

The Way



The FREE newspaper of the Church in Cumbria – Summer 2021



Offer of respite to
frontline workers

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Intern's challenging
year in Baltic state

PAGE 8

UNLOCKING JOY



A welcome sign of hope after 18 months of Covid challenges. The Rev Sarah Jones enjoys a cuddle with her son Michael, who celebrated his eighth birthday on the day she was ordained Deacon, reminding us we have a God for All...

Living Lord, as we offer to you
our common life,
refresh our vision that we may
know your will
and seek to follow in all your ways.

May we follow daily as
your disciples,
care deeply for one another
in community,
speak boldly your gospel
words of love,
and tread gently as faithful
stewards of your goodness.

We ask this in the power
of your holy name,
as Creator, Redeemer and
Sustainer of our lives,
today and for ever.

Amen

INSIDE THIS EDITION



MARANATHA YOGA



Numbers grow with Zoom class
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YOUNG PEOPLE

Nearly 200 attend Ablaze event



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COMMUNITIES



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

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

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

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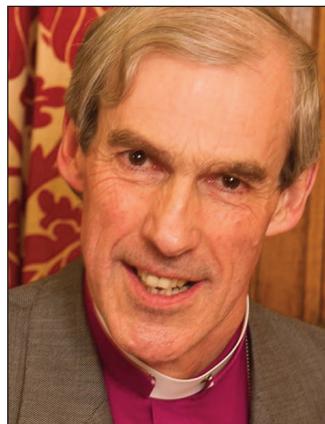
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The Way
Newspaper of
the Church
in Cumbria

THE FUTURE AWAITS

Welcome to the summer edition of *The Way*. Since the pandemic first struck, all editions of *The Way* have been published digitally and this is to continue. We thank you for your continued support and would encourage people to read, download and share the publication with others. In that same spirit of unity and as we look, together, to the future - one in which Covid-19 legal restrictions are lifted - so leaders from across our denominations reflect on what it will mean for us and our churches as God continues to unlock his Kingdom in the days, months and years ahead.

The Rt Rev James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle



A FASCINATING debate has been taking place in recent months over whether the pandemic has resulted more in people losing their faith and 'voting with their feet' - or in a sort of 'spiritual awakening' as existing presuppositions have been challenged and new priorities established, and much kindness received.

Personal experience of people's reactions suggests a bit of both, but, as a recent in-depth study (Francis and Village) reveals, overall a 'spiritual awakening' is more usual. Certainly, the number of people tuning in to streamed and on-line services exceeds the local

in-person attendance figures (though there is a real issue about how that can be turned into committed Christian discipleship.)

So it does look as though God may be using what has been for so many a very tough

time to 'unlock his Kingdom'. It is difficult - even for the least reflective among us - to go through an experience like this without asking some fairly deep and searching questions. For instance: what has all this shown me about what really matters? Where is God in a global crisis of this sort? Where can I turn when my life is turned upside down?

We have known for a long time that there is a huge and growing interest in 'Spirituality' in this country. Covid has prompted increasing numbers of people to explore that 'interest' further and ask where faith and reality are to be found.

All of which presents us with a significant challenge, as well as a great opportunity. If God is indeed unlocking his Kingdom in this way, how can we best push open the unlocked door?

Rev Andrew Dodd, President, Churches Together In Cumbria



I AM old enough to recall the 'interlude' on black-and-white TV of a potter's hands throwing the clay on a wheel. This, however, did not reflect the beginning or end of the process.

The raw materials of clay and water must be drawn from the ground; a tiring and messy process. Water may emerge clean and fresh, but the clay will carry impurities which need to be worked out until fit for purpose.

Taken from the muddy earth, trodden by an apprentice to clear impurities, kneaded to a basic lump, spun at dizzying pace, pressed in from all sides by strong, skilled and patient hands drenched with water, from the clay emerges a pot or work of art.

As we emerge into the future, the hands of God will shape the Church by various pressures (2Cor.4:7). Impurities might be found which need to be excised. Will we yield to be shaped or be stubborn - to be discarded?

We hear much of the 'emerging church', and fresh or new initiatives. We've seen that fashioning clay is a messy business. Perhaps we can learn from our Celtic forbears who speak of and pray into the image of the clay, drawn from the earth of which we are a part.

*On the day when
The weight deadens
On your shoulders
And you stumble,
May the clay dance
To balance you*

JOHN O' DONAHUE -
A New Year Blessing

Being human, being God's Church is a messy business. Our Faith is that there will emerge a work of art. Meanwhile, we will have to get our feet and then our hands dirty!

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



GOD is always unlocking his Kingdom - in the bigger picture and tiny details alike, and among all peoples and places.

I recently experienced this at the Methodist Conference, a large annual gathering (mostly on Zoom!) of district, ecumenical and overseas representatives that forms our governing body. A huge amount of business reflected our changing times, from climate change to reports about changing patterns of ministry, marriage and relationships, and equality, diversity and inclusion.

