

The Way



The FREE newspaper of the Church in Cumbria – Summer 2023



Artist gives 'scrap'
a new lease of life

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Vet combines job &
unpaid ministry

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PICTURE: STUART WALKER

THANK YOU AND FAREWELL

■ **Cumbria says goodbye to Bishop James, retiring after 21 years' ministry in county**

IN THIS edition of The Way we say thank you and farewell to the Bishop of Carlisle.

The Rt Rev James Newcome will retire at the end of August after 21 years' ministry in Cumbria. A special Farewell Service took place on Sunday July 16, marking more than two decades in the county.

During that time, he has spearheaded the creation of our ecumenical county and been at the forefront of the God For All vision and strategy. Likewise, he was there to reach out to communities struggling through the foot and mouth crisis, three severe floods, the West Cumbrian shootings and the Covid-19 pandemic.

We give thanks for both his and his wife Alison's faithful service during their time here.

Pictures from the Farewell Service can be seen on page 5 while, on page 4, Bishop James provides a very personal reflection of his journey to faith, ordination and ultimately ministry to the people of this county: a place he loves.

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

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

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

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

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The Way

Newspaper of the Church in Cumbria

SPEAK BOLDLY

Our refreshed ecumenical God for All vision and strategy is undergirded by four central themes. Over forthcoming editions of *The Way* we will focus on a particular theme, asking our ecumenical leaders to reflect on why each is so important. We start with 'Speak Boldly' and the call to share our faith in Jesus Christ in everyday ways, seeking to connect with everyone, especially those currently unrepresented in our churches.

The Rt Rev James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle



ST PAUL would have been very keen on 'God for All'. That's what the whole of his ministry was about, motivated as it was by a keen desire that everyone should have an opportunity to hear and believe the Gospel of Christ. But, as he pointed out to the Christians in Rome, "How are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?" (Roms. 10.14) That 'proclaiming' he saw as one of his primary tasks.

But he was absolutely clear that it wasn't just up to him to spread the good news. As far as he was concerned, every Christian had a part to play.

That same conviction is what lies behind the 'Speak Boldly' theme of our ecumenical 'God for All' vision. It would be easy to suppose that everyone in our allegedly 'Christian' country already knows about Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life -

and that most have deliberately chosen to ignore him. But that is simply not the case. The level of Biblical illiteracy is staggeringly high; and while people may know the name of Jesus, they often know very little about him - and nothing of his risen presence.

It would also be easy to suppose that 'proclaiming the Gospel' is the task primarily of Clergy and Readers. Again, not true. Many more people discover Jesus and become Christians through their Christian friends than through the 'theological professionals'.

I recently saw a sign by the roadside. 'Appeal for witnesses', it said. That could apply directly to 'Speak Boldly' - which reminds every one of us of the privilege we share of talking about Jesus - and speaking up for the Truth.

Major David Taylor, Salvation Army Divisional Commander



JOHN and the writer to the Hebrews are clear that Jesus is God's spoken word for the world (John.1:14, Heb.1:2), and Jesus tells us that in the power of the Holy Spirit, we "will be witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

God's word spoken in a human being, Jesus, reminds us that all our words, actions and character speak volumes about what we really believe and have staked our lives on. The challenge is to make this the most positive witness it can be.

As Paul encourages, "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col.3:17).

Speaking boldly is therefore something we do in both words and action, yet there is a temptation today to go quiet on the spoken witness, whether for fear of offending or of sounding imposing. Yet words remain a vital way of communicating good news for our world.

Peter challenges us to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have" (1 Peter. 3:15), and I would suggest we don't always have to wait to be asked. So, speak boldly and with love.

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



SPEAKING boldly might be the God for All priority that many of us feel most hesitant or uncomfortable about. Even when we need to speak boldly to an issue of injustice, we sometimes struggle, and perhaps even more so if the focus or opportunity is evangelistic.

In today's culture, without a common belief system, we are rightly often respectful of individual preferences or perspectives, so we are also usually hesitant about speaking about God. Yet deeds, as well as words, and above all sensitive, compassionate presence - a caring deeply and treading gently rooted in a following daily - can also 'speak' boldly and point to the God whose love is for all.

Then, notwithstanding our anxieties about getting it wrong or appearing hypocritical or at times being unsure of our own faith, if we can locate our heart in the right place, perhaps sometimes we can also find some appropriate words to accompany our endeavours, or even a helpful invitation that points to the possibility that God's goodness and grace are also present. So, let's encourage each other to keep trying, sensitively yet courageously, to speak more boldly in the many ways open to us.

Rev Martyn Coe, Coordinator, United Reformed Church Cumbria Partnership



DO YOU know someone who is a gospel gossip? I know gossip is generally not a good thing, but over the years I have known some great gospel gossips. The way they live is a great way of speaking boldly about faith. They speak gently and yet boldly. They don't shout or force faith into conversations where it is not wanted. Indeed, some have been very quietly-spoken people who struggle in life. Their faith has been important to them, and they have been happy to share that God is with them, especially when their life is at its most challenging.

