



The Way

The FREE newspaper of the Church in Cumbria – Spring 2020



In the footsteps
of Saint Kentigern

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Mother tells of
heroin tragedy

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PRAYER FOR ALL

As we come together across Cumbria
to face the coronavirus pandemic,
so you are encouraged to hold the
prayer below in your hearts...

*Loving God, as your Son
healed the sick
And brought good news to
the needy
Be with us this day.
Loving Jesus as you taught us to
'Do unto others as you would
have them do to you'
Be with all the medical staff
this day.
Loving spirit, your gift is healing,
Bring your healing fire to
our homes, our hospitals and
our county,
But most of all, be with us
this day. Amen*

CUMBRIA ECUMENICAL
SPIRITUALITY GROUP

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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.

While we are happy to consider unsolicited submissions, we operate largely on a system of commissions and do not guarantee to publish any materials received.

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The Way
Newspaper of
the Church
in Cumbria

Messages of hope

For the first time ever, and in response to national guidance relating to coronavirus, this edition of *The Way* will not be printed; instead, it is being offered as an online edition only. Please encourage as many people as possible to visit the link to read the stories contained in these pages. As this edition was completed, so the situation around the pandemic remained a fast-changing one. Some of the dates for advertised events and courses may understandably change.

This page contains messages from all four of the county's partnered ecumenical leaders as churches face up to an unprecedented national and international crisis...

The Rt Rev James Newcome, The Bishop of Carlisle

THE coronavirus pandemic is in one sense a disaster. It has led to a climate of uncertainty, confusion and fear unprecedented in my lifetime, and has already caused many to lose their jobs, their homes - and even their lives.

But, at the same time, it has prompted an outpouring of care, compassion and creativity on a scale which I have found deeply impressive and heartening. Churches all over this county have been working on ways of 'doing church differently' now that (for the moment) public worship has ceased, and on-line communication has really come into its own. (I do recommend the 'Fresh Expressions Cumbria' Facebook page for ideas.)

They have also been developing ways of caring for and supporting the most vulnerable members of our society, and showing that the Church is still at the heart of the communities we are there to serve.

In particular, churches across Cumbria are praying for the sick and lonely, for NHS staff and



for 'key workers' as well as those most at risk from the virus. I suggest too that many who would not call themselves 'Christian' are being challenged to think carefully about their priorities - their purpose - and what really matters most in life.

So, please keep on praying - caring - and meeting 'virtually' while this pandemic continues: and perhaps re-read Romans 8.35-39 which speaks powerfully to the situation in which we find ourselves.

Rev Martyn Coe, Co-ordinator: United Reformed Church Cumbria Partnership

A GOD of the good times would be like a fair-weather friend.

Psalm 93 reminds us that God is ever present.

"It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night."

God is with us even in the hardest of times. In Jesus, Godself lived on earth and so understands joy and love, grief, confusion, sadness and even anger.

In these changeable, even scary times, may we find the strength and resolve to praise God, and care for one another in the knowledge that God understands and loves us.

Let us praise God for all those who continue to work keeping society going and caring for those who are ill.

May God's peace be with you, and may you be a blessing to friend and neighbour.



Major Roger Batt, Divisional Commander of the Salvation Army

RIGHT now we are hearing from all kinds of people such phrases as: 'We are facing unprecedented days', 'We are navigating our way through uncharted waters', 'We are facing a time of great concern and uncertainty'.

All these outpourings come from the heart and we all need to engage with the reality and consequences of such utterings.

But as a Church right now we need to be heard uttering - no, I should say actually declaring - the authority of God's Word over our communities.

Words such as this from Psalm 23 (The Passion Paraphrase): "Even when your path takes me through the valley of deepest darkness, fear will never conquer me, for you already have me!

"You remain close to me and lead me through it all the way. Your authority is my strength and my peace. The comfort of your love takes away my fear. I'll never be lonely, for you are near."



The Rev Dr James Tebbutt, Chair of the Cumbria District of the Methodist Church

THE sudden, extensive, and never really expected disruption of the coronavirus pandemic has affected and constrained us all, reminding us that our lives and usual assumptions are more precarious than we like to remember.

The crisis can reveal the worst in each of us (the selfish panic buy), but also the best, as recent divisions pale in a shared concern to take care for and of one another. Not least, we deeply appreciate those who are doing their best for us.

In it all, faith again finds its place, that trust in the God who loves all, who is at the bedside of the one struggling to breathe; who weeps when we weep; who knows our fear and our frustration; who holds us all, longing for us to come through and to flourish, more kindly, more lovingly, more fairly, more united than we were before. May God be with us all.



SAINT LEADS THE WAY

■ Minister maps out new pilgrims' route linking churches that honour Kentigern

By Dave Roberts

IT WAS a crisp winter's day when the Rev Prof Stephen Wright stepped out on the first leg of a new pilgrimage he'd felt called to map out in honour of Cumbria's 'patron saint' St Kentigern.

Setting off from Mungrisdale parish church he couldn't help but notice the small robin which hopped along beside him for a few seconds. It was a fitting walking companion.

Stephen, who is an inter-faith minister, laughs: "The robin is a symbol of St Kentigern and so I thought to myself, 'Well, someone is clearly speaking to me here'."

The pilgrimage around Cumbria's northern fells is the subject of Stephen's new book *The Kentigern Way, A Life and Lakeland Pilgrimage*.

It takes readers along a route connecting churches named in honour of the sixth-century saint while also providing an historical backdrop to both the saint and the region, and exploring what pilgrimage is. Prayers and reflections are provided throughout each stage.

"Ever since I moved to Cumbria, I've been fascinated by Kentigern," Stephen explains.

"His story grabbed hold of me, and I became very aware of his influence here in Cumbria. He's as close to being our patron saint as anybody.

"I had no interest in Christianity when I first moved here in 1996 and I didn't start going to church until 2004.

"But, from the time I arrived in the county, I became almost obsessed with Kentigern; I didn't know where this impulse came from.

"I've been so heavily influenced by this man about whom so little is known, yet who was such an important figure in the early Christian church.

"I'd visit places that were associated with him and I found myself acquiring more and more material about him, visiting churches for prayerful reflection about this man and, along the way, meeting some lovely people."



Stephen Wright: 'I became almost obsessed with Kentigern'

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS



Tranquil: The church at Mungrisdale is one of several in Cumbria dedicated to St Kentigern

The pilgrimage and the new book are the culmination of more than 20 years of careful research into the life of Kentigern.

The 90-mile route is split into nine stages, linking churches connected with St Kentigern in places such as Mungrisdale, Caldbeck, Aspatria and Crosthwaite, near Keswick.

Stephen, who is also a trustee and spiritual director of the Sacred Space Foundation, adds: "It's a route which takes in the beautiful northern fells, the city

of Carlisle and the Cumbria coast so it covers all kinds of terrain.

"It's been wonderful to be able to create this pilgrimage, one which, although based around Christian sacred sites, is open to people of all faiths and none to walk and explore the countryside and their own spirituality."

The book and pilgrimage also complement Stephen's work as founder of the Kentigern School, which supports those people who are interested in exploring the contemplative way and their relationship with God.

He explains: "The pilgrimage very much fits in with the contemplative way.

"Contemplatives are people who tend not to cluster, who enjoy solitude.

"They're looking for that direct route to God and I'd say that a pilgrimage really offers that opportunity."

The book also includes a foreword by the Bishop of Carlisle, the Rt Rev James Newcome.

In it, he writes: "I challenge anyone not to be inspired and intrigued by the thoughtfulness and love that have gone into researching and producing this unusual and compelling work."

■ *The Kentigern Way, A Life and Lakeland Pilgrimage* is published by Wild Goose Publications and is available at a special offer price of £8.99 from www.ionabooks.com.



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By The Way

Hope to follow 'Julie'

I REMEMBER 'O Jesus I have promised' from my Confirmation and from school assemblies but it sticks in my mind for another reason. One boy in our class was friendly with a girl named Julia. When we sang the words 'My hope to follow duly' (Julie) all the boys would point, cheer and embarrass this poor lad.

David Pendlebury, The Parish Church of St Paul, Grange-over-Sands

RESIDENTS will be saddened to hear of the death of the Rev Peter Hayward, peacefully at his home, and after a short stay in the Cumberland Infirmary. Peter and his wife, the late Joyce, moved to Allonby around 20 years ago, to be near family and with them their son Richard. Appropriately, for a Church of England minister, the house they chose as their retirement home was a former Wesleyan chapel.

Allonby Beachcomber Monthly Village Newsletter

OUR 2019 shoe box campaign has been a great success, thanks to the generosity of so many who gave money, goods or even filled their own shoe box. We completed 117 shoe boxes – passing our 100 target... By the time you read this, the boxes along with some lovely knitted blankets will be in Romania, and distribution will be well under way.

Iris Diggle, The Stricklandgater, Newsletter of the Stricklandgater Methodist Church, Kendal

THIS February, Upper Eden Community First Responders (UECFR) celebrate 10 years supporting residents of the Upper Eden Valley by attending medical emergencies. Members of the team undertake training and assessments by North West Ambulance Service paramedics. This includes recognising signs of a stroke and a heart attack, how to perform CPR and the use of a defibrillator.

Parish News, The Parish of Kirkby Stephen with Mallerstang, Crosby Garrett and Soulbry

I AM looking forward to all that the [Mothers' Union] central chaplain role brings, to being able to support the work of local branches, both here and around the world, and to pray for the members and their ministries. It is such a joy that the MU is so strong in Cumbria.

