

The Way



The FREE newspaper of the Church in Cumbria – Winter 2021/2022



Globe-trotting Simon's
Lakes champing trip

PAGE 9



Wishing our readers a
wonderful Christmas
and Christ-filled 2022

LINKING LIVES

■ Eighteen churches unite to befriend dozens of lonely and isolated people

TERRY Peate is the driving force behind work to draw alongside people feeling isolated and lonely.

A lay minister at Christ Church in Cockermouth, Terry has developed a Linking Lives project in the town, supported by volunteers from 18 churches.

He explains: "I see God in all that is being done through this project; he's in front, behind, above and below.

"The only way that church can grow is to be relevant in the community."

From its launch just before Covid, numbers of referrals have leapt. There are now 60 people being befriended in their homes each week through amazing outreach.

■ For the full story, turn to page 4.



Terry, right, with Bill Wheeler who says he has benefitted from the scheme since his wife died
PICTURE: JONNY GIOS

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

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

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The Way
Newspaper of
the Church
in Cumbria

Leaders reaffirm their commitment to unity



Harmony: Attendees at the Service of Reaffirmation at Keswick Methodist Church

JO PHILLIPS, CTiC

Service marks ten years of pioneering co-operation

By Dave Roberts

AN EARLY blast of winter could not force the postponement of a special Advent Sunday service at which Cumbrian church leaders reaffirmed their commitment to continued ecumenical working.

Ten years after Cumbria became England's first ecumenical county, the Service of Reaffirmation at Keswick Methodist Church saw denominational leaders sign or commit to a Declaration of Covenanted Partnership and a Declaration of Companionship.

Heavy snow and dangerous road conditions in some parts of the county meant not all attendees could make it to the service at the end of November, which came a decade after partner and companion denominations first signed a Declaration of Intent in Ambleside.

Since then, churches have worked together to grow God's Kingdom in the county and have developed the ecumenical God for All vision and strategy.

Representatives from mission communities (groups of mutually

'BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST'

The Rt Rev James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle



"I was delighted to take part in the service at which our Ecumenical Covenant was reaffirmed by all eight participating denominations. We all continue to regard this as a theological imperative ('May they all be one') and pragmatic necessity (mission is far more effective when done together). Please continue to pray for all our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout Cumbria."

Major Dr David Taylor, Salvation Army Divisional Commander



"The Salvation Army in Cumbria is committed to working in active partnership with our brothers and sisters in Christ, in the way that Jesus prays for and the needs of our communities calls for, and in seeking the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. May God give us wisdom, compassion, integrity and faithfulness in all we aim to do together."

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



"It was a significant, reverential, and joyful moment to reaffirm the Ecumenical County. Rooted in prayer and relationship, we continue with humility to recognise that collectively we are called to show and share God's love. Accordingly, we committed ourselves to a new phase in our Covenant Partnership and Companionship, undertaken in faith, repentance and trust."

supportive, mission-focused churches), local Churches Together groups and ecumenical projects from across Cumbria also attended the service.

The Rev Andrew Dodd, President of Churches Together in Cumbria, said: "It was a shame numbers were limited at the service, but I give thanks for all those who were able to attend and all those I know who would have been praying for us, though the snow and ice meant they were not able to get to Keswick.

"It was an opportunity to give thanks, too, for the continued commitment to our joint working together in the coming years. We heard some wonderful stories as to how that united approach in Christ is truly helping God work his purposes out in our county.

"It is wonderful to know a new

commitment has been made to that joint working and our prayers would be that the coming years will see a sense of renewed growth and sense of mission through God for All."

Leaders from the four partner denominations – United Reformed, Methodists, Salvation Army and Anglican – and those of companion denominations – the Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic Church, the Religious Society of Friends and the North Western Baptist Association – have committed to sign or affirm the new document.

The wintry conditions meant four of the leaders were unable to attend on the day, but the document is being circulated for signature.

The service included a series of four special reflections which

focused on ecumenical working to support mission in Kirkby Lonsdale, across social responsibility, in and around the Cocker-mouth area and as part of the Network Youth Church.

The Rev Dr Paul Goodliff, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, also gave an address.

In 2011, leaders from the Methodist, United Reformed and Anglican churches first came together to sign a Declaration of Intent. They were joined in 2016 by the Salvation Army.

Since then, the partner denominations – along with the companion denominations – have developed the God for All vision and strategy. That is currently being refreshed around four new themes: speak boldly, follow daily, care deeply and tread gently.

Church chocolate bars help visitors work, rest and pray

■ Customised Fairtrade treats should also bring a boost to church group's funds

By Dave Roberts

A GROUP of Cumbrian churches has come up with an enterprising way to boost funds – by selling its own branded chocolate bars.

The Warnell Parishes are made up of six churches – taking in Caldbeck, Castle Sowerby, Rosley with Welton and Woodside, Sebergham and Westward – that lie on the edge of the Lake District National Park.

