



The Way



The FREE newspaper of the Church in Cumbria – Winter 2018/19



One woman and her dogs – and her flock

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May you all have a wonderful Christmas and Christ-filled 2019!



'IN PRISON BUT FREE!'

By Dave Roberts

“I REMEMBER sitting in a police station and saying, ‘God, if you get me out of this, I won’t commit another crime’. I was bailed, walked out, then just laughed it off with ‘God! God who?’”

Dave Higham, founder and chief executive of The Well Communities in Barrow, recalls just one of the many times he was arrested for stealing and burgling to feed a crippling heroin addiction.

Plagued by self-hatred and low self-esteem both as a child and young man, and living within a dysfunctional family in Liverpool, he sought comfort elsewhere, but in terribly self-destructive ways.

Aged just 12, Dave began to experiment with household substances such as glue. By 14 he was addicted to heroin. Two years later he was serving his first sentence - three months at a Young Offender Institution having been convicted of attempted burglary and theft.

His life spiralled out of control; repetitive prison

■ The chief executive of The Well Communities describes how finding faith put an end to a spiral of drug-fuelled decline

sentences followed while his cravings for the next ‘high’ grew ever stronger. Drugs were easy to come by inside prison as well as outside.

But starting another four-year sentence, and by now in his mid-30s, Dave found hope. A fellow prisoner mentioned a 12-step rehabilitation programme run at the former Lancaster Castle prison. He applied and was accepted.

On the programme were people he knew as former addicts, learning how to be clean from drugs. Then one day he walked into the dorm he shared with seven other men to find a Bible on his bed.

“In the past I’d told God where to go,” he explains. “I wasn’t interested in him. I was inside prison, I needed to be

able to fight and look after myself. I’d told him, ‘Don’t you come near me’.

“But that was years ago and now I was stood here looking at this Bible. So I said ‘Alright, if you’re there I want you to come into my life right now’. And it happened. It was as if my whole body had come alive. It’s so hard to describe but it felt like my blood was full of bubbles. There was such intensity and power and I now know that was the Holy Spirit.

“God knew that’s what I needed; I’m someone who needs hard facts in order to believe something. That was when God came into my life. It was the most free I’d ever felt; I was in prison but I was free!”

Dave Higham: Overcame a crippling heroin addiction to establish a programme for other former drug users

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Craig takes up cathedral position



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RUGBY LEAGUE



Chaplain for Barrow Raiders
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CONTACT US

EDITOR & ADVERTISING:
Dave Roberts

Tel: 01768 807764
Mobile: 07469 153658
Email: communications@carlisle-diocese.org.uk



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

Leading clergy walk together in mission

■ Group will visit every Mission Community area, or where one is planned

By Rev Mike Talbot, Evangelism Enabler

BISHOP James, along with the other ecumenical church leaders who will accompany him along parts of the way, will be taking the opportunity to increase their step count through Lent when they set out to walk across Cumbria.

The group will visit every area where there is either a Mission Community, or one being planned.

Joining them for some of the time will be the newly consecrated Bishop of Penrith, Emma Ineson.

Planning to cover around 10 miles a day, their visits aim to support local churches in building on the work that took place during Moving Mountains – looking for ways in which we can help those around us discover more of God and his purpose in their lives.

Plans are already afoot for tea parties, grill-a-bishop evenings in local pubs, storytelling in libraries and meetings with local councillors to explore how the church can support the community.

The best events are those which build on what is already happening – using the visit of the church leaders to support and resource us as we seek to embed outreach as a way of life within our Mission Communities.

As the group walks the county, local people will be encouraged to join them for parts of the journey – walking together, discovering God in the thin places which proliferate across Cumbria, and learning from one another what it means to be a pilgrim people.

What are the ways in which you might be able to make the most of this opportunity, both in your community and for yourself?

For details, talk to your Mission Community leader (or local minister) or get in touch with Mike Talbot via mike.talbot@carlisle-diocese.org.uk.

■ **The proposed itinerary can be seen in the orange panel on the right.**



Stepping out: Bishop James

DAVE ROBERTS

DATE	MORNING	LUNCHTIME	EVENING
Mon 11 March	Launch event	Penrith	Inglewood
Tue 12 March	Walk to Wetheral	Holme Eden/Scotby	Brampton
Wed 13 March	Walk to Lanercost	NE Brampton MC	Carlisle Central
Thu 14 March	Walk to Kingmoor/Houghton	Kingmoor/Houghton	Carlisle South
Fri 15 March	Walk to Burgh by Sands	Carlisle Rural	Carlisle Rural
Sun 17 March	Moresby		
Mon 18 March	Walk to Solway Plain	Solway Plain	Maryport/Criffel View
Tue 19 March	Walk to Workington	Workington	Grassmoor
Thu 21 March	Walk around Derwentwater		
Fri 22 March	Walk Beacon Edge to Langwathby	East of Eden	North Appleby
Sat 23 March	Tebay	South Appleby	South Appleby
Sun 24 March	Western Dales	Western Dales	Rainbow
Mon 25 March	Walk to Kent Estuary	Kent Estuary	Grange
Tue 26 March	Walk to Kendal	Kendal	Kendal
Wed 27 March	Kendal	Kendal	Kendal
Thu 28 March	Walk to Windermere	Windermere	Windermere
Fri 29 March	Walk to Ambleside	Central Lakes	Central Lakes
Sat 30 March	Walk to Crake Valley	Crake Valley	Ulverston
Sun 31 March	Walk to Urswick	Dalton/Urswick	Dalton
Mon 1 April			Barrow
Tue 2 April	Barrow	Barrow	Millom
Wed 3 April	Seascale	South Calder	Central Calder
Thu 4 April	Hensingham	East Whitehaven	Whitehaven
Fri 5 April	Binsey	Binsey	Keswick
Sun 7 April		Two Rivers	

EVENTS AT CARLISLE CATHEDRAL

DECEMBER

Fri 7 - 7.30pm, The Eden Valley Hospice Carol Service. Carols for all with the Cathedral Carloli Choir

Mon 10 - 7pm, University of Cumbria Christmas Celebration

Fri 14 - 7.30pm, Gala Concert for Christmas with the Cathedral Choirs

Sun 23 - 3pm, Festival of Readings and Carols with the Cathedral Choir

Mon 24 - 3pm, The Christmas Eve Crib Service with the Cantate Children's Choir; 6.30pm, A Festival of Readings and Carols with the Cathedral Choir; 11.30pm, Christmas Midnight Eucharist with the Senior Girls' Choir and Lay Clerks, Preacher: Canon Jan Kearnon

Tues 25 - 8am, Holy Communion; 10.30am, Christmas Morning Eucharist, President: The Dean of Carlisle, Preacher: The Bishop of Carlisle; 4pm, Said Evening Prayer

Sun 30 - 10.30am, Eucharist sung by the Cathedral Carloli Choir

JANUARY 2019

Sun 6 - 3pm, Carols for the Feast of the Epiphany with the Senior Girls' Choir and Lay Clerks

Tues 15 - 7.30pm, Christingle Service

FEBRUARY

Sun 3 - 3pm, Evensong for Candlemas attended by the Friends of the Cathedral, Preacher: the Dean

Sun 10 - 10.30am, Plus Eucharist

MARCH

Ash Wednesday, March 6 - 7.30pm, Eucharist sung by the Senior Girls and Lay Clerks

Sun 17 - 3pm, Evensong and the Installation of the Bishop of Penrith

Sat 23 - 7.30pm, Cumbria Rural Choirs concert: Mozart's *Requiem* and Haydn's *The Seven Last Words of Christ*

APRIL

Sun 14 - 10.30am, Palm Sunday Plus Eucharist with procession

Our Holy Week Preacher for 2019 will be The Very Rev Dr Frances Ward, Formerly Dean of St Edmundsbury. She will preach at the services marked * below.

Mon 15 - 7.30pm, Holy Week Eucharist *

Tues 16 - 7.30pm, Holy Week Eucharist *

Wed 17 - 7.30pm, Holy Week Eucharist *

Maundy Thursday, April 18 - 11am, Eucharist with renewal of ministerial vows and blessing of oils; 7.30pm, Maundy Thursday Eucharist *

Good Friday, April 19 - 12 noon, Meditation; 1.30pm, Good Friday Liturgy *

Sat 20 - 7.30pm, Easter Eve Eucharist and Confirmation

Sun 21 (Easter Day) - 10.30am, Sung Eucharist, President the Bishop of Carlisle, Preacher the Dean of Carlisle; 3pm, Evensong

New bishop following God's call to Cumbria

■ *The Way* meets the Rev Emma Ineson as she prepares to move north

Q Emma, firstly, tell us a little bit more about yourself, your upbringing and your family?

A Hi! I was born in Birmingham but spent most of my childhood in Kenya, where my parents were involved with education. I met my husband Mat at University in Birmingham, where I studied English, and we have two children, now adults. We've lived all over the UK – Birmingham, Bristol, Devon, Sheffield – and now Cumbria.

Q At what point did you make a commitment to follow Jesus?

A My mother took me and my sister along to church from when we were little so I learned very young that Jesus was my friend. I got to know the Bible and 'grew into' Christian faith. It was when I left home at 18 that I owned faith, and had to decide whether I would be known for being a Christian.

Q How has your relationship with God helped you over the years and, particularly, as you prepare to move to Cumbria?

A My relationship with God, through Jesus, directs everything I do and who I am at my very core. Without God I wouldn't have made many of the decisions I have. Being a Christian gives me such hope and joy, even (or especially) at those times in life when things have been tough – at the death of my father following a road accident a few years ago, for instance. I have been so grateful for the way Jesus has been at the centre of our marriage and family life too. As we prepare to move to Cumbria I am so looking forward to getting to know the Christian family in this wonderful county.

Q As Bishop of Penrith you'll be involved in enabling the ecumenical God for All strategy. What excites you most about this?

A It's an audacious vision, which is great. I love the fact that the aim is for every woman, man and child to have the opportunity to know God and his purpose for their lives by connecting with a Christian community. The fact that it's an ecumenical vision makes it all the richer; we are better together, and each denomination brings its own riches to the way we do mission.

Q God for All is not without challenges as we all look at developing new forms of mission and ministry. How can we help our church families on this journey?