To my (prejudiced?) mind, the testimony of some of the younger representatives suggested their lives appeared a bit chaotic, but over the week this gave way to being impressed by their courage, faithfulness and generosity. God seemed to be ready to unlock his Kingdom not just for the present age, but for the generations to come. Without devaluing the incredible faithfulness, service and leadership of older people as well (at conference, or in our congregations and communities), nonetheless, if sometimes we are anxious about the future, it would seem that God, as ever, has a plan, and that God's love will endure forever. In the words of a hymn: "We'll praise him for all that is past, and trust him for all that's to come."

Major David Taylor, Salvation Army Divisional Commander



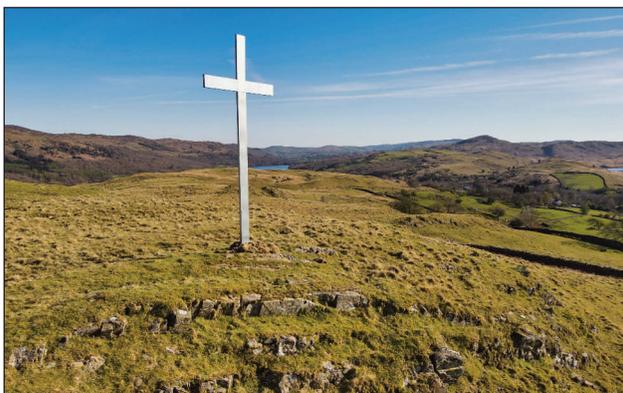
PAUL writing to the Corinthians envisions them with the reality that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image" (2Cor.3:17,18 NIV).

God is unlocking his kingdom and creating possibilities beyond our imagination. It's not that Paul doesn't recognise that the Church can face great challenges - he has already described "being under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself" (2Cor.1:8).

In such circumstances he reminds them of the "God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2Cor.1:3,4).

The last 18 months have required such compassion. But we must keep in clear view that God is committed to completing in and through us what he has begun. And so I suggest that we recall Paul's thanksgiving to God "who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere" (2Cor.2:14).

Captive to Christ, we are set free to follow him in bringing the freedom of his kingdom to our neighbours, in the power of his Spirit. Let's step forward in faith.



Aerial views: David's drone images showing, from left, Colton Church, the Torver cross and Coniston St Andrew's

FRESH PERSPECTIVES

■ Passion for photography leads retired vicar to take to skies above county churches

By Dave Roberts

A RETIRED clergyman is documenting some of the county's churches in new ways... from the air.

The Rev David Bickersteth has long been a keen amateur photographer, enjoying taking pictures when walking the Cumbrian fells.

But now the 71-year-old has branched out, purchasing two drones with which he has captured video footage and still photos of churches in the south Lakes.

David, who lives in Greenodd, said: "I've always been interested in photography so was keen to see what could be achieved using drones. I'd seen plenty of photos of the Lake District taken using them and thought they offered a very interesting angle.

"I've only been using them for about a year. They are not particularly complicated to film with, but you must ensure you have all the necessary operator and drone licences before using them. I also appreciate that drones are seen as being anti-social so I ensure I only film discretely, away from people or with people's permission.

"I'm doing this for fun, but our vicar heard about it and suggested there may be a way I could film the churches in our benefice. I also offered to film the churches in another benefice."

So far, David has captured footage of 11 churches across the two benefices – Coniston and Crake Valley and Broughton and Kirkby Ireleth – but he says he is willing to consider filming elsewhere.

David knows Cumbria well. He retired to south Lakeland, having latterly served in two parishes south of Stoke-on-Trent. Before that – from 1981 – he ministered in the Diocese of Carlisle in Dearham, Gosforth and Wasdale, St Elizabeth's Carlisle and then in Maryport.

He currently operates two drones – a DJI Air 2 and a smaller, more lightweight DJI Mavic Mini 2. Both shoot ultra-HD footage. David edits the pictures against a musical bed and then uploads the films to his YouTube channel. He has also completed a Civil Aviation Authority course for drone operators.

One of his latest films features the Torver cross. The cross was the idea of



Trained: David has completed a CAA course for drone operators

farmer Hazel Bowness and her friends who regularly walk to a high point on her family's farmland to pray for the area.

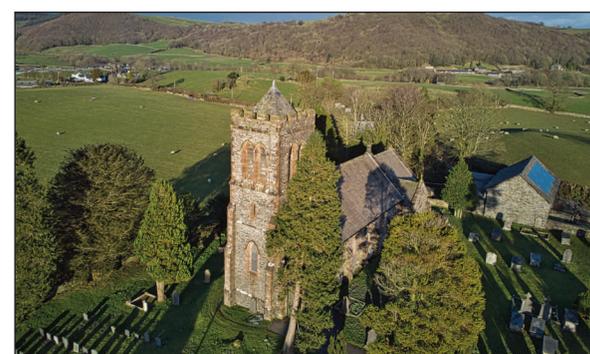
In 2018, the group decided to erect a 15ft cross on the fellside, commissioning a local blacksmith to build the structure which has a galvanised steel face. Planning regulations mean it can only be erected for short periods; this year it was raised from Easter Week through to Pentecost.