With visitor footfall high in some of the buildings, the clergy team decided to branch out by selling their own bars to boost income.

The Rev Eileen Reid, Priest in Charge of the Warnell Parishes, said: “We came up with the idea in the summer and placed an order.

“Of course, there’s an upfront cost to cover artwork and postage, but we’re confident we shall make a decent profit from this.

“It’s also a lovely way in which we can further connect with people and they can remember our church as they eat the chocolate bar.

“We’re hoping there will be a rush on the bars as we approach Christmas, and parishioners decide to buy some to offer as gifts.”

Four hundred bars were delivered to the parishes in October. The upfront costs allow for church branding to appear on the wrapper alongside a bespoke message on the back, which reads: “Warnell Parishes are a group of churches in northwest Cumbria living out our calling to grow God’s kingdom on earth. Part of the Diocese of Carlisle and the Carlisle Rural Mission Community.”

People are being asked to make a minimum donation of £3 per bar and it is hoped that £600 could be raised for parish funds.

There are displays of the chocolate in Caldbeck church as well as in the chip shop owned by the parishes’ curate. The two village shops within the parishes also sell the Fairtrade chocolate bars.

Eileen added: “For us it was essential the chocolate we sourced was Fairtrade. In particular, Caldbeck is a Fairtrade parish and we have the One World Shop across the road from the church in which a number of our congregation members volunteer. So, it was incredibly important that the bars could be badged as Fairtrade.

“I think they are a fabulous idea; they are something completely different. It’s a way in which we can bolster church funds in totally new ways. There may well be visitors who come into our churches and who may not want to buy a book, for instance, but would really fancy tucking into one of our chocolate bars. Well now they can!”

The parishes have worked alongside



Optimistic: The Rev Eileen Reid is confident the customised chocolate bars will make a ‘decent profit’

DAVE ROBERTS

the Meaningful Chocolate Company, which also produces Fairtrade chocolate Easter eggs and Advent calendars.

The bars contain sugar sourced from co-operatives in Paraguay and Belize; the majority of cocoa comes from co-operatives in Ghana; and beans are sourced in the Dominican Republic, Peru, Panama and Ecuador.

David Marshall, who founded the Meaningful Chocolate Company, said: “We were the first business in the UK to develop custom-made Fairtrade bars back in 2012. As far as I know we are still the only one doing so as we had to get special permission from the Fairtrade foundation and every bar

is checked by them.

“Our first bar was for Leicester Cathedral and their Richard III exhibition. Since then we have made bars for dozens of churches and organisations – everyone from the Scottish Parliament to a small rural church in Nottingham.

“Quite often people are willing to buy a few bars or even hundreds of bars as a way of supporting fundraising efforts. Some churches give the bar away in return for a minimum donation for a particular project. Some sell them to raise money.”

■ For more on Meaningful’s bars, visit www.fairtouristbars.uk.



Own brand: People are being asked to donate at least £3 per bar



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Ecumenical project offers hope to lonely and isolated

■ Work of volunteers has increased since start of Covid-19 pandemic

By Dave Roberts

“THE driver for me was that I thought churches were average in the ways they reached out,” Terry Peate says. “We’re really good when someone comes to our door; we give them a lovely welcome and we’re brilliant at making a fuss of them.

“But we’re rubbish at inviting people; that’s why the church is declining. We’re not very good at living out our faith and that’s why I felt this project was the way forward.”

Terry is talking about the Linking Lives project which he has spearheaded for churches in and around Cockermouth, the town which he and his wife, Ann, retired to in 2011.

With a career latterly specialising in health management, Terry was passionate about reaching out to the elderly in the area. After a search he eventually found what he was looking for in the UK charity Linking Lives, which is undergirded by a Christian ethos.

Originally set up in 1998 in Berkshire, the charity now has 72 projects across the UK, of which Cockermouth is one. The aim is to create a befriending service for mainly older people who are lonely or socially isolated.

Terry contacted the charity and went on to draw together 18 churches through Churches Together in Cockermouth to help run the scheme. A steering group has been formed.

It was launched at the start of October 2019. Just six months later, the Covid-19 pandemic struck and there was even greater need to help combat isolation.

Terry says: “Through Linking Lives, all the necessary protocols and procedures were already in place around such things as safer recruitment and safeguarding; they’d done all the hard work. As a result, there’s a fantastic resource which harnesses the largest group of volunteers in the country: that’s the church.

“My vision was for all churches in our town to be involved and that proved to be the case. We’ve had funding from many sources including Cumbria Community Foundation, Cumbria County Council, Allerdale Borough Council and the National Lottery. There’s no problem getting



Quiet contemplation: Terry Peate, right, with Bill Wheeler

PICTURES: JONNY GIOS

funding for this kind of work because loneliness has been identified as being such a huge problem. There are lots of statistics which show loneliness can be directly linked to development of dementia, obesity and heart disease.”

