Cathedral  
**Sat 27 & Sun 28** - 3pm, Choral Evensong with guest choir Melbourne Parish Choir, Derbyshire  
**Sun 28** - 6.30pm, Cologne Philharmonia in Concert

# WANTED: PUPPETEERS

## (No strings attached... honest!)



**Spreading the word:** Members of the Niscu north Cumbria puppet team with their popular charges

By Dave Roberts

A TEAM of Christian puppeteers is on the hunt for extra pairs of hands to help support their ministry in schools.

Niscu – the Northern Inter-Schools Christian Union – is behind a number of puppet teams which visit both church and non-church schools across the county.

But organisers of the north Cumbria team say the number of volunteers has fallen in recent years and they have now put out an appeal for more help.

Team leader Ailsa Taylor explained: "At the moment we have 15 people who go out to schools in an area which stretches from Calthwaite to Wigton and across to Brampton and Gilsland.

"They are all completely committed and supportive but the average age is probably about 75 and so it can be hard work for them. We'd welcome anyone who is interested to make contact because it's getting harder to cover all the schools we need to. We'd dearly love to see some new blood in our group; people don't realise what great fun this kind of ministry can be."

The north Cumbria team is currently split into two groups.

From January through to the February half-term they meet weekly to practise separate Bible stories which they act out with their puppets.

Once rehearsals are finished both teams hit the road, each visiting one school a week in their patch. To date 84 schools have had performances.

There are further rehearsals before Christmas and then team members are rostered to perform at a different school each day during the last two weeks of term.

Ailsa added: "Going into the

### ■ Group seeks new members to help with its schools' ministry

schools and seeing the kids' reaction is wonderful. A lot of children simply don't know anything about Jesus; we had one child ask us if Jesus had died of cancer. It made us realise just how important it is to do this.

"We try and make all the songs interactive so the children can shout back at us or dance. But ultimately the kids just love the puppets. It's great to see their excitement and we pray we've planted a little seed. Often they leave the hall singing the songs they've heard, even if they may not fully understand the whole context.

"I've got friends who don't go to church but their children have seen one of the shows at school and gone home and told their mum about the story which had been acted out. That's precious!"

Over the coming months, one team will perform the story of Daniel and the Fiery Furnace, while the second will act out David and Goliath.

Ailsa says she would love to expand the ministry further; some of the puppeteers already visit care homes.

Grants from the Mothers' Union and financial support from Niscu helped set up the second puppet team – screens can cost £400 and puppets from £45 upwards.

Ailsa says that each puppeteer takes great care of their charge.

She joked: "People get very possessive of their puppets. They chat to them as if they're one of the family and I'm sure some people take them on holiday!"

■ Contact Ailsa on 07786 160163 or at ailsat@hotmail.com.

### 'I'VE NEVER FELT MY AGE, BUT THIS HELPS ME FEEL EVEN YOUNGER'

YOU would struggle to meet anybody more enthusiastic about puppeteering than June Dixon.

The 86-year-old is the oldest member of the Niscu north Cumbria puppet team. She joined five years ago after seeing a demonstration of their work.

"I'd gone along for a Niscu meeting and then they performed," June explains. "I'd never seen anything like it before. I fell in love with them, didn't I, and that was it, I asked if I could join.

"I've never felt my age, but this helps me feel even younger. I get such pleasure from it and it's such a lovely way to get the Bible stories across."

June, who is a member of St Elizabeth's, Harraby, in Carlisle, was a Sunday school teacher from the age of 15 and so is used to sharing Bible stories with a younger audience. But she says working with the puppets has opened her eyes to new ways of communicating.

"When we go into schools you can see that the children take it all in more than they would if they were just being told about the stories by a teacher," she adds.

June has a number of puppets but admits her favourite is Gran – because she's a gran too.

And as for her favourite Bible story to perform? Well, that would be the parable of the Lost Sheep.

And she has just one piece of advice to other potential puppeteers: "I'd urge people to come and try it because once you have you'll love it!"



**June Dixon:** 'It's such a lovely way to get the Bible stories across'

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS



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**By The Way**

**Good Thursday craic**

BROUGH Memory Club has been relaunched as Brough Thursday Club. We will meet fortnightly in Brough Methodist Schoolroom between 10.30am and 12 noon. This is an invitation to everyone who would appreciate some company, chat, activity, games, crafts, a singsong with Elvyn on the keyboard, all in a warm and friendly environment. There is the possibility of trips out when the weather improves. There is no charge.

**Newsletter, Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Tebay Methodist Circuit**

WE are sure you all know Jim and Katie are retiring in October. Many of you may be wondering what will happen once they have left. The PCC has been having discussions with the archdeacon and we have been told that we will have to share a priest with St Elisabeth's. There is no one at St Elisabeth's at the moment, so a new person will be appointed who will be priest-in-charge of both.

**Irene Dufton and Brenda Martlew, The Observer, Saint John the Baptist, Upperyby**

WE need, as a circuit, to seek to discover our way forward in a world which is totally different to the one in which I started in ministry a quarter of a century ago. We are now, as a national church, totally unable to resource our ministerial needs across the nation and a quarter of appointments which come vacant this year may not be filled. How do we face this reality? How do we, as a circuit, respond to it positively, creatively and imaginatively?

**Graham Ransom, The Grapevine, Newsletter of the Methodist Churches of Coniston, Swarthmoor and Ulverston**

MAKE us ready to fast from criticism and feast on the good we see in others. Make us ready to fast from inactivity and feast on action for justice. Make us ready to fast from greed and feast on giving. Make us ready to fast from conflict and feast on peace-making. Make us ready to fast from selfishness and feast on Christ-likeness so that we might be changed to become more like your son.

**Andy Murphie, Crosthwaite Parish Keswick**

FOR myself and on behalf of St Paul's Lindale PCC may I offer a great big thank you to all who joined us or expressed their support and prayers for the closing service. It was great to see so many who were able to come along and, although a sad occasion, celebrate the church building's long presence in Lindale and the witness to the community of all who worshipped there.

**George Wilson, The Parish Church of St Paul, Grange-over-Sands**

IN the busy-ness of this life, it is easy to become like a tree whose roots don't make it to the water. Instead, if they grow at all, they grow in random directions and are of little or no sustenance to us. Lent is a period when we pay attention to what is most important, and that is that our relationship with God is healthy and deep.

**Alison Riley, The Parish of Whitehaven**

IT'S been lovely to feel the benefit of the new heating system at St George's. People have commented favourably, including many visitors over Christmas, on the difference it is making. However, unforeseen work in the toilets has delayed completion of this phase of the project.

**Sara Thu, Norwegian Mission Society Intern in Barrow, Team Talk, The Magazine of the Parishes of St Aidan's and St George's with St Luke's, Barrow-in-Furness**

THE Allonby Women's Group met as ever in the Ship Hotel for a few drinks on the last Tuesday of the month. Half a dozen of us had a jaunt out to Wigton, visiting the lovely Fountain Gallery where a few purchases were made before lunch in Caldbeck.

**Allonby Beachcomber Monthly Village Newsletter**

# Rural foodbank has its busiest Christmas yet

■ 'People don't realise the level of poverty some are living in'

By Dave Roberts

A **FOODBANK** serving rural communities in north Cumbria has experienced its busiest ever Christmas.

The Upper Eden Foodbank was formed in 2013 and has representatives from both Methodist and Anglican churches on its management committee. It supplies food parcels to individuals and families within the Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Tebay areas, extending to Penrith.

Latest figures reveal that year-on-year demand between September and December rose by more than 80 per cent. It means the foodbank received more than 70 referrals for that period and prepared more than 150 bags of food in the lead up to Christmas. Overall, more than 440 people were supported in a year.

Volunteer Anne Bell said: "When I explain what we're doing, people often say 'Well, there's no one in need in Appleby, is there?' People don't realise the level of poverty that some are living in. There's such a focus on urban poverty but there's lots of rural poverty too."

"That's made worse by low



**Anne Bell: 'There are times when... I've been in tears'**

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS

wages, bad transport links and fuel poverty; some people simply can't afford to put petrol in their cars to travel around."

The Upper Eden Foodbank is run from the Sands Methodist Church in Appleby. Volunteers meet regularly to replenish the stock of food which is stored in the building, before packing bags and sending them out to holding centres in the market town as well as Kirkby Stephen and Penrith.

This system of distribution was developed to protect the anonymity of those who call for help. The holding centres are purposefully busy places, and the food parcels are supplied in bags

from supermarkets local to the area, again to protect identity.

The Rev Stephen Radford, local Methodist minister and chair of the management committee, said: "This is all about being there for our community; people can see what is being done, the care that's being offered up and the difference that the foodbank's making."

"People might think we're talking about small numbers but in terms of the percentage of the population, this makes the situation as bad as somewhere like Sunderland."

"We have volunteers from across all our denominations and also from no denominations. We're telling the story of Jesus

quietly through our actions."

Referrals are made to the foodbank via social services, GP practices, housing associations and schools. In emergency cases, volunteers can also meet those in need in a public place.

Anne added: "We've had people contact us who haven't eaten for three days. There are times when I've met up with someone who's in an emergency and they've broken down in tears in front of me because I've turned up to help them. There are times when I've got back in my car and I've been in tears too."