Bishop Emma Ineson, Mothers' Union News

Last year began with one of the driest winters in my Scotby records. December 2018, January and February 2019 make up the winter period and all had much lower than average rainfall, making the winter the third driest I have recorded. However, that was more than compensated for by the very wet summer.

Anne East, Pow Maughan, The Magazine of All Saints', Scotby and St John's, Cotehill with Cumwhinton

BY the time you read this, Lent will be upon us. You may have already given something up, or taken something on, but if you haven't why not find out more about mindfulness, be it Christian or secular in nature, and make it part of your daily routine, as a means of recapturing the joy of life and keeping the human tendency to worry under control.

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

GREYSOUTHEN WI. Liz, originally from the west country, gave us a reading of a couple of Pam Ayres' poems which are quite amusing. She also brought a book of poems by a local Cumbrian lady, some of which are in Cumbrian dialect and also quite amusing. I have to say her Cumbrian accent wasn't quite as accurate as the Devonshire one!

St Bridget's Parish News

OUR archbishops, ++Justin and ++John, are encouraging us this Lent to engage in caring for our creation. They have said this is an opportunity for us to rebuild our relationship with our planet, and in turn with God who is Lord of everything.

Alison Riley, Parish Magazine for Gosforth and Wasdale

Raising awareness of domestic abuse

■ Team helps train clergy and pastoral workers

By Dave Roberts

“OVER the past 10 years we have trained hundreds of clergy and pastoral workers in this county, of all denominations and free churches, on how to be more aware of domestic abuse.”

The Rev Eleanor Hancock explains how she and a small team, working through Churches Together in Cumbria, have been tackling domestic abuse.

And it is an issue which also affects Christian communities. In 2018, researchers from Coventry University and the University of Leicester asked 438 churchgoers in Cumbria about their experiences of domestic abuse. The findings were published in a report, *In Churches Too: Church Responses to Domestic Abuse*.

One in four of the churchgoers experienced at least one abusive act in a current relationship, mirroring domestic abuse in the wider society. Of the respondents, 71 per cent were aware of domestic abuse in their community but only two in seven churchgoers considered their church to be adequately equipped to deal with a disclosure of domestic abuse.

It is that latter figure which Eleanor and other members of the training team are committed to addressing.

“Domestic abuse is very prevalent in rural areas,” Eleanor adds. “People are far more isolated and that makes it even easier for the perpetrator and harder for a victim to access support. So, in this situation, I wanted to see how we as churches could help and offer support to victims and their children. There’s a church or chapel in every community so we can be there to help.”

She began to take a lead on the issue in the early 2000s, while training for curacy and also sitting as a member of the local Probation Board. Her next-door neighbour at the time was a lady who ran Carlisle’s women’s refuge and Eleanor identified a need for further chaplaincy work.

At the same time, she drew alongside Helen Boothroyd, then the social responsibility officer for Churches Together. They, and a few others, teamed up with the



Eleanor Hancock: ‘Domestic abuse is very prevalent in rural areas’

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WHERE TO TURN TO FOR HELP

LOCAL SUPPORT SERVICES

■ Victim Support Cumbria - 0300 303 0157, 8am-6pm Mon-Fri; 08 08 16 89 111, daily, 24 hours; website: <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-and-support/get-help/support-near-you/north-west/cumbria>

■ Turning the Spotlight. A countywide project supporting families experiencing conflict, violence and abuse. Contact Laraine Carr on 07919 393 311 or at turningthespotlight@victimsupport.org.uk

NATIONAL HELPLINES

■ 24-hour National Domestic Violence Freephone Helpline - 0808 2000 247 / helpline@womensaid.org.uk

■ National helpline for men experiencing domestic violence and abuse - 0808 801 0327 / www.mensadvice.org.uk / info@mensadvice.org.uk

■ Freephone national helpline for LGBT+ domestic abuse victims - 0800 999 5428 Mon, Tues and Fri 10am - 5pm; Wed and Thurs 10am-8pm / help@galop.org.uk / www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse

■ National Stalking Helpline -



Resources: An international Christian alliance called Restored has released *A Handbook for Female Christian Survivors of Domestic Abuse*,

0808 802 0300

■ Respect phonenumber - 0808 802 4040 / info@respectphonenumber.org.uk

■ Action on Elder Abuse Helpline - 080 8808 8141 / www.elderabuse.org.uk

■ The Revenge Porn Helpline, Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm, excluding bank holidays - 03456 000 459 / www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk

OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES

■ Domestic abuse - www.womensaid.org.uk www.refuge.org.uk www.safelives.org.uk

www.victimsupport.org.uk

■ Stalking and personal safety - www.suzylamplugh.org

■ Economic abuse - www.survivingeconomicabuse.org

■ Domestic violence and sexual assault - www.uksaysnomore.org

■ Men, young people and perpetrators - www.respect.uk.net

■ Legal help - www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

■ www.ncdv.org.uk

■ Men’s Advice Line - www.mensadvice.org.uk

■ Report a crime anonymously - www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Let Go project, which was set up initially to raise awareness of domestic abuse and provide support for victims and their families in rural parts of Carlisle and Eden.

“Our training runs for a full day and looks at what constitutes domestic abuse, why people stay, and the idea of power and control,” Eleanor says. “We explore patterns of behaviour: generally, a perpetrator is abusive, apologises and then there’s a honeymoon

period. But then it starts all over again, and gets gradually worse.

“We look at what could be the causes of domestic abuse and the myths that it is caused by, for example, alcohol, the weather or mental health issues. It’s important to remember perpetrators can be different with other people; they choose to abuse those closest to them. Domestic abuse in a family home will also affect any children.

“We’ve also explored theologi-

cal issues on training days. What is it that we do and say in church that can help or hinder somebody who needs our support?”

Eleanor and the Churches Together team plan to continue their cross-denominational work in liaison with the Diocese of Carlisle and Cumbria Methodist District, and are looking at other ways to raise awareness and equip churches to support victims and their families across the county.

'Holiday club' with a twist

■ Vicar takes kids' event and turns it into gathering for older people

By Dave Roberts

"I COULD give Andrew a big hug," June Proudfoot laughs. "We've all been made to feel so special. It's been a wonderful experience."

June, a member of St Peter's Kingmoor, is referring to the Rev Andrew Towner, the vicar of Houghton and Kingmoor in north Carlisle. He is the brains behind a church 'holiday club' for older people which has just been held for the first time. June was there every day it ran – with more than 50 others.

Andrew explains: "We hold a hugely successful holiday club for children at the end of August each year. We get more than 100 people along and it's fantastic. But it's been on my heart for several years that we do something similar for older folk."

"I was desperate to make it happen so that we, as churches, could bless all these people, many of whom are dear friends."

The 'Holiday at Home' club was developed over six months with invitations then sent out. It ran over three days at St John's, Houghton. The format included ice-breaker quizzes in the morning followed by singing sessions, a



Clockwise, from above: Dozens attended the Holiday at Home club at St John's, Houghton; the Rev Andrew Towner with organisers Cathy and David Ross; club-goers enjoying the activities



DAVE ROBERTS

'virtual tour' of Lake Galilee through Bible sessions and arts and crafts after lunch.

Run on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, there was also a special 'Holiday at Home' celebration service the following Sunday.

Organisers specifically chose to run it over a week in January. Research suggests it is a time of year when people can feel the most isolated or lonely.

"It's a time when people can feel poor or lonely and that they don't

have anything to look forward to," Andrew explains. "So one answer is to put on an event like this which they can positively engage with."

The organisation of Holiday at Home was overseen by Cathy and David Ross, both members of St Peter's. The couple, who also run the church's Lunch Club, co-ordinated a team of 23 volunteers.

David adds: "There's been a real team effort to get to this point. We advertised the club as widely as we could, putting up flyers in the

Post Office and talking about it at church and the Mothers' Union. We wanted to reach out to as many people as possible and we have got some people here who don't go to church. That's great to see."

There are plans for Holiday at Home to become an annual event, a suggestion which has been welcomed by those who have benefited from the gatherings.

Mick Shaw, who helped as a car park attendant, says: "It seems to have gone down well. We've had a

good number of folks come along every day and there have been very positive comments which is encouraging for all the team."

That is reflected in comments from St Peter's congregation member Jean Morris who adds: "I would not have missed it for anything. My biggest hope is that people's hearts will have been touched by what's gone on here and that they will be able to think about what they've heard and get to know more about Jesus."

Former cinema and bingo hall now packed with church-goers

A SERVICE of thanksgiving has marked a Barrow church's move to a refurbished former cinema in the town.

Congregation members from Spring Mount Church gathered in February to celebrate the move to the town's former picture house, the Salthouse Pavilion, which became a bingo club in later years.

It marks the culmination of a five-year project for the church after money was raised to buy the building at auction.

Pastor Jonny Harrison said: "We had to start looking around for new premises because we simply could not fit everyone into our old building on Abbey Road if everyone was to turn up."

"We looked at a couple of options for relocation but, as a church, we really believe we need to be in the heart of the community and that's exactly what this building gives us."

After purchasing the Pavilion in 2015 for just under £100,000,



Decorating: Church members turn the old bingo hall into a church

phased refurbishment work began. The original sloping floor was levelled, and the building was insulated and refurbished. Church members decorated the interior.

Jonny added: "When we'd completed the first phase of building work we met with our builder and said, 'We want to be completely honest with you; we don't have all the money in yet for the second phase of works'. In that meeting,

the builder – who is not a Christian – turned around and said, 'Don't worry. We want to journey with you'. That's an incredible display of faith."