David's film features sweeping panoramic shots of the cross and is set to Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. Still photos of the cross have already had 5,000 hits online.

Hazel, who is also a church treasurer at St Luke's Torver, said: "I think the film is absolutely fabulous; I love it. I can't believe how many people have viewed it online."

David added: "The cross is so spectacular, particularly if you film it in the 'golden hour' towards sunset, with the sun reflecting off its face."

You can view all of David's films on his YouTube channel by searching for dbickersteth. David is also happy to chat with other clergy colleagues about future filming of churches. He can be contacted at david.bickersteth@btinternet.com.



In the landscape: St Luke's at Lowick



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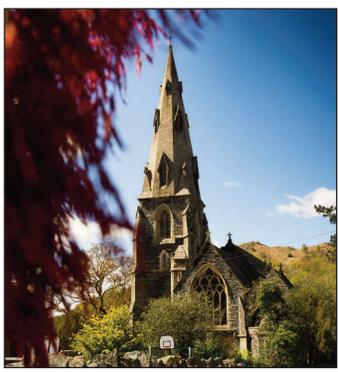
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St Mary's: Ambleside lies at the heart of beautiful Lakeland scenery

JENNY WOOLGAR
PHOTOGRAPHY

Pilgrims link sites of worship

AN ECUMENICAL group of pilgrims has created 10 new walks, connecting places of worship in the Lake District.

Members of the Central Lakes Mission Community have worked together for the last three years to develop the series of circuits which take in two or more churches as well as the beautiful scenery.

They vary from a short walk around Ambleside, to an eight-mile hike over the fells between Satterthwaite and Sawrey, and represent a collaboration between Anglicans, Methodists and Baptists.

The Rev Kath Dodd, of Hawkshead Hill Baptist Chapel, said: "We have discovered a richness in our mutual friendship and in the sharing of our different traditions, emphases and expressions. It is an open community in the sense that all churches, congregations and meetings in the area are invited to join in at whatever level they are able to participate.

"These walks will connect you with a number of places of worship – Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic and Quaker. Each place has its own distinctive story to tell which serves as an inspiration to the pilgrim."

The walks – which include meditations – link all the churches, chapels and meeting houses within the Mission Community: from Rusland in the south to Grasmere in the north.

Organisers say they hope tourists feel encouraged to walk the trails and experience the spirituality of the natural world.

There are plans for the walks to be published in leaflet form and shared in Tourist Information Centres. They are also available on the website of St Mary's Church Ambleside.

Our carers are in need of care too

■ Scheme offers free Rydal Hall retreats to frontline workers

By Dave Roberts

WITH a long and distinguished career in nursing, the Rev Prof Stephen Wright understands all too well the stresses and strains our frontline carers work under.

But even Stephen recognises that the Covid pandemic has taken levels of duress and burnout to new highs among NHS staff, care home workers and those providing other essential health services.

That's why he has come up with a simple plan to try to pay back a little of what he believes is owed to our frontline carers.

Stephen, who is also spiritual director of the Sacred Space Foundation, a non-profit, non-denominational retreat centre and charitable trust located in the Lake District, explains: "We've all clapped for our carers and now it's time we proactively cared for them too."

That care will come in the form of a series of free retreats for up to 45 NHS staff members and care workers from across the county at the Diocese of Carlisle's Rydal Hall Christian Retreat and Conference Centre.

It follows a number of conversations between Stephen and the Bishop of Carlisle, the Rt Rev James Newcome, who is the Church of England's lead bishop for health and social care and who has thrown his support behind the Caring for the Carers project.

"We're well aware of the burnout and exhaustion that so many are facing and so we just want to do our best to help their recovery in some small way," Stephen adds. "My sense is that very large numbers of healthcare workers have got through the pandemic, they've stuck it out and held it together at huge cost to themselves.

"Now large numbers of these people are allowing themselves to feel the stress and distress of what they've experienced.

"So this will be an opportunity for individuals to recharge their batteries in whatever way they want: to read, to walk, to enjoy Rydal's grounds, to talk one to one or in groups. It would be completely up to them.

"Critical to all of this is that we want to give to these healthcare



Stephen Wright: 'We're well aware of the burnout and exhaustion that so many are facing'

DAVE ROBERTS

workers who have given so much themselves. This is about church using Christian hospitality to support these people; it's a muscular action."

The hall will offer discounted rates for the bookings. Currently, 14 full-board rooms have been reserved at Rydal Hall for three

nights from September 21, with a further 31 rooms booked for another three nights from December 7.

A fundraising drive is now underway, with £7,000 having already been pledged at the start. Organisers are looking to raise a total of £20,000 which would



cover the cost of the 45 rooms with an option to offer up more retreat places in 2022.

Stephen, who is a visiting professor of nursing at the University of Cumbria, has also written to prominent Cumbrian companies and grant-making bodies asking them to consider supporting the scheme.

Meanwhile, he has contacted NHS trusts across the county, so they can promote the project to staff. Places are being offered up on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Caring for the Carers project comes as Stephen publishes a new edition of his book *Burnout: A Spiritual Crisis: From Stress To Transformation*, which explores the relationship between stress and burnout and how to identify and prevent it.