A I don't think mission has ever been easy. Even when Jesus walked this earth there were those who rejected his message. We live in complex and uncertain times, and so we're going to need courage to stand firm. We're also going to need wisdom to discern



what aspects of ministry and mission need to remain the same, and what needs to change. We're going to need creativity and imagination to tell the age-old story of God in new and compelling ways. My sense is that there is already a lot of great stuff happening in and through the churches of Cumbria.

Q You've already made a number of visits to Cumbria since your appointment. What do you make of the county?

A Cumbria is an amazing place! Aside from the obvious natural beauty, the people seem to have warm hearts and a great sense of humour. I can't wait to get stuck into all that Cumbria has to offer. Church life can be tough in an area with small, dispersed communities, but I've glimpsed a creativity and resilience. I'm looking forward to becoming part of the big family that is the Diocese of Carlisle.

Q You come to this role after four years as principal at Trinity College, Bristol. How has that helped you prepare for this next step?

A Being among a large community of (mainly young) people training for ministry and ordination has given me real hope for the Church of England. I've also learned a lot about the importance of everyone (not just those at theological colleges) growing in faith and discipleship. Above all I've seen the power of the Holy Spirit of God to transform lives and bring growth,

hope and healing. Oh, and I've learned a thing or two about running a fairly large institution, which might come in handy occasionally!

I'll be sad to leave Trinity College, but I know I'm following God's call to Cumbria.

Q What passage of scripture particularly resonates for you at this time and why?

A One of my favourite books is Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It offers a great vision of what the church is for – and could be. Chapter 3 verse 20-21 says: "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen". That sense of audacious possibility is what I see at the heart of God for All.

Q As you prepare for consecration in February, what would you ask people to pray for both you and your family?

A Please pray that God equips and prepares me to serve the people of Cumbria and the Diocese of Carlisle well. Do pray for Mat my husband and for Molly and Toby, our children, who will be off following their own vocations. And pray that I follow Jesus closely in the weeks and years ahead. I am very much looking forward to being with you, alongside Bishop James and my ecumenical colleagues.

Emma Ineson: Preparing for consecration as Bishop of Penrith in February

DAVE ROBERTS

NEWS IN BRIEF

The 'Big Events'



CUMBRIA'S ecumenical leaders will host two special God for All 'Big Events' next year. Rheged's 200-seat theatre is the venue for both events on

Friday March 1, from 2-4pm and repeated from 7-9pm.

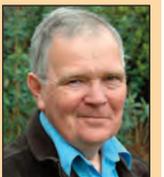
They will provide a chance to explore how God for All is working in a local context.

In December a survey will be emailed to all mission communities (planned, developing and launched) so that feedback can be collated to help hone the events' content.

Early in the New Year, invitations will be opened enabling 10 people from each community to attend. Each session will be live-streamed allowing countywide participation.

Ad man leaves

AFTER 10 years as advertising manager for *The Way*, Steven Bowditch, pictured, has stepped down from the voluntary role.



The 71-year-old former headteacher at James Rennie School in Carlisle has overseen the advertising for more than 30 editions of the newspaper which is published three times a year. Steven, who lives in Stanwix with his wife Christine and son Andrew, said: "It's been a pleasure to be involved. I have met a wide range of people, all of whom have viewed *The Way* with great Christian kindness."

Steven even continued in the role while serving as a city councillor between 2010 and 2018.

Dave Roberts, the Diocese of Carlisle's communications manager and editor of *The Way*, said: "I would like to thank Steven for the many years he has given towards the production of *The Way*."

"Steven's energy, enthusiasm and support for *The Way* have proved invaluable."

We are looking for a new advertising manager. Anyone interested should contact Dave Roberts on 01768 807764, 07469 153658 or at communications@carlisediocese.org.uk.



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By The Way

Less mischief, please

I WONDER if we could change the culture around Halloween to bring a little bit of light and thankfulness instead of celebrating trickery and mischief? You could have a family celebration in your own home, with a special harvest meal, perhaps lighting a candle for each person you want to remember, sharing some stories about them. And imagine if those who went round knocking on doors gave a little gift instead of expecting a treat!

Jennet McLeod, Around Church, Ramsden Street URC

FAMILIES Together In Tebay and Orton. I want to introduce this with a quote: "It takes a village to raise a child." As a single mother to three children this comforts me along with prayer in my darkest times. This quote comes from an African proverb which means that it takes an entire community of different people interacting with children in a safe environment. Families Together look to promote this.

Pippa Smith, The Link, Orton, Tebay and Ravenstonedale with Newbiggin-on-Lune

WE are pleased to tell you Lamplugh CofE School won a 'Golden Apple' award for Best Early Years Provider – a fantastic achievement. The pupils continue to enjoy their learning and are undertaking many exciting opportunities, both in and out of school. I am thoroughly enjoying leading the school forward and supporting the fantastic pupils, staff and parents.

Lindsey Martin, Contact, Lamplugh, Kirkland and Ennerdale Ecumenical Parish

AS I was quite young, my memories of the war are vague: the black-out blinds, the gas masks, powdered egg, blackcurrant puree in tins, concentrated orange juice, cod liver oil and powdered milk, which my mother used to make into delicious mint-flavoured sweets. We didn't have an 'Anderson Shelter' which my husband remembers from his childhood in Stanwix.

Eileen Sinclair, Dalston Parish Paper

PERIOD Living in November featured the Stationmaster's House at Wetheral railway station, the home of Mat and Judith Jansen. Back in July there was one grey day amidst the wide blue skies all around. That was the day the photographer from the magazine arrived – at 6.30 in the morning – and he had driven up from Wales. He was pleased that there was no sunshine as that suited him better.

Nigel Holmes, Focus on Eden, Holme Eden and Wetheral with Warwick

THE initiative – supported by church leaders from widely differing denominations ranging from the Church of England to the Salvation Army, as well as the blessing of our Roman Catholic friends – to bring God to the attention of everyone in Cumbria by 2020 is ambitious. What it has done though is make us all realise that to achieve this we need to work with others because we cannot just offer the URC vision.

Nick Mark, Newsletter of Penrith and Penruddock URC

If you are taking your children to a Christingle, or crib service, why not ask them to invite their friends to come too? The schools will do some marvellous shows and services as term ends. Let's see if we can carry the same spirit over into the holiday! There are many special events and services throughout the Binsey Team in the weeks before Christmas. Why not invite your friends or neighbours to a carol service, or a Christmas social? Maybe particularly to the very special and almost magical atmosphere of the late-night services on Christmas Eve.

Binsey Link, Binsey Team Mission Community

I WAS licensed as a Reader in October 2016 after two years' training, including a placement for four months at St Kentigern's Aspatria, Hayton St James and Gilcrux St Mary's. The training was in theology, ministry and mission, overseen by Durham University. I really enjoyed it and wish I could do it all over again. The thing I enjoy most now is spending time studying God's word and then communicating it.

Julie Graham, Connect, St James, Carlisle

'I have come that they might have life to the full'

■ County develops and strengthens national Vision for Education for local children

THE past two years have seen some exciting developments in the realm of education. Across Cumbria there is a fresh vision for all children and young people, based on Jesus's words in John 10:10 "I have come that they might have life to the full."

Rev Andrew Towner, chair of the Diocesan Board of Education and, himself, a former teacher, explains: "When I was appointed to chair this work in early 2017, I knew that a clear vision was vital. "The Church of England had already done some work on this at a national level, and we had also begun to review it at a county level. We needed to focus that into the realities, challenges and opportunities, in Cumbria."

The national Vision for Education focusses 'life to the full' into four concepts designed to shape all our desires for children and young people:

- Wisdom – that learning develops wisdom as well as knowledge and skills
- Hope – that all are encouraged to develop hope and aspiration
- Community – that each individual lives well with others
- Dignity – that our communities value and respect each individual

The reaction up and down our county has been positive, whether from heads or pupils, staff or governors, while clear distinctions have been made that this is not a



Benefitting: Pupils at Carlisle's Bishop Harvey Goodwin School

CHARLIE HEDLEY

plan to make schools into mini-churches.

Michael Mill, diocesan director of education, said: "This vision expands beyond the 100-plus schools for which we have legal statutory responsibility. It is a desire to positively influence the lives of all the children in Cumbria. We long that everyone flourishes. The Church of England's will is that our church schools be 'church schools for all for Jesus's sake' and for another,

this vision has rightly captivated a number of heads who don't work in the church schools' context – and we are thrilled by that."

The Bishop of Carlisle recently described this as "an important aspect of our God for All mission in Cumbria" and the ecumenical partners across our county have been involved at all levels.

Plans are in place and work is underway to develop the vision – not least, according to the Archbishop of York, through

considering the three-legged stool of church, school and family and the strong potential of these when working together to influence lives for good.

Andrew added: "The test for us has always been whether this is making a positive difference in real lives on the ground. The feedback we hear is overwhelmingly positive, and so we intend to continue, develop and strengthen our work for all the children and young people in Cumbria."

Hope into action through character education

ENJOYING 'life to the full' does not mean it's without challenge; just ask the pupils and staff of Blennerhasset School. Their school grounds have been repeatedly flooded in recent years. A much-valued outdoor log cabin classroom was destroyed in Storm Desmond in 2015.

But the school community turned a negative into a positive. Together, pupils wrote and illustrated a book about their experiences – *Do I need wellies today?*

It built on a theme of resilience and hope, key components of the Vision for Education.

While not a church school, headteacher Jillian Harrison-Longworth says the vision embodies values they hold dear.

Talking about character education through their Peer Support Network (PSN), she says: "The focus for the second year of our PSN group was the development



Communication: From left, year six pupils Jake, Holly, Lily and Ruby join headteacher Jillian Harrison-Longworth to read through their book on resilience

DAVE ROBERTS

of character education. As a leadership group we considered the vision and identified areas of focus for each of our schools.

"At Blennerhasset School, we

worked with our children to identify the key traits they wish to develop as a member of our school family. The initial discussions raised a list of words:

kindness, honesty, trustworthiness, resilience, empathy and positivity to name just a few and all characteristics of living well together as part of a school community.

"The deeper enquiry saw the children determining what each of these words might look like in action, in school.

"They worked in groups, talking and thinking about each class across the school, acknowledging that demonstrating empathy for example would look different in key stage two and nursery.

"The results of the character education work clarified that the relational aspects of cooperation, communication and being the best version of oneself stood out significantly to the children and these are continuing to be incorporated into planning and policy in our school community for future generations."