The necessary money was pledged, and the congregation moved to their new building last July. Up to 250 people now regularly attend the church, many of whom gathered for the service of thanksgiving in February.

Jonny added: "Throughout this process we have never had to stop the building work; the necessary money has always been found."

"God has shown us again and again that he doesn't just provide what we need, he goes beyond that."

"It's exciting to have seen a change of building but it's even more exciting to have seen the change in the people who worship there on a Sunday morning, who are part of small groups who meet there or who volunteer. It's a sure sign that God is at work."

Alex Haynes
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By The Way

So much technology!

DO you ever long to live in a world a bit less dominated by technology? Sometimes I get really frustrated with life when it seems it's impossible to exist without being connected to the internet; I have to log into this, remember passwords for that, find a 'product key' to activate something else. Computers drive me crazy.

Michael Woodcock,

Two Valleys Parish News, Cartmell Fell, Crosthwaite, Crook, Helsington, Winstar, Witherslack and Underbarrow

A NEW slot in services – Family Time – will be introduced to encourage people present to share news and talk about their faith journeys in an informal way. This will only take about five minutes and at some point in the future it is hoped that volunteers will lead the session. New ideas about music in the services were asked for in the Church Review, so, in addition to our choir, it was suggested that a praise group be started to introduce new music, songs and modern hymns.

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

WE can't explain what happened on that first Easter, how exactly the resurrection came about... that was between Jesus and his Father in those cold dark hours in the tomb. But we can celebrate the promises of God that death is not an end but a new beginning in Christ. What great hope we have in him!

Lucie Lunn, Church of Low Furness Community Magazine

WHEN Jesus came out of the wilderness it was to fulfil all that had been prophesied and to proclaim the Kingdom of God. We too, in meeting people, can do the same – proclaim the kingdom of God and show what a marvellous God we have who cares for everyone.

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

ALTHOUGH we have had two storms recently there is something comforting in seeing the garden covered in a wonderful collection of snowdrops and crocuses. (There are even some daffodils flowering already). We sometimes forget how lucky we are to have God's creation despite the awful weather. However, those experiencing flooding may not feel so and they are in our prayers.

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

AROUND the Churches. The chapel of St Anselm on the Victoria Park campus of Manchester University has become the first university chapel to become a corporate member of the Prayer Book Society. The society has funded two choral scholarships and donated 50 new pew editions of 1662 to the recently refurbished chapel.

Proclaim, The Parish Magazine of the North Barrow Team Ministry

SPRING is around the corner, the snowdrops are out in abundance and I have even seen some brave daffodils showing their bright yellow colour. The days are getting longer and we have the firm hope that things will improve.

In our church of St John the Baptist, we are now looking forward. We have a new vicar; he is our sign of spring, of new hope when we can all start working together, to reach out to our friends at St Elizabeth's and to our friends in the mission community.

Brenda Gear, The Observer, Saint John the Baptist, Upperby

'Does evil exist? It does in the form of heroin...'

■ Bereaved parents Philippa and Graeme use experience to help other families

By Dave Roberts

"IF YOU remember the Milky Bar kid, then you'll know what our Jim looked like when he was young," Philippa Skinner smiles. "He was a very affectionate child, a very cheeky little chap with the glasses on which he'd worn from a really young age.

"As he got older, he was quite quiet, but he was also very funny and pretty sporty. We just had lots of fun together."

Jim Skinner was one of four children born to Philippa and her husband Graeme, who is the vicar of Eden Churches and team leader of the Eden Wild Goose Mission Community.

Tragically, Jim died of a heroin overdose aged just 21. His body was found in a flat in Hong Kong, where he'd been working in support of those battling drug addiction.

The exact circumstances surrounding his death in November 2007 are still unclear, as are the reasons why he turned to drugs in the first place. He'd started to smoke cannabis in his late teens, despite being challenged by his parents.

"I honestly believe that if Jim were to be in this room now, he would say he didn't know why he'd taken drugs," Philippa says. "I think he'd say, 'It just happened. I was stupid. I made a mistake'. That's the same for him and so many others."

She is clear, however, as to where the root of the problem lies.

"I have a visceral hatred of drugs," Philippa says. "People ask: 'Does evil exist?' Well, yes, it does in the form of heroin. It ruins so many lives and it doesn't care who it hurts along the way."

Philippa chose to write about her experience of loss, grief and hope in her book *See You Soon*. It is a mother's personal reflection on her son's life and death, and the unanswerable questions it creates.

The title draws on the last letter Jim wrote to his parents, who were due to travel to Hong Kong to visit him: "See you soon (relatively)". The chapters explore how Jim's death affected Philippa's faith and relationship with God.

She explains: "I suppose my relationship with God did break and I had to rebuild it. I remember



Philippa Skinner: On a journey following Jim's death

DAVE ROBERTS



Happier times: Jim with dad Graeme and, right, mum Philippa

picking up the Bible soon after Jim had died and feeling a tremendous vibrancy coming from the pages, as if Jesus was speaking to me. But that later gave way to a railing, an anger, an utter lostness and despair. And that is what grief is like; it is a complete mixture of emotions all bundled up together like a bowl of spaghetti. That was what my relationship with God was like too."

She is at pains to stress that she and all her family remain on a journey following Jim's death. Her book, published in 2012, is a part of that journey.

Philippa also continues to

provide help to other bereaved parents as a telephone befriender for the Christian charity, Care for the Family.

She adds: "Obviously Jim will always be a huge part of our family, but I think the work gives me an ongoing connection with that aspect of my life. I've learnt so much through Jim's death and the way it happened, and at least I can use this to support others in similar situations.

"Because we have been through what we have, I'm able to better understand what these other parents are experiencing. It's being a listening ear. For some people that may be one conversa-

tion; for others it becomes quite a long-term relationship."

She and Graeme have also spoken about bereavement, loss and hope at various conferences and seminars.

At a New Wine North event, a man entered the room as Philippa spoke to those gathered. He later explained he'd been running a charity stall and had unexpectedly stumbled over their seminar about drugs. He'd heard Hong Kong mentioned and felt moved to go into the room.

Introducing himself as Bill, he revealed that he'd known Jim in Hong Kong and had counted him as a dear friend. In fact, the couple had found a letter of encouragement from him in Jim's possessions when they'd flown out to Hong Kong, but hadn't known who 'Bill' was.

"It gave us both an incredible sense that God was in all of this," Philippa adds. "It may feel like a huge mess, but meeting Bill like this reminded us we were not alone. It was such a phenomenal thing to happen. It was God's touch saying 'Press on. It's okay but it's not okay. Just remember that I'm here'."

■ *See You Soon* is available from www.careforthefamily.org.uk and on Kindle.

Liberalism has 'eaten itself' says ex-leader

■ MP Tim Farron concludes in book that politics and faith can go together

A DELAYED train journey home provided the perfect opportunity for Cumbrian MP Tim Farron to start writing his recently published book.

"I was on the train coming back from our Party Conference in September 2017 – the first conference after I'd stepped down as leader – and we were hideously delayed somewhere around Wolverhampton," he explains.

"I got my lap-top out and started to write. I rattled off 10 to 12,000 words which essentially became the arc of the book which, I guess, was the story of the 2017 election campaign."

A Better Ambition: Confessions of a Faithful Liberal was published last autumn. It provides a fascinating insight into the challenges faced by this Christian politician during his time as Liberal Democrat leader.

The book documents his childhood, coming to faith as a teenager while in Singapore, and his rise through the political ranks: winning the Westmorland and Lonsdale constituency in 2005, becoming Lib Dem president in 2010 and party leader five years later.

It also explores media reaction to answers he gave when asked whether he believed gay sex was a sin. Ultimately, the media focus became so heightened that it led to him quitting as leader after the 2017 General Election.

"I had a story to tell. I'd been through a very interesting time and I thought it should be written down," Tim says. "There's obviously an issue about the place of faith in politics. In America it seems that you've almost got to invent a faith to be taken seriously as a politician, while in the UK you've got to pretend that you haven't got one. In both cases that's nonsense!"

"I fear that in Western society liberalism has eaten itself; it's become tolerant of everything apart from the stuff it does not agree with. In which case it's not liberal. I am a passionate liberal who stands up for the rights of people who are very different to me."

His book concludes that politics and faith can sit alongside one another and that having a faith should not preclude a person from holding a high political office.

Tim is also adamant that the political arena is not simply a dog-eat-dog one. He says there is cross-party Christian fellowship and support in Westminster.

He says: "My time in Parliament has not made me think desperately

By Dave Roberts

well of the political classes but, having said that, you do come across huge amounts of kindness where you might not expect it.

"Life on planet Earth is a mucky business and politics is just a part of that. So, it's important as a Christian within the political arena that I demonstrate grace, be forgiving of others and show kindness. And, of course, I mess up regularly!"

My interview with him comes some months after we'd first been due to meet; campaigning for the 2019 snap general election had put paid to that. It was an election which saw Tim's majority increase from 777 in 2017 to 1,934. He is now one of only 11 Lib Dem MPs.

A Better Ambition: Confessions of a Faithful Liberal is his first book. Tim has enjoyed writing it so much that he now regularly contributes pieces to publications including *The Spectator*, and the Church of England and *Catholic Universe* newspapers.

He adds: "My fundamental mission as a Christian is to serve people, primarily the people here in this constituency. But I'm also very keen to use my profile to talk to Christians about politics, so that there's greater understanding."