Bishop James added: "We are well aware of the huge sacrifices made by all of our frontline health workers during the pandemic. Day after day they have gone above and beyond and for that they have our huge thanks.

"So it is only right that we look to support them in whatever way we can, with so many having been left exhausted by their efforts over this year and a half. I have also written to all of our churches across the Diocese to bring this project to their attention in case they feel moved to offer financial help.

"My prayer is that we see a groundswell of support for this initiative and, as a result, there are carers who are able to enjoy some much-needed time for relaxation and recuperation."

People can also offer donations via a crowdfunding page or through "The Bishop of Carlisle and Sacred Space Caring for the Carers Fund", sort code 30-96-26, bank account number 74754760.

■ *Burnout: A Spiritual Crisis* is available in bookshops and online.

Yoga community expands after classes move online

■ New team leader takes reins from Fresh Expression movement's founder

By Dave Roberts

“FOR some people this is their form of church,” the Rev Pauline Steenbergen explains. “When they are practising on their mat at home, it’s their Bible study and it’s their prayer time.”

Pauline is talking of the Cumbria Fresh Expression Maranatha Yoga movement which she and her husband, the Rev Steve Carter, formerly Vicar of Dalston, now both help lead.

The group is the brainchild of Christine Pickering, a member of the congregation at St Martin’s Bowness and a British Wheel of Yoga teacher. Christine founded the concept of Christian Yoga sessions in 2000, and went on to create a number of workshops, even featuring on *Songs of Praise* in 2008.

In 2016, the idea of Maranatha Yoga was born following conversations with the God for All team’s Fresh Expressions Enabler Richard Passmore and his wife Lori. It led to a number of taster sessions being run in churches across the county and Christine publishing a book in 2019.

She says: “I was running sessions at my church but also would happily travel across the county to run other introductory groups. We also tried both church and non-church settings to see if people felt more comfortable going to one than the other. Then the pandemic hit.”

That forced the team to rethink how classes could be delivered. There’s been a remarkable growth, with a burgeoning online



Christine Pickering: ‘We tried church and non-church settings... then the pandemic hit’

community and classes run on Zoom every two weeks. Seventy-six people have taken part.

And it has become a truly ecumenical movement, with participants from seven denominations across Cumbria and the UK regularly involved.

“If we were to try to worship together traditionally, how compli-

cated would that be?” says Pauline, a Church of Scotland minister, former hospice chaplain and a yoga teacher in Carlisle. “But through Maranatha Yoga we are all worshipping in the same way, united in Christ through movement of our bodies, through our breathing, through scripture, prayer and meditation.

“People even come along from other yoga classes which I teach at a gym and in village halls who are spiritually curious as well as others who have previously moved away from church but want to explore again. There’s a diversity, unity and a Christ-consciousness which is really transforming. “It helps us to get fitter both

physically and spiritually so that we can help serve God in the world. What happens on the yoga mat matters, but equally important is what happens off the mat; how this can help make you a better Christian, a better person, a better disciple.”

There are plans to look to develop a Maranatha Yoga foundation course, open to all, and a transition course for yoga teachers looking to integrate Christian spirituality into their teachings.

The group’s leaders also recognise, however, that yoga can create divides within a church context. It’s hoped that a national Fresh Expressions online debate about yoga will be held in mid-September. This will include input from pioneer practitioners such as Pauline, those who have concerns and those yet to reach a view.

Pauline explains: “We will continue to work hard to have dialogue and conversations so there’s a better understanding for all parties and so it reduces polarisation.”

Steve adds: “For many people the stumbling block is the word yoga, and I can understand that because of the connotations that exist around that.

“But it’s important to remember that the word yoga simply means yoke or unity.”

Christine has now handed over the position of Team Leader to Pauline, but remains a committed member of the Maranatha Yoga team as an Associate Leader.

She concludes: “I’m humbled and heartened by what Jesus is doing through our team and online community in support of the God for All vision to ‘follow daily, care deeply, speak boldly and tread gently’.”

ONLINE GATHERINGS: WHAT TO EXPECT

A TYPICAL Maranatha Yoga session starts seated with welcome, opening words and a prayerful poem - to help people settle.

At the end of this, participants are invited to say the word ‘Maranatha’ which means ‘Come Lord’ and which is the mantra used during meditation and silent contemplation in the last 15 minutes of the hour together.

Each gathering revolves around a Christian theme based on scripture.

People are then invited to take part in simple physical warm-up and limbering movements. A prayer could also be offered up with partici-

pants invited to focus on Christian phrases during the practice of traditional yoga postures, such as ‘Your Kingdom come, Your will be done’.

Key scriptural Christian phrases are repeated throughout - when participants are still and also during movements. Christine describes it as “worship and prayer with our whole selves; body mind and spirit”.

She adds: “By the end, you’ve learned a prayer or passage of the Bible by heart, all in synergy with the movements you are making at the time. It becomes so co-ordinated, like a piece of music and your body is the instrument. What you’re doing

is a very beautiful thing. You are combining movement, breath, speech, prayer and an awareness of your body. It is as if every part of you is saying a prayer.”