Speaking boldly is not the same as shouting or pushing a conversation which is not wanted or telling people that God is the answer but, having experienced the love of Christ ourselves and being open to the discernment from listening to the Spirit, it is about quietly but clearly sharing our own experience. Those folk I have known were so comfortable in the love of Christ that they were able to share it. Our God for All themes work together if we are prayerful, caring people following God. Then, maybe we too can speak boldly as gospel gossips.

Upcycling 'scrap' provides Mark with creative voice

■ Six foot installation is one of several artworks offered to churches

By Dave Roberts

A GARDENING mishap proved the inspiration for Mark Hunt's striking art installation, *Christ on the Cross*.

The 63-year-old was pruning a conifer tree in the grounds of his home on the outskirts of Penrith when the ladder he was standing on gave way.

He reached out for support, grabbing a cross which he had fashioned at the top of the tree, but that snapped off and he fell to the floor.

Mark laughs: "The next thing I knew I woke up lying on my back holding the cross in my hand. Initially, to tidy things up, I threw it on top of the woodshed and forgot about it but then I decided I wanted to do something with it, by which time the wood had dried out beautifully.

"When I took it in my hands I knew I had to work on the figure of Christ on a cross. I had a lot of copper wire spare and I wanted to use that in the design, so I carefully coiled the cable together to form the limbs. What's lovely about the copper is that it catches the light in beautiful ways which I really think adds to the overall effect."

The result was an 18-inch-high version of *Christ on the Cross*, a design Mark then decided to upscale using large pieces of wood in his workshop, more copper wire coils and piping for the figure of Christ.

Over two months he worked on the design, carefully stripping back plastic sheathing from the copper cables before fashioning Christ's body and the crown of thorns. The finished artwork stands more than six feet high.

Originally from Wigan, Mark has lived in Cumbria for 11 years. Although he has had no formal training as an artist, he has fashioned various pieces in recent years, all using materials he has upcycled.

And while he does not profess to have a strong faith, he recognises that religious imagery has been a focus for a number of recent works, including his own interpretation of Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*.

"Ever since childhood I've had an interest in art," Mark explains. "It was mainly woodwork and metalwork back then. I remember one of the first pieces I completed at school was some marquetry which included imagery of a church with a cross in a valley.

"After completing *Christ on the Cross*, I came across another piece of wood which I immediately thought I wanted to use to sculpt the hands from *The Creation of Adam*.

"What's also been important for me in the artwork is that I've used materials other people may simply have thrown away. You can take all kinds of materials and fashion art from them. There's a



Mark Hunt: 'It's as if somebody has guided me'

DAVE ROBERTS

value in so many things that people may otherwise consider to be scrap.

"Ultimately, I just want to give pleasure to people from this art and to enable them to use the imagery to be taken on their own journey."

He says his artwork provides an important way for him to express himself, having been diagnosed as dyslexic.

"Whilst I may have trouble with spelling and reading, the fact that I've been able to work on these designs says to me, 'Yes, I can create!'. It is as if somebody has guided me to do this."

Mark is keen for his artwork to be dis-

played in a church in the county. He is offering up the three pieces – the smaller *Christ on the Cross*, the larger installation and his interpretation of *The Creation of Adam*.

"I would be thrilled if these pieces of art could be placed in a church somewhere in the county for others to see and reflect upon," he says. "I'm more than happy to deliver them to a church that may want them, though I would not be able to install the larger cross."

If you would like to display the pieces of art in your church, please contact communications@carlisle-diocese.org.uk



Fashioned from wood and copper: Mark's interpretation of the hands from Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*



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Bishop's 'pact' with God in reluctant answer to calling

By Dave Roberts

THE Bishop of Carlisle laughs heartily as he recalls his 'pact' with God when answering the call to ordination.

"Firstly, I told him that I'd never be involved with a building project," the Rt Rev James Newcome explains. "Second, I said I'd never work in a Cathedral and, lastly, I said I'd never work in the north of England.

"Well, I was then involved in a huge building project with the church I led in Cambridge, I worked for eight years in Chester Cathedral and for 21 years I've ministered in one of the northernmost dioceses in England. God has a great sense of humour, doesn't he?"

As he approaches his retirement at the end of August, Bishop James is reflecting on his 45 years in ministry, including more than two decades here in Cumbria. But his was a call to ordination he only reluctantly followed.

"Lots of people were telling me that I should consider it, but I'd always set my heart on moving into publishing," he says.

"I was offered a job with Macmillan and then a job in the Foreign Office but there was a constant niggle about ordination. I did everything I could to avoid it and eventually turned down both jobs and decided on a short-service commission in the Regular Army, having already been commissioned in the Territorial Army.

"However, the call became stronger and stronger, and I was at a Christian conference where someone simply said to me, 'If you know that is what God is saying, why are you putting it off?'. At that point it hit me between the eyes."