The Cockermouth team now has 45 volunteers – largely, but not all Christians – who each draw alongside a person referred to the scheme, generally via a GP.

Each week, the befrienders spend an hour with their link person, offering chances to forge new friendships. The scheme’s youngest recruit – a 17-year-old – has a weekly link to a 94-year-old lady. Funding of £6,000 per year also covers the costs of local co-ordinator, Sue Gorman.

While befrienders are not there to proselytise, there’s an understanding that some people may find extra solace in prayer.

“People understand many of the volunteers are Christians and so, if they ask about faith or to pray, then of course we’re more than happy to draw alongside them in that way too,” says Terry, who has now been appointed the regional co-ordinator for Linking Lives.

“When Covid arrived, the number of vulnerable people with which we had contact leapt from about 12 or 13 to between 40 and

50. We now have more than 60 links.

“We’ve also begun to develop links with Age UK and so we can point people to knit and natter, Tai Chi and gentle exercise groups. There’s also a new Linking Lives initiative called Tea at Three held every third Sunday of the month.”

In his regional role, Terry has helped create a similar befriending service – Two’s Company – in Keswick, Kirkby Stephen and the Eden Valley. He is also supporting other potential groups in Carlisle, Brampton and on the west coast.

He concludes: “I see God in all that is being done through this project. The only way that church can grow is to be relevant in the community.”

The Bishop of Carlisle, the Rt Rev James Newcome, is patron of Linking Lives. He said: “What Terry and others have achieved in Cockermouth and the wider county is tremendous.

“I give huge thanks for the work of all the befrienders and the wonderful ministry to which they are so committed. My prayers are also with those people they draw alongside each week, who must contend with feelings of isolation and remoteness which are so prevalent in today’s society.”

■ For more details, visit www.linkinglives.uk/cockermouth.

GP REFERRAL ‘FILLS GAP’ FOR BILL, 88

FORMER headteacher Bill Wheeler, 88, lives in Brigham. He met his wife, June, when he was 17 and they married four years later.

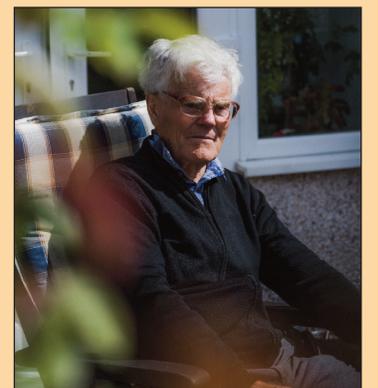
Ill-health forced his early retirement at the age of 58, after which the couple spent ‘glorious years’ in their home in Dean, developing both the property and garden.

June sadly passed away in September 2019, and though the couple’s four children live relatively close by and are a source of constant support, Bill says Linking Lives has helped combat feelings of loneliness. He meets weekly with his befriender, Jeremy.

“I was referred to Linking Lives through my doctor’s practice. I’m very lucky that my four children are close and I’m well supported, but Jeremy is an extra bonus. He is a wonderful bloke.

“It provides me with someone I can simply natter to. Initially, when we met, I tried to talk quite seriously with him, but that’s not the case so much now. Instead, we sit and chat in the house or garden.

“Probably the poor bloke gets bored stiff, but he has learned more about our shared past through my reminiscences. It’s



Bill Wheeler: Meets his befriender Jeremy weekly

partly an opportunity for me to sentimentally reminisce and, also, we talk about a variety of topics and issues.

“I think Linking Lives is brilliant. I know how important it is to me – yet I have so much other support – so it must be absolutely vital for others. I’ve never really been on my own, so this provides a way to help fill the gap.

“It’s so important that the church is involved in this kind of work.”

Birds, bugs and bats turn up during church BioBlitz

■ Graduate puts skills and passions to good use for urban nature survey

By Dave Roberts

WILDLIFE media graduate Rachel Owen has three passions: the natural world, photography and her faith.

So, the perfect fit for the 26-year-old was to combine them all by running a special 'BioBlitz' nature survey in the churchyard of St Michael's Stanwix in Carlisle.

The former University of Cumbria student has attended the church since moving up from Kenilworth, Warwickshire to start her studies just over three years ago.

Rachel explained: "A BioBlitz is a form of intense biological survey of a small area that is conducted over a short period of time, often just 24 hours. It's something that I'd been involved with as part of my degree and I thought it would work really well within the setting of our churchyard."

"When we explained what we wanted to do there was plenty of interest from the congregation and a lot of people volunteered. I also used my local connections with organisations like Carlisle Natural History Society and the university to get local experts along to show us all the wonderful wildlife that we had in our churchyard."

More than 50 people from the congregation and local community took part in the BioBlitz which was held in June, as part of A Rocha UK's Churches Count on Nature week.