Former addict helps users find their way

■ Dave turns life around after release from prison

■ From page 1

With chaplaincy support, Dave began to serve in the prison chapel each Sunday, in charge of the music and projector. Prayer and Bible study became part of his daily routine and he completed an Alpha Course. Later it was even suggested he offer pastoral support to fellow inmates who had suffered bereavement. And all of this as he continued the recovery programme.

After release from prison, Dave settled in Lancaster, initially terrified that he would relapse. He spent three days in prayer, 'Please God, please help me' but with the support of the chaplaincy team he moved into a flat and began to rebuild his life.

Within two months he'd met Kerrie. The couple married 13 years ago and have two children.

He helped set up a church in Lancaster for newly-released prisoners and the homeless – the Church for the Unchurched. Armed with a diploma in psychology and a foundation degree in substance misuse he began voluntary work in addiction services before eventually understanding, in 2012, that it was God's plan he create The Well Communities.

"I felt I needed to be out in the community more," Dave explains. "That's where you connect with people and help recovery. So I put my own money into the creation of The Well, opened it up over a weekend and created a constituted group which included my former prison chaplain.

"We'd open every weekend while I was working full-time for a service user organisation. Initially that was in Lancaster but then I secured a contract to support users through The Well. I gave up my job knowing we only had enough money for a year. That was six years ago. It gave us the means to expand into Cumbria and open our base in Barrow."

With bases in Barrow, Kendal, Morecambe, Fleet-



'Not an easy ride': Dave Higham says those The Well helps have responsibilities too DAVE ROBERTS

wood and Lancaster and outreach into prisons, The Well provides help and support to recovering addicts, using the same 12-step programme Dave completed.

He and his team have supported hundreds of former prisoners in tackling their addictions and reintegrating into society. Each is given a place to live in rented accommodation; they have five houses in Barrow. Social enterprises in catering and repairs provide a route back into work.

Local churches provide a network of support too, offering venues for drug and alcohol addiction groups, and clothes and toiletries for those newly released from prison.

Through close liaison with statutory authorities, Dave and his team – who are all former addicts – now also provide a targeted approach to those peo-

ple who are considered to be the most likely to die due to their addiction.

Dave adds: "We have over 1,000 members on our Well Page. We've provided a lovely, therapeutic environment where people can come to get well. It's a really simple concept; they are loved so, in turn, they come to love themselves. But it's not an easy ride; people have to understand that if they come to us for help they have a responsibility to behave well too. There's no hierarchy; we're all accountable to each other.

"It's a blessing to be among these people and to feel God's presence here. It's an amazing feeling to be able to keep yourself well and your spirit well, and go out to help somebody else.

"But I know I couldn't do it on my own; Jesus is right here all the time!"

'I'VE BEEN ABLE TO GET TO THE CORE OF WHAT'S MADE ME TICK'

GED Pickersgill is the full-time project development manager for The Well Communities. He took up the post after volunteering for more than 18 months.

He came to Barrow in June 2015, having been on a six-week crack cocaine and alcohol binge. For Ged, previously a retail manager, rehab had never worked... until he met Dave Higham. He's been substance-free for three-and-a-half years.

"I was completely broken when I arrived here," he says. "I started using drugs aged 14. I dreamt of being a traveller and just wanted to forget about everything else - my O' Levels, my future.

"I'd had a good upbringing in St Helens. I'm not your stereotypical alcoholic or drug addict; I've never been in the gutter clutching a brown paper bag. Even in the grips of it I was in well-paid jobs and successful. But I couldn't stop taking drugs and that misuse completely ruined my family.

"I now know I don't have a drugs problem; I have a 'Ged' problem. That's been identified by the work we do here. Underneath all of this ego and bravado is a kind, compassionate person. But also, fundamentally, I'm dishonest, manipulative, greedy and selfish. Through The Well I've been able to get to the core of what's made me tick. It means I can finally accept what I've done in the past and ask myself and other people for forgiveness.



Ged Pickersgill: 'I'm not your stereotypical alcoholic'

"The 12-step programme is just one of many intervention programmes on offer here. For me it's worked and taken me out of myself to realise I'm not at the centre of everything.

"I've engaged in more than 30 courses on things like relationships without conflict and parenting.

"The wonderful thing is that we are able to reconnect families through The Well. When I see that happen - a daughter meet the father she's not seen for a long time - that makes me realise why I do what I do now.

"This is a faith-based programme. People are offered the chance to answer to their God as they walk the journey. I'm continuing to work towards that and at the end of each day I centre myself and look at my behaviour towards everyone I've met."

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Carlisle Diocese

By The Way

'Lord, come quickly!'

THE cry of Advent is: "Lord, come quickly!" But as we try to stir God into urgent action, we become grateful for his patience. What if he were to come now? Am I ready for that? Too often we are part of the problem rather than the solution. In truth, we are not quite ready for him. Advent tugs us simultaneously towards a longing for urgent resolution and towards greater patience. The answer to "Lord, come quickly" is "May the Lord, when he comes, find us watching and waiting".

Stewart Fyfe, North Westmorland News

AS we prepare to sing those familiar carols and read the Christmas story once more, we begin to ask ourselves how we can bring something new to this familiar story? Well, maybe that is the wrong question. Perhaps we should be asking ourselves, 'What new gift can I bring to Jesus this Christmas?' What do I need to do to see the unfamiliar in the familiar?

Debbie Harkness, Newslink, South West Cumbria United Area

THE season of peace and goodwill is days away. We will wish each other a happy Christmas and peaceful New Year, but this remains a wish if we aren't prepared to do something to bring it about. I came across an anonymous quote recently, which chimes with a quote from Gandhi. It is: "Be the reason someone believes in the goodness of people." Don't you think this would make a wonderful New Year's resolution for us all?

Nigel Davies, Parish News, St George, Kendal

I WOULD like to thank all those who have helped with the flowers, cleaning of the brass and the church throughout the year. Thanks also to Wreay School for their donation to the food bank at harvest time and all those who contributed throughout the year. Wishing you a merry Christmas and a happy 2019.

Jennifer Johnson, St Mary's Church, Wreay

I FIND such generosity in many people of faith, and I think that is just one of the things that has drawn me to faith. So why do I find Christmas so appealing? Because it reminds me of what has been given by God. It encourages me to value that gift and to share in the joy of giving with God himself. I wish you all a peaceful and joyful Christmas and pray that you are able to receive and give gifts, and that by doing both you will have so much pleasure.

Bill Heatley, The Link, Holy Trinity and St Barnabas with Sandsfield Fellowship

AROUND the beginning of March, two Iranian ladies started attending Egremont Methodist Church - Sedigheh and her daughter Sanaz. They were welcomed by many in the congregation, often involving hugs, because neither of them spoke good English. Ever since then, Sedigheh and Sanaz have been two of the most regular members of the weekly congregation, attending nearly every Sunday.

Egremont Methodist Church

ST MARY'S has been a member of Churches Together in Wigton for many years. This forms a link with Low Moor Evangelical Church, St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Church and the Methodists in Wigton. In addition, we are now members of the Solway Plain Mission Community which brings together many of the churches in the area of Wigton, Silloth and Aspatria.

St Mary's, Wigton

THANK you to those who quietly but inconspicuously support KPC's concern for world mission and so link with brothers and sisters in many different situations. These include: those who have put donations in the boxes for Manna House, Springfield Hostel and the Food Bank; those who have signed up to help provide meals for this winter's night shelter; those who pray regularly for Andrew and Maria Leake or who support their work financially; those who have contributed through Christian Aid or other agencies to the crucial relief work following the tsunami in Indonesia.

Michael Hunter, Parish Life, Holy Trinity Parish Church Kendal

Axe looming over city's night-time Street Pastors

■ Dwindling funds and lack of volunteers threatens project that offers help to vulnerable

By Dave Roberts

A CITY centre church scheme supporting vulnerable people on the streets may operate only for five more years due to dwindling funds and volunteers.

The Carlisle Street Pastors project was set up in 2010 through Churches Together in Cumbria. The inter-denominational group initially had more than 20 volunteers. They take to the city's streets on Saturday nights from 10pm to 3am, offering help where needed to those on nights out.

The group, which runs under the national umbrella organisation the Ascension Trust, offers flip-flops to people who may have lost shoes, organises taxis for those who may be vulnerable through drink and collects bottles and glasses from the streets, working in consultation with Cumbria Constabulary.

While they cannot actively spread a Gospel message, they remain a Christian presence on the streets at night. Members are able to explain to those people who ask why they serve in this way.

But the number of volunteers has fallen to 13 and the group is having to draw on financial reserves. It means they may be able to operate only for five more years.

Kathy Howe, who was one of the first volunteers and is now the group's co-ordinator, said: "At the moment we don't have enough people to put out a team every week. Each team must include at



Dedicated: Street Pastors Kathy and David Howe

ALL PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS

least one man, one woman and a senior street pastor. Some weeks we simply can't meet those requirements."

Coupled with the fall-off in volunteers, the group is eating into its reserves. When first set up, it received a £5,000 grant and co-ordinators say they remain grateful for the regular support given by churches and businesses. A city centre church provides a room every Saturday, free of charge, from which the Street

Pastors can work. Group members say they continue to trust that God will provide but it is important a close eye is kept on their financial forecast.

David Howe, who chairs the group, explained: "Because the population base up here is smaller, we don't have 10 or 15 people coming to us for training at any one time. So we're faced with one or two people coming forward."

"That means we have to send our individual trainees to Preston,

Glasgow, Edinburgh or Hawick, so it's a couple of hundred pounds each time we train someone.

"We pay for the majority of hand-outs we give to people, such as the flip-flops. There are uniform costs and also payments that have to be made to the Ascension Trust to cover admin. It means our expenditure is outstripping our income."

■ *If you would like to offer financial support to Carlisle Street Pastors or become a volunteer, contact Kathy Howe on 01228 511819.*

New church plant finds home in unlikely spot



The Rev Robin Ham: 'It's tough but exciting'

A WORKING Men's Club is the surprise home of a new church plant in south Cumbria.

Grace Church has been set up by Pioneer Minister, Rev Robin Ham, in the Holbeck and Roose districts of Barrow, which were without a church following closures in recent years.

Initially, the congregation met on Sunday afternoons at a local primary. But, since October, services have been held on Sunday mornings in the Roose Conservative Working Men's Club.

Robin, who lives near the new venue, said: "During my curacy in the town I was working with Rev Gary Cregeen and the two congregations he leads while also looking towards trying to get something going here."