Steve adds: “We may, for instance, take prayers from the Northumbria Community, the Lord’s Prayer or a story from the gospels and find postures which interpret that. You are able to embody what you are saying.”

At the end, members of the online community are invited to bless each other by offering the Peace.

■ For more information, visit www.maranathayoga.org.uk.



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New HQ as charity grows

■ Restore now has five shops in north Cumbria

By Dave Roberts

A CHRISTIAN charity which builds community for those who may not normally go to church has opened a new headquarters.

Restore was launched in July 2020 and runs five charity shops – four in Carlisle and one in Penrith – offering high-quality recycled goods for sale as well as drop-in facilities and opportunities to help people back into a work environment.

A stand-alone charity which grew from the Diocese of Carlisle's OpShops social enterprise, it has recently secured a lease on a new warehouse and shop facility on Carlisle's Shaddongate from where it runs its distribution operation.

Chair of Trustees Bryan Gray has helped the charity grow in recent years. As well as the warehouse, there are two new shops – one on Shaddongate and the other on the city's Petteril Bank Road – and a new operations manager has just been appointed.

Bryan said: "Obviously, it was pre-Covid when we launched, but you could argue that the reason for the charity's creation has become even more prescient. There's a greater need than ever to help restore our communities following the pandemic and that's what we want to help to do."

"Restore is a charity shop with a difference; we are receiving donations and selling goods to people who could not afford to shop elsewhere, but all the profit from the shops will be invested in mission and the local communities which they serve."

"We want our shops to be places people feel proud to go into, either to shop or to volunteer. They are special places."

Pioneer minister, the Rev Chris Harwood, works closely with Restore. He was instrumental in setting up a Men in Sheds



Bryan Gray: 'There's a greater need than ever to help restore our communities'

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS

initiative which combats loneliness and isolation by bringing people come together to make things in a workshop setting. The group meets at the new Shaddongate hub. Meanwhile, Restore also has a community allotment group and holds regular prayer meetings.

The charity is supported by churches across north Cumbria, with many shop volunteers coming from local congregations.

Three months ago, a new operations manager was appointed. Rachel Nutley has moved to Cumbria from north Devon and has managed charity shops for the last 12 years, latterly for the RSPCA.

Rachel said: "I love the concept of Restore. All the charities I've previously worked with have been big organisations, whereas Restore is looking after the communities in which they're based. It's so rewarding to know that the help we provide and the money we raise will go to the people of Carlisle and Penrith."

The charity is looking for bigger premises in Penrith and a Pioneer Minister has just



New operations manager: Rachel Nutley outside the Shaddongate site

been appointed to work with customers, staff and volunteers at that shop as well as churches across the Penrith Mission Community. The connection between shops and local churches is considered critical for the charity's success, and Bryan is confident the new post will see greater ties forged with rural church communities.

He added: "I live in the East of Eden mission community, which is made up of 19 congregations, largely Anglican and Methodist. There's as much need in rural

communities to help restore that sense of community as there is in a town setting. We want to help make that happen.

"We want to provide hospitality and welcome – which are core Christian traditions – and to allow everyone who wants to work with us an opportunity to explore their giftings."

"Our Christian ethos manifests itself through the sense of caring community that's been created and the living out of parables such as the parable of talents."

"As we come out of lockdown I feel there's an opportunity for us all to reboot, reset and restore; that's what we feel we want to help with."

With the charity expanding, more volunteers and donations are needed and the board of trustees is looking for two new members. Meanwhile, a new website can be viewed at www.restorecumbria.co.uk.

■ If you want to volunteer or donate, please email Rachel Nutley at operations@restorecumbria.co.uk. Anyone interested in becoming a trustee should contact Bryan Gray at bryangray@bryangray.co.uk.

'Entrepreneurial' vicar writes autobiography

A RETIRED Cumbrian vicar has published a new book documenting nearly 60 years of ministry and social action.

The Womb with a View details the Rev Malcolm Stonestreet's early life, ordination in 1962 and curacy in Leeds through to his final appointment as vicar of six churches in Eskdale.

Readers are also guided through his second curacy at Far Headingley, appointment as Vicar of Askrigg in Wensleydale and his move to Bramley, the largest parish in the Diocese of Leeds and where he oversaw the creation of a Gift Economy scheme supporting unemployed people. Malcolm,



pictured above, eventually moved to Eskdale, where he helped establish the Muncaster Conference, committed to community and economic renewal.

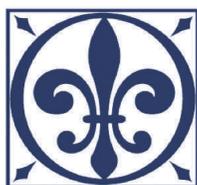
The Ven Chris Burke, Archdeacon of Barking, said: "Malcolm is well-

known as one of the great priest entrepreneurs of the 20th century."

Though now retired and living in Borrowdale, Malcom continues to play an active part in local ministry.

Reviewing the book, the Bishop of Carlisle, the Rt Rev James Newcome, writes: "I found this lovely book quite a nostalgic read, because it reminded me of the church into which I was ordained nearly 40 years ago. I also found it deeply moving..."