Activities included a prayer walk, workshops on birds and entomology, children's minibeast hunts, a flora survey and evening bat walk. Trail cameras were also placed in the churchyard to capture wildlife footage and a moth-trapping session was held.

A total of 113 species were recorded including common pipistrelle bats, grey squirrels, 22 varieties of moth, 59 different flowers and plants and two types of fungi. It's clear proof, Rachel says, of the rich natural habitats that churchyards provide.

"A university lecturer came to give a talk on bugs and explained there will be many more species in our churchyard that we have not yet recorded," Rachel said. "So, this was a good start but there's still so much work to be done."

"We can begin to think about what we can do to enhance the habitat to benefit the species we have identified in the BioBlitz as well as considering what species



Rachel Owen: 'This is God's creation; it is what we have inherited'

DAVE ROBERTS



Engaging: Local people learn about the local environment at St Michael's Stanwix

PICTURES: RACHEL OWEN

may be missing and thinking about what we can do to encourage them in."

There are plans to restore a former Roman herb garden and a sensory garden which are currently overgrown.

The Rev Nigel Beer, vicar of Stanwix, welcomed the renewed focus on the wildlife around the church.

"Considering we were in a lockdown situation when the BioBlitz was first suggested we thought we might have a few people come along," he said. "But we had a great number of people attend and Rachel brought in some of her expert friends. It was such a positive day for everyone involved."

"A part of it has been about enabling people to see the richness of creation that's around us and on our

doorstep and think of the God who is above and behind all we see."

Rachel – who also recently joined the church PCC – says projects such as the BioBlitz help complement the refreshed God for All vision and strategy, particularly the theme of treading gently.

She added: "This is God's creation; it is what we have inherited and what we were instructed in Genesis 2 to care for, though we've not done that as well as we should have."

"So, I really want to encourage this church and other churches to do all they can to help us be gentler with our planet. No action is too small as together we look to tread more gently for nature."

A film of Rachel's nature work at St Michael's can be seen on the God for All YouTube channel.

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Pioneers' £1.6m boost

Successful cash bid helps set up team

By Dave Roberts

A TEAM of pioneer enablers will help grow new worshipping communities, including fresh expressions of church, and work alongside traditional churches and mission communities.

The team has been formed as part of a successful application for £1.6 million to fund 'Reaching Deeper' work over the next five years. The money was awarded through the Church of England's Strategic Development Fund (SDF).

It means that five pioneer posts have been created across the county – in Carlisle, Penrith, west Cumbria, Barrow and a county-wide outdoor and education pioneer.

Emma Richardson, Pioneer Enabler Team Leader, said: "The key for us is to make this form of ministry self-sustainable for the future. The idea is that the five pioneers will work in different



Mission: From left, Lisa Andradez, Beth Honey, Opa Geibel and Paul Rose FRED WILSON

locations and contexts across the county in enabling roles which help other people and provide local points of contact.

"We see this as an important way in which to help develop the missional eco-system of Cumbria. But it is not just about creating fresh expressions outside of the church. We want to support time-honoured church as well; this is not an either or."

The Covid-19 pandemic meant recruitment to three of the five posts could only be completed in September.

Paul Rose, the outdoor and

education pioneer, was appointed just before the first lockdown in March 2020, while the Rev Chris Harwood was appointed as a pioneer specialising in new monasticism in Carlisle, partly working alongside the Restore Christian charity shop network.

They have now been joined by Beth Honey who will work alongside Restore in the Eden Valley, Opa Geibel, based in Barrow, and Lisa Andradez who will support communities on the west coast.

The pioneer enablers will also work alongside the Northern Mission Centre which is also

funded through the SDF application, offering a Church Mission Society Certificate in Pioneer Mission.

Emma added: "We have two pioneers working alongside the Restore shops as we wanted to develop a model of mission which would support work that reaches out to people who would never normally connect with church – those people on the fringe."

The dual roles will see the pioneers set up new expressions of church while also supporting other people who may approach them with ideas.

In his role as outdoor and education pioneer, Paul will reach out to church and secular walking groups while exploring themes of rites of passage and pilgrimages with schools – through forms such as muddy, forest and beach churches. Chris will continue to draw alongside newly-formed communities through Restore.

Initially, Beth's focus is on embedding the vision and work of Restore in Penrith through well-being groups alongside Churches Together, growing a training community to celebrate and develop volunteers across the Restore network, and taking Restore on the Road in a van.

Opa aims to encourage 16 to 35-year-olds to connect with church and he's set to develop a new Cameo group (Come And Meet Each Other).

Lisa is concentrating on work around families and young people, launching a monthly 30-minute church service in 2022, a baby spirituality group and a new debt advice centre in Maryport.

The SDF funding was offered for projects which would particularly support areas of population density and with a focus on young people and deprived communities.