"For the first year we concen-

trated on meeting Christians in the area to pray together and we ran a Lent group. In year two we started a Sunday afternoon family event, but the prayer was always to step out and grow a committed church community, so Grace Church was born in autumn 2017.

"A number of people we'd got to know through mid-week community groups suggested Sunday afternoons were typically 'family time' for them. So we've acted, moving from the school to the Working Men's Club and to a Sunday morning."

Services are described as informal, community-led and family-friendly. All worship includes singing, prayers and a Bible thought, with refreshments provided. Communion is celebrated once a month.

Church planting traditionally sees a mother church send out some of its congregation to set up a new worship community. That's not happened for Grace Church, although there's been welcome support from other local churches.

Robin admits that this style of pioneer planting is not easy.

"A traditional church plant sees people who embody the 'DNA' of the mother church move to a new setting. Instead we're working from scratch. Rather than having a core team we feel we are growing one. That can be tough but it's exciting at the same time."

As for the new relationship between church and club, Robin says things are going well. "The club is naturally happy that they have a regular booking which will benefit them financially," he added.

By The Way

Hydro grant awarded

HOPES for a green energy project to generate electricity from our streams have been encouraged by the award of a grant to explore potential sites. The four parishes of Blindbothe, Buttermere, Lorton and Loweswater, working through the Melbreak Communities Hydro Action Group, have won a grant from the Rural Community Energy Fund to carry out a feasibility study on three sites, to see if any of them would be suitable.

The Link, United Benefice of Lorton and Loweswater with Buttermere

WHILE the practical day-to-day things around us matter a great deal, our attitudes and relationships matter even more. Of course, that doesn't mean life will become a bed of roses just because we value our faith above all things. As Jesus discovered, preaching God's word and following his path still managed to upset many in authority.

Parish Magazine, Benefice of Egremont with Bigg and Haile

ASPATRIA Methodist Church has always been part of a wider family of Methodist churches across the area and, in facing some of the challenges that lie ahead, we are now working more closely together. That process has involved bringing our five churches under one umbrella and so you will start to see the name 'Cornerstone Methodist Church' appearing.

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

WELL, before we knew it, it was October and a year since we moved here. I can honestly say I absolutely love it here. I have never been so happy. In a way, it seems like we have had a year on holiday, but I'm also living the dream. Cumbria and Allonby is home now.

Rose Harper, Allonby Beachcomber Monthly Village Newsletter

I HAVE always been impressed by the gentle, quiet spirit of David (Firth). Never forceful. Never undermining people, but revealing a Holy and Godly man, whose life and ministry has been grounded in prayer, reading the Bible and worship. I along with you am thankful for the ministry which David has brought to Wigton Road Church.

Richard Teal, The Messenger, Wigton Road Methodist Church

WE had a real treat for our September meeting, as local author Ruth Sutton came to talk to us. Originally from West Cumbria, Ruth started her career as a secondary school teacher, climbed the ladder into the education authority and, at 40, decided to go freelance, travelling the world as an education adviser. She came back home to west Cumbria, and at 60 started writing. After some rejections, her first book A Good Liar was published in 2012.

Liz Bell, St Bridget's Parish News

NO ONE ever said that being a Christian was easy - that's because it's not. But as we wrestle with our faith and seek out God's way in our lives, we can always find comfort in the fact that God wants us to succeed and that we travel not on our own but as brothers and sisters in Christ.

David Stretton, The Stricklandgater, Stricklandgate Methodist Church, Kendal

IN October I conducted my 773rd funeral service. This fact is sad, not because of the number of funerals - death is a fact of life and part of my job - but because you have a rector who counts them! Perhaps it is easy for the clergy to get complacent about death. An audible gasp as a body was buried brought me back to my senses. The earth is the destination of our physical bodies. This reminder of the destiny for the body we spend so much time, money and mental energy on keeping fit, healthy and comfortable, brings matters into perspective.

Bill White, Together Community Newsletter, Matterdale, Watermillock, Patterdale, Greystoke, Penruddock and Mungrisdale

DOWN YOUR WAY... FRESH EXPRESSIONS

EDUCATION & OUTDOORS

Everyone Together, Leven Valley CE Primary

'EVERYONE Together' is an opportunity for children, staff, families and church members to spend time together in shared craft activities, worship and food.

Each session is based on a theme or story, which acts as a stimulus for the craft activities and a focus for our time of worship.

Adults and children alike get involved as equals, talking and engaging with one another, building relationships.

Usually, one of the crafts can be taken home, while others are used to create a joint display that might go to the churches in our area.

Refreshments are generously provided by church members - food is very much a key component of these sessions.

Because of the preparation involved, Everyone Together happens only once a term, but this means it's looked forward to, and



Building: Children and adults get involved as equals

talked about afterwards.

Feedback has been very positive. The opportunity to have time to talk to one another in the midst of busy lives seems particularly important to people.

IAN NICOL, headteacher, Leven Valley CE Primary

HOSPITALITY AND OLDER

Take Tea Out, The Old Plumpton Backstreet Methodist Chapel

AFTER our development in May 2012, we had an opportunity to hold other events in the centre. With up-to-date facilities we could do so much more.

I had always wanted to have an afternoon tea where people could meet and enjoy time together. So in September 2012 we had our first Take Tea Out with 10 people. That was six years ago and now Sylvia Dufton and I prepare up to 50 teas each month.

In December we do a Christmas lunch and are fully booked.

We also take food out to people who are unwell or need a visit with most of the money going to charities. Many friendships have been



Friends: Take Tea Out has become a regular event

made over the years. We have been blessed. You should hear the laughter and chatter! It's great!

SHEILA MALLINSON, senior steward, Cottagewood Methodist Chapel

NEW MONASTIC AND ALTERNATIVE SPIRITUALITY

St Kentigern School

WHILE participation in religion is falling away, surveys show that we haven't become universally atheist. About 75 per cent of people still long for the 'something other'.

The penny dropped for me when a wise teacher told me that Jesus asked us to believe in him, not about him. The 'in' suggests a (loving) relationship, a personal encounter not contingent upon doctrine or theology.

I think that is what huge numbers of people are still looking for, the direct relationship with the beloved.

That's what contemplation is all about, unity with the presence, a condition of 'prayer without

ceasing'. Contemplation as a condition can't be taught; there is no 'method'. What we can do, however, is cultivate readiness for that condition to arise through certain forms of prayer, worship, reflections and insight exercises.

That's what the Kentigern School is all about - a gathering of fellow wanderers who've tried lots of other approaches; willing to go through a six-month programme rooted primarily in the wisdom teachings of that master contemplative, Jesus.

For more information, please phone 01768 779000. REV PROF STEPHEN WRIGHT



Immersed: Young people raising money for a trip to Bosnia by doing a sponsored swim

YOUTH Ignite, Grange-over-Sands

IGNITE is a cell church run by the Network Youth Church in Grange-over-Sands. We have been meeting for more than two years in a house.

Ignite seeks to build community around fun, worship, bible, prayer and hot chocolate and it has been a pleasure to see young people grow and develop. Some of the young people who attend

are from local churches, while others are unchurched, and it has been great to see a few make a conscious decision to follow Jesus.

In Easter 2019, four young people from Ignite are going to Sarajevo in Bosnia with Youth With A Mission, and we are currently fundraising for the cost. The hope is that the trip will immerse the young people in another culture and be a life-changing experience, which is what Ignite is all about.

CHRIS MASON, Ignite Network Youth Church leader

Reaching more people in more ways than before

By Richard Passmore, Fresh Expressions Enabler

WITH nearly 100 people attending this year's Fresh Expressions Conference in November, these are exciting times.

Last year we recorded 99 Fresh Expressions (FX) across Cumbria, with on average 30 people attending.

We are reaching more people in more ways than ever before, and to help support this we have started to group the new FXs around seven themes.

To help we're using the centre spread of *The Way* to highlight one FX from each theme. It gives a flavour of what is happening across the county.

Each new FX must be missional (engaging new people), contextual (growing church through listening and serving the community), formational (growing new disciples) and ecclesial (intentionally being and growing church).

So Fresh Expressions are church, engaging new people, and in many places working closely with established churches to see ideas emerge.



Wild: Making bird boxes on a National Trust estate

SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE, RURAL AND BUILDINGS Organic, Kirkby Thore

ORGANIC is a network of Fresh Expressions in Rural Cumbria centred around Kirkby Thore.

There is a regular monthly cycle of all-age gatherings: Messy, Breakfast, Family and Wild. These meet for worship, bible, prayer and food in various creative ways across several locations. They try to maintain a focus beyond themselves to God, neighbour and creation. The aim is to be a community of blessing where all are welcome.

It began four years ago when, as newly arrived house-for-duty pioneer ministers myself and my wife, Kristy, were looking for a way to get to know local people.

Using the tried and tested model of Messy Church we gathered a number of families who were

willing to work together to organise and run something for their children every month in the village hall.

From those beginnings there has been further branching, experimentation and evolution by following the passions of different people.

The most recent addition to the network is Wild. This grew from one person's past work in conservation and is a way of worshipping God in and through creation.

Our most recent gathering was at a National Trust property where we reflected on God's love and care for his creation and our role as stewards. We made bird boxes and, with the help of the local ranger, hung them around the estate.

DAN PATTIMORE, pioneer minister

ADDRESSING DEPRIVATION Foodshare, Whitehaven



Invitation: Foodshare prepares to open its doors

AT FOODSHARE in Whitehaven, every Tuesday afternoon, volunteers make up 50 food bags and set out St Nicholas' Café with tea, sandwiches and cake.

At 4pm, we open our doors and invite all to share in God's generous provision regardless of rank, status or income.

After the food share, we offer prayer and discussion of the Scriptures.

We see people in all sorts of states, often pitifully thin and struggling with mental health issues.

Many have so little them-

selves, and yet they bless volunteers with presents, and we hear stories of their own generosity - a shower for someone sleeping rough, food taken to those too ill to come, and love shared in the forgotten places of our town.

The food, which would otherwise have gone to landfill, comes from two charities - Recycling Lives and Fareshare.

Interested in doing this? Please email me, Alison Riley at alidunnuk@yahoo.co.uk or phone/text 07787 508391.

REV ALISON RILEY, Foodshare co-ordinator

CHILDREN AND MESSY Messy Vintage, Kendal

THIS term we launched 'Messy Vintage', a programme based on the benefits of relationships between the very old and the young.

Through regular visits - with play, creativity, music and stories - we link care homes in the parish with schools and our baby and toddler group. We share about God through our activities with singing, crafts and a brief 'thought for the day'.