"And I want the opportunity to talk more about the Gospel. When I write in the secular media about my faith, I'm doing something that very few people do and so, yes, it feels like a calling."

He and his family continue to be supported by the congregation of Parr Street Church in Kendal where they worship.

"The elders of the church have been great," Tim says, "but often people don't talk to me about politics at all because I'm just a regular part of the church membership."

"It's important for me as a Christian in Parliament to find fellowship. There's regular cross-party fellowship on a Wednesday morning which I go to. The political life is such a busy one but it's so important to make time for that."

And as he embarks on a further five-year term as a Cumbrian constituency MP, what would be his prayer?

"I want people to consider Jesus," he says. "We've all been put off by Christians at some time or other, but I've never been let down by Jesus Christ. My prayer for everyone would be that they don't shrug him off."

■ *A Better Ambition: Confessions of a Faithful Liberal* is available from bookstores and online, priced from £9.99.



Tim Farron: 'I am a passionate liberal who stands up for the rights of people who are very different to me'



Working together. Left, Brec Seaton and Jane Maycock

Training addresses conflict

SPECIAL training days exploring change and conflict are to be rolled out in support of mission communities across Cumbria.

The sessions will consider 'Growing Through Change and Conflict' (July 7), 'Scripture, Spirituality and Conflict' (June 16 and July 2), 'Further Skills in Growing Through Conflict' (September 24) and 'Bullying and Harassment' (October 20).

Brec Seaton, a Methodist lay officer who helped develop and lead the training, said: "When mission communities were first talked about there was a recognition that with change can come tension. So, a group of us worked on developing resources to enable people to work through any differences."

The days are facilitated by the Cumbria Growing Through Conflict Network and are run under the umbrella of the Methodist Church programme, Positive Working Together and through Churches Together in Cumbria.

The Rev Jane Maycock, continuing ministerial development and leadership enabler in the God for All team, has also helped develop and lead the training days.

She said: "We would encourage any mission community who may be interested in holding a training day to contact us."

To arrange specific training for your mission community, email seatonb@methodistchurch.org.uk. To book one of the training days, email Rob Glassonbury at NWMannNetwork@gmail.com.

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By The Way

Monochrome world?

LIFE is far from black and white. We live on a spectrum of colour and are called to love people all across that spectrum, whether they are the same colour as us or not. I pray that, as we face the future, we may do so together, embracing every shade that God has graciously given us, not dividing ourselves from 'the other' but uniting ourselves in the rich kaleidoscope of life.

Phil Jackson, Link, Aspatria Methodist Church, St Kentigern's Aspatria, St Mary's Gilcrux, St James' Hayton

MESSY Church is getting bigger and better, so a huge thanks once again to Deacon Mel Beaven who leads our Messy Church with such enthusiasm and such creative ideas. Each one has different activities to challenge everyone. Everyone is kept involved and encouraged to join in. The children always have something to take home to remind them of what they have heard, although some of it is eaten before they leave.

The Messenger, Wigton Road Methodist Church

WHEN life is rubbish - when it's unfair, when you get let down, left out, ignored, knocked back and forgotten - when all that happens, you're not on your own. Jesus will stick around. I could talk for a long time about joy and how great it is to be a Christian. I could. But sometimes, what we really need to know is that Jesus will stick with us when things are bad.

Andy Murphie, Crosthwaite Parish, Keswick

SMALL daily sacrifices are like a field in the open valley, filled as far as the eye can see with beautiful wild flowers. One flower is lovely, but when we commit ourselves to these small acts of love, each day and every day, we present to God a flowing field of endless beauty and magnificence.

Robert Jackson, The Parish of Whitehaven

OUR ongoing conservation works - anyone who has been into St Oswald's recently will have seen the scaffolding up the west wall - is still in place. Unfortunately, the second layer of lime plaster applied to the wall is drying out more slowly than we had hoped. The weather, both temperature and rain, have not helped. We are discussing with our architect and our contractor the way forward. Fortunately, the church is still useable.

Dean Parish News

MY NAME is Andrew Callaway and, from June 28, I will be joining you as a part-time, self-supporting assistant curate in training within the Solway Plain Parish, a title that trips off the tongue with ease. This is an exciting time for me and my wife Carol as it marks the end of one part of our journey with God and the start of another.

Andrew Callaway, Solway Plain Team Magazine

EDEN Wild Goose has launched a new craft group called 'Crafty Gaggles'. It will be for all abilities to come together with their own crafts but with the opportunity to see and try others. The aims are to enjoy ourselves, meet new people and build community.

Al Lee, Focus on Eden, Holme Eden and Wetheral with Warwick

WE can be quite uncomfortable with the idea of 'following Jesus'. Indeed, some people get uneasy if Jesus is mentioned too often in sermons. But, of course, it is there in our baptism. As the 1662 Prayer Book has it, we are to "obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of [our] life" and our 'profession' is "to follow the example of our Saviour Christ and to be made like unto him". Whatever our Christian background, promises like these were made at our baptism and affirmed by us (if we were confirmed) at our confirmation.

James Richard, Parish of St Martin's, Windermere

DOWN YOUR WAY... WITH #MyCalling

Name: Paul Gibson
Location: Warwick Bridge
Vocation: Worship group leader



I GUESS I've been given a gift to play music, to sing and generally help people join together and move forward together in a co-ordinated manner.

It's a privilege and a pleasure when I'm helping people encounter God, which is probably what my role entails, be that with the singers and musicians I play with, the congregation as a whole or anybody who comes into the church, whether they know the church and the hymns or whether they don't know what to expect.

I don't want people to feel alienated. I want them to feel able to sing and read the words, feel moved by the music and get a closer understanding of God's love for us and all he can do in our lives.

It enables me to search more of the truth and try to get more of a heart for God so that when I'm leading, it is a genuine, authentic leadership; that I'm leading from the heart and I'm looking for Jesus to guide me in terms of hymn and song choices and how we put those together into a service to complement what's being talked about through that service.



Name: Fiona Wilkinson
Location: Carlisle
Vocation: Foster carer

WHEN Stewart, my husband, and I got married later in life I joked one day in the car that if we didn't have a family of our own that maybe it was a sign that we should foster.

Children didn't happen. We built an extension and we had two empty bedrooms. The extension was finished in the February and by the November I had given up my job and we had been approved as foster carers.

Since then we have had 14 children: some just for one night, some for a few years. You can see the difference you make in children's lives. They come to you frightened and upset; some of them never knew where their next meal was coming from. Some are angry and have behavioural problems.

But it's amazing to see the difference that is made by having a loving family and some support and structure. It's so rewarding. I couldn't imagine doing anything else now.

The support we get from our church family is invaluable. We have had difficult times with some of our placements, but we know that they are always there for us, always praying for us. There could be a knock at the door, and then someone comes in to offer support. We could not do it without our faith or our friends in church. Stewart and I don't have any family locally. We call them our Carlisle family. They keep us going!

Where does God want to take you?

By Dave Roberts

ROADSHOW DATES

JUNE 2020:

- Sunday 7, 2-4pm: North district, Brampton Methodist Church
- Wednesday 10, 7-9pm: West district, Christ Church Cockermouth (with Bishop James)
- Sunday 14, 2-4pm: South district, Ulverston Methodist Church
- Monday 22, 7-9pm: North district, Penrith Methodist Church (with Bishop James)

JULY 2020:

- Sunday 5, 2-4pm: West district, Seascale St Cuthbert's (with Bishop Emma)
- Thursday 9, 7-9pm: South district, St Thomas Kendal

People are encouraged to book on to one of the #MyCalling roadshows by visiting www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/vocations/.

SIX ecumenical roadshows are to be staged across Cumbria this summer to help people explore what God is calling them to.

The #MyCalling events will run in June and July, with two sessions each (a mid-week evening session and a Sunday afternoon) to be run in the north, south and west of the county.

The two-hour roadshows will include worship as well as talks from speakers about how they discerned what their calling was and how they are living it out now. Vocations advisers will be on hand to chat with those who attend.

The Rev Canon Peter Clement, director of vocations in the God for All team, said: "These roadshows won't just look at a narrow field of ministry; the opportunities are wide. We want people to be enthused and inspired to explore more. Where is it that God wants to take you?"

"But the roadshows are also not just for people who are wondering what God is calling them to do; they are very much also for

church leaders and other key people who can learn more about what is going on and then return to their church to do a 'ministry of nudging' of others."

The roadshows have been developed in partnership with the Cumbria Methodist District and the Diocese of Carlisle. There are up to 30 vocations advisers across the county who can draw alongside those exploring their calling. The work is overseen by co-ordinators in the north, south and west.

A series of special #MyCalling films has been produced to sit within the roadshows. These will also be rolled out through social media.

Sarah Hulme, an outreach and

Fresh Expression enabler with the God for All team who is also working with the vocations project, has helped produce the films.

She said: "It was an honour to interview people and hear how God has moved in their lives. I had tears in my eyes listening to one particular testimony. The people we interviewed were able to clearly articulate what their calling is. I was certainly challenged to think more about what I'm doing, how I'm doing it, why I'm doing it and how I should be listening to God. I'm sure others who see the films will feel the same."

A selection of testimonies from the #MyCalling films appear on these 'Down Your Way' pages.

Name: Sarah Nixon
Location: Carlisle
Vocation: Intern



I'D BEEN worshipping at St Mike's (St Michael's Stanwix) for three years. I started when I came to university here in Carlisle.