Emma said: "Our county is so diverse, yet there are similarities as well. So, we've designed the roles to allow for ease of replication where possible."

MEET THREE OF THE ENABLERS...

REV BETH HONEY
Pioneer Enabler, Penrith

"I AM excited to be involved with a role that is both hands-on pioneering and stepping back and seeing where others see God at work - watching the patterns over time and a wide geographic area.

"I am a mum of three young children with Ben, who is a lay pioneer, and we are enjoying getting to know a new place and landscape together. We bring with us from Derbyshire a joy of the outdoors, creativity, beer and board games.

"I began following Jesus after encountering him when I was a young person living in a rural benefice. My confirmation service was the beginning of a vocational journey that has brought me to this place, through all sorts of ministry experiences.

"I am relishing the context of Restore's work - shops in Carlisle and Penrith, and to surrounding villages - and the challenge of connecting these



up. I am hoping to take Restore on the Road in a van to enable side-by-side and independent projects and groups to grow sustainable community and faith across a wide area."

LISA ANDRADEZ
Pioneer Enabler, West Coast

"MY name is Lisa, I am a Pioneer Enabler for the west coast, specifically Maryport and Workington. My role is to work with the church to set up and grow Fresh Expressions of church in the different communities and their contexts.

"I moved to Cumbria from Liverpool in July with my husband Martin and am very much enjoying the change from city life to rural living. I have two adult sons who live away from home. I like running, walking the fells and writing poetry. I also like red wine, cake and watching TV.

"My desire is to see the church look beyond itself and its tradition and into the community so that we can begin to



challenge the injustice of poverty, isolation and disconnection felt by so many - living more like Jesus and doing what he has asked of us."

OPA GEIBEL
Pioneer Enabler, Barrow

"I am from Germany, but have now lived abroad more than in Germany. God moulded me in many ways - time in mission around the world, studying at theological college in Northern Ireland, a Masters in youth and community work and applied theology in England, and working for and with pretty much any Christian denomination and movement you can think of. I have learnt from all.

"I have worked in Blackburn and now Carlisle Diocese. I recently got married which meant moving from Lancaster to Blackburn and on to Barrow. It doesn't matter too much to me where I live as I love people and want to help them live life in all its fullness, no matter where that is. That said, I love Barrow."



EVENTS

15-16 January - Discovering your Best Self with Mike Mullins

1-4 February - Poetry Carousel with published poet Kim Moore

8-9 February - Recorders with Mary Tyers

26 February - Quiet Day for Lent



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On the bee trail: From left, Jen Kell with four-year-old twins Finn and Tom; Louise Eckley with daughter Bethan, five; all three children playing together

NATURAL CONNECTIONS

■ Ecoprojects and drop-in scheme help Lol reach out to families

By Dave Roberts

“THE recognised church has lots of missing generations,” explains Lol Wood, the Lunesdale Family Project Leader.

“To ask someone to enter a church space who may not have any knowledge or heritage of faith can be very intimidating for them.

“So, what we’re doing as part of our project is to go out to people, rather than asking them to come in. In that way we’re able to draw alongside them as they ask the big questions: ‘Why am I struggling?’ ‘Why is life so hard?’”

Lol, 32, has worked for the ecumenical group of churches in and around Kirkby Lonsdale for four years.

She came to the role from a background working with youth, children and families in various church settings, both Anglican and Methodist, as well as working as a chaplaincy assistant at two universities – Keele and Lancaster.

Since 2017 she’s been able to bring that experience to bear in a Cumbrian context, reaching out in new ways to families in a predominantly rural setting.

“I feel that many children are able to make a connection with God through nature,” Lol says. “I was looking for more rural settings in which to explore this and then saw the advert for this job. It was perfect.

“Since arriving, the ministry team I work within has understood that there is a real need to create more listening spaces to help connect further with people and to contend with feelings of isolation.”

That work has seen the development of the Green Warriors after-school gardening club for Year Five and Year Six pupils at St Patrick’s C of E Primary in Endmoor. The pupils are encouraged to help garden, listen to Bible stories, share their thoughts about school and home life, enjoy food together and engage with a weekly



Planting the seeds: Lol Wood with Bethan in the grounds of St Mary’s Church

PICTURES: MARK KENSETT

take-home challenge. Work is also planned to help refurbish a reflective garden in the school’s grounds.

Meanwhile, a weekly drop-in centre was also created for parents whose children attend a local primary school. A space was offered up at St Mary’s Primary in which people could call in for a brew and a chat.

Lol says: “Parents were able to walk off the playground into the drop-in centre; it was so important that it was in a space that they knew and felt comfortable with.

“That’s been really valued – particularly by new mums who see it as a chance to connect with other

adults. We also offer people the opportunity to pray for the things that they may have talked about. There’s absolutely no pressure to do so, but we’ve found particular people are open to that. We look for those more ‘natural’ faith moments, rather than a big push. For some people I’d say this has been their form of church. One parent told me it had been their lifeline.”