■ *The Womb with a View* costs £10 plus postage. It is available in local book shops, via Amazon or direct from Malcolm at malcolmstonestreet@gmail.com.



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Fun in the sun: From left, five-year-old Otis, from Brough, on the slide; Tebay Youth Group members Emily, 12, Poppy, 12, and Madison, 11; and Harry and Finley, both seven, enjoying ice creams

Cumbria's Ablaze again!

Youngsters welcome return of youth church's outdoor event

By Dave Roberts

NEARLY 200 children and young people gathered for an afternoon and evening of fun organised by the Eden Network Youth Church.

The outdoor Ablaze event was held in the shadow of Brough Castle and offered a minis session for those aged from five to 10 followed by an evening event for 11 to 18-year-olds.

Most of those attending came from across the Eden Valley with some teenagers from the Carlisle Network Youth Church also travelling down.

Ablaze was first launched five years ago, but the pandemic forced the cancellation of last year's event. Rachel Milburn, Network Youth Church Pioneer Minister for the Eden area, then took on the 2021 event, which had to be carefully managed due to Covid regulations.

"I've been thinking about organising this since April, wondering if it would happen or not and watching the guidelines constantly," she explained.

"The play equipment has to be cleaned constantly and activities such as henna tattoos and the prayer stations have not been able to happen.

"These kids have been tied down for a year and I just have such a passion to see them having a good time whilst also learning about God.

"We have boards dotted around which explain that we're all loved by God. If they take nothing else away, they will know that they're loved and are beautiful."

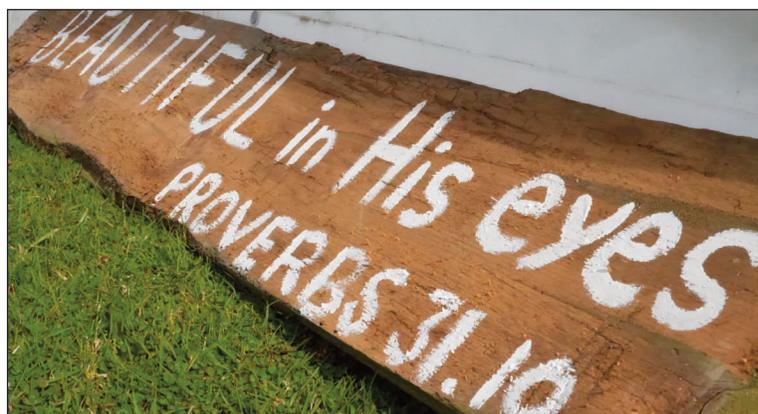
The Ablaze event was held on land which Rachel's family farms. Attractions included trampolining, inflatable slides and obstacle courses and a slippery slide close to the 11th century Brough Castle.

Emma Brown is a member of Cornerstone Church in the Western Dales Mission Community and was at Ablaze with her nine-year-



Contenders ready... Thomas, left, and Jacob battle it out

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS



Good news: Message boards were dotted about the site

old son Jackson. She said: "It's been brilliant. There's so much choice for the kids. Our young people have had it tough over the last year so it's important that they can come to events like this and see kids from other Christian homes having fun."

Rachel feels that the Ablaze

event represents an important form of outreach.

She added: "There are so many different ways we can tell people about God. Going to church just doesn't work for some younger people. As Christians we have to be out in the communities putting on events like this."



In the swing of it: Talwyn enjoys some trampolining



Heads up: Isabelle, 11, on the obstacle course

‘Wonderful year of service’

■ Intern taken out of his comfort zone during challenging few months in Estonia

By Dave Roberts

AS WE talk over a Zoom link, Gareth Palliser casually mentions that he’s only been married for two days and has had to leave his bride in her native Estonia.

It’s a bit of a surprise, bearing in mind we had come together to chat about his time working in mission in the Baltic state as an intern.

It transpires that he met his new wife, Hannah, when she was in Carlisle in 2018 working as an intern at the Cathedral; so their respective calls to mission have been central to their marriage.

Gareth, 24, is the first intern from the Diocese of Carlisle’s IX12 Internship programme to travel overseas, making the journey to Estonia in September 2020.

He explains: “I’m very Cumbrian; even a move to Newcastle felt too much a few years ago. But it was Hannah’s story about her call to the UK which inspired me. She felt God calling her to that mission, even though she was very established in Estonia.

“Having heard her story I started to think about it far more seriously and prayed about it. I have a heart to serve and saw this as an important opportunity to do that.”

It led to conversations between internship programme managers and the Norwegian Mission Society who partner the scheme. It was decided Gareth would be based in the south Estonian university city of Tartu.



Gareth Palliser: ‘Most people in Estonia would not know anything about Christianity’

“Because of the pandemic, trying to get a flight out to Estonia was crazy; the schedule was constantly moving and flights were being cancelled at the last minute,” Gareth explains.

“For a while I wasn’t even sure if I’d be able to go because the rules were changing so rapidly. When I finally got to Tartu, I then had to self-isolate for 10 days.”