■ *The Upper Eden Foodbank needs a secretary. If you're interested, phone 07596 690902.*

## 'Never afraid to challenge when it was needed'

"FOR me six words sum up Nigel Holmes: kindness, generosity, precision, knowledge, integrity and courage."

The words of the Ven Richard Pratt, the Archdeacon of West Cumberland, as he led the funeral at Wetheral Parish Church of Nigel Holmes, a well-known broadcaster and regular contributor to *The Way*.

Nigel's sudden death from a heart attack in March sparked many tributes to a man who only last year marked half a century in the field of mass communication.

The Bishop of Carlisle, the Rt Rev James Newcome, said: "Nigel was a good friend and remained a passionate and committed advocate of the place that religious programming should have within public sector broadcasting. "It was a strong conviction built



**'Committed': Nigel Holmes**

upon an equally strong faith. Nigel served selflessly within a church, parish and diocesan setting. He was never afraid to challenge when challenge was needed and brought great insight, coupled with a ready wit, to the many discussions we had together about faith issues and more generally the

workings of the Church of England. I thank God for all that Nigel has given within Cumbria and nationally."

Nigel was a BBC local radio producer for 30 years, initially at BBC Radio Durham before the station's closure saw a move to BBC Radio Carlisle – later BBC Radio Cumbria. He won three national awards for religious broadcasting.

After leaving the BBC he was invited to run the Church of England's regular publication, *The Reader*, which he did for ten years. He also served as a reader for 33 years; 25 of those representing the Diocese of Carlisle in the General Synod.

That gave him the platform from which to question the progressive marginalization of religious broadcasting. He was also the

Church of England's representative on what is now the Church and Media Network and served on the Church's Board of Mission.

Dave Roberts, communications manager for the Diocese of Carlisle, said: "Ever since my appointment in 2012, Nigel has been a constant source of support and encouragement. As a journalist, he was never shy at coming forward with wonderful story and feature ideas for *The Way*. His knowledge of the faith landscape both locally and nationally was incredible, yet he was always so generous in the sharing of that knowledge. Nigel will be greatly missed."

Nigel, who was 74, leaves his wife, Susan, who was diocesan registrar from 1991 to 2005 and was also ordained priest in 2007, and their two children Andrew and Helen.



**Balancing act:** Richard Woolgar with Isobel Woolgar, four, of Stanwix, Carlisle, spinning a plate in a circus workshop at Rheged



**Creative:** From left, volunteer Michael Hastwell, Carey Hipwell, four, and Gill Hipwell, making pictures using stamps



**Splashing about:** From left, Olivia Simpson, seven, Taliah Graham, six, and George Graham, four, all from Botcherby, Carlisle

## Ecumenical vision under the spotlight



**Focus:** 'Big Discussion' event



MORE than 300 people participated in a God for All 'Big Discussion' event at one of Cumbria's most popular tourist venues in March.

Representatives of all mission communities across the county were

invited to attend one of two sessions at Rheged, near Penrith.

Those gathered heard from senior denominational leaders about the latest in the roll-out of God for All, the ecumenical vision with the aim that by 2020 everyone in Cumbria of all ages and backgrounds will have had an opportunity to discover more of God and God's purpose for their lives.

People were invited to submit questions before the event with topics covering areas such as ecumenism, motivation and the future of church buildings. Answers to all questions tabled will be posted on the God for All website over the coming weeks.

BBC Radio Cumbria's Richard Corrie hosted both sessions, which also included a film about the role of the county's first mission community administrator, Joyce Keetley.

The afternoon session saw the Rev Canon Godfrey Butland talk through how the Grasmoor Mission Community had been formed in and around the Cockermouth area.

Explaining how all churches were represented at an early stage through the formation of a steering group, he said: "It's been fun. It's been bumpy. It's been challenging. The big thing has been to understand God has gone before us, so we're going where the Spirit leads."

The Rev Les Wallace and the Rev Katharine Butterfield from the East of Eden Mission Community were interviewed during the evening session.

Both sessions were livestreamed and are available to watch on the God for All YouTube channel.

# Messy celebration of kids' gifts and talents

■ Hundreds of families turn out for latest event hosted by Rheged

By Sarah Hulme,  
Children and Families  
Evangelism Enabler

'PLAYFULLY Serious', the title of Church Army's most recent research into Messy Church, perfectly encapsulates the recent massive Messy Church at Rheged.

Messy Church is a way of being church for families involving fun, creativity, celebration and hospitality and is primarily aimed at people who don't have connections with any form of church.

Hosting Messy Church in a public venue is the ideal opportunity to engage with those who might have never connected with their local Messy Church before.

So the generous gifting of the venue at Rheged by The Westmorland Family group gave us the perfect all-age space to get creative with this year's theme of 'big top circus party', celebrating our unique God-given talents and gifts.

The Mountain Hall area was transformed into the big top stage for the celebration times. We offered interactive prayer activities in a circus-themed prayer tent. Various workshops were hosted around the venue; with the opportunity to discover new talents and skills in street dance, circus skills, wooden toy making, vocal workshop and animal antics.

There were also pop-up activities dotted around the venue including crafts, treasure hunt, tattoos, table talk activities in the café spaces and a photo selfie station.

An amazing team of 70 volunteers, including 15 young leaders



**All a-spin!** Circus artist Thomas Trilby watches as Gemma Jones, nine, gets to grips with the hula hoop

PICTURES: JENNY WOOLGAR PHOTOGRAPHY

and interns from around the county, generously gave their time and energy throughout the day to welcome the 1,800 visitors to Messy Rheged.

Goodie bags including details of all Cumbrian local Messy churches and a copy of the Messy mini book *Family Question Time* were distributed to more than 600 families.

■ For details or for resources used, visit [www.godforall.org.uk/messy-rheged.html](http://www.godforall.org.uk/messy-rheged.html), email [sarah.hulme@carlisle-diocese.org.uk](mailto:sarah.hulme@carlisle-diocese.org.uk) or phone 07584 684310.



**Taking aim:** Left, Noah Farrance, six, of Appleby, throws the hoop helped by volunteer Joshua Taylor; above, families enjoying the big top circus party



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## By The Way

## Conversation with God

PRAYER is holding a conversation with God in which we meditate and listen as well as 'speak'. It is helpful to use the Bible in our time with God as we hear his word and respond in prayer. In addition, many people have found the ACTS (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication) framework to be helpful as a pattern for prayer.

**John Riley, Gosforth, Nether Wasdale and Wasdale Head Parish Magazine**

LENT is a good time to deal with all sorts of things that challenge us. It is a preparatory time for the season of celebration and joy of Easter. And we have much to celebrate this Easter, including the establishment of a fresh expression of church and supporting the families of all those coming to baptism in our churches over the Easter period. There are lots of them.

**Lucie Lunn, ADRU Benefice News, Aldingham, Dendron, Rampside and Urswick**

THE church follows the pattern of seasons closely and we are now in the countdown to Lent, derived from an Old English word 'lencten' that has at its root the meaning to lengthen, lengthening days. If you haven't spotted this in the countryside and from the fact that you are now coming home from work in the light, then the other clue is that M&S is selling daffodils once again.

**Fraser Clark, Parish Magazine, St Bride's Parish Church, Kirkbride and St John's, Newton Arlosh**

WHEN Nelson Mandela said, 'Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life', he was bringing the concept of care for the weakest in society into modern parlance. In the Old Testament, the Israelites are told repeatedly to care for the poor, including foreigners, orphans and widows – the less fortunate. Jesus also made it clear that it was those on the margins who needed special care.

**Nigel Davies, Skelsmergh, Selside and Longsleddale Church and Community News**

HERE in the parish church we are facing external change as we get to grips with the transition into being part of a Mission Community, in company with some of our ecumenical partners; and we are looking into ways of making our building fit for a much wider range of activities, events and worship than we offer at present.

**Sam Held, Parish News, Parish of Kirkby Stephen with Mallerstang, Crosby Garrett and Soulby**

SOME years ago we did research on all the men from Dean Parish who served in the 1914-18 Great War. That booklet is still available in the church. We are now compiling lists of all the men and women from the parish who served in the forces or helped in various occupations in the Second World War, or on the home front, and hope readers of this magazine can help.

**Dean WI, Dean Parish News**

FIVE members of St Andrew's have supported Kath and David Wood in their quest to make toiletry bags for 600 girls in Uganda. Other ladies have given ribbons and material to help keep those sewing in supplies. A little gathering was arranged in church to thank those involved, including three volunteers who heard about the project online.

**Penrith Beacon, The Magazine for St Andrew's Penrith, Christ Church Penrith, St John's Newton Reigny and St John's Plumpton Wall**

IT is good to see community events thriving and so many people attending them. The community is you – everyone working together and 'being' together. It is encouraging to see this as we live in a rural area. I can see we are never alone – there is always someone looking out for us and caring for us.

**Sandra Ward, The Link, The United Benefice of Lorton and Loweswater with Buttermere**

# Actor Tim's one-man play brings Gospel stories to life

■ Performance aims to show audience 'we're talking about ordinary people'

WHEN it comes to the premiere of a new play then Holme Cultram abbey may be a surprise venue.

But for Cumbrian actor Tim Barker, the 12th-century building, which has been restored following a fire in 2006, provided the perfect 'stage' from which to perform his one-man play – *Come and See*, based on St John's Gospel.