Understandably, the Covid-19 pandemic affected the project’s work. It is hoped that the Green Warriors club will begin again soon. An attempt to take the drop-in centre online proved difficult as many parents had to help home-

school or were suffering Zoom fatigue. Messy Church was taken online, though, and worked well.

Lol has seen other opportunities develop in which the Family Project could reach out. She helped create a new form of Muddy Church during lockdown, with families following a trail of stones on which Bible verses had been written.

“That was really well received, particularly by parents who were struggling to encourage their children to go out for a walk,” Lol adds.

She also helped develop a reflective Labyrinth and a nature and bee trail in the grounds of St Mary’s

church. A further Christmas and New Year trail is planned as well as a Living Advent trail in which 25 windows will be lit in Kirkby Lonsdale. All of the work is enabled through strong ecumenical ties.

“I grew up understanding the real value of ecumenism but for people who don’t go to church, that doesn’t matter,” Lol adds. “What they see is Christians completing acts of love or service.

“Through our joint working, there are so many more opportunities for that kind of thing to happen. Working ecumenically means we’re able to look at a wider group of people and identify their gifting.”

'Graduation' tea for students

■ Participants and tutors come together to mark end of two-year lay training scheme

AN AFTERNOON tea at a Cumbrian country house hotel provided a lovely way to celebrate the importance of lay ministry.

Students of the ecumenical Authorised Lay Training Pathway (ALTP) scheme gathered to mark the course's conclusion at the Roundthorn Hotel, above Penrith. They were joined by tutors who had delivered modules over the previous two years.

ALTP ran from 2019 as part of the then God for All team's ministry and had been developed following recognition that existing training was academic so might not have appealed to everyone.

Emma Richardson, a member of the mission community support team, helped develop the course. She explained: "We recognised there was a need for some more contextual lay training that would enable anybody to find out what their ministry was inside or outside the church.

"We needed something that was a little bit more flexible and agile so that anybody could engage with it. It was rooted around the original God for All vision, that God was for all, regardless of age or background."

The course, participative in style, saw students gather for classroom work six times a year. There was also remote learning supported by a series of special cards, one-to-one mentoring and support from local clergy.

The two-year course was built around six key areas: mission and outreach, pastoral care and ministry, welcome and hospitality, worship, Christian tradition and God for All. Each of the six areas allowed students to consider how these could be developed both in a traditional and pioneering church setting. Following the foundational year, students were then

By Dave Roberts

able to specialise in particular ministry to which they felt called.

Kristie Legg, a learning and development officer in the Methodist Connexional Team, was also involved in the development of the course.

"I helped deliver the section around welcome and hospitality," she said. "I'm always keen that people learn by modelling. The sessions themselves were very welcoming. When people arrived, there would be daffodils where they were to sit.

"It's been a joy to work ecumenically and have people with different perspectives come together to contribute through their own particular passions."

Of nearly 20 people who engaged with ALTP, some have gone on to develop ministry around Messy Church, prayer, pioneering, preaching and school chaplaincy.

Plans are now being developed for a new tranche of lay ministry training to be offered from September 2022.

The Diocese's Director of Ministry Development, the Rev Nicky Smith, who is overseeing that body of work, said: "Huge value is placed on the importance of providing all the necessary training to ensure everyone can fully develop their God-given gifts. So, I give thanks for all those who have benefitted from ALTP and am equally excited about the fresh lay ministry courses we are looking to develop together.

"It is clear that, more than ever, we must look to support and cherish the richness that lay ministry offers our worshipping communities in order that we can grow God's Kingdom across Cumbria, both individually and collectively."



Growing: From left, Kathy Howe, Kate Wright, David Robbens and Sue Wymer

SCHEME OPENS DOORS FOR ATTENDEES

David Robbens, 68, of Ambleside
Occupation: Hostel Owner

"I picked up a card about ALTP when I was in a Baptist Church and made some calls. I'm someone who's very involved in mission and so it was when I heard more about the missional side of ALTP that I decided to join the course.

"I'm a member of Through Faith Missions, which sends teams to churches at their request. In 2007 we completed Walk Cumbria, looking to evangelise as much of the county as we could with 600 people over three weeks.

"I don't know exactly where ALTP will lead. At the Anglican church in Ambleside I'm now taking some outdoor Sunday services and I'm further exploring the pioneering side of things through the Northern Mission Centre."

Kate Wright, 46, of Kendal
Occupation: Compliance Officer, Sedbergh School

"It was my vicar who suggested completing some lay training to put a 'stamp' on what I was already doing in terms of prayer ministry.

"I was able to complete two years of ALTP in one year. I got to the end of year one and was then

able to complete a pastoral module straight away. I was on furlough at the time which meant it was a really good use of time.