During his internship, Gareth taught English at a Catholic school. Through his work with Lutheran churches, he also drew

alongside people from the city’s university – Estonia’s largest.

The country’s Soviet past – when public worship was prohibited – means that many people would not class themselves as Christians. Some surveys even suggest it is the ‘least religious countries in Europe’.

“Most people in Estonia would not know anything about Christianity. They may have a vague spirituality but aren’t seeking to connect,” Gareth says.

“So my internship was very varied and I had a degree of flexibility. My work at the school would see me work on a one-to-one basis with young people and look to connect them with my other links.

“The main churches I was connected with were Maarja Kirik (St Mary’s) where I’d help them film the service on a Sunday.

They were next to a far bigger church Pauluse Kirik (St Paul’s) and I helped a lot with the youth work there.

“Every week there’d be a youth meeting. I was so impressed by how well the young people knew the Bible. It was all in person until March and then, for three months after that, we had to meet via Zoom. An advantage of taking things online was that we were able to pull together lots of young people from across the south of Estonia who may only be in very small youth groups locally.”

He also drew alongside the organiser of a CrossFit mission where people would come together to work out and then pray.

Gareth grew up in a Christian family and was raised in Dalston near Carlisle, attending Hebron Evangelical Church from a young age. After returning from university he joined Carlisle’s Vineyard Church. He trained as a paramedic



Newly-weds: Gareth and Hannah on their wedding day
MADIS KASK

and, during the pandemic, worked at Carlisle’s Cumberland Infirmary to help with the Covid testing programme before starting his internship.

He also had close ties with Carlisle Network Youth Church, helping the team draw alongside young people who attend a park on the city’s Raffles estate.

Gareth adds: “I suppose that was my introduction to mission. I really enjoyed meeting up with the young people and building up trust. There were huge amounts of kids who would come along each week, with some then joining youth groups.”

Hannah has now travelled to the UK, and the couple are set to move to York where Gareth will complete a master’s degree in health research.

He adds: “This has been a wonderful year of service and a time when I’ve been lifted out of my comfort zone. There’ve been all kinds of challenges and I’ve learnt so much about myself and what God wants for me. I’d encourage others who may be thinking of doing something like this to pray about it and talk to others. It’s been one of the best things I’ve ever done.”

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TASTE OF MISSION AND MINISTRY

IX12 Internship Programme Manager Sophie Smith, pictured left, explains how the scheme works...

IX12 is a mission internship programme that intentionally invests in young adults as disciples of Jesus by providing church community placements of all kinds in Cumbria. We partner with the Norwegian Missions Society’s internship programme, which means we receive interns from across the globe. With a combination of teaching, practical work in placement churches

and mentoring, our interns get first-hand experience of what mission and ministry can look like, which they in turn take home with them when their internship year is over.

The scheme has run successfully for more than 10 years, having seen over 100 interns being part of it, and more than 30 different churches and ministries across Cumbria benefitting from it.

■ For details about the programme, email ix12@carlisle-diocese.org.uk or visit www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/ix12/

A boost for rural voices thanks to God's 'nudge'

■ Ex-diocese worker takes up Methodist Church post

By Dave Roberts

“MY WHOLE life has been about listening to God to see where he wants me to go next and then wait for him to give me a nudge,” Sarah Hulme explains.

That latest nudge has seen her appointed as the Methodist Church's Rural Mission and Ministry Officer, a new full-time position for the church.

The 50-year-old who lives in Penrith with her husband Chris – with whom she has three children – comes to the role having worked for the Diocese of Carlisle for nearly 10 years.

She's now a member of the Methodist Church's Evangelism and Growth team – covering the whole of Scotland, England and Wales – with a brief to promote the 'rural voice' in all that the church may be looking to develop.

Sarah says: “Within our team we have, for instance, an evangelism and contemporary culture officer, a church at the margins officer and a mission and community engagement officer. My job is to work alongside all of these colleagues to ensure that, in whatever resources we develop for different circuits, districts and churches, there is content which fits the rural context.

“It ensures resources are not aimed at the big churches which have hundreds of people in the congregation, but that smaller churches in a rural context are always carefully considered too.

“We know that there's not a 'one size fits all' for church and indeed there's not a 'one size fits all' for rural church, but my role will be to make sure huge consideration is given to the needs of these churches.”

Originally from Ulverston, Sarah has lived in Penrith for more than 20 years. She was a secondary school language teacher for 17 years before joining the diocese in a job-share role with the Board of Education, developing after-school clubs and fresh expressions. Before her appointment with the Methodist Church, she was the



Sarah Hulme: Working as part of the God for All team was 'invaluable'

DAVE ROBERTS

Growing Younger Enabler.

She attended Ulverston Parish Church from a young age and made a faith commitment aged eight while attending an after-school club. Her faith continued to grow while studying for a joint languages degree at Leicester University, including a year in Germany when she joined an ecumenical student church. Sarah is a member of the congregation at Penrith Methodist Church and the Mountain Pilgrims fresh expression community.