The 71-year-old, who is also a lay reader for the Solway Plain Parish and lives in Silloth, performed it publicly for the first time during last year's Moving Mountains.

Tim explained: "For a long time I had a party piece based on the wedding at Cana which, when you study it, is a perfect example of a conversation between a Jewish mother and her son; the way she doesn't have to say anything but he understands.

"Perform it like Maureen Lipman would and people connect. It bears out my own feelings that John's Gospel must be based on eyewitness account.

"It got me thinking about developing a play in which you can demonstrate to an audience – particularly people who may not know Jesus very well – that we're not talking about something odd or strange. We're talking about ordinary people, just like they may meet in the street. In the performance it's just that they happen to be using God's words, although I've updated a little bit of the phraseology."

Lasting 50 minutes, *Come and*



**Tim Barker: 'I feel God has called me to do it'**

ALL PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS

*See* draws on stories including the wedding at Cana, the woman at the well, the feeding of the 5,000, the blind man in Jerusalem and from the Last Supper onwards.

Tim, who soon marks 50 years as a performer, is well known from appearances in television shows such as *Inspector Morse*, *A Touch of Frost*, *Coronation Street*, *Emmerdale* and *Doctor Who*. His film roles include *Calendar Girls* and *Peterloo*.

For the last three years Tim has stepped back from acting to concentrate on a new 'role', as lay director of Cursillo in Cumbria, a

movement which empowers Christians to grow through prayer, study and action.

He sees *Come and See* as a marriage of his two passions and has performed it four times, most recently in Cheshire for the Salvation Army's north-west leaders.

Roger Batt, divisional commander of the Salvation Army, said: "My wife and I saw Tim perform the play for the first time at Moving Mountains and we were both incredibly moved by it. We knew that would be the case for our colleagues, as it proved."

Tim says he is open to

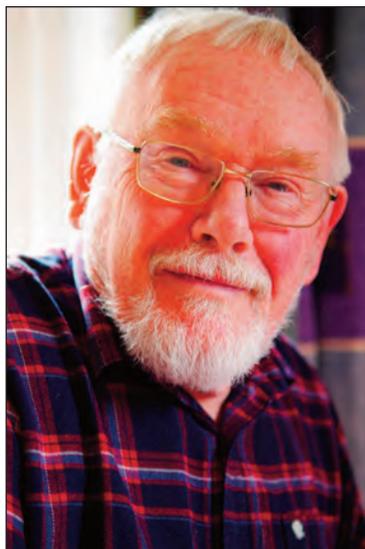
approaches from churches across the county who may be interested in staging the play. After each performance the audience is invited to participate in a question-and-answer session.

He added: "I feel God has called me to do it because I have these skills and acting experience.

"At the end of the day it is an unashamed performance but it's an opportunity to spread the Gospel message too."

■ Tim performs *Come and See* at St Barnabas Church, Carlisle, on Friday, April 26. He can be contacted on 016973 31246.

## No minister? Don't just twiddle your thumbs!



**David Bamford: 'In Chile, the desert is only transformed because the rains come'**

EVERY ten years or so, an amazing natural phenomenon transforms a Chilean desert – overnight the parched sand turns into vibrant blooms.

David Bamford, who lives in Lanercost, north Cumbria, was lucky enough to see it while living in South America where he was headteacher of a school affiliated to the Chilean Anglican Church.

Now the 75 year old has used it as the inspiration for a new book which aims to help support churches and congregations which may be without a minister.

*Flowers in the Desert* is a self-published work which draws on the series of sermons David gave as a licensed lay reader while the parish he serves was in vacancy for 12 months.

He said: "I became aware the sermons were actually teachings about how to handle a vacancy.

"It was an understanding that being in vacancy is not about thumb-twiddling and aridity; it's about tilling the ground, turning it over, fertilising and planting ready for when the new minister arrives.

"In Chile, the desert is only transformed because the rains come; I see a vacancy as a time of watering."

The book represents a chronology of the sermons David preached during the time the benefice of Lanercost, with Walton, Gilsland and Nether Denton was without a vicar – as well as reflections from the parish magazine.

The Rev Angela Hughes, who is officially retired, is now in post as House for Duty, meaning she works three days a week. But David says people still need to continue to step up to grow God's kingdom.

"We've reached a point where the full-time stipendiary clergy are

falling in numbers so we have to see this as a long-term process which requires patience effort and great prayer," David added.

A couple of sermons based around Paul's second letter to the Corinthians particularly resonate for him.

"Paul is writing to these churches which are without a leader," David added. "These would have been young churches that would be even more reliant on their leaders, yet they had to realise that they had the talents among themselves to be a flourishing church.

"I want the reader to feel that if the Christian church is going to survive then it's down to them. They need to feel encouraged. That's what God for All is all about."

■ *Flowers in the Desert* is available in paperback at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) priced at £4.99 and as an eBook.

# Doctors' African calling

■ Couple pledge to return to Thomas's native Sierra Leone, where average life expectancy is 48

By Dave Roberts

"I CAN always remember the time you came out of the operating theatre after a Caesarean section and you were dancing because the mother and baby were alive. That commitment to saving lives is why I fell in love with you."

GP Hannah Ashley sits across a dining table from her husband Thomas – the surgeon who had saved those two lives – as she describes a moment of joy in a district hospital in west Africa.

The couple and their two children currently live in Wetheral, near Carlisle, as Thomas completes further sponsored surgical training at the city's Cumberland Infirmary where he is a registrar.

Once that's completed they intend to return to Thomas's native Sierra Leone, to care for the poor and improve health care provision in what they see as a God-given mission.

Thomas explains: "Ever since I was a kid, I always wanted to be a doctor. I remember watching my aunt having to travel from our hometown to a bigger city before she could get adequate care.

"Many people died making that journey and morbidity rates are still very high in the country. There is an average life expectancy of just 48."

Getting through medical college was tough. From 1992 to 2002 a terrible civil war was waged in the country. It's a conflict which claimed the life of Thomas's mother who was killed by rebel soldiers when he was just 18. His father had died eight years earlier.

That led to a five-year break in education for him as schools and sixth form colleges were closed. There were times when he would study while experiencing terrible hunger pangs, other times when shots were fired around the medical college as he worked. But he says he has been watched over.

"My faith was the source of my strength at this time," Thomas says. "Otherwise I would have just stopped everything including my education. When I think about my background and my story, I know that it has not been about my strength or my wisdom, it's been about how God has moved in my life."

It's a conviction which is shared by Hannah, a GP partner at the Lakes Practice in Penrith. She grew up in Kettering, Northamptonshire, attending church and Scripture Union



camp. Her parents now live in Kirkby Stephen. Aged 18, she took a gap year to travel to Pakistan and work with missionaries in a girls' school. "I was inspired by their mission and how they worked tirelessly to improve the situation for the girls," Hannah explains. "Seeing that calling in action was an important part of my life."

Medical school followed and she finished GP training in 2011 before completing a diploma in tropical medicine. That led to a posting in Sierra Leone to help upskill health workers.

"We met on the ward rounds in the district hospital," Hannah laughs. "As we grew closer I knew we'd be able to achieve more together than if we were apart. Thomas had local knowledge and expertise and I had knowledge from a western setting where you have every drug and test you may need. Managing patients when there are extremely low resources is when we come together so well."

"I've always known that Thomas has call to return to Sierra Leone. He made that clear

from the start, which was a big deal for me, but we know that together we can provide that help."

The couple also spent three years in Ghana while Thomas gained more training at a university hospital. They have made a long-term commitment to the Wesleyan Kamakwie Mission Hospital in northern Sierra Leone of which Thomas is chief medical officer (CMO).

He adds: "There were times at medical school when I would cry after passing an exam because it was so difficult to study but I know the hand of God has been in everything for me."

As CMO he regularly takes calls and emails in the UK, querying medical procedures and treatment in Africa, and the couple know there may be times, in the future, when they are the only doctors serving the needs of 200,000 people.

Hannah adds: "This is my calling. It is not so far removed from what I dreamed about when I was 18 and in Pakistan. I was being spoken to by God and what I heard was, 'Go for it! There's nothing to lose!'"



Back to where it began: Left, Hannah and Thomas with their children on a recent trip to Sierra Leone; above and right, the Wesleyan Kamakwie Mission Hospital, of which Thomas is CMO



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### By The Way

#### Time moves on...again

YOU may have noticed that the church clock had stopped. The 'Egremont Yesteryears' Facebook page was concerned this would be permanent and we would be locked to the year 2018 at 12pm. The pendulum of the clock is suspended from a piece of spring steel. Over time this cracks and has to be replaced... Finally, on February 13 the part was replaced. So we now have a working clock and chimes.

Andrew Holland, Parish Magazine, Benefice of Egremont with Biggill and Haile

EASTER is about being ready to celebrate that God is with us; that God not only dies for us on the cross but rose again, is alive and offers us a whole new start. In Jesus, God interrupts the world by surprising us with his love and his presence among us. But like all special events the question is, are we going to be there? Are we going to throw ourselves into it? Or will we stay put and complain that nothing ever happens in our lives?