At the end of uni, my vicar came up to me and said: "Heh, Sarah, what would you think about being an intern?" And I was like: "Nigel, I'm not going to lie; I've got a lot on right now! Come back and ask me in a month's time!"

As the weeks went on, things just sort of fell into place. It was really being put on my heart. I feel that, if something is being put on your heart that much, then maybe it's meant to be there.

People have put a lot of trust in me to plan stuff and achieve things. It's really cool to be doing that in a Christian environment because there's so much support. It's really built my confidence and my trust in God.

A lot of the things I've done have gone in directions I could never have thought of myself. It's been really cool to see how God is working through the internship,

through me and through others.

I've really wrestled with the word 'calling' as time has gone on because was this me being called and following God's calling, or was this me thinking this was the easy way out of whatever else I have to do?

In the run-up to making the decision to become an intern, God put me in situations and changed my situations so that it would fall into place. I truly believe God called me back to Carlisle.

Name: Joan Wager
Location: Langwathby
Vocation: Spiritual director



WHEN we moved up here, all people wanted to know was if I was a local preacher and when I said, and still do, 'No', they'd say, 'Oh!' I have struggled with that.

I think that what I felt when I moved to Cumbria was that I had a lot of experience and some skills - particularly listening skills - which I feel are really important.

I asked the question, 'What has God got in store for me now?' and after a little searching around and some conversations, I discovered a course to train to be a spiritual companion.

When I looked at the content, I felt really excited and I still feel that.

If I had to give everything up except for one thing, the spiritual direction would be the thing I'd want to keep going.

I think vocation is something that's relevant to everybody; it's not just for young people or middle-aged people or people of a working age. It's for everybody.



Name: Nick Gray
Location: Beetham
Vocation: Reader

HAVING come to faith in my 30s, I'm quite mindful of the fact that I haven't got a big background in the church. And so, I'm also mindful of the fact that other people who might be interested in exploring their faith will be the same.

There is so much diverse material that can help people into their faith, be it works of art, poetry or Celtic saints, to name a few.

There are a lot of things we don't hear much about in church, we have to do our own research and private reading. I felt excited by this and wanted to pass it on to others.

I felt nudged in the direction of maybe having some extra knowledge and some authority,

really, to be able to talk to people. I decided that doing the Reader course would be the right pathway for me to follow.

Having been a vet, I've spent my whole life explaining quite difficult concepts to people: helping make them understand about diabetic cats, or dogs with hormone conditions. To put that over in a simple way which people would understand was, I felt, something transferable and would help explain Gospel and Bible messages to people.

That's an important message for churches where the congregation profile age is older; God has not finished with them, there's still a calling in their lives if they choose to follow it.

It's a wonderful privilege to be a fellow traveller with people on these journeys and I have learnt an enormous amount. It's not a one-way thing.

By The Way

Brownies group folds

NOTHING lasts forever... and it was with heavy hearts we held the last ever meeting of the Second Seascale Methodist Brownies. It was not an easy decision to make nor was it one we came to lightly. Joan and I felt the time had come for us to retire after serving 15 years and 22 years respectively, and our two younger leaders felt, with their careers, that they didn't have time to commit fully to running Brownies. The good news is that all girls who want to are able to transfer to Gosforth Brownies as they were struggling with numbers, so this has given them a much-needed boost.

In Touch, The Magazine of Seascale and Gosforth Methodist Churches

BOXES of Hope. Last year was brilliant as we sent 136 boxes. We are also the drop-off point for others and, hopefully, we can get more people to collect the boxes. We have already started collecting for this year. We need pencils, pencil cases, pens etc. A big thank you to everyone who helped to donate items, pack them and collect them.

Vickie Lipton, Living Stones, Whitehaven URC

BECAUSE it is a long season Lent gives us time for things too. Time for God, time for the needs of others, time for prayer, time for silence. It is a time to think spiritually about the needs of the world – a world which is always with us and always pressing in on us with its demands; and the world is always with us in the bad sense of the temptations and testings of 'the world, the flesh and the devil'. If we can turn these realities into our prayers and our hopes then we will show in our lives whose side we are truly on.

Geoffrey Ravalde, St Mary's, Wigton

LIFELONG commitment is not what everyone thinks it is. It's not waking up early every morning to make breakfast and eat together. It's not cuddling in bed together until both of you peacefully fall asleep. It's not a clean home and a homemade meal every day. It's someone who steals all the covers, who sometimes slams doors, and a few harsh words, disagreeing and the silent treatment until your heart heals. Then forgiveness!

The Villager, Seaton Churches

AS I write this letter we've just squelched our way through Storm Ciara and are now anxiously watching the rise of the river water levels during Storm Dennis. The coronavirus is spreading to different countries and the number of homeless people on our streets is increasing. It all paints a bleak picture. Yet despite all this the snowdrops are in full bloom all around with their promise of new life and new hope.

Jean Radley, Parish News, St George's, Kendal

IF you are such a good Christian that you do not need church, then please come along to teach us how to be as good as you. If you are more like me, a bit of a sinner, a little bit broken, seeking improvement, then please come along to receive God's forgiveness and healing. Dalston church is made up of lovely welcoming people – it is a great place to be on a Sunday morning.

Ben Phillips, Dalston Parish Paper

EXPOSED: *The Church's Darkest Secret* was a documentary aired on BBC2 in January, looking at the Church's handling of the circle of abuse surrounding Bishop Peter Ball. What made it shocking, even for someone like me who had read all the reports, was hearing the abused speaking in their own words and, with great dignity and courage, telling a story I could recognise, even if I had been blind to it before. It left me heartbroken for the victims and (for the first time) ashamed of the Church.

Stewart Fyfe, North Westmorland News

'If God can find me and bring me back, then he can bring anyone back'

■ Man behind new Fresh Expression of church in Workington tells of an early 'adventure with God', losing his faith and his joy at rediscovering it

By Dave Roberts

WHEN it comes to learning to drive, steering a van around a field in Kathmandu before heading into the chaotic city takes some beating.

But that's exactly how Mark Singleton came to master gear changes and clutch control.

It was the early 1980s and, aged 20, he'd signed up to join Operation Mobilisation (OM) which offers Christian mission across the world.

Mark, 56, laughs: "Initially I'd thought about going to Pakistan but then it became clear that there was a need for drivers in India. The only problem was that I couldn't drive!

"I ended up learning in this clapped-out Transit van, driving around a field dodging potholes and a mongoose before then heading into the city to dodge tuk-tuks. I was nicknamed Stirling Moss!"

His trip came after he'd vowed that he wanted "to go on an adventure with God". Having grown up on a council estate in Keswick, Mark came to faith aged 18, after joining the Keswick Crusaders, an interdenominational youth group.

Giving up his job at the local Co-op and after spending eight weeks at Capenwray Bible School – where he met Ruth, the woman he was eventually to marry – Mark joined OM. He would spend two years in India and Nepal.

"I was very young and very zealous in my faith," Mark says. "I went out there as a young evangelical Christian, wanting to tell as many people as I could about Jesus and support the work of the team. We'd trek off to villages for days at a time taking little with us, but ensuring we carried leaflets, and then look to draw alongside people."

Returning from his work with OM in 1985, Mark renewed contact with Ruth. The couple married in 1988 and moved to Workington where they began to worship as well as in Cocker-mouth.

But, by the 1990s, Mark had



Mark Singleton: Recently launched a Men's Breakfast group

DAVE ROBERTS

begun to question his faith and his relationship with God.

"I can remember thinking there were a lot of words being spoken about how things were happening in Church; people claiming all kinds of ridiculous things, as I thought then. But I didn't see anything happening. It all began to sound like rhetoric to me.

"I'm keen not to lay the fault with anybody else. I know that this was my decision but I questioned everything. It became a real crisis of faith. Going to church became increasingly sporadic, and then I left completely.

"I became very bitter about faith, really bolshy. Our kids were of the age when they began to ask more about God and I really tried to get them to turn against him."

For Ruth, they were difficult years. She continued to go to church and regularly prayed for Mark's faith to be rekindled, despite his protestations. It would be more than 10 years before that happened, with Mark eventually

returning to church to support his wife.

"Ruth asked me to go with her, but I also very arrogantly went back just to prove to someone else who had challenged me about church, that I could go back and it would not affect me at all," Mark adds. "I was confident it would mean nothing to me."

The couple attended Westfield Church with Mark eventually drawing alongside other congregation members. He then went to church on his own one Sunday.

A few days later, it was Remembrance Day. Mark had parked up the mobile library he drove for the county council to observe the two minutes' silence.

He recalls: "I was listening to Classic FM and, after the silence, they played a choral version of *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace*. It's such a beautiful piece and the words are so profound.

"I was meant to hear the music that day. I realised that, once upon a time, I had known what the words of that hymn meant and I

just wept. Months before, when I'd been at a desperate point, I can remember driving the mobile library and shouting 'Help me God'. Here he was. He'd never left me.

"I now know that the whole time I called myself an atheist, it was actually me trying to suppress the voice of God that was still within me. He's drawn me back."

Mark's faith has returned. He continues to worship at Westfield and has recently launched a new Men's Breakfast Fresh Expression of church which meets at the Carnegie Theatre. The Churches Together group meets monthly and also offers support to particularly vulnerable people, including those battling drug and alcohol addiction and the homeless.

"People have come along and felt blessed by it," Mark says. "It's a friendly group which very gently talks about faith.