Weekly sessions mean everyone can visit or get a visit at least once a month and we conclude with an end-of-term 'Messy Service' with the children and the team providing reflections, activities, music and refreshments.

It took a lot of careful planning, but we saw the benefits to both groups almost immediately.

It's truly beautiful to see the residents and children interact through conversation, games including dominoes and bowling, exploring books and toys, making art and saying goodbye with hugs and waving.

LIBBY TULLEY, children's worker, Holy Trinity, Kendal



Interacting: Young and old meet through Messy Vintage

By The Way

A cargo of vitamin C

I GREW up with the sound of middle C ringing in my ears – from the fog horn of the Needles Light, now long silenced. My mother could still recall the sinking of the Varvassi, wrecked on the Needles in 1947. Its cargo of tangerines provided welcome bounty for the West Wight in the post-war austerity.

Proclaim, Parish Magazine of North Barrow Team Ministry, St James the Great & St Francis

I BELIEVE God has brought me specifically to Barrow. When we were back in Norway, our co-ordinators were trying to match the interns up to a placement. This is where they placed me and I believed it is the place God wants and needs me to be.

Sara Thu, Norwegian Mission Society Intern in Barrow, Team Talk, Parishes of St Aidan's and St George's with St Luke's, Barrow

AT the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." If we claim to follow Jesus we are called to be peacemakers in our homes, our families, our communities and in the world. Peace-making is a divine work.

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

IN times of war, the weakest often suffer the most, but war can also bring out great strengths in people. It has been said there are no heroes, just ordinary people doing extraordinary things. The same might be said of the church heroes, the saints and holy ones of old.

Peter Blackett, Parish Magazine, St Bride's Parish Church, Kirkbride and St John's, Newton Arlosh

BUILDING communities so that all can find a place, where people's voices are heard, is crucial. Creating communities where everyone is valued and can contribute is what life is all about. Such purposeful activity will ultimately result in an outbreak of genuine happiness in this country and the world.

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

I THINK my body is doing a bit of a double take as we move into autumn. I arrived here at the end of August, when it was early spring in New Zealand after a cold, wet and windy winter. Adjusting to early autumn wasn't a big deal, as the weather wasn't that different. Now November is looming large and my system is saying, "What happened to summer?"

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

ABOUT 30 ladies, including guests from Cockermouth and Cleator WIs, enjoyed a talk by Annie Mawson, of the Sunbeam Trust. This is a marvellous organisation, based near Penrith, that provides music therapy for people of all ages with disabilities or dementia. Annie also played the harp and sang for us.

Dean WI, Dean Parish News

WORK continues on re-slating the Penrith Parish Centre roof and so far we are fortunate that very little timber rot has been found. Solar panels, to reduce our carbon footprint and energy costs, have now been fitted. Although they have added to the original £100,000 cost the trustee/directors made the decision to go ahead with the in-roof panels, rather than surface-mounted, so further scaffolding costs would not be incurred.

Lesley Ridley, Penrith Beacon

THANK you so much for all the cards, practical help and well wishes for us all as a family following Michael's illness. Following a small heart attack at the start of October, he was admitted to RUJ and then Blackpool Victoria Hospital where he had a double bypass operation. He is now recovering well at home. It has been a bit of a shock for us all, but we have appreciated everyone's prayers and support which have helped us through the darkest days. Thank you all. Michelle, Michael, James and Eleanor.

Two Valleys Parish News

Craig brings his National Theatre skills to cathedral

■ Appointment of head of visitor services closely linked to Lottery-funded Fraternity Project

By Dave Roberts

A FORMER National Theatre administrator has been appointed Carlisle Cathedral's new head of visitor services.

Craig Carruthers, 45, took up the post in October, having worked as a box office operations manager at the London venue for 15 years and latterly for three years at the Florence Arts Centre in Egremont.

The appointment is closely linked to the cathedral's Fraternity Project which has already secured Heritage Lottery Funding. The aim is to make the historic Fraternity building accessible to the whole community, develop learning opportunities and provide a new space for schools and educational groups. A new visitor café and hospitality area will also be created.

Craig, who is originally from Carlisle, said: "I wanted to move back to somewhere which is a smaller community but one where you can more readily see the effects you are having on the people who use that space."

"There's a far greater sense of community in a place like the cathedral than there would be in a building such as the National. My main aim is to keep the cathedral on the map and to strengthen that position. Obviously, the Fraternity Project will be an important means of achieving that and my job is closely allied to that."



Craig Carruthers: 'A 21st-century faith, arts and cultural venue'

DAVE ROBERTS

Craig's role is a first for the cathedral. While he does not profess to have an active faith, he says he identifies with the cathedral as a living worship space.

He added: "Of course the cathedral is a place of worship but it's also one for people of no faith or those exploring their faith. We're looking to bring a vision of the cathedral as a 21st-century faith, arts and cultural venue."

"Put simply, our aim is that it becomes a destination in Carlisle which is for everybody. It's my job to get that message across."

Further plans could see an events manager appointed who would work closely with Craig.

The Very Rev Mark Boyling, Dean of Carlisle, said: "The cathedral building and precinct is already one of the most visited sites in the city. In recent years we

have worked hard to increase the number of people who are drawn to the cathedral, be it for a time of worship, quiet contemplation or an exploration of its rich history and the stories which lie behind that.

"Our prayer is that the Fraternity Project will reinforce the cathedral's place in the heart of the city and we see Craig's appointment as another step in opening up this amazing building to new audiences."

Our churches top for history and atmosphere

CUMBRIA'S rich church history has been deemed England's best in a national survey of more than 2,000 places of worship.

And that's no surprise as church buildings are a constant feature of the county's landscape. They are often the oldest building within a parish, contributing to the traditional iconography of our towns, villages and rural landscapes.

They are some of the most architecturally, culturally and historically significant buildings in an area.

The Churches Trust for Cumbria, working in conjunction with the National Churches Trust (NCT), features more than 80 Cumbrian churches on its ExploreChurches website.

A recent NCT survey compared and rated more than 2,000 English churches for their architecture, historic value, atmosphere and famous connections to create a



Famous connection: St Oswald's, Grasmere is Wordsworth's burial place

CHURCHES TRUST FOR CUMBRIA

national map for heritage hunters.

Cumbria topped the poll for historic value, with the most churches (54 per cent) having a connection to celebrated figures or historical events, pushing London into second place.

William Wordsworth is buried at the church of St Oswald's, Grasmere, and some chapels in the north of Cumbria are built with stones from Hadrian's Wall.

Our churches were also deemed the most atmospheric having the

highest percentage of those offering atmospheric surroundings (78 per cent), offering the best in 'other-worldly' ambience.

Jayne Potts, development officer for the Churches Trust for Cumbria and self-confessed 'church crawler', said: "It is important our buildings are open and welcoming; people visit churches for a number of reasons. We want to make sure they remain open for religious and community use, but we also want to celebrate their tremendous heritage."

"Every church has something unique about it, with a story to tell. Sometimes it is just taking the time to look. Recently I found a squirrel carved in the end of a pew, something the church warden had never noticed before."

■ For more on ExploreChurches and faith tourism, contact Jayne Potts via jayne@ctfc.org.uk or phone her on 07979 606131.

■ Encounter with Jesus brought Steve back from the brink after breakdown 'He couldn't think or talk. All he could do was cry...'

By Dave Roberts

CHRISTMAS Eve 2001 and Steve Scoulding stood on the banks of a river, threatening to end his life.

He'd reached breaking point; the pressures of work, home life and money issues were too much to bear for this Metropolitan Police officer.

Steve was drinking too much, the relationship with his wife, Mel, was breaking down and he'd just lost his dad. Mel managed to talk him away from the water's edge that day.

She said: "Even though we'd been talking for months about the difficulties, Steve just wanted God to take him away from everything. He had decided he couldn't carry on. But I told him that if he went in, I'd go in after him."

Before Steve fell ill, he'd returned to church, having previously attended an Anglican church with Mel more than 20 years before. The couple had originally met at a church youth group.

Further support came in the form of a police motorcyclist who used to partner Steve and who was a member of the Salvation Army. He put Steve in touch with an army officer who reached out to the family. It was suggested he and Mel take part in an Alpha course.

"I knew our marriage was in such a state that I had to say yes to the course," Mel said. "But the day before we were due to go, Steve had a complete breakdown. He couldn't think or talk. All he could do was cry. It was awful."

Salvation Army officer, Major Malcolm Westwood,



Together in faith: Mel and Steve Scoulding

DAVE ROBERTS

visited the couple's house and offered help through scripture, in particular Psalm 139.

Steve said: "I explained how I felt as if I was in a black space with my hands, feet and mouth gaffer-taped; I couldn't move. So Malcolm sat and read the Psalm telling me that God would go to the ends of the earth for me.

"With that I felt someone sit next to me. He touched me and said, 'I've never left you, Steve. Now we've got to get you better.' Whether that was reality or my state of mind, I'm prepared to believe I saw Jesus. With that encounter the light came back and the fight began."

Ever since, the couple's faith has been at the centre of their lives. They made it to the

Alpha course and, eight weeks after first walking through the doors of the Army's hall, they were soldiers.

By 2003 Steve had made a phased return to work. The couple ran Alpha courses in prisons and Mel offered ministry within the Civil Service, where she worked. A leadership conference followed in 2008 at the Salvation Army's London headquarters.

Steve retired from the Met in 2009, which meant the couple could enter training to be army officers. Their first appointment saw them move to Jersey for six years.

"It was a wonderful time in Jersey but it was tough too," Mel said. "Being so far away from family was not easy but

the work we were involved with was transformative."

It's a family transformed through faith – Steve's mum is now a Salvationist; their son, Mark, is an officer; and Steve's brother and sister-in-law are soldiers. In 2017 they were posted to Carlisle, both as captains, to take on the city-centre ministry.

Both Steve and Mel are members of the God for All strategy steering group. They remain passionate evangelists.

"People often think the Salvation Army is a charity and not a church," Mel said.

"It's a privilege to be able to tell them why we do what we do, how we've been touched by Jesus and how we want others to feel that love."

WHAT'S ON AROUND CUMBRIA

NEW YEAR'S EVE HOUSE PARTY

Sat Dec 29 to Wed Jan 2, Rydal Hall, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9LX

Welcome the New Year with fun and reflection. Cost is £425 per person, full board. To book contact 015394 32050 or mail@rydalahall.org.