Tim Herbert, Link, Aspatria Methodist Church, St Kentigern's Aspatria, St Mary's Gilcrux, St James' Hayton

TWO photographic exhibitions will be held this summer in All Saints' Church, Underbarrow, as part of the 150th celebrations of the present building's completion. The first of these, in May, will depict the village and its environs in times gone by. The PCC is appealing to anyone in the Two Valleys and beyond who has old photographs which they are willing to loan for the exhibition.

Two Valleys Parish News, Cartmell Fell, Crosthwaite, Crook, Helsington, Winstler, Witherlax and Underbarrow

THE Prince's Trust recently surveyed 1,200 youngsters. Of those, 18 per cent felt life wasn't worth living and 27 per cent felt life had no purpose. We used to joke about mid-life crises but we can now add teenage and early 20s to the list. The causes are many and in combination complex, so what can Christians do? Obviously, what any caring person can do - listen carefully, 100 per cent attentive, just like the Samaritans do.

St Bridget's Parish News

SOMETIMES during Lent we might not only give things up or seek forgiveness, we might also take something else on. This might include daily Bible reading, fasting on Fridays, times of prayer, taking a course of study. In this parish we are offering one called The Bible Course.

Ruth Crossley, New Life, Parish of Dalton-in-Furness, Newton, and Ireleth with Askam

UP here on the Moor neighbours can be mentally and spiritually close rather than physically close - homes which are miles apart can be 'next-door' neighbours. But don't imagine for one moment we are cut off from the rest of the world here; Alston Moor is the centre of the universe! Whether for family, work or in regular support of a particular charity, our neighbourly care reaches a long way.

Faith in the Moor

WHAT does the image of the cross and the empty tomb convey to you? Abject failure, a lost cause, true love... what do you see? The man was to prove his victory over death by revealing the scars on his hands. I will be exploring the meaning behind this image in the 'Inquisitive' gatherings and through the Easter period.

Graeme Skinner, Focus on Eden, Holme Eden and Wetheral with Warwick

FAIRTRADE helps to make cocoa farming in places such as Ivory Coast and Ghana more sustainable by guaranteeing minimum prices and providing a premium to invest in local communities, so farmers can provide a better future for themselves and their families. And you can give them this opportunity just by enjoying your favourite Fairtrade chocolate treat.

Jennet McLeod, Around Church, Ramsden Street URC



'Rowdy bunch': Students from Trinity College, Bristol, help Emma to celebrate her big day



Final preparations: The Ven Sarah Clark adjusts Emma's collar before the consecration ceremony



Fellowship: Bishops confer a spiritual blessing on Emma and Sarah by the laying on of hands



Service: Emma with husband Rev Canon Mat Ineson, son Toby and daughter Molly

# 'Exciting opportunities lie before us'

## The Rt Rev Dr Emma Ineson reflects on her recent consecration as Bishop of Penrith at York Minster



Tradition: During the ceremony at York Minster



New shepherds: From left, the Bishop of Carlisle, James Newcome, Emma Ineson, Dr John Sentamu, Sarah Clark and the Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, outside York Minster

THE fact that the sunshine was unseasonably bright and warm made the day of my consecration in York Minster in February seem especially blessed.

It was so fantastic to see so many people gathered together, nearly filling that beautiful, ancient building, for the service which saw myself and the Ven Sarah Clark consecrated as Bishops of Penrith and Jarro respectively.

It was lovely to gather with friends and family, people from various stages of my life and ministry, with a coach load of students from Trinity College where I have been principal until recently - a particularly rowdy bunch! - together with many from Cumbria.

A particularly moving moment for me was hearing our 18-year-old son Toby read George Herbert's poem *Love Bade Me Welcome*.

Rachel Trewweek, Bishop of Gloucester, was our preacher and she spoke of God being 'with' us, and we being 'with' each other. We sang with great gusto the hymn *Hills of the North Rejoice*.

As I look forward to starting my ministry among the people and places of the Diocese of Carlisle and our ecumenical partners, those are two themes that continue to ring in my ears, particularly as I look to support and enable the God for All strategy: the need for continued encouragement of relationships as the basis of all we do in mission in this diocese.

God is a God of relationship. He is with us and forms us in him into communities which support and build up each other. Along with that is the call to rejoice and to have confidence to rejoice in all that God has done, and will do, in our midst.

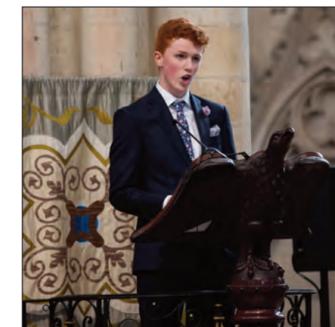
From what I have discovered so far, Cumbria is a wonderful place and the opportunities that lie before us are exciting, as we seek together to make the good news of Jesus known in our villages, towns and communities. Hills of the north rejoice!



Ceremony: The Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu leads Emma, right, and Sarah through the minster



Looking forward: Emma awaits her consecration as the new Bishop of Penrith



'Moving moment': Emma's son Toby reads during the service

PICTURES: KEITH BLUNDY

## By The Way

### Long walk to school

WE HAD to walk three miles to school, myself and my brothers and sisters. Every morning we had to have our dose of malt to keep the cold away. I used to detest it. They were long days – three miles to and three miles back. The taxi used to pick up the young 'uns from Low Mosser but, over eight and you had to walk it. Long days. Sometimes we were lucky to cadge a ride on a lorry, sitting on bags of farm food for cattle. I thought that was fun, but I couldn't do it now.

**Martha Jackson, Contact, Lamplugh, Kirkland and Ennerdale Ecumenical Parish**

ST PAUL often tells his readers to 'put on' qualities such as love or faith or other great spiritual qualities. What he is meaning is that it is important consciously to practice becoming what we would be. It is like learning a new foreign language. We have consciously to try from the beginning to do it, and to do it badly before we do it well. Like learning difficult things, living Christian lives takes years. Actually, it takes our whole life to acquire, learn and become what God wants us to be.

**Geoffrey Ravalde, St Mary's Wigton**

WHAT is being introduced into many schools is the practice of "mindfulness", which encourages children to have times of stillness and calm when they can learn to be aware of their bodies, of the things around them, can learn to concentrate on the present and to acknowledge the thoughts and feelings they have without allowing these to overwhelm them. It's a practice which is helpful for everyone, but Christians can go beyond this by being conscious that they are being still in the presence of God.

**Diana Nicholson, The Link, Parish Magazine for Orton, Tebay and Ravenstonedale with Newbiggin-on-Lune**

WE ARE having a drop-in coffee/hobby morning twice a month from 9.30 to 11.30am in All Saints Church, Raughton Head. The aim is to share ideas and have company, while completing hobby projects that you have on the go. Or maybe you might like to explore hidden talents. My quest is to complete a wool hooky rug that I began back in Oz some years ago.

**Glenda Furniss, Raughton Head Parish Magazine**

THANK you for the flowers which Anne took to Bob. Her visit and chat cheered him. My cornea graft has been successful but my sight won't be restored fully for a while. Thank you all for your prayers, thoughts and the cards I received.

**Betty Wright, Living Stones, Whitehaven URCh**

MANY Christians these days look to take up some Lenten spiritual discipline such as reading a daily devotional to draw themselves nearer to God. Here in the benefice, we will be doing several things. As has become the custom over the years, we will be providing a simple soup meal in Church House, Dalston, on each Friday, with the money raised going to support our link diocese in Northern Argentina through the Church Mission Society.

**Steve Carter, St Mary's Church, Wreay**

MAYBE this Lent we can all do with a little less ourselves and choose to put aside money each day in thanksgiving for all that we have. After Easter we could send the money to the Church Mission Society, Tear Fund, the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children or some other relief organisation. And should any refugees arrive in Kendal, we can welcome them warmly. One thing we must not do is to allow ourselves to become desensitized to that which must be breaking the heart of God.

**Jean Radley, Parish News, St George, Kendal**

# Activity centre opens up the outdoors to everyone

■ Charity has always been at cutting edge of making facilities accessible for all abilities

By Dave Roberts

TO THIS day the Christian benefactors behind Keppleway, the outdoor centre in the south Lakes, don't know who tipped them off that the property was to go on the market.

As the centre nears its 30th anniversary, chair of trustees, the Rev Canon John Libby, explains: "Out of the blue we received an envelope from the county council that, despite research, no one has ever admitted to sending. Inside was a note explaining Keppleway was about to go up for sale and they were looking for an interested party.

"We ended up buying it, refurbishing the building and making it completely accessible for all and then advertising it as a base for CPAS ventures."

For many years, the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS) has run schemes to provide children and young people with opportunities to enjoy outdoor ventures across the UK.

John, who lives in Carlisle and is the former vicar of St James, Denton Holme, had been part of a team which helped youngsters take part in the residential breaks, but they were always over-subscribed early in the year and concerns grew they were not open to all backgrounds, abilities or to people who couldn't guarantee funding at that point. Inadvertently they had become 'exclusive'.

The answer to prayer was Keppleway, an Edwardian mansion in Broughton in Furness, latterly used by the county council as a special school and which the trust bought in 1991.

"The only funding we had to buy it came from the individuals on the team," John says, "so we then had to borrow to develop the site and refurbish the building. Early on, there were several years when we had to have some tough negotiations with our lenders to get us through the winter months. But we're still here!"