"I feel in my heart God's love for mankind. I know how stupid and stubborn I have been. If God can find me and bring me back, then he can bring anybody back."



New moderator: Rev Brian Jolly

Brian takes on key URC role in NW

THE Rev Brian Jolly has been appointed as the moderator of the North Western Synod of the United Reformed Church (URC). He assumed his office at the beginning of January.

Born in 1956 in north London, Brian moved to the north west in 1978 for his initial ministerial formation at the University of Manchester and the Congregational College.

He was ordained in 1982 and has served pastorates in Blackburn, Bolton, Stockport and Altrincham. Most recently, he was clerk of the North Western Synod.

He has served extensively in the wider church and as a trustee and chair of the board of the UK Christian charity Embrace the Middle East (formerly BibleLands).

Brian and Denise, who is a specialist in the residential care of children with special educational needs and disabilities, have three adult children, Sam, Peter and Hannah, and a baby grand-daughter.

Brian said: "I am looking forward to continuing to serve the North Western Synod and the wider church in this new role, and especially to supporting ministers and churches as they engage with the Missional Discipleship strategy.

"And I am excited by the prospect of close co-operation and partnership with ecumenical colleagues and churches across the north west."

The Rev John Proctor, General Secretary of the URC, said: "Brian has done an immense amount to sustain the life of our North Western Synod, in his role as clerk over the last three years, and in carrying many of the moderator's responsibilities in the recent months of vacancy.

"He impressed the nominating group with his long ministerial experience in the synod, his extensive knowledge of its people and churches, his commitment to service and the high level of respect and trust that he has gained from many around him in the context of complex and weighty responsibilities within the URC and beyond."

The North Western Synod of the URC has 125 churches – from Bewcastle in Cumbria on the Scottish border to Macclesfield in Cheshire, all supported from the synod office in Manchester.

Ten marathons, ten days – all for charity

■ Michelle takes on super-tough charity challenge

By Dave Roberts

AS PERSONAL challenges go, running ten marathons over ten consecutive days takes some beating.

In fact, the 'Brathay 10 in 10' is considered one of the UK's toughest running events, with athletes completing an undulating course which circumnavigates Windermere.

But that's not deterred a south Lakes minister who is set to take it on this year in support of the Brathay Trust, a Cumbrian charity which supports young people through outdoor learning.

The Rev Michelle Woodcock explained: "Every year I've seen the '10 in 10' runners making their way round Windermere and thought to myself 'They are amazing, I could never do that'. Then I asked myself, 'But why can't I do that?' So, I decided to apply and see what would happen."

By Michelle's own admission she completed her application more in hope than expectation. A keen runner who had previously completed the London Marathon and the Great North Run, she'd hung up her trainers for a few years.

Runners must apply online, detailing the last three marathons they've completed; that created a bit of a headache for Michelle.

She laughed: "I've only ever done one marathon before – the London Marathon in 2016 – so, at a push, I also included the Great North Run which is a half-marathon.

"For my third marathon I wrote down 'Brathay 10 in 10 - 2020?' Perhaps the organisers were looking for someone with a bit of humour because I was picked to do it.

"I cried when I found out that I'd been successful. I had to tell the person on the other end of the phone that they were happy tears!"

A team of 18 runners will take on this year's 10 in 10 challenge. The team is evenly split between men and women and those who have completed the challenge before and others for whom it will be a new experience. The team is supported by a running coach



In training: Michelle Woodcock

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS



Reminder: Michelle's trainers have been personalised

and physiotherapists. Each runner must raise £3,000 for Brathay; Michelle is already well on target to beat that total and has set her sights on pulling in £5,000 for the trust.

After successfully applying last summer, she began running again, initially completing three miles every day. That has gradually increased until she is now running a marathon a week. She also does a regular 13-mile loop from her home in Crosthwaite, near Kendal, which takes in plenty of climbs.

Having stepped back from

full-time parish ministry a few years ago – though she still leads a monthly service at Witherslack – Michelle now teaches RE and music at Leven Valley CE Primary. It means she has had to add in training time to her already busy schedule.

The mother of two added: "I'm often out training from six in the morning. It can be really tough to force yourself out in the wind and rain, but you've got to do it.

"It's more of a mental challenge than a physical one when

I'm out in weather like that.

"When I'm running, I also pray a lot and I listen to choral evensong regularly through a downloaded podcast.

"Quite often I will see people I know when I'm out running, and I will be aware of things going on in their lives so I'm able to pray for them and for the farms which I run through. It brings a real sense of creation, being alive, being free."

The 10 in 10 takes place from Friday October 23, with the final run coinciding with the Windermere Marathon on Sunday November 1.

Michelle, 45, added: "I'd ask that people pray for protection against injury.

"Also, others who have done it before speak of the sheer physical exhaustion you feel, so I'd ask that people pray for me to have the mental strength to keep going each day."

To sponsor Michelle visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/michelle-woodcock262.

By The Way

'Be part of the future'

ON Sunday March 29 at 3pm in St Michael's, Dalston, there will be a special service to launch the new Carlisle Rural Mission Community. This is an exciting way forward where our local ecumenical churches commit to working together to make God for All a reality in our communities. Do come along and be part of the future.
St Mary's Church, Wreay

MANY thanks to Catriona Messenger for making small cotton bags using recycled material. These little bags will be available in church. They are colourful and pretty. We all have loose change in our purses and trouser pockets. We ask you to join with us and save your 'pennies from Heaven' small change to support the work of Raughton Head Church.
Elizabeth Martin, Raughton Head Parish Magazine

OVER the last few months it's been a pleasure to welcome new people from different parts of the country making their new homes in Tebay. To them I would say there is a variety of organisations which would be pleased for you to join in. It is very encouraging to those who, like myself, have been involved over the years. New people bring new ideas and enthusiasm.
Bernard Thornnarrow, The Link, Parish Magazine for Orton, Tebay and Ravenstonedale with Newbiggin-on-Lune

WHEN Deacon Kina Saunders preached in Egremont she mentioned the book *So What's the Story?* by the president and vice-president of conference, Barbara Glasson and Clive Marsh. As a result, members of Open House Fellowship decided to study the book together. The idea of the book is that we think about and share our own stories in the light of God's story.
Egremont Methodist Church

SINCERE gratitude is extended to Andrew Oldham retiring from the post after three dedicated years of meticulous work keeping the priory accounts in order and advising on budgets and finance. At their February meeting, the PCC welcomed their new treasurer Norman Killip who is settling into this responsible role and appreciates the support of the vicar and church council.
St Bees News

PATTERDALE WI Walk. A short route was planned for our November walk. Five of our members, plus the lovely Alice, set out from Watermillock Church to walk to Aira Force, with magnificent views all the way. Still lots of autumn colour on display, and Cross Fell, covered in snow. Soon we were looking down onto Lyulph's Tower, built in the 1780s by Charles Howard, the 11th Duke of Norfolk, and beyond to Aira Point. Then a late lunch in the warmth of the café at Aira Force.
Jan King, Together Community Newsletter, provided by the churches of Matteredale, Watermillock, Patterdale, Greystoke, Penriddock and Mungrisdale

Flying global missions from her garden shed

■ As the world's largest humanitarian airline celebrates its 75th anniversary, *The Way* meets two local people with close links to Mission Aviation Fellowship

A 'POSH shed' in a Carlisle back garden may seem an unusual place from which to support the world's largest humanitarian airline.

But this is Janet Busk's workplace; it's where she keeps tabs on numerous spreadsheets, accounts and emails in her role as international finance manager for Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) International. The Christian charity – which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year – provides flights for more than 1,500 aid, development and mission organisations which bring medical relief and life-transforming help to vulnerable people living in the world's most inaccessible places.

Janet has worked for MAF since 2005, initially for 18 months as a finance manager in Kenya. She was chief finance officer from 2007 to 2016, before she stepped back from that role to her current position, which allows her to work more regularly from Cumbria.

"Though I'm sat here in my garden office in Carlisle, I'm connected to the world," Janet explains. "I've been emailing people in Kenya and Uganda this morning about aircraft parts.

"But that's still a part of MAF's overall mission, one which I feel very much connected to. My job means I can be having phone conferences at all times of the day because of time differences. It makes me realise that the world is a small place these days."

A handful of RAF men founded MAF in 1945, acquiring their first aircraft three years later. Their first mission base was established in Sudan in 1950 and the charity now operates 131 light aircraft in 26 developing countries.

Janet helps oversee finances for 13 overseas programmes – half of

'Flying bus' took us to jungle parish

THE Rt Rev Peter Ramsden is the retired Bishop of Papua New Guinea (PNG). He and his wife, Sue, live outside Brampton, in north Cumbria, and he chairs the Diocese of Carlisle's Partnership in World Mission committee.

Before Peter was installed as bishop, the couple were in parish ministry in a remote part of PNG for 10 years, supported by MAF.

"Sue and I first travelled to Papua New Guinea in 1983," Peter recalls. "We were based in the Highlands area of the country in a mission posting called Kainambe and this is where we first came into contact with MAF.

"They took us into our new parish in the jungle. There were no roads so we had to fly in, in a six-seater, one-engine Cessna 206. They became a sort of bus service for us because it was the only way in and out of the parish.

"We'd driven from the capital Port Moresby up to Mount Hagen where MAF had its regional headquarters. The flight to our parish would take about 20 minutes.