LOVE IS - SIN ISN'T

Sat Jan 26, 10am for 10.30am-3.30pm, Ambleside Parish Centre, Vicarage Rd, Ambleside LA22 9DH

Bob Morley leads a day of meditation, lectio divina and time to talk. Cost is £10. Please bring your own lunch. To book contact Richard Broughton on 01946 862990 or cmcwccm@fastmail.fm.

LIVING WITH THE MYSTICS

Tues Feb 5, 10am for 10.30am-3pm, Friends Meeting House, Elliot Park, Keswick

Helen Chalmers leads a day about the Persian mystic poet, Rumi. Cost is £5. Drinks are provided but please bring your own lunch. To book contact Bob Morley on 016974 72644 or rgm1@live.co.uk.

CREATIVE WRITING WEEK

Mon Feb 11 to Fri 15, Thornleigh Christian Hotel, 26 The Esplanade, Grange-Over-Sands, LA11 7HH

Gill Henn leads a five-day workshop. Cost is £225 for four nights' dinner, bed and breakfast and all sessions. Contact 015395 32733 or office@thornleigh.org.

QUIET DAY

Fri March 1, 10am-4pm, Rydal Hall, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9LX

Mountain Pilgrims' founder John Fleetwood leads a day looking at what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in a modern context and to develop helpful rhythms to lead God-centred lives building on the Celtic tradition. Bring a packed lunch. There is no cost but booking is required via 015394 32050 or mail@rydalahall.org.

THE HYNING RETREAT

Fri March 29 to Sun 31, Monastery of Our Lady of Hynning, LA5 9SE

Anthony Finnerty leads a residential course on The Wayless Way of Meister Eckhart. Cost is £130 (concessions, £100). Contact Richard Broughton on 01946 862990 or cmcwccm@fastmail.fm.

LAKELAND WRITING RETREAT

Tues April 23 to Thurs 25, Rydal Hall, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9LX

Novelist and journalist, Angela Locke, leads this retreat, suitable for beginners, seeking to inspire writers through the Lake District scenery. Cost is £252 per person for dinner, bed and breakfast. To book contact 015394 32050 or mail@rydalahall.org.

DAY RETREAT

Sat May 11, 10am for 10.30am-3.30pm, Ambleside Parish Centre, Vicarage Rd, Ambleside LA22 9DH

Neil Douglas-Klotz leads the day. People are invited to give a voluntary contribution of £20. Drinks are provided but please bring your own lunch. To book contact Richard Broughton on 01946 862990 or cmcwccm@fastmail.fm.

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By The Way

Call for hall volunteers

AT the last meeting of the Bampton Memorial Hall, the committee decided it was time to start taking a longer-term view of the hall's future. It is an amenity which is much enjoyed by us all but as it was built in the 1950s it now requires work to keep it functional for the community. We are therefore asking for volunteers who would be interested in joining a small working party to consider how we can ensure its long-term future.

Lesley White, Bampton Parish Newsletter

FRIENDS Sunday was held on October 14 and thanks go to the Rev Geoff Turner for his thought-provoking and humorous sermon on the theme of friendship. The service was followed by the Friends AGM, where chairman, John Lomax, reminded everyone of the successful work the Friends do in raising funds for the Beetham Church Heritage Trust.

The Gateway, Parish Church of St Michael and All Angels, Beetham

THANK you to everyone who took part in the Macmillan Coffee Morning which raised £340 – and those who gave a donation even though they couldn't get there on the day. My personal thanks go to the wonderful team that set up, welcomed everyone, served teas and coffees and packed away, as well as everyone who baked.

Kay Robinson, Raughton Head Parish

OUR faith won't grow if we try to hide or run away. We need to step out and meet him where he calls us to be. That isn't always easy but the more we do it the more we will experience God working actively in our lives and the more our faith will grow. And not only will we be blessed, but God will bless others too, through us, which is wonderful.

Bryan Rothwell, Solway Plain Team

THE rhythms of the seasons and the cycles of the church calendar continue to influence our church life. In the short term, Christmas is coming. There will be carol services and crib dedications. Let's plan to celebrate Christ's birth and to share our celebration with joy.

Wendy Kilworth-Mason, In Touch, Seascale and Gosforth Methodist Churches

Vicar arrives in Cumbria with her full flock in tow

By Dave Roberts

A NEWLY appointed Cumbrian vicar has arrived in the county along with her own ready-made flock – of sheep that is!

The Rev Angela Hughes has taken up post as House for Duty Priest in Charge in the benefice of Lanercost, Walton, Gilsland and Nether Denton.

She arrived in the county along with her 23 rare-breed sheep – ten Hebrideans, eight badger-faced Welsh mountains and five Manx loaghtans – and eight sheepdogs which she trials regularly.

It's a passion which dates back many years with Angela having previously trained Border collies in agility, obedience and working trials. A love of sheep – she bred one of England's best flocks of Manx Loaghtans for show – eventually led to sheepdog trials.

Angela explained: "When I had a dog which was safe to work with sheep it was great fun to start going to trials.

"I've had a huge welcome from people here. In the past I have occasionally struggled to find somewhere to keep my sheep but up here parishioners have been very generous in finding fields for them.

"For the first eight days that I was living in Lanercost, and be-

Angela brings rare breeds and eight sheepdogs

fore I could start in post, I went to seven trials. It's been great.

"The funny thing is that people assume I had a rural upbringing but I was born in Brighton, so it's maybe not what you might expect."

Angela, 66, is officially retired but as house for duty she will be available for parish work on Sundays and two other days. It means she will have more opportunity to devote to her pastime.

A school teacher for 16 years, Angela trained as a reader before being ordained in 1992 and priested two years later. Next year she celebrates 25 years in ministry, having served in Worcester, Leicester, Lincoln, Brechin and Peterborough dioceses before her move to the Diocese of Carlisle.

"God's timing has brought me here, though I've wanted to be in Cumbria for a long time," Angela explained. "I've always felt drawn to minister in the north. An added bonus is that it's a great base for the sheepdog trials."

Angela now shares the vicarage in Lanercost with her eight dogs – Frost, Joe, Vic, Jill, Alf, Jet, Ghost and Glen. Together they have won a number of nursery and novice trials, though she has yet to be placed in the top six at an open trial.

And as for her 'flock' of parishioners across the benefice, Angela jokes: "The sheep may be a little bit easier as I can get the dogs to help me. That wouldn't work quite so well with the human flock."



Good shepherd: Angela with Frost

DAVE ROBERTS

Alex Haynes

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What is prayer? Learn from St Aidan

By Rev Canon
Cameron Butland,
Cumbria Ecumenical
Spirituality Group

the community, witnessing the impending death of his friend and king, they prayed 'holding on in love'.

Many people ask what we can do in our world when we feel powerless. Apologetically, we sometimes mumble that we could "say a prayer, if you like". We should be more positive than this; our calling is to put prayer first.

The Cumbria Community of Prayer (CCP) seeks to do just this. CCP is a network of prayer groups and individuals coming together to hold the county in prayer; to receive prayer requests and to pray for one another on a daily basis.

So, what was Aidan's prayer? "Look Lord, what mischief does!"

"Is that it?" you may ask. Yes. Aidan and his community believed all was in God's hands; they didn't need to say anything else, rather to focus their attention in prayer on those who they loved.

We too should pray after this example. The CCP provides a framework for us all to pray as part of a much bigger group. Like many, I have seen the power of prayer to change and transform lives, but that power comes not from us but from the Spirit working through the world.

What happened as Aidan and his community prayed in 635? Well, the wind changed direction and Penda's fires, meant to destroy Bamburgh, started to consume his invading army. He and his troops packed up and left – never to return.

■ Network helps Syrian refugees find homes, jobs, friendship and a new, secure life in Penrith

Everybody needs 'their place'

By Dave Roberts

WALAA Asfar's face lights up as she talks about her dream to open a Syrian café in Penrith town centre.

The 26-year-old and her family moved to the town in April 2017, some of the 285 refugees welcomed to the county as part of the Home Office and United Nations' Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

In total 20,000 people are being supported across the UK. Another refugee family is also based in Penrith.

Both families and other refugees are being supported by the Penrith and Eden Refugee Network, which includes significant input from the local faith community including the town's mosque.

The network's chair, Sarah Wilson, explained: "Our ethos is all about helping people to integrate into their community. Everybody needs a place in which they feel they belong; to find their place. Everybody needs friendship, family, acquaintances, an introduction to social projects and clubs and to jobs. That's what we're here to help with. Essentially it is about being good neighbours.

"We're fortunate in Penrith and Eden that we have people who wanted to help achieve that for the families who are now here. It's been wonderful to welcome them; our town is enriched by their presence."

Founded a couple of years ago, the network's first meeting was held at the Haydock Community Centre which belongs to St



Welcome: Refugee families enjoying a picnic with local people in Penrith

Catherine's Catholic Church. Organisers expected half a dozen people to attend; more than 60 turned up.

Local services and community groups are learning how to welcome refugees into the community. The regular summertime informal 'Great Get Together' picnics in the town's Castle Park are popular.

Penrith Quakers have also partnered with the network in launching the social media project #PenrithWelcomesRefugees. This makes links with nearby dispersal towns and cities, where many refugees and asylum seekers live who are not part of the Government programme but need support.

Sarah added: "Often these people simply stay put in these places but it's important they have a choice to consider what location would be best for them."

Local churches continue to support the grassroots group, with many volunteers coming from congregations in and around the town. The Diocese of Carlisle's charity OpShop offers work opportunities while, each

year, Churches Together in Penrith invites a group of asylum seekers and refugees from Newcastle to Glenridding for a day out.

"The OpShop is a great place for our families to visit," Sarah added. "You can be sure to find good second-hand goods. When you walk in wearing a head scarf you are greeted with 'Salaam-Alaikum', the Arabic greeting meaning 'Peace be unto you'. There couldn't be a warmer welcome.

"Churches have always been a tremendous support for the good causes of this world. It's amazing just how many volunteers with the network also go to church and are Christians."

It is hoped the town will welcome new asylum seekers and refugees to Penrith next year.

Sarah said: "While we would encourage anyone who may feel isolated to make contact we recognise we have core skills in areas such as translation which would be of particular help."

■ For more information, visit www.penrithandeden-refugeenetwork.org.