Keppleway was at the cutting edge in making its accommodation and activities accessible for all abilities and was involved with the development of policy around the Disability Discrimination Act.

For the trustees it was vital young wheelchair users could abseil alongside able-bodied friends while others with cerebral palsy had the opportunity to canoe on Coniston Water.

It has become a firm favourite



**Adventure:** A young woman taking part in one of the activities on offer at Keppleway



**Inclusive:** Clockwise from above, John Libby, chair of the trustees; participants learn how to paddle a canoe; the Edwardian mansion of Keppleway



for many schools and church groups and is now a provider of choice for the National Citizenship Scheme for 15 to 17 year olds.

Underpinning it all is a Christian ethos, though members of staff include non-believers and there is an understanding that the centre's purpose is not to proselytise.

John, who was appointed national director of the Langham Trust in 2016, says: "When we first stepped out with this we recognised that we wanted the Christian faith which is common to all our trustees to be understood but not forced upon others.

"That's how we developed our vision that 'we aim to expose our Christian faith and not impose it'. Our approach is very much about trying to encourage people who

stay here to explore their own spiritual journey, while understanding that for many this is within a predominantly secular, humanist, materialist or atheist context.

"Most of our work is with non-Christian groups. But to get people up a hill, get them wet, and look at a horizon, offers them an opportunity to think about creation differently. They may be swimming in a lake or abseiling down a rock face which means they often face fears and challenges and ask deeper questions of themselves. And maybe they'll wonder why the staff are doing this work and what's that 'cross symbol' they occasionally see around the place."

Church groups visit throughout summer, some through CPAS, and offer opportunity for faith-based

activities and reflection.

John says: "People are aware what they are signing up to in these instances, so there is greater focus on worship, teaching and prayer."

Patrons of the centre include Olympic champion Jonathan Edwards and former England Rugby Union international Roger Uttley. The physicist Prof Sir Stephen Hawking who died last year was also a patron.

John explains: "Stephen spoke eloquently at our launch night about Keppleway and I prayed with him before he spoke.

"I remember looking at him in his wheelchair, next to a towering Roger Uttley, and I realised that this image of inclusion perfectly encapsulated what Keppleway is all about."



'Spiritual': Alex with some of the artwork produced in collaboration with Lydia Corbett

DAVE ROBERTS

# Alex translates stories through stained glass

By Dave Roberts

"AN ECCLESIASTICAL window has to express the glory of God and lead people towards that idea, otherwise it's not doing what it's supposed to."

Stained glass artist Alex Haynes talks passionately about his artwork as we sit in his workshop, located in an idyllic beck-side setting just outside Brampton.

His is a talent which has attracted notable clients: Melvyn Bragg commissioned him to design and install three windows at St Mary's, Wigton, while he also collaborates with artist Lydia Corbett, former muse of Pablo Picasso when known as Sylvette David.

Alex says: "A stained glass window in a church is not just there to look pretty; it's there to tell a story. That's always the approach I take when I first sit down with a client and we talk about different concepts and designs. We've got to be able to translate the story through craftsmanship.

"I'll always look to push the design process forward. When you go into a church you may see the different eras of design and I want that to continue. Sometimes in a very old church there will be pre-yellow stain stained glass, then you move through to the period when enamels were



Skilled: Alex at work in his studio

used on windows, then it's on to the pre-Raphaelites and the arts and crafts movement who sought a return to the medieval style of stained glass, but still within their own style and design. It's important that the craftsmanship continues to evolve."

Alex, 51, started his business – Albion Glass – in the early 1990s. Much of his work is based around the renovation and repair of existing windows, although he has installed new windows in churches right across the county. He also created 13 new windows based on wild-life for a church in Bentpath in southern Scotland.

Moving from initial designs to installation of a finished window can take time. All designs also have to be approved by the necessary authorities.

Once agreed, the sketched

designs are blown up to full size and lead lines drawn in. Mouth-blown glass is selected for various hues and shades before cutting begins and pieces are laid out on a board. Pieces can be acid-etched or yellow-stained to create different colouring, while a metal oxide and glass powder paint is used to create finer details. This is then fired in a kiln. A choice of up to 30 lead profiles may be used to join the pieces of glass together, before soldering all joints – back and front – cementing all cracks, adding tie wires and support bars to relieve weight from the lower panels and polishing the glass before installation.

Work on the three windows at St Mary's, Wigton, stretched out over a year. Alex worked in collaboration with artist Brian Campbell, bringing his watercolours together in a

design which celebrates both the Holy Trinity and the community of Wigton.

There's a strong religious iconography and symbolism in the 8ft-high windows: God is represented through sun and corn, Jesus is depicted by a crown of thorns, and descending doves and Pentecostal flames represent the Holy Spirit. But Alex sees himself as more of a spiritual man.

He explains: "I have a spiritual awareness but I would not say it was a faith. Do I believe in a God? I believe in an energy which helps us all but I don't follow any particular religion. For me I can look out of the window of my workshop and see beauty and a life force and a cycle to nature.

"And ultimately, what makes me happy is that I'm able to use my craftsmanship to express what people would like to, but they don't have the skills to make that happen. That gives me huge satisfaction and joy."

That joy is further enhanced by the work in the county of other stained glass artists, of which Alex says he has a particular favourite piece.

"There's a little church at Martindale near Ullswater which has windows by Jane Gray," he explains. "They're fantastic because they're quite medieval in style but with a beautiful twist to them."

## WHAT'S ON AROUND CUMBRIA

### EASTER HOUSE PARTY

4pm, Thurs April 18 to 10am, Mon April 22, Rydal Hall, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9LX

Easter is a time of thankfulness, celebration and rejoicing. You are invited to join the team at Rydal Hall for a joyful weekend exploring the Easter story and how it relates to us today. Cost is £360 pp, full board. To book contact 015394 32050 or mail@rydalhall.org.

### GOSPEL CONCERT

Fri April 26, 7.30pm, Wigton Road Methodist Church, Carlisle

Enjoy the music of Northern Irish group The Morrisons who were formed in 2016, and include three former members of the Harvesters Gospel group. Admission is £5.

### LIVING WITH THE MYSTICS

Tues May 7, 10am for 10.30am to 3pm, Friends Meeting House, Elliot Park, Keswick

Bob Morley leads a day exploring the works of Catalan Roman Catholic priest Raimon Panikkar. Cost is £5. Drinks are provided but please bring your own lunch. To book contact Bob Morley on 016974 72644 or rgm1@live.co.uk.

### RECORDERS AT RYDAL

4pm, Sun May 12 to 3pm, Tues May 14, Rydal Hall, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9LX

Enjoy beautiful music and develop your skills in the company of players of similar upper-intermediate and advanced level ability with tutor Mary Tyers. Cost is £220 pp residential and £110 non-residential. To book contact 015394 32050 or mail@rydalhall.org.

### QUIET DAY AT DALTON

Sat May 18, 10am for 10.30am to 3.30pm, St Mary's Church, Dalton, LA15 8AZ

Canon Ruth Crossley and Deirdre Hannah will lead a day on the theme of Abide in Him and He in us: the work of the Holy Spirit. There is a suggested voluntary contribution of £10. Drinks are provided but please bring your own lunch. To book, contact Alison MacMahon on 01228 343621 or at ally-mac@hotmail.co.uk.

### QUIET DAY

Sat June 1, 10am to 4pm, Rydal Hall, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9LX

Ramin Selahi leads a quiet day on the theme: God Knows, God cares and God understands - Psalm 139:1-6. The quiet days are free of charge, but booking is required and donations are suggested. Bring your own packed lunch or visit Rydal's tea shop. To book contact 015394 32050 or mail@rydalhall.org.

### HEART AND SOUL SINGING RETREAT

4pm, Mon July 8 to 3pm, Wed July 10, Rydal Hall, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9LX

Heart and Soul Singing Retreats are led by tutor Keely Hodgson and aim to combine singing in harmony with rest, nurture and inspiration. Cost is £225 pp, full board. To book contact 015394 32050 or mail@rydalhall.org.

### FLOWER FESTIVAL

Thurs 11 to Sun July 14, St Anthony's Church, Cartmel Fell, Grange-over-Sands, LA11 6NQ

The Flower Festival is based on 'Life on the Fell'. There will be refreshments available on all days.

### DAY OF GATHERING

Sat July 27, 10am to 4pm, Cartmel Village Hall, Cartmel, Cumbria LA11 6PS

The team from Christian Meditation in Cumbria will lead a day to come together and meditate and walk in creation. Cost is £5, although there is a suggested donation of £10. Drinks and cakes are provided but please bring your own lunch. To book contact Richard on 01946 862990 or at cmcwccm@fastmail.fm.

## By The Way

## Wisdom and creativity

IN THE winter edition of *The Way*, the new Bishop of Penrith spoke of the God for All mission. "We're going to need wisdom to discern what aspects of ministry and mission need to remain the same, and what needs to change. We're going to need creativity and imagination to tell the age-old story of God in new and compelling ways." Revival starts at home; we have to put our own house in order first.