"Completing the course has given me a new level of confidence. To say that I'm an authorised lay minister has made me more confident within the PCC setting and when leading prayers. There was also a fair degree of safeguarding training which means the church can use me in new ways too. ALTP has definitely opened doors for me."

Kathy Howe, 73, of Carlisle
Occupation: Retired teacher and commercial pilot

"I did two years with ALTP and decided to specialise in worship leading. With my teaching background, I enjoy talking to people and felt this was how I was being led.

"If you attend a particular church, you tend to get rooted in one way of worship leading, but the course helped reveal the many ways in which this can be done; it helped me to pick and choose and to develop my own style.

"I completed the module in conjunction with one being led at St Michael's Skelton which was good

because there was a large mix of people which threw up lots of different ideas. I now lead worship about once a month and I'm able to draw on the many different points raised as part of ALTP."

Sue Wymer, 71, of Allithwaite
Occupation: Retired headteacher

"I work in three primary schools, three mornings a week, leading collective worship and supporting staff, pupils and headteachers.

I don't class myself as being Anglican; I'm a Christian who happens to worship in an Anglican church.

"I'm a governor at two of the schools and, obviously, through Covid it's been difficult to provide pastoral support. That's what I consider to be important and what I thought I would study further through ALTP.

"But that's not what happened. It was pointed out that my work was outside the church and so I should consider the chaplaincy module. I shall be working with the Rev Glynn Jones (Chaplain of Chaplains) to make that happen.

"I very much enjoyed ALTP. I learned more about the worship side of things and the hospitality module was excellent."



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Advent message going out to young



Sharing: NYC members with the special calendars

HUNDREDS of special Advent calendars have been shared with young people by Network Youth Churches (NYC) across the county.

Five hundred calendars – made up of individual cards for each day of Advent – were printed for distribution among those who regularly attend NYC and young people who they also draw alongside in the community.

The idea was first introduced by the leadership team of Carlisle NYC three years ago. It was then

picked up by the other eight NYC leaders who between them support around 1,500 young people to grow in faith.

The cards were distributed to all young people on their databases. It is hoped they will also help them reconnect with young people with whom they may have lost touch during the pandemic.

As well as Bible verses and challenges, some cards contain messages from celebrities about their faith.

TV Simon's church stay is bumper season's highlight

■ County's sole champing church benefits from staycation boom

By Dave Roberts

A BEAUTIFUL Cumbrian church was the chosen overnight accommodation for journalist Simon Reeve on his recently broadcast BBC programme *The Lakes*.

Simon, who is known for his worldwide travels, decided to focus on areas closer to home in the three-part series, with cameras following him around Cumbria.

And the award-winning journalist chose St Mary's Longsleddale – the county's only 'champing' church – as a place to bed down after a day's exploration.

Entering the church, he told viewers: "Well, this is a first for me. By staying somewhere like this, we are helping to keep these old and ancient buildings alive."

The church is one of 14 across England in which people can camp. The project was developed by the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT), the national charity protecting churches at risk – with St Mary's opening to campers in 2017.

The visit by the TV presenter also reflects a marked upturn in champing bookings at St Mary's as Covid travel restrictions meant people holidayed in the UK.

John Farmer, the chair of Friends of St Mary's Longsleddale, said: "As the pandemic restrictions started to unwind, we suddenly had a huge influx of people to our valley; people cycling and walking here.

"Married with that, there was the staycation boom which meant we have had by far and away our best champing year. In crude financial terms, we have made two or three times as much money which has made a substantial difference for us.

"Also, it's encouraged a lot of people to come into a church who may never otherwise enter the building. Some people are just looking for a place to stay, but a lot of people do have connections with the church where they live and so they've recognised that by staying with us they are supporting our local community."

The 2021 champing season has seen more than £3,000 raised, with



Holidaying at home: Globetrotter Simon Reeve made three episodes of *The Lakes*

BBC TV

the money shared between the church and the local community. In total, the church was booked out for 44 nights with 52 adults and 20 children staying there this year.

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

A team of five people oversees the champing operation, with St Mary's taking a maximum of five visitors. A nearby community hall provides kitchen facilities and there are public toilets next door. Bookings are dealt with centrally by the CCT which takes a percentage to cover its overheads.

The pandemic meant the local team had to ensure strict hygiene measures were enforced.

"There was a lot of extra cleaning," John explains, "spraying of items, ensuring everything was wiped down and notices put up to explain what could be touched.

"We did everything necessary to ensure it was Covid-safe in line with the regulations at any particular time. Whilst we provided the camping beds, campers had to provide their own sleeping bags and inners."

Simon Reeve's televised visit was just one of a number of media features about champing at St Mary's in the last year.