Syrian refugee Walaa Asfar: 'I love to cook. It makes me happy'

'I know my kids are safe, they are at school and they have food'

"I WAS able to send my mum pictures on my phone of me cooking Syrian dishes for people here in Penrith," Walaa Asfar explains. "When she saw those she knew I was safe and she was happy."

Walaa and her husband, Mustafa, are forging a new life for themselves and their three children in Cumbria, having had to flee Syria as civil war raged.

When the conflict began in 2011, the family were living in Idlib in north-west Syria, a former stronghold of the armed opposition against the Assad regime.

Sustained bombing saw Walaa, Mustafa and their extended families move from city to city, eventually living in school buildings near the Turkish border.

"It was very bad," Walaa says. "It was war. Everything

had gone. It wasn't safe for our kids or us to stay."

A perilous bus trip saw the family make it to Lebanon before their relocation to the UK as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

In April 2017, they arrived in Penrith. Two of their children are now pupils at a local school, while their youngest attends a nursery in the town.

Mustafa is able to worship at Penrith's mosque and Walaa has enrolled on a catering course at Carlisle College.

The family are integrating into their new community, although Walaa admits it can be hard. She says they are thankful for the support of volunteers from the Penrith and Eden Refugee Net-

work and Penrith's OpShop who have made them welcome and helped practically.

She has repaid that kindness by cooking Syrian dishes for OpShop customers as part of the Penrith on a Plate food festival as well as serving up recipes from her native country at a refugee network meeting.

Walaa adds: "Of course I miss my family who are still in Syria but at least I know my kids are safe, they are at school and they have food. It's a very different life here; things can be difficult but people have helped us a lot.

"And my dream for the future? I love to cook. It makes me happy. I don't want a big restaurant. I would be happy with a kitchen and one table to serve Syrian food to people here in Penrith."

Mike Angelo Photography

PRESS – PUBLICITY – PRESENTATIONS

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

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By The Way

Excited but anxious

GREETINGS! By the time you read this, I hope I will have met most of you in the circuit. Moving here has been very exciting, if not something that has made me at times anxious and apprehensive. Like all new things, walking into the unknown is difficult but we have a promise that Christ walks with us, that God's grace and peace surround us; that the Holy Spirit is equipping us.

Andrew Sterling, Newsletter, Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Tebay Methodist Circuit

I AM encouraged by some branches who are attracting new members, particularly Solway Deanery. This diocese has a bright future ahead with new members joining. We need to encourage new leaders. It is up to you as members to rise to new challenges and be a force to be reckoned with in our churches. I would like to see a Mothers' Union presence in every Mission Community in this diocese.

Jane Conlan, Mothers' Union News

CAROLE Harkins has become a Reader Emeritus. This means she can have a slightly quieter life because, although not 'retired', she will be doing a little bit less. Carole has been a reader at St John's for 27 years and has served the church well. This hasn't just been in the leading of worship, but in a lot of pastoral work. It has all been much appreciated and we thank her for her dedication.

The Observer, St John the Baptist, Upperyby

THE 2019 calendars are now available. As usual they cost £10, which will enable me to give something to the causes I support. These include St Mary's Hospice, Christian Aid and Oxfam as well as the church. This is my eighth calendar and I have been able to donate £1,500 from their sales. I am grateful to those who support me.

Gill de Bourcier, Grapevine, Methodist Churches of Coniston, Swarthmoor & Ulverston

THANK you for the beautiful flowers received after my fall on Anglers' Crag, Ennerdale. At least I had achieved reaching the top and was on the way down when it happened. Fortunately, no major damage was done and my bruises faded more quickly than the flowers.

Fiona Donaldson, Living Stones, Whitehaven URC

MOBILES are a great tool for keeping in touch, getting out of a jam, doing business, keeping safe and even finding your way home. However, I have some reservations... we do get rather attached to them... We do find it hard to stop fiddling with them... We have a tendency to panic when they go missing... And we seem to have become a generation that looks down (at the screen) rather than up (at life, God, at the world).

Andy Murphie, Crosthwaite Parish, Keswick

NEXT autumn when you see geese heading south for the winter, flying in a 'V' formation, you might consider what science has discovered as to why they fly that way. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a 'V' formation the whole flock adds at least 71 per cent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own

Parish Church of St Paul Grange-over-Sands

THE first session of The Ark, the new toddler group run jointly by the Mothers' Union and church members, held its first session in October. There were a small number of visitors aged from five weeks to the grand old age of two years. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, including the helpers.

The Parish of Whitehaven

WE live in one of the most beautiful places in the country. We have the privilege of living in a place where God's creation has not been masked by the concrete jungle! We can still find those 'thin places' in our environment.

Graham Tate, ADRU Benefice News, Aldingham, Dendron, Rampside and Urswick

Easter story to be acted out on streets of Carlisle

■ Auditions to be held in January for all Passion Play roles, including that of Jesus



Isaac Lawrence: Planning a performance of a Passion Play in Carlisle. Other Cumbrian towns, including Kendal inset, have staged similar plays in the past

MAIN PICTURE: DAVE ROBERTS

SPECIAL auditions are set to take place ahead of the ambitious performance of a Passion Play in Carlisle city centre.

Staging will be erected and sound systems rigged in the city's pedestrianised English Street for the performances on Saturday April 13, 2019.

But before that can happen, actors must be cast for the lead roles – including that of Jesus. Auditions are scheduled for January 9 and 11 from 5-9pm at St George's URC in Carlisle.

The performance is the idea of the Rev Isaac Lawrence, vicar of Scotby with Cotehill and Cumwhinton, who in recent months has liaised with Carlisle City Council and the city's faith community.

Isaac said: "The God for All initiative was the catalyst for me to start doing something about staging the play. As I prayed, I felt God's calling to take this play out onto the streets of Carlisle, to take it out to the people who may not readily come to church.

"The Passion Play is such a powerful way in which the story of Christ's trial, death and resurrection can be told which will hopefully move people to ask the simple question, 'Why Jesus?'"

There will be two, hour-long performances of the play on the day at 11am and 2pm. A technical support team has been set up to oversee the recruitment of actors, the staging, sound system, costume and stewarding.

A group of city centre churches

By Dave Roberts

has also committed resources to the event, including two Methodist churches, St George's URC and the Salvation Army (who will provide refreshments on the day). Anglican churches, Carlisle Christian Fellowship and Hebron Evangelical Church are also supporting it.

Organisers have liaised with churches in other towns – such as Kendal – where Passion Plays have been staged and want the Carlisle performances to act as a springboard for people to hear more about the Easter story in their local church.

Open-air meditation and contemplation sessions will be held in the days after the play. Those leading sessions include the Rev Richard Teal, chair of the Cumbria Methodist District, the Rev Sarah Moore, area president of the Cumbria area of the North Western Synod of the URC and the Very Rev Mark Boyling, Dean of Carlisle.

"The Christian church is pretty good at putting on events but not that good on follow-ups," Isaac explained. "So the plan is that we will hold open-air sessions on the Monday, Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday of Holy Week."

John Davies, of Classic Theatre Cumbria, is writing and directing the play which will be performed in the modern idiom. There will be more than 20 speaking parts, as well as live music.

■ For more details, visit www.carlislepassionplay.org, email info@classictheatrecumbria.org or phone 07970 673236.

Campaign enables church to balance books

WE KNOW generosity is a key aspect of the character of God. We see everything in our lives as gifts from God, and we recognise the ultimate gift of God in the birth and death of Jesus Christ and in the promise of eternal life.

So how do we respond to this amazing generosity? Members of Ulverston Parish Church have been exploring just that.

The Rev Canon Alan Bing, rector of Ulverston Parish Church, explained: "We have run 'stewardship campaigns' in the past, but often with few results. This time we decided to look more holistically at the topic of generosity and stewardship.

"We ran a preaching series on a Sunday morning, we looked at money and giving in our small

By Sophie Hodge, Stewardship Enabler

groups and we wrote letters to everyone in our congregations outlining our vision for fulfilling God's mission and ministry in Ulverston, explaining church finances as clearly and transparently as possible. Through including response forms, the letters made it as simple as possible for people to respond to what they had heard on a Sunday morning and in their small groups."

Before the campaign started, some congregation members had reported back that they felt people were already giving as much as they could.

"Thankfully this didn't end up being the case," Alan added. "The



Alan Bing: 'Confidence'

result of this push is that we now have an extra £1,000 income a month. This has made all the difference to us as we have now balanced our books and are not operating at a deficit. This has given us tremendous confidence

and encouragement as we seek to begin a major building project in our church.

"Perhaps most importantly, stewardship has given us a forum to look again at what it means to be children of God.

"I was delighted to hear people in my congregation discussing how God had blessed them; how God had been challenging them in their finances; the freedom they had discovered since committing to tithing and the challenge; and anxieties they were still battling with when it comes to money. This openness and honesty felt like a refreshing and real response to the God who has given us everything."

■ Contact stewardship enabler Sophie Hodge on 01768 807777 or sophie.hodge@carlisle-diocese.org.uk

Rugby-playing vicar seeks conversions as team's chaplain



Tony Ford: Played semi-professionally
PHILIP HATFIELD PHOTOGRAPHY

A RECENTLY appointed Cumbrian vicar who played rugby league semi-professionally has been appointed chaplain of the Barrow Raiders RL club.

Rev Tony Ford took up his post as Priest in Charge of St Mark's Church in September, having made the move north from Rochdale.

As a child, Tony battled back from severe birth defects caused by the drug Thalidomide, to be signed by Manchester United.

Tony said: "When I was born my feet were virtually back to front. I had to have surgery and spent much of my time in special shoes to help correct them. By the age of nine they were virtually as normal."

His talent led to him joining the Old Trafford club for seven years. Aged 16 he turned professional, playing for Canadian team, The Whitecaps, and later semi-professionally for an Australian team in Woolagong.

Returning to the UK, where he worked in warehousing and as a buyer in

By Dave Roberts

electronics, Tony was persuaded to try rugby league.

He laughed: "I was told 'Come along you'll love it. You won't get hurt.' I was picked as hooker and was promptly kicked all over the park! I loved the physicality of it all, though, as well as the social side. It was great fun."

His love of the sport saw him turn out for Salford Rugby League's first team and reserves before a return to Oldham where, again, he represented the reserves.

"For my mum and dad, Oldham was a big club so playing for their reserves was a huge thrill for me."

It was the birth of his daughter, Nicola, now 25, which proved the catalyst for Tony's faith journey. He and his wife Denise wanted her to be baptised but the vicar insisted they had to attend church regularly.