Frank Balme, *Writings on the Wall*, Lanercost with Walton, Gilsland and Nether Denton

LET us engage well in this trying time for our country: enabling good disagreement wherever we can, seeking peace and pursuing it, challenging our leaders and decision-makers to make this country work for all people and not simply those with the loudest mouths or biggest pockets, and overarching it all, remembering that we remain held in the loving purposes of God.

Rob Saner-Haigh, *Parish Life*, Holy Trinity Parish Church, Kendal

I WAS recently elected to be chair of the House of Clergy in our diocese. As such, I attended a meeting at Church House in London. Taking advantage of a trip to the big city, John and I stayed over and spent the next day exploring. We walked miles and ended up in the British Library. The Treasures of the British Library exhibition was amazing and among the ancient exhibits were some beautiful biblical texts. The colours and quality were outstanding, especially given that some had been buried in the desert for hundreds of years.

Shanthi Thompson, *United Churches*, Staveley, Ings and Kentmere

WE NEED to accept that God offers us the possibility of change and renewal, and be willing to act on it; not just 'wish' for better things for the world and ourselves, but have the 'will' – political, moral, spiritual and personal – to change things and to be changed by the love and power of God.

Les Hann, *The Stricklandgate*, Stricklandgate Methodist Church

# Lottery cash means it's lights, camera, action...

## Films explore church buildings' heritage potential

A SERIES of special training films is set to be shot across Cumbria as part of an 18-month ecumenical project focussed on church buildings' resilience and sustainability.

It comes after the Churches Trust for Cumbria (CTfC) received a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £75,400 for its heritage project, Caring for Cumbria's Churches.

The project will also explore churches' potential as community assets and how to raise their profile as places of heritage interest.

As part of the scheme, award-winning TV production company Brilliant Trees Media has been commissioned to produce a series of films to be shared with churches across the county. These will look at areas such as building fabric, governance, heritage professionals, maintenance and management, and how to be an open and welcoming church for visitors.

Adam Naylor, chairman of the CTfC, said: "We are thrilled to



**Sustainable future:** CTfC development officer Jayne Potts joins churchwarden Henry Pitt at St Michael's, Barton, near Penrith, which is set to feature in the series of films

have received this support thanks to National Lottery Heritage Fund, and are confident the project will raise the profile of these valuable spiritual, community and heritage assets."

CTfC was formed in 2008 as a charitable trust to help secure a sustainable future for Cumbria's

churches. In 2010 it became clear that many church communities were struggling to fund their ministry and their buildings.

An ecumenical buildings survey was conducted over 2012 and 2013. Despite the trust going into a period of hibernation in 2013, the 'Church Buildings Survey'

report was published in 2015.

The films will form part of a resource pack which will be offered up to those who care for church buildings. A self-inspection template – a check-list of what needs to be maintained – has already been developed as the first tool.

Meanwhile, a 'sustainability rosette', a concept which emerged from the 'Church Buildings Survey', is being offered as a further resource.

A series of workshops in May and September will introduce the rosette, and a variety of speakers will give presentations on funding, heating, lighting and energy efficiency, security and faith tourism. They will run from 9.30am to 3.30pm on the following Wednesdays:

- May 1 – Penrith Methodist Church
- May 15 – St Aidan's Cafe, Barrow
- May 22 – St Michael's, Workington
- September 11 – Penrith Methodist Church
- September 18 – South Cumbria (location to be confirmed)
- September 25 – West Cumbria (location to be confirmed)

For further information or to book a place, please contact Jayne Potts at CTfC on 07979 606131 or [jayne@ctfc.org.uk](mailto:jayne@ctfc.org.uk).

## Work starts on £3.5m Fraternity Project

A MILESTONE has been reached in the redevelopment of Carlisle Cathedral's Grade 1 listed Fraternity.

Contractors have removed the building's stone porch, a Victorian addition, to reveal its original doorway which dates from the 1500s.

The Dean of Carlisle, the Very Rev Mark Boyling, said: "After careful project development and extensive consultation, it is thrilling to see work beginning on site to bring the Fraternity back to life and provide the facilities we need for the cathedral to engage with more people in new ways."

"We first began thinking about the redevelopment more than ten years ago so this has been a long time coming. But we're delighted to see construction start in earnest and welcome the fact that this will provide new access for all to a wonderfully historic building. It will provide a wonderful base from which to tell stories of faith and hope and further connect our schools and visitors with the reality of God."

The £3.5m Fraternity Project is the most significant construction work on the cathedral site for more than 150 years.

It has been made possible by funding from the Friends of



**Plans:** Mark Boyling, left, with Fergus Feilden on site

Carlisle Cathedral, grant-making trusts, generous donations by members of the public, cathedral activity and £2m from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The single-storey, new-build entrance pavilion is located to the north-west of the Fraternity. It reintroduces a reflective public space at the heart of the Cathedral Precinct and provides a welcoming area to greet visitors and school groups.

Designed after public consultation in 2016, a lightweight, fully glazed bronze structure connects the pavilion to the split levels of the refurbished existing Fraternity building

where exhibitions, performances and events will take place.

The link structure will contrast with the red sandstone elevations of the pavilion, which are inspired by the surrounding arches and by the perpendicular Gothic tracery.

Fergus Feilden, director of architects Feilden Fowles, said: "I've been working on this project for the last five years so it's wonderful to see a start on site."

"There have been huge and numerous challenges because we have got to be respectful of the setting. Our aim is to create a space where people can pause and be diverted to appreciate the cathedral and bring the Fraternity back to life."

"As an architect this feels like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Of all the cathedral precincts around the country, this is one of the most significant projects."

The Fraternity was built as the abbey refectory and currently houses the cathedral's important collection of 17th- and 18th-century books.

The Dean added: "We're working hard to develop new activities which will be housed in the Fraternity buildings."

Building work will continue on site until the end of the year.

Alex Haynes

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# Pair forced to escape their homeland after choosing Christianity



Wishes come true: Sanaz, left, and her mother Sedigheh, right, with Gillian Bounds

DAVE ROBERTS

By Dave Roberts

## ■ Mother and daughter welcomed into west Cumbrian church community after fleeing Iran

“IF I had stayed in my home country, I don’t know what would have happened. I had to get out because I didn’t feel safe.”

Sanaz Razeghi Kisemi explains how she and her mother fled their home in northern Iran after deciding to convert to Christianity from the Muslim faith they’d been born into. In December 2017, the 32 year old left her university job behind, crossing the border into Turkey with her mother, Sedigheh, and then travelled across Europe to the UK.

At the heart of their journey was the women’s wish to convert to Christianity, one they would eventually see come to pass with their baptisms in an Egremont church.

Sanaz explains: “I wanted to be able to choose my own faith, to follow my own journey and I realised that that was through Christianity. But I knew the authorities would not like that and I’d have to get out of Iran if it was going to happen.

“I felt I was in danger and that my mum was too. My father had died some time ago

and I am an only child so together we made the journey.”

On arrival in the UK, the two women immediately applied for asylum. The daughter of one of Sanaz’s father’s friends was living in west Cumbria and offered support, so they moved to Egremont.

After two weeks in the town, Sanaz plucked up the courage to attend Egremont Methodist Church. Initially she attended with her friend.

“I will never forget the first day I came into this church,” Sanaz recalls. “I was so nervous because I didn’t know what the welcome would be like. But people came over and made us welcome straightaway. We were asked to sit in the first row. It was a communion and we were able to take part in it. Everyone was so wonderful.”

Church steward Alec Bounds was among the first to welcome them that day. Two weeks later he laid on hands and prayed for the mother and daughter at church.

That Easter, Sanaz played an active role in the Good Friday service, placing symbols at the cross. The congregation also

presented them with a Bible which had been translated into Farsi.

Gillian Bounds, Alec’s wife, says: “I was preaching elsewhere the first day they came but I know everyone was so thrilled that they’d had the courage to come, and that Sanaz and her mum came back the following week.

“When we prayed for them, it was our way of offering them protection and safety. As a church we’d gone through some difficult times but when Sanaz and Sedigheh arrived they were a real blessing for us. It’s made us all challenge ourselves about how to be as welcoming and inclusive as we can be.”

One of the greatest occasions came when both women were baptised, willed on by their supportive church family.

“I knew I was ready for this,” Sanaz says. “It was such a big moment in my life; this was my choice. My faith gives me such a good feeling; God gives me extra strength when I need it. For me being a Christian is about loving God and showing God’s love to every-

one. It has melted my heart.”

For her mother it was an equally emotional day. Sedigheh adds: “I felt like I had been born again. I was blessed by God and Jesus.”

The two have now moved to Workington, where Sanaz has a job in a take-away. Both have been awarded asylum, though Sedigheh had been facing deportation at one point. The church congregation were set to support her at a hearing, only for the deportation order to be rescinded.

Sanaz continues to pray for the church family which offered such support and is looking for a church in Workington. She admits language remains a barrier but she continues to feed her faith by reading her Farsi Bible.

And Gillian admits it will be far more accurate than her attempts to translate the weekly readings into Farsi. She laughs: “I tried to use Google Translate but I didn’t realise it was being written out left to right when Persian reads right to left on the page. It didn’t make any sense at all, but Sanaz was too polite to tell me it was wrong!”



Young team: The group had four days’ training before leaving the UK

## Group’s Bosnian mission adventure

A GROUP of seven young people from Cumbria has travelled to Bosnia as part of a special mission adventure.