"I'd speak to MAF every day at 7am when we were in Kainambe, giving them weather reports so they could safely plan their day. All our Anglican mission stations in that area had little air strips. It would have taken me two days to walk to my neighbouring parish



Lifeline: A MAF plane in Papua New Guinea

but it was five minutes in a plane.

"MAF would fly into our mission station every week. Supplies would be brought in and the local farmers' coffee beans would be taken back to town to be milled. MAF were absolutely critical for the churches, health centres and schools in that area.

"When I contracted malaria they flew me out to Mount Hagen as an emergency evacuation and when Sue was due to give birth to our first son, Nicholas, they flew her to hospital.

"There's still no road to the mission station we were in so MAF continues to provide all of this support. Flying in PNG can be very dangerous due to weather and terrain. Three MAF pilots were killed while we were there.

"My prayer would be for the continued safety for all their pilots and passengers, and that the organisation continues to attract the dedicated professionals and Christians needed for this remarkable service."

ically so far apart. I feel I'm part of a worldwide family. I'm able to dial in to the MAF International office in Ashford in Kent every Tuesday morning for a short devotional time."

Janet attends St Michael's Stanwix, a Carlisle church which has connections with global missions including MAF and Operation Mobilisation which has Christian

mission in more than 110 countries. She values the support she gets from her congregation.

She adds: "My prayer is that we continue to find the right people with the right skills to serve with us at MAF. That's not just the pilots but also our engineers and managers."

The value of MAF's mission is perhaps best demonstrated through one of Janet's highlights during her time with the charity.

She recalls: "I flew out from Dhaka in Bangladesh on our float plane which meant we were able to land on water. We were then carried by boat to a Friendship hospital ship, which provides life-saving surgeries for vulnerable people living on the river islands.

"I can remember seeing patients in tents – both waiting for treatment and those in post-op recovery – and realising that it was MAF that had helped to fly in the medics and other staff to the ships to help these people."

■ For more about MAF, visit www.maf-uk.org.



Janet Busk: 'I feel I'm part of a worldwide family'

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Meet the neighbours!

■ Chaplains aim to address social isolation

By Dave Roberts

IT'S A cold, grey, winter's morning in Kendal but that's not put off a spirited bunch of neighbourhood chaplains.

Six volunteers are working their way along a road on the Sandylands Estate, knocking on doors and offering those who answer a reassuring 'hello' while checking that everything is okay.

This is the Kendal Neighbourhood Chaplaincy team and is made up of eight people who attend the town's Gateway Church.

Led by the Rev Jonny Gios, a church planter and long-time resident of the south Lakes town, their aim is to combat loneliness and isolation.

A recent survey of Kendal homes has identified these as particular concerns for residents.

Jonny explained: "We're faced with a growing number of lonely and isolated people.

"Age UK figures suggest that 800 people in Kendal are affected. This is not just the elderly; it's younger people too. In this digital world people are losing the art of connecting with others, meeting up to have a coffee and a chat.

"So we want to reach out and help people by doing simple things: offering to do some gardening for them, or just sitting down to listen to them over a brew. As a



Reaching out: Two of the volunteers chat with a local resident



On the streets: Above, Jonny Gios, far right, with other members of the Kendal Neighbourhood Chaplaincy team; and, right, talking with people living on the Sandylands Estate in Kendal

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS

church we felt that this was the right thing for us to be involved with."

It's a relatively new venture for members of the Gateway Church congregation. The church launched in March 2018 as a 'house church'. As the congregation grew, so services moved to the Fleece Inn in Kendal town centre every Sunday from 2pm.

Neighbourhood chaplains is a 'recommended project' of the Cinnamon Network – which helps churches get involved in social action. It has grown from the charity Counties UK which trains and helps start every project.

The Kendal team attended an information day in Keswick last September before signing up to the scheme and completing training and safeguarding

The chaplains focus on three estates in the town: Sandylands, Hallgarth and Kirkbarrow. Initially, one road on each estate is visited to build up relationships with residents.

A week before the door-knock, leaflets are posted out explaining that the chaplains will be calling round. Residents can place the leaflet in their front window if they don't want to be visited.

The visiting chaplains split

into teams of two. When speaking to residents they underline that they had previously posted the leaflets, check that everything is okay and ask those they meet if they need help to combat loneliness or isolation issues or if they know of others who may be struggling. A further leaflet is posted at homes where there's no answer.

"This is a really important way we in which we can share God's love in word and deed," Jonny says.

"About 30,000 people live in Kendal but 28,000 are far from God and while this is not about inviting people to church, perhaps it's a way

we can invite people into a relationship with Jesus.

"First and foremost, this is about befriending people who may need support; it's about offering them genuine friendship. It would also be lovely to be able to sit and pray with people and share the gospel.

"We'd love other churches to get involved with this. I do believe that churches grow stronger together when they're involved in things like neighbourhood chaplaincy."

If you are interested in joining the Kendal team, please contact Jonny at Hello@Gatewaychurchkendal.org or 07584 052102.



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By The Way

Time to think 'green'

WE decided to embark on becoming an eco-church... Everyone can do something. Wear last summer's clothes again this summer, or find someone your size to swap with, instead of buying new. Plan to eat one fewer meat-based meal per week this year, and make it two fewer next year. Change is very often unwelcome but if the world is to be inhabitable for our grandchildren, it must come soon, led from the grassroots.

Ian Parker, Contact, Lamplugh, Kirkland and Ennerdale Ecumenical Parish

A PRINCIPLE of life is that we tend to become what we think about. So perhaps it would be worthwhile to start to journal/list our blessings instead of problems, to actively look for good news instead of taking on board the negatives we are often exposed to. I think you will be glad that you did!

Peter Gilroy, 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

HEART of Westmorland Bereavement Support Group will meet at The Hub Cafe in Appleby on the first Monday of each month, between 2 and 4pm. This is an informal group and anyone who has suffered the loss of someone close to them, either recently or some time ago, is invited. We will not follow a programme and will not offer counselling – simply the opportunity to talk about what is on your mind and share your feelings with others who may have felt the same.

Heart of Eden, The News Magazine of the Heart of Eden Benefice

MY parents had a magnet on their fridge which read: "I believe in the sun when it doesn't shine. I believe in God when he is silent." Why do I mention this? Well, because as I write this letter it feels like it is some time since we have seen the sun. The days are dark and cold and wet. Spring and summer seem a long way off. Do I still believe in the sun? Of course I do. Though I cannot see the sun much, though I am cold and wet, the evidence for the sun is still present in the fact that I continue to exist.

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

OUR countywide Christian commitment is that God is for all, that everyone in our county gets the opportunity to know that in some way and respond to it. The people who lived in Jesus's time saw the hurts of life healed by compassion and the wounds of misunderstanding healed by forgiveness. The rule Jesus left us was a new commandment; love one another as I have loved you. We need to put this into practice!

Ruth Crossley, New Life, In the Parish of Dalton-in-Furness, Newton and Ireth with Askam

WHEN everything is going well, I do well to remind myself of words from Deuteronomy chapter 8: "Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God ... when you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses... for he brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery". That quickly keeps me from feeling any false sense of pride or arrogance.

Jennet McLeod, Newslink, South West Cumbria United Area

PLEASE keep snipping stamps from your 'snail mail' and leave in the box at Holy Trinity or pass on to Alison at Holy Trinity or Joan at St Barnabas. They will send your stamps either to the Leprosy Mission Stamp Exchange or to Embrace, who use them to support the Helen Keller School for the Blind. Thank you to everyone who has given me stamps in the past few of weeks, especially Irene Frizzel and Frances McKnight. I have sent off two large packages recently.

Alison Sayer, The Link, Holy Trinity and St Barnabas with Sandsfield Fellowship

Cathedral visitors go to Moon and back

UP TO 5,000 people visited Carlisle Cathedral to witness a spectacular light and sound show – Space: God, the Universe and Everything.

The historic building was the centre-piece of the first ever 'City of Lights' project in Carlisle, organised in conjunction with Cumbria County Council and Carlisle City Council.

The art installation ran over three nights in February and was inspired by the 1969 Moon landings. Visitors experienced a journey through the cathedral, revealing the universe, galaxies, space and creation.



Spectacle: Visitors enjoy the light show LUXMURALIS

Peter Walker, artistic director of Luxmuralis, the award-winning arts collaboration behind the event, said: "Members of the cathedral staff loved it when they

saw the preview show and there's been a similar reaction from all those people who have seen it since. For people who may never have been in a cathedral, this is an opportunity to open up to them what these spaces are about."

The installation took several months to develop. It had previously toured other cathedrals and is slightly redesigned for each venue.

Peter added: "Carlisle Cathedral is not the biggest but that creates a very intimate feel. In such a sacred space it gives people the opportunity to think about a few things: the fragility of our planet, what else is out there and

what will our next steps be."

Nine light shows were held on each of the three nights. Each lasted 10 minutes with visitors treated to a further installation projected on to the north transept.

The Dean of Carlisle, the Very Rev Mark Boyling, said: "It was wonderful for the cathedral to be able to host such an amazing event."

"We know there will be some people who came into the cathedral for the first time. Our prayer is that their hearts would have been stirred by the vivid imagery and wonderful music and that they were able to reflect upon an amazing creator God."

Carry on champing!

Remote community benefits from church accommodation scheme

By Dave Roberts

AS RURAL churches go, St Mary's Longsleddale is pretty remote. Tucked up a Lake District valley, it commands beautiful views of the nearby River Sprint and surrounding fells.