In her new role she will also serve on the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) – a body which includes representation from the United Reformed, Baptist and Methodist churches and provides a joint approach to public policy information, campaigning and advocacy – and at the Arthur Rank Centre, an independent ecumenical charity that helps rural communities flourish by inspiring, encouraging and equipping local churches.

A major strand of her role will be to help develop the Methodist Church's fresh expressions work through the 'New Places for New People' project. Over the next three years, 30 Methodist districts will be awarded money for the scheme which they'll match fund to develop a focus on pioneering aspects and church at the margins.

“I'll be involved with conversations at district level about the roll-out of this, especially those in more rural areas,” adds Sarah, who started her new job in May. “It will be about helping people to consider what a 'new place' might look like in a rural area.

“The experience I've had as part of the God for All team, particularly working alongside colleagues who were developing pioneering strands, has been invaluable.

“When new colleagues hear that I was working in Cumbria, they immediately start to ask questions about how things are working out. People are fascinated by the ecumenical partnerships that have developed here and they're closely monitoring them.”

Sarah also understands that the Covid pandemic has shifted the landscape for many of our churches, not least those in a rural setting.

Problems include financial constraints and bridging onsite and online worship in the future, an issue for many rural churches due to connectivity issues.

She remains hopeful though, concluding: “I'm still excited to hear what God is doing in different places, and seeing how he is making things work. It's great to be part of a team that's looking to inspire and encourage others along the way.”

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‘Unity makes our credibility and witness much stronger’

■ In our latest Focus on Faith, we meet David Taylor, the Salvation Army’s new Divisional Commander in Cumbria

Q Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

A I was born in Rhodesia to parents who were both Salvation Army officers. My family has a long ancestral line going back to the founding days of the Army. My dad trained teachers at one of our institutes in Africa. We were in a big station out in the bush with a large hospital, schools and the college for training officers. When I was about 12 we returned to the UK, living in London.

I studied English literature and biblical studies at Sheffield University and, after a couple of years working as a porter at Guy’s Hospital, I entered the Salvation Army college in Denmark Hill.

I’m married to Kathy and we have three children. One of our daughters and son-in-law have chosen to enter Salvation Army officership as well.

I’ve just completed 37 years in officership, mainly engaged in church leadership but latterly involved in leading our higher education as well as national spiritual life development. For the last three years I’ve been based in our central north area – which takes in Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Lancashire and Cheshire and now Cumbria as we’re expanding our regions.

While still a church leader I also went back to studies, completing my Masters at Oxford University and a subsequent doctorate which focussed on ecclesiology.

I’ve got a strong interest in ecumenical relationships and what the nature of the church is. I’ve always wanted to engage with other denominations; that’s really important to me.

Q What will your new role entail?

A Within our region we have a number of Lifehouses (residential centres for homeless people or young care leavers), plus our elderly persons’ homes. We currently also hold the Government’s contract for anti-trafficking and work alongside a number of other organisations to combat slavery. In addition, we have Employment Plus services, to help people get back into work, a housing association, prison and airport chaplaincies, and debt advice centres. Many of these services are run from within our church centres.

And, of course, we have a strong charity persona including our charity shops which also serve as ministry centres.

So my new role will be to connect people. Where we have specialist contracts there’s a need for informed, dedicated management structures which are more centralised from our London offices. But my job is to ensure there’s connection, integration and

collaboration across the north west and to help identify people who can make that work.

Q Why do you feel ecumenism is so important as we look to grow God’s Kingdom?

A I’m a firm believer in the Kingdom first and the need for us to clearly understand that is one church. Pragmatically and practically there is room for diversity, but I hold Jesus’s words dear, that we may all be one.

Our credibility and witness is so much stronger when people see that the nature of Christianity is the unity and love which flows out of Christ through our denominations and streams.

The risk is that we could become moulded by the world’s values around individualism and competitiveness, but the Good News is that we are one in Christ. As such we are brought into a whole new family, Kingdom and set of values based around the likeness of Christ which can only make us stronger.

I can imagine that where communities may feel more remote, then there is a real value in the sense of closer working relationships across the denominations.

As the people of God I would like to think we would want to work more strategically together in every area.

Q How important do you feel it is to have strong mission communities across the county?

A I think they are vital; they are at the heart of renewing our Christian heritage. Mission communities bring a new sense of ownership and a dynamic which is centred on people’s giftings and passions. They bring new energy to the life of the church.

We’re a relatively new denomination, but even within our 150 years, you can see how easy it is to become settled and perhaps a little too rigid in our structures and culture. So there’s room to go back to Christ at the centre and rediscover what it is to be the body of Christ.

Q What is your prayer as you prepare to take up the new role?

A My prayer would be that we are God-focussed and God-led, not just trusting in our own human energy and wisdom. I’d pray that we seek to honour what God is doing, and wanting to do, while understanding the signs of the times.

I’m a firm believer that where the Good News is proclaimed faithfully, then God will build his church. My prayer is that we can go on that journey with God and each other.



New role: David Taylor says his job will be to ensure ‘connection, integration and collaboration’ across the region **DAVE ROBERTS**