In just eight months, the travellers, aged 12 to 17, raised £6,500 to fund the trip, through cake sales, jumbles sales, quiz nights, car washing and donations from trusts.

They will spend ten days in Bosnia as part of a mission adventure scheme organised by Youth With A Mission (YWAM), an international volunteer movement of Christians from many backgrounds, cultures and traditions, dedicated to serving Jesus throughout the world.

The group will be joined by Ignite Windermere Network Youth Church leader, Chris Mason, and Cartmel Peninsula Team youth worker, Libby Cuthbertson, who jointly organised the trip.

Chris said: “We decided we wanted to widen our young people’s horizons and show them faith in action in a new place. We looked at various options and decided to link up with YWAM. “Then it was just a case of raising the money as quickly as possible. They all worked hard to make that happen and now they’re all ready for the trip.”

YWAM began in 1960, with the main focus of giving young people opportunities to demonstrate the love of Jesus to the whole world.

The group completed a four-day training camp before leaving. This included team-building, worship and intercession, cultural awareness and biblical study, and learning what it is to be a missionary both overseas and at home. They have also been joined by a YWAM missionary on the trip.

Chris added: “We will be based in Sarajevo and our young people will have the opportunity to draw alongside those from the city. They’ll help run a holiday club, teach conversational English and generally have the opportunity to share their faith.”

A full report will appear in the next edition of *The Way*.

## Mike Angelo Photography

PRESS – PUBLICITY – PRESENTATIONS

*Lakeland Seasons, Lakeland Life and Lakeland Calendar* are three 50-minute audio-visual presentations showing the annual beauty of Cumbria.

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## By The Way

### A life on the move

IT'S amazing to think that on August 31 this year I will have been in post for one week short of 15 years! This is by far the longest I have ever lived in one place. Even as a child, my family moved every six or seven years due to my father being a vicar. I was born in the village of Bagnall near Stoke-on-Trent, my older brother having been born in Guildford three years previously. My sister was born in Salford two years later, and my youngest brother was born six years after that in Highbury in London.

Steve Carter, Dalston Parish Paper

THE Easter message is that death does not have the last word. Things may look hopeless, frightening, desperately sad as they did for Jesus's closest friends. The disciples had hoped Jesus would challenge the mighty power of Rome; instead they saw him die in a shameful, agonising, public execution. But the 'Good News' is that death could not hold Jesus down. The life of God is victorious. The God of love and life is the greatest power of all.

Clare Spedding, Binsey Link,  
The magazine of the Binsey Team Mission  
Community, the churches of Allhallows,  
Bassenthwaite, Boltons, Embleton,  
Ireby, Isel, Plumbland, Setmurthy,  
Torpenhow, Uldale and Wythop

TWENTY-FIVE years ago this month, women were ordained as priests in the Church of England. As the BBC commentator on the first service in Bristol Cathedral I was prepared for disruptions from demonstrators, but it proceeded reverently and without a hitch. The only protest was outside, where a group of approving Roman Catholic women held a banner saying, 'We're Next'.

The Link, Holy Trinity and St Barnabas  
with Sandsfield Fellowship

THE Christian life is about healing in the fullest sense of the word. It is about God healing us from our past, healing the wounds we pick up from the difficult things that happen to us or are said to us, healing us spiritually and physically. It is interesting that humanity has gone from a time when healing was entirely the domain of religion to a time when it was entirely the domain of science and now is increasingly a collaboration between the two.

Stewart Fyfe, North Westmorland News

I HAD the good fortune to be raised in a very active local church that supported and encouraged us as we crossed the threshold into adulthood. We were prepared to take up responsibilities in the church. To this day Methodism relies upon its members. Only members can take on certain responsibilities. Without those who take office in the local church and who serve at circuit and district level our church could not continue.

Wendy Kilworth-Mason,  
Egremont Methodist Church

THIS is my first time writing the Newlink 'letter', and I'm starting to write the day before the deadline – for me that counts as early! Today, I spent the morning out walking and birdwatching, in beautiful sunshine and sparkling frost with the backdrop of calm blue sea and the snow-capped Lake District hills. This set me thinking about how we appreciate (or, at times, fail to appreciate) God's wonderful world, and our treatment of his creation.

Karen Edmondson, Newlink,  
South West Cumbria United Area

THE earthly life of Christ and his sacrifice for us is an amazing demonstration of God's pure love. It sums up for me why I work on matters ecumenical because working together demonstrates that God's love can and should persuade people that strife and isolation and hatred cannot bring about the kind of society we dream of. So much valuable time is wasted on furthering hate and even vengeance.

Nick Mark, Newsletter of  
Penrith and Penruddock URC



**New dawn:** A view of the sunrise from the hotel in Bethlehem



**Special moment:** Michelle celebrates communion on the Sea of Galilee



**Powerful:** One of the group's mountain-top communion services

# Pilgrimage leader in at deep end in Holy Land



**'Truly blessed':** The pilgrims outside the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

## ■ Husband's heart operation leaves Michelle at helm of long-awaited trip

By Rev Michelle Woodcock

ON A cold and dark Monday morning in November, 16 excited pilgrims gathered on my driveway, eagerly anticipating a long-awaited trip to the Holy Land.

I was excited too, but also hoping no one noticed how absolutely terrified I was; leading a pilgrimage to the Holy Land – when I had never been there myself – was not something I had planned on doing.

On October 1, my husband, Michael, and I had been looking forward to the trip. The following day, he had a heart attack. When he had a double heart bypass oper-



**Atmospheric:** A service on Mount Precipice, Nazareth

ation it became clear he wasn't going to be fit to travel, let alone lead the trip.

Many times I had thought, "Thank goodness I am just going on this trip and not leading it". Michael had worked so hard to prepare everything. Then, six weeks before we were due to travel, our trip needed a new leader and I was the obvious choice.

Fortunately, we were accompanied by an excellent Palestinian Christian guide (Mutassem) and the tour operator (Kathy) so I didn't have to know where everything was. The three of us got on brilliantly. From the moment we

landed and met them at Tel Aviv, I knew we were in safe hands.

The trip was full of laughter and tears in fairly equal measure. I don't remember hearing one cross or unkind word within the group, no moaning or complaining, even when for a third consecutive day we had to get up at 5.30am.

We felt truly blessed as pilgrims, making our way around Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth and all of those other places I'd heard so much about but thought I'd never see. It felt that God was very near.

Even the parts of the trip that could have been a disaster turned into huge blessings. We had been

booked into various chapels to celebrate communion each day, but some places would not allow a woman to celebrate. As I was the only priest we had, that could have been a problem. Instead, our ever-resourceful guide suggested that, if we didn't mind, we could go to the top of a mountain in the desert instead and have a service there with some bread and wine bought from a local shop. It was brilliant and our mountain-top communions were some of the most powerful times we spent together as a group and with God.

Celebrating communion on a boat on the Sea of Galilee at sunset still ranks as one of my top ten highlights, although floating in the Dead Sea and riding a camel on my birthday are close behind!

I wouldn't have volunteered to lead this trip in normal circumstances. I felt pushed way out of my comfort zone, but the presence of God was with me in it all, from start to finish. I returned home feeling proud, blessed and so privileged to have spent these special days away with such a brilliant group of people.

# Brought together by blue bus vision

■ Couple launch special vocal workshops after move to Cumbria

IT IS the vision of a big, blue double-decker bus that brought John and Lisa Wright together.

Since childhood, Lisa had felt called to develop a project in which a bus would go out to the villages surrounding Poole in Dorset, where she lived, to connect with young people.

For John, a professional musician, it was an inexplicable vision he experienced during a church service which then prompted a discussion between the two.

He explained: "We didn't know each other well at all. I'd just come back to church after a rocky time. I'd never lost my faith but I'd needed time to understand what it was to walk as a Christian.

"One day in church I experienced what felt like a tiny bit of God's compassion being injected into me. I became really emotional. Suddenly this picture came into my head of a big blue bus going out into the countryside and serving people. I had absolutely no idea what it meant.

"Lisa came over to me later to ask if I was okay and I explained what had happened. I didn't have a clue what it meant but Lisa just said 'Don't worry, I'll fill you in!'"

Initially the couple – who were to marry a couple of years after meeting – hired a bus for a week from a charity to see if the project was viable.

It was and, courtesy of a loan from a couple who handed over their house deposit, they were able to buy a bus. The vehicle was used to connect with young people and even pull together divided communities in a newly regenerated area of the town.

Further funding came in and the bus was equipped with computer games, a soft play area, coffee bar, sports equipment and DJ decks.

John added: "It was a youth club on wheels. One of our volunteers coined the phrase reverse evangelism because we never had to bring up our faith, the young people did."

Eventually the bus project came to an end. By now the couple had two children. Lisa felt God calling them to move, though John was recovering from kidney surgery and his business as a music teacher was flourishing.

By Dave Roberts

Lisa said: "I had a picture of the Lake District in my head, though I'd never been there and knew nothing about it."

In March 2013, the family made the move. John has since built up a strong client base for his private music lessons, schools work and performances. Now the couple, who live in Burneside, Kendal, and attend the town's King's Church, have launched a series of special vocal workshops – Vocal Workshops Cumbria.