So it is a perfect location for a 'champing church'. Launched by the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) in 2017, there are now 27 champing churches across the UK, providing people with the opportunity to camp overnight in one of the historic buildings.

Back in the summer of 2017, *The Way* reported that St Mary's had become Cumbria's first champing church. Three years on, it remains the county's only one.

John Farmer, the chair of Friends of St Mary's Longsleddale, believes other churches could benefit from the scheme.

"Champing has brought people to our church who would not otherwise have come," he explains. "It's been great for our valley and the people living here, many of whom are now on a rota to help make this work."

"It's encouraged new people to visit our community; we're getting increasing numbers of cyclists and walkers staying with us."

St Mary's is now a Festival Church meaning it is not used for weekly services but instead opens at Easter, Christmas and Harvest as well as for baptisms, funerals and weddings.

When the church had faced potential closure the small rural community – only 66 people live in the valley – rallied.

"It's sad that it took the threat of closure for people to be stimulated," John remarks. "But they have been. New people have come



Holiday: A family enjoy a stay at St Mary's Church

JENNY WOOLGAR PHOTOGRAPHY



'Real love': John Farmer

along to look after the building and to tend the graveyard. There's been tremendous financial support. There's a real love for this building."

A team of five people oversee the champing operation. Bookings are dealt with centrally by the CCT which takes a percentage to cover its overheads.

Generally, the champers are self-sufficient, although camping beds, comfortable seats and lamps are provided. A nearby community hall provides kitchen facilities and there are public toilets next door.

Nearly 90 champers have visited so far, generating an income of more than £5,000. Profits are split between the church and community hall. Champers usually stay for one or two nights, though one group stayed for five nights.

John adds: "This has been nothing but a positive experience for us. It's brought people into our community and of course there's the financial aspect; £6,000 represents a lot of church coffee mornings!"

"I'd encourage other churches to think about what champing

could mean for them. I think there's real mileage in creating a champing church pilgrimage in the Lakes that people could follow. I'm sure we'd have people queuing up to walk that."

And the church's champing experience has brought new people to Longsleddale, in turn creating new friendships.

"We had one guy who laid out candles around the church and proposed to his girlfriend," John explains. "We also had a couple stay from the mid-west in America. They were touring from one champing church to another for their holiday."

Champing season runs from March 30 to September 29. Adult rates cost from £49 to £59, while children's rates start at £25. For details, visit www.champing.co.uk.

Jennie has first poems published at age of 92

■ Great-great-grandmum's verse tells of life, faith and love for late husband Billy

By Dave Roberts

A WEST Cumbrian great-great-grandmother's poetry has been published for the first time, following help from a member of her church.

Jennie Doran, 92, has been writing verse for well over 20 years, with hundreds of her works collected in a 'big black book' which she keeps at her home on the Mirehouse estate in Whitehaven.

Now, thanks to the efforts of Jackie Wilkinson – her friend and fellow congregation member at St Andrew's Mirehouse – the poems have made it to print in a self-published book, *Poems on Life, Faith and a Widow's Love*.

Jackie said: "Sometimes Jennie would read her poetry in church and when I came to visit her at home. She'd often tell me that she had written another poem and asked if I would listen to it.

"I realised there were all these poems – really good poems – which she had written at various stages of her life and people needed to enjoy them. There are some really funny ones in there too."

Jackie first typed out all of Jennie's poetry before choosing the 78 works which form the book. The three sections draw on Jennie's life, her faith and her marriage of 53 years to her husband Billy, a former miner at Haig Pit.

"I don't know why I've been able to write poetry," Jennie said. "I'm not particularly clever in other ways but I've been given this gift. It's such a pleasure for me to know that other people have got enjoyment from reading my poems.

"I can remember when my Billy would be sat reading his paper and I'd kneel down next to him and say, 'Billy I've written another poem, just have a listen!' He'd put the newspaper down with a



Blushing bride: Jennie and Billy on their wedding day in 1947

sigh and after I'd read it, he'd say, 'Aye, that's alright'. So I know that he'd be delighted with this book.

"I don't think you can ever come to terms with losing your partner of so many years but writing poems about Billy has certainly helped. My biggest hope is that other people enjoy my poems. I've already had a letter from another widow to say that the poems have helped her. That's lovely."

As well as reflecting her life and marriage, 25 poems also focus on her faith. As a girl, Jennie was confirmed at St Peter's Kells, where she was also married. She has been a member of St Andrew's Mirehouse for many years.

She added: "I thank God for the gift he's given me to be able to write these poems."

The first print run which went to family, friends and congregation members has already sold out.

"Everybody in church loves the book," Jackie said. "They've been selling like hot cakes. In fact, we've had to print some more. Often people have ordered one but then bought three!"

Copies are available in the Cornerstone Christian Bookshop and the Beacon Museum in Whitehaven and The New Bookshop in Cockermouth as well as online, priced at £5.99.



Friends: Jennie, left, with Jackie

DAVE ROBERTS



Success: Ester Chindamba in her grocery store bought with pigeon pea profits

Farmers beat drought with pigeon peas

By Laura Jones,
Christian Aid
Regional Co-ordinator

THE three-year commitment of Carlisle Diocese to Christian Aid's pigeon pea project in Malawi has made a big impact.

With more than 80 per cent of Malawians depending on farming, they are vulnerable to droughts and floods.

Christian Aid is supporting the Nandolo (meaning pigeon pea) Farmers Association of Malawi (NFAM) to encourage people to grow the drought and flood-resilient pigeon pea as a cash crop. NFAM has provided seeds and training to more than 6,000 farmers, and helped them to form co-operatives and receive a higher price for their crop.

Despite Cyclone Idai, the last harvest was 14 per cent up on the previous year. Farmers received an average of 280 Kwacha per kilo as compared to 2018's 50 Kwacha per kilo.

A group of Christian Aid supporters from Cumbria visited in March 2018. The farmers shared their initial successes and showed how profits from pigeon peas were helping their families with items such as a corrugated roof, livestock, school uniform and investing in new businesses.

Later this year, a new factory will open. Owned 75 per cent by farmers, this will enable them to remove the shells from the peas and, consequently, earn more from the crops.



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‘Music changes lives, and I love being a part of that’

■ In our latest Focus on Faith, we speak to Dan Elson, the Salvation Army’s regional music and creative arts specialist who covers Cumbria

Q Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

A I’m 35 years old and am married to Becca. We have two young boys: Ben, four, and Thomas, one. I’m originally from Somerset but I moved to Liverpool to complete my music degree and then taught at a school on the Wirral, where we still live.

I started working for the Salvation Army three and a half years ago. This is a new role and I have free rein to support all our churches, our Lifehouse homeless centres and our older people’s centres through music and creative arts. I cover from Carlisle as far south as Crewe and Buxton and support 62 churches, 10 Lifehouses, two older people’s homes and a number of prison chaplaincies.

I grew up in the Salvation Army. I started learning to play the cornet when I was six years old, so I’ve done 29 years of Salvation Army brass banding. I found a really deep personal faith in my first year at university. It was a difficult time, but the Liverpool Corps really supported me.

Q How important is music to you in terms of your faith journey?

A Music is massive for me. As well as playing the cornet, we had a piano and old acoustic guitar in our house and, as a child, I was always dabbling with those. Music is something that’s in me which has to get out! It doesn’t really matter how that happens; it could be through playing, composing or singing.

The fact that music is a great vehicle to express what my faith means to me is a huge bonus. I met Becca, who plays the tenor horn, when we both played in the university brass band. She came to faith playing in the Salvation Army brass band. So I know that music plays an important part in bringing people to faith. It changes lives and I love being a part of that.

Q How does music and creative arts affect the people you draw alongside?

A Singing can have a particularly profound effect. We do something called Singing By Heart which is the Salvation Army’s dementia singing group programme, which I wrote with a colleague. I have done 80 or 90 sessions all around the country and, each time, I have seen someone have a ‘spark moment’. They may not have been able to connect through conversation

but suddenly, through singing, you see their true self. It’s incredible.

When I get a few of the guys who are supported through our Lifehouses to sing together, you can instantly see relationships formed. You might then say, ‘Let’s have a look at this song which has got some religious lyrics in it’, and before you know it, they are working alongside you on it.

Q How does your ministry feed your faith?

A Every day I see people experiencing God through music and art. You can’t fail to be sparked and reignited every time that happens.

When I play, I see people connecting or reconnecting with God in a whole new way. I drive home a happy man; it keeps me going for weeks.

Q What challenges do you face in your role?

A If I’m invited somewhere, then I go; so, covering the patch I do means I cover some miles. Where there may be specific requests around areas that aren’t my speciality then it can be a bit more of a struggle. I can lead drama but I’m not particularly an artist – though I can design using a computer.

So, I’m on a journey, linking people up with others who may be more capable in those areas. I have the privilege of travelling around and working with lots of different people. That gives me the opportunity to take away things I’ve learned and to pass these on to other people. For instance, there is a fabulous artist at a church in Sale who runs Bible journeying sessions. I have been able to use her skills with other groups I’ve met.

Q What would be your prayer for your ministry?

A As a teacher, I worked with 11 to 18 year olds every day. In this role I’m privileged to spend time with children and young people of that age range and younger. But I still feel there is an age gap in our churches, so I would pray to find some way to fill that gap.

I want to work with the Salvation Army’s other specialists in children’s and family ministry as much as possible so that we can continue to reach out and say to people: ‘Let us look after your children. We can give them something which is far more than just entertainment. We can bring them to a new life.’



Dan Elson: Grew up in the Salvation Army