"It feels as if the media have gone berserk around this," said John. "I've done a series of interviews, there's been a BBC programme about staycations and champing, I've been on BBC Radio Cumbria, there are articles going into local magazines and now we've had the Simon Reeve programme. It's been a great way to promote our community."

A Zoom conference is planned for early 2022 to explain more about the champing initiative to churches across the county.

Fiona Silk, Champing Business Development Officer, said: "2021 has seen an incredible amount of support for champing, from guests booking champing stays, active churches enquiring about how they can join us and offer champing next season, and those just getting in touch to say they love the idea. "This season is the best yet for revenue, which will ensure we continue and also extend the number of churches offering champing next season. We hope to open our doors to other churches in the north, so watch this space!"

The champing season runs from April 1 to September 30 at Longsleddale. Adult rates cost from £49 to £59, while children's rates start at £25. There are also special offers available and group discounts for eight or more. For details, visit www.champing.co.uk.



Visitors: A total of 52 adults and 20 children stayed at St Mary's in 2021

JENNY WOOLGAR



John Farmer: 'It feels as if the media have gone berserk around this'

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Church buildings should be a route to God, not a burden

Q Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

A I was brought up in Cumbria – on the west side of Windermere – and later lived in Edinburgh for 20 years where I was an antiquarian second-hand bookseller and part-time academic, working as a history lecturer for Edinburgh University.

I moved back to Cumbria 30 years ago and now live at Lowick, between Coniston and Ulverston. I'm chairman of St Luke's Lowick with Blawith PCC and also have a small agricultural estate which I run.

About six years ago I took over the chairmanship of the Churches Trust for Cumbria (CTfC). I also chair the Cumbria Gardens Trust and am a Deputy Lieutenant of the county.

I'm married to Marianne and we have one daughter, Claire, who lives with her husband at Far Sawrey.

Q What does your role with CTfC entail?

A Most of the work of the trust is conducted by our excellent development officer Jayne Potts. My role as chairman of trustees is to oversee the governance and finance of the trust. We are financed by the Diocese of Carlisle and the Methodist Church, and so we are very much ecumenical in nature and happy to advise any denomination.

I meet Jayne regularly to help and advise on the work that is ongoing and enjoy visiting churches across the county to meet people and talk about church fabric and look to advance the wellbeing of church buildings.

While the majority of our trustees are churchgoers we are not an overtly faith organisation; our focus is on church buildings.

We would encourage congregations to be outward-looking and to have their churches open as much as possible so that people can visit for prayer and reflection or indeed because they may be interested in architecture and heritage.

The other key thing for our Cumbrian churches is maintenance and repair and that is something that CTfC looks to advise upon widely and comprehensively. That could be from the most basic level – such as how churches should maintain their rainwater goods – through to Jayne's support of the DAC (the Diocesan Advisory Committee) which considers church planning applications.

In addition, we look to support churches who may want to reach out to their local communities further, for instance through fayres, lectures or musical events.

The drive to Net Zero carbon emissions is also obviously a big challenge for churches and is something we want to help engage them with.

Ultimately, our hope is that church buildings can continue to be a focus for



'Fabric': Adam Naylor wants churches to continue being a focus for local communities

DAVE ROBERTS

■ In our latest Focus on Faith feature, we meet Adam Naylor, 67, chair of the Churches Trust for Cumbria

the local community, both for worshippers and those who may wish to use the building to celebrate life events, such as weddings, baptisms and funerals.

Q Why do you feel it is important to protect church buildings' fabric?

A Well, for two reasons. Firstly, our churches are an integral part of our country's heritage; over half of listed buildings in England are churches or church buildings.

Secondly, a church building is the visible face of Christianity within our county and so it is often what people turn to during particular moments in their life; be they happy or sad times. If a local church is warm and welcoming and looks well maintained and cared for then I believe it conveys a Christian message of hope, openness and a sense of looking to the future.

Q What would be your hope for our churches in the years ahead?

A I think it is right to recognise that our churches are facing some difficult times. I'd suggest that the church hierarchy, local leaders and those in our congregations understand that something of a crisis for our buildings is approaching. Primarily, that's a result of falling congregation numbers, fewer clergy and less money so there aren't going to be the same number of churches open.

The trust has become increasingly aware of a need to help churches through this process. If parishes, benefices or mission communities are looking at building strategies, then we can help them with that in terms of highlighting the architectural importance of particular churches. We could also help advise churches who may wish to consider

becoming festival churches or even if they decide to close altogether. While this is a body of work we've not really been involved with to date, we understand it is something that may well come our way in years to come. Ultimately, we want to consider how best we can ensure a positive future for our church buildings which may no longer be open.

Q What is your prayer as you continue in your role?

A I think it would be that Christians continue to value and love their church buildings and view them as a route to God and as places that can be loved and cherished rather than being viewed as a burden or challenge. If the trust can help in that way, then we are doing our job.

■ For more information, visit the website at www.ctfc.org.uk.