The events are based around music from films such as *The Greatest Showman*, *Aladdin*, *The Lion King* and *Frozen*. Others feature the music of Abba, Queen and Elton John. To date they have been held in Kendal, Kirkby Stephen, Coniston and Carlisle. The couple also ran one at this year's Messy Rheged event.

Participants learn up to six songs during two hour-long sessions, before the newly formed choir runs through each tune, having developed some two-part harmony.

John and Lisa say that all the songs offer up the Gospel message to people who may be looking for it.

Lisa added: "It's really important that we provide an environment in which people feel welcomed, loved and accepted. Through the songs we're able to weave in themes which are important to us: love, purpose, hope, forgiveness. If people choose to ask more about it we can then go into more detail."

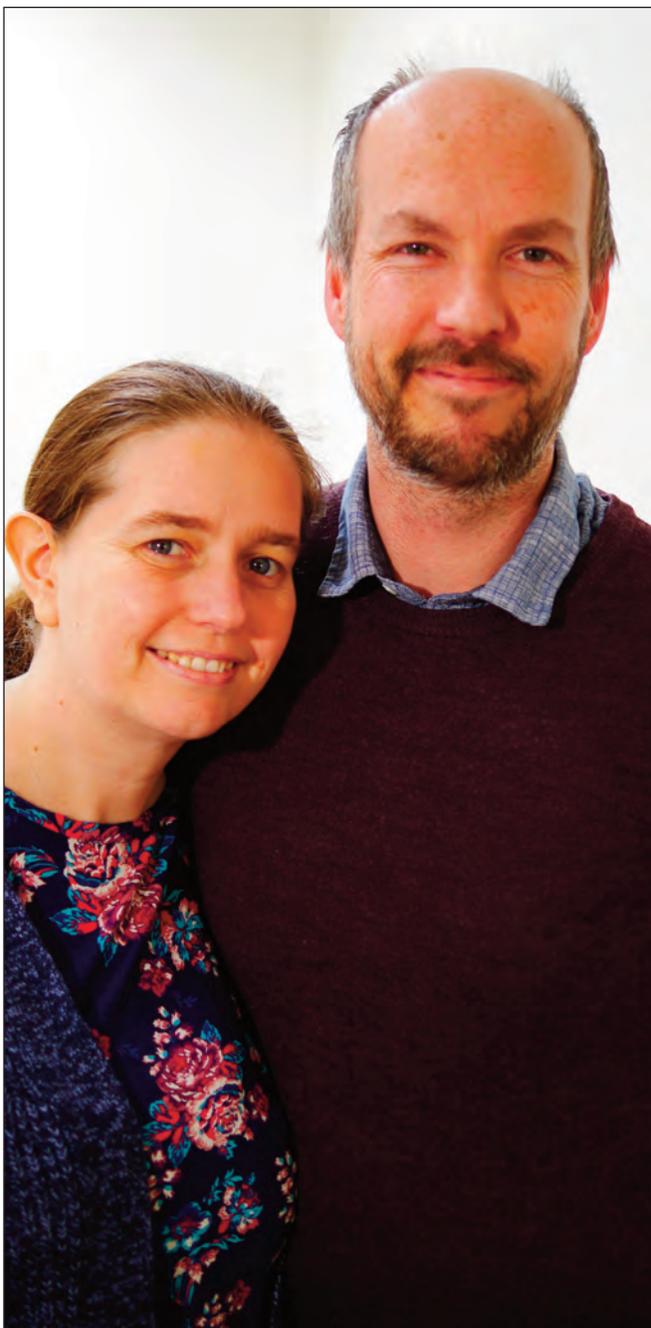
And as for John, he feels that God has planned their journey – double decker bus and all.

He said: "I always finish a gig by singing *You Raise Me Up*. I explain that the song is special to me because I was in a dark place which I was lifted out of and my feet were placed on solid ground.

"There's a line which goes 'You raise me up so I can stand on mountains'. I really believe that that is God being prophetic in my life.

"He's led us to where we are now. It's amazing."

■ To book on to a Vocal Workshops Cumbria event follow the Facebook page, phone John on 07445 405314 or email [vocalworkshopscumbria@hotmail.com](mailto:vocalworkshopscumbria@hotmail.com).



Lisa and John Wright: On a planned journey

DAVE ROBERTS



Kelvin M Knight: 'Actions are paramount'

## Short stories with Christian themes

FAITH lives. Faith breathes. Faith can be not quite as it seems.

This is the tagline from Kelvin M Knight's first collection of flash fiction stories, *Faith in a Flash*, which marries his storytelling with his faith.

A Christian since childhood, Kelvin had his faith confirmed in St Bees Priory in 2014. Later that year, he graduated from Northumbria University with an MA in creative writing. Flash fiction represents a short fiction story, typically less than 1,000 words.

*Faith in a Flash* is divided into 15 chapters with the central theme of each following Christian concepts such as charity, humility, forgiveness, hope and glorifying God.

"Hope is vital for us individually and for the world we live in. Hope is something I try to offer as a Samaritan and a writer.

"Many of the stories in *Faith in a Flash* offer glimmers of hope."

Kelvin wrote the first story in this collection on his Cumbria Cursillo Pilgrimage in 2016 – a journey that moved him tremendously. He wrote the last story on his first visit to Iona in the autumn of last year.

Training to become a Samaritan came immediately after his Cumbria Cursillo pilgrimage. He is also a prayer pastor for Carlisle's street pastors.

Kelvin said: "Humility has always been important to me. The first intercessions I wrote were based on the Beatitudes, and walking that extra mile spoke to me then, as it does now. Actions are paramount. And active listening is such an important gift – something you do not need to be extraordinary to do."

■ Kelvin blogs at [kelvinmknightsblog.wordpress.com](http://kelvinmknightsblog.wordpress.com).

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# School family with 'values rooted in Christian ethos'

■ In our latest 'Focus in Faith' feature, we hear from Claire Render, newly appointed chief executive of the Diocese of Carlisle's The Good Shepherd Multi Academy Trust

**Q** Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

**A** I was born and brought up in Bootle in Liverpool into a family who had a strong Christian faith. My mum, who passed away last year, was a nurse and a person who had the greatest of faiths. My dad is a guide at Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral, writing books about the local area and the cathedral itself.

I have an identical twin sister called Rachael, who is also a headteacher in Formby. My sister and I ran our youth club Sunday school from the age of 17. Sunday was very much about us going to church; that's always been a big part of my life.

I've been a teacher for 25 years, firstly in Newcastle and then Carlisle. I studied at Newcastle University and that's where I met my husband, Peter. We've been married for 23 years and have two lovely girls, Eve who's 16 and Ruby who is nearly 11. We live in the village of Wylam in the north-east.

**Q** What does your new role as chief executive of the Multi Academy Trust (MAT) entail?

**A** There are many different parts to the role. Firstly, it's about creating a family of schools which have their vision and values rooted in the Christian ethos. It's important our headteachers and staff have time to come together to discuss ways we can make our family the best it can possibly be in terms of academic and non-academic education, the curriculums we provide, the support we provide for our pupils' and staff's wellbeing and career development; it's about making this a place where everybody wants to work.

The second part of my role is to grow the trust, to look beyond the schools that are already a part of our family and to see how we can grow that by showing others what we have to offer in terms of school improvement, business management support, continuing professional development and sharing best practice around curriculum developments.

**Q** And a third part will see you continue in post at Wreay CE Primary near Carlisle?

**A** Yes, I shall be continuing my executive headship there as well as the trust's Whitfield CE Primary in Northumberland. I have two fantastic Heads of School at Wreay and Whitfield who oversee what's going on in both schools.

I've always been passionate about teaching; in fact, I was telling head-

teachers at one of our meetings that my husband has said that the love of my life is Wreay School!

**Q** What challenges does The Good Shepherd face as it moves forward?

**A** All schools face a challenge because of the financial climate. But I know with The Good Shepherd that we have the expertise to ride through those challenges. There's also the challenge of making other headteachers aware of what we offer in terms of vision, values and support. We are open to church and non-church schools and would encourage others to explore what it could mean for their school to be part of the MAT.

**Q** Why are you so passionate about teaching?

**A** It's truly a vocation. I wanted to be a teacher from seven and I do believe at that age God spoke to me and told me that would happen. Some people may laugh when they hear that but others understand. I get quite emotional when I think about that because God has never told me to think about doing something different. If that did happen, then I would not be a teacher any more. But right now God's plan is for me to do what I'm doing.

**Q** How are you able to live out your faith through your teaching?

**A** I approach my faith perhaps in a quieter way than others but that's not to suggest that they're wrong and I'm right. I always look to treat people well, to care for them and respect them. When I'm with other teachers who are Christians, I will talk about my faith and explain what I believe so they understand where I'm coming from. At Wreay we have always placed great importance on offering Christian hospitality; we welcome everybody and people leave feeling very valued and affirmed.

**Q** What is your prayer as you settle into your new role?

**A** I have what I suppose is quite a selfish prayer. It is that God allows me to make my family proud of me and that he allows me to be a strong role model for my daughters.

Finally, I pray for our school leaders and that God gives them the grace, knowledge and understanding to do the best for all the children in our care.



**Claire Render:** 'I wanted to be a teacher from seven and I do believe at that age God spoke to me and told me that would happen'  
DAVE ROBERTS