"We went along intending to do a runner after the baptism but we made friends there and kept going," he said. Tony eventually attended an Alpha Course

and gave his life to Jesus. He was appointed children and families worker at his home church before being chosen for ordination and training at Oak Hill Theological College.

Now Tony now has been named as chaplain of the Barrow Raiders Rugby League club, having previously served for eight years as chaplain of Oldham RLFC. The role involves pastoral care and welfare across the whole Barrow Raiders' community including the players,

staff, directors and the fans.

Director Denis Fay said: "In our development planning we recognised the club needed to do more in its welfare provision. We were pondering a response when, almost by divine intervention, the opportunity to appoint Tony came along!"

And as for any return to the pitch, Tony joked: "There are plenty of exciting things God wants me to tackle in my new role, rather than tackling somebody on a rugby pitch!"

Cumbria County Council



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Churches back foster support scheme

CUMBRIAN congregations are being encouraged to sign up to a new scheme which aims to create new church support for foster carers.

Cumbria County Council launched the Fostering Friendly Churches scheme in September, with the support of Penrith Methodist Church and the Parish of Whitehaven.

They have now been joined by St Mary's, Walney Island, and St John's, Barrow Island. The Rev Andy Batchelor, who fosters with wife Julie, is vicar of both churches.

Andy said: "I was so pleased we have become Fostering Friendly churches, particularly as through our work as carers, Julie and I understand the urgent need for more carers.

"We were both brought up in families that included



Andy Batchelor: Fosters with his wife Julie

DAVE ROBERTS

foster children, and Julie had, for a long time, felt we might be able to offer a home to children in need of one.

"After having a conversation with our daughter who lived at home with us, we decided the time was right to investigate.

"After undergoing the very thorough process of assessment we were approved to be foster carers, undertook some initial training,

and began the wait to be 'matched' to a relevant case.

"We are now long-term foster carers for two children aged 9 and 11, and they are very much a part of our family.

"People often comment that they admire our dedication in taking on the children, but in reality we are just an ordinary family who happens to have the space and the willingness to take in children in desperate need

of love and stability."

Cumbria County Council already supports more than 200 foster families, but with close to 700 children needing care, they are always looking for more.

The council hopes that churches who sign up to the scheme will celebrate fostering and foster carers through prayer, sermons and participation in campaigns.

Information sessions, at which you can find out more about fostering and chat to local carers, will be held on:

■ Saturday February 9 – Crown & Mitre Hotel, Carlisle (2-4pm)

■ Saturday February 23 – George Hotel, Penrith (2-4pm)

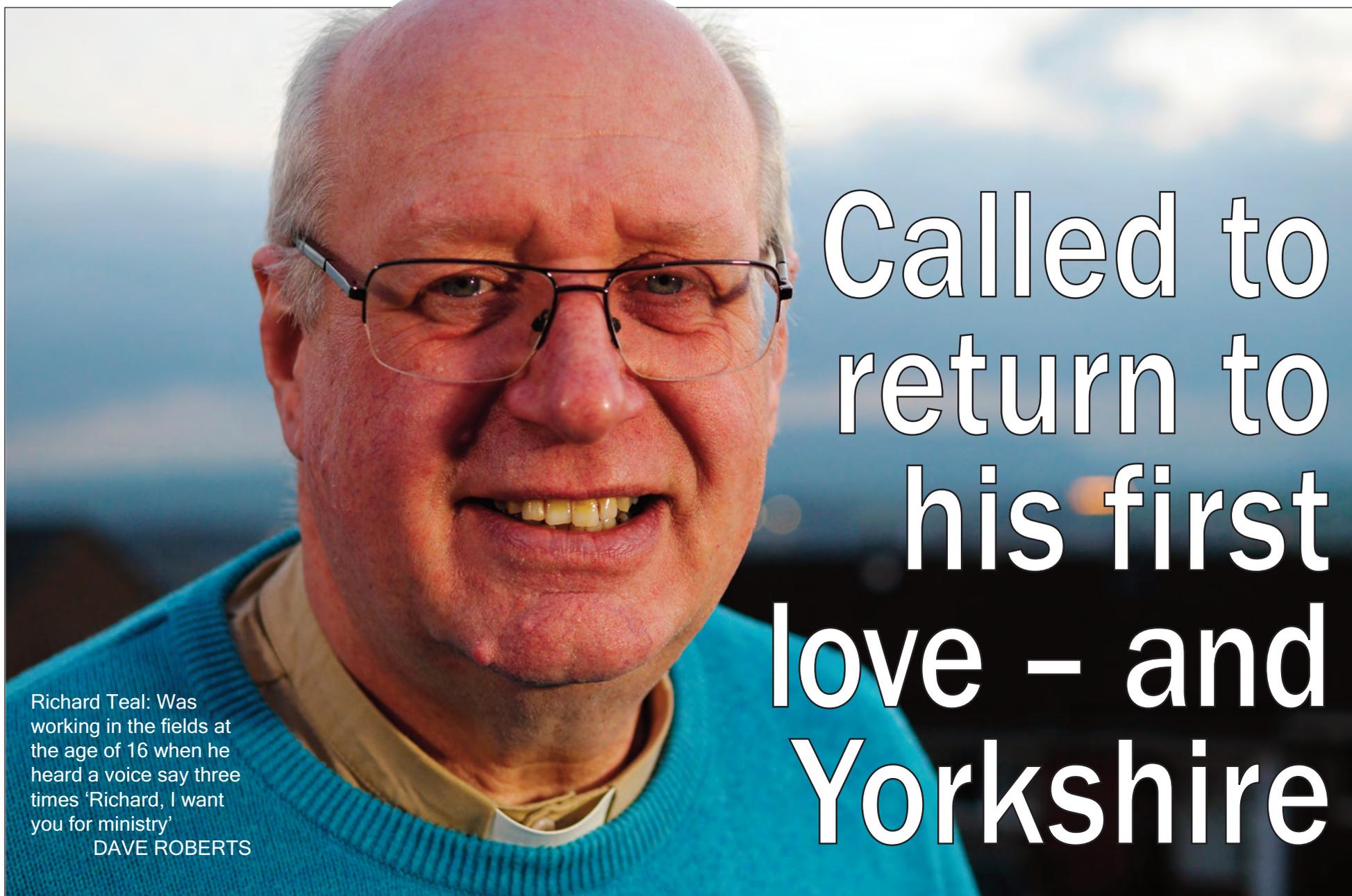
To find out more about becoming a Fostering Friendly Church email claire.crisp@cumbria.gov.uk.

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Called to return to his first love – and Yorkshire

Richard Teal: Was working in the fields at the age of 16 when he heard a voice say three times 'Richard, I want you for ministry'

DAVE ROBERTS

Q Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

A I was born into a tenant farming family in the Yorkshire Dales with no connections to church. My childhood ambition was to teach music and one day the minister from the village's Methodist Chapel asked if I would play the piano.

Usually, I'd take a book to read during the sermon, but one day I forgot so I listened and, as Wesley said, "my heart was strangely warmed". From that moment I was converted to Christ. When I was 16, I was working in the fields when I heard a voice say three times "Richard, I want you for ministry". I know that to be the voice of God so, rather than music, that's the path I chose.

My minister advised I 'taste life' before moving into ministry so I took a job in sales and production. In 1978 I went to train at Wesley College, Bristol. At the end of my third year I was pulled out early due to a shortage of ministers. Newly-married to Susan, we moved to Gateshead.

By 28 I was a superintendent in Berwick-upon-Tweed, tasked with turning round a church on its uppers. When we left nine years later, it was a thriving community

■ Ahead of his move next summer, Rev Richard Teal, 60, chair of Cumbria Methodist District for 10 years, is our latest 'Focus on Faith'

church. In East Yorkshire we were called to do the same and grew to a congregation of 300-plus adults and 50 children.

The job in Cumbria came up in 2008. I never thought I was chair material but others did. I was persuaded God was talking to me through other people.

Q What does your current role entail?

A Methodism is a connexional church so that has shaped my role. Nationally, I have represented Methodism on three ecumenical committees as well as serving on the Methodist National Medical Committee and as a board member on the Methodist Ministers Housing Society. I was then asked to co-chair the National Rural Strategy Group.

On a regional level I meet regularly with chairs from across the north-west and the Isle of Man.

The district role is manyfold. The Methodist Church does not have a hierarchy so although some people say I'm the 'leader' of the Methodists in Cumbria, I see myself as first among equals. I

hold dear the responsibility of caring for ministers and retired ministers. I want to be known as someone who can be approached and trusted.

Q We are in England's first ecumenical county. Why's that important?

A I was new to faith in my teens. At that time David Shepherd and Derek Warlock were leading the ecumenical scene in Liverpool. I was inspired by these men bringing communities together; it was not about theology, but about what could happen on the ground.

In my last appointment I was minister of the main Methodist/URC church as well as the Anglican church.

In Cumbria, we're not saying there should be 'one denomination'; it is important identities are retained. But I'd also say that ecumenism helps us to realise even more who we are within our denominations. Beyond our distinctiveness there is an overarching unity and commonality.

We also have to understand that resources are less plentiful and

that together we can do great things for the Gospel; separately we can't be as effective.

Q What challenges does ecumenism bring?

A The national ecumenical officers have walked with us in Cumbria and been incredibly supportive but across the county we continue to push at doors. That is a challenge but it's a good one to face. We face theological differences. I've always stressed that, as Methodists, we would not change our views on gender equality. Through prayer, tradition and reason we have come to understandings. Likewise there are times when we can't agree and we have all had to respectfully accept that. But that doesn't mean we can't live well together.

Q You've been heavily involved in the God for All strategy. How is it going?

A It is placing mission at the forefront of all of our ministries and that is to be celebrated. We need to be aware, however, that people don't feel God

for All is a constant approach from the top without any engagement locally. I feel things are changing and that people have become more confident and trusting in each other. That means being missional through God for All has become part and parcel of all our agendas.

Q What does God have planned for you next?

A I've always said that before retirement I felt I was called to return to my first love – circuit ministry. I've been asked to consider a number of national roles but I've said no. So from next August, I shall be superintendent for the Driffield and Hornsea Circuit in East Yorkshire.

Q How will you feel as you leave Cumbria?

A A number of people have said I will find it hard to return to pastoral ministry from the role I've been in and I'm aware of that. We've been very happy here so I shall be sad to leave Cumbria but it will be a joy to get back into Yorkshire.