It led to him declining the short-service commission and spending a year as an ambulance driver before attending Ridley Theological College in Cambridge.

He'd previously studied history at Oxford, where he met his wife, Alison, who would later go into nursing and then work as a health visitor.

He says it was while at university that his faith strengthened when he was part of the Christian Union.

After serving his curacy in Leavesden, Watford, he and Alison moved to the parish of Bar Hill in Cambridge, growing a congregation of 20 to more than 200



Looking forward to retirement: Bishop James and his wife Alison at their home in Cumbria

DAVE ROBERTS

■ A special service was held in the Cathedral recently to mark Bishop James's retirement. While he reflects here on 45 years in ministry, photos from the event can be seen on the next page

over 12 years. He played a central role in developing an ecumenical ministry there and oversaw a huge building project and the creation of a new church.

"Building the new church was a great example of God at work," Bishop James recalls. "It was going to cost £1 million, and we were on a housing estate where many people were struggling to pay their own mortgages.

"So, the big question was how were we going to raise that money? Well, we did and were never in debt. The congregation gave very generously but I really don't know how we did it!"

After a further eight years at Chester Cathedral as Residentiary Canon and Diocesan Director of

Ordinands and Director of Ministry, he was appointed Bishop of Penrith in 2002 before, seven years later, being named Bishop of Carlisle.

"Throughout my time as Bishop I've particularly enjoyed spending time with clergy on the ground," he says. "Getting out and visiting people is so important; that's something I regularly stress to all clergy.

"I've also loved developing the various strategies over the years.

"I remain hugely passionate about the ecumenical relations which are at the core of our God for All vision and strategy. I really do believe that as Christians we are meant to be working in mission together.

"It's also been wonderful to be a part of the various missions we've had here and I've thoroughly enjoyed my national roles, not least acting as lead bishop for healthcare. Visits to our link dioceses – especially Northern Argentina – have also been particular highlights."

His time as Bishop has seen the county contend with the foot and mouth crisis, several major floods, the west Cumbrian shooting and the Covid-19 pandemic.

He adds: "The way that the church responded and was there for people during these crises has been central to the building of even closer relationships across the county.

"As Christians, it's essential

that we are seen to care for others, that's why I feel one of the God for All central themes – Care Deeply – is so important."

As he looks towards retirement and moving closer to family in west Oxfordshire, he says he will still keep ties with the county, continuing in his role as chair of the Rose Castle Foundation.

He concludes: "I pray that the God for All vision becomes more firmly embedded and that our ecumenical ties grow ever stronger.

"I see the county rather like a big family. In that way it has a feel unlike any other diocese I've ever worked in. I pray that continues to grow in the future."



Family time: From left, Edward Newcome, Bishop James, Alison Newcome, and Anna Boon with her daughter Evie and husband Edward Boon



Ecumenical Selfie: Bishop James with Captain Canon Hilary Borthwick from the Salvation Army



Meet and greet: Bishop James chats with people outside Carlisle Cathedral after the service

Encouragement and hope



Sermon: Bishop James spoke of the hope and realism underpinning the God for All vision
PICTURES: JENNY WOOLGAR PHOTOGRAPHY

MORE than 500 people gathered at Carlisle Cathedral for the Farewell Service for Bishop James and his wife Alison.

It came ahead of his retirement at the end of August, with the Choral Evensong on Sunday July 16 featuring readings from 2 Chronicles and 1 Thessalonians, the Cathedral choir leading anthems and a worship group helping lead the congregation in two songs.

During his sermon, Bishop James touched on the encouragement he had experienced during his 21 years' ministry in Cumbria and the hope and realism which undergirds the county's ecumenical vision and strategy God for All.

The former Lord Lieutenant Clare Hensman was among four



Tribute: Clare Hensman

people to pay particular tribute to Bishop James and Alison, telling the congregation: "James and Alison are some of the kindest people; thinking the best of others. You have always been so welcoming and hospitable and we will miss that infectious laugh of James's. We wish you a very happy retirement."




Procession: The congregation stands as Bishop James and Alison Newcome leave the Cathedral



Symbolic: Canon Warden Benjamin Carter hands Bishop James his Pastoral Staff, representing his office to the Diocese

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Plant the rural seeds and watch the disciples grow

■ John takes on exciting new role in Keswick area

By Dave Roberts

“I HAVE always been connected to churches which value planting very highly. I suppose you could say it’s a part of my ecclesiological DNA,” the Rev John Freeman says.

It is that passion which he brings to his new role in Cumbria, as Associate Priest of the Binsey Mission Community and A66 Church Plant Pioneer.

He will work alongside existing churches in the Keswick area and beyond, planting new worshipping communities and growing disciples.

“Every church plant looks different,” he says, “and I’m certain there will be various models for us in a Cumbrian context. But ultimately, the key point is to reach new people in new ways. A good church plant will always be aware of the context in which they are serving and be aware of those people who they are yet to connect with in specific areas.

“It is important to remember that you can’t take a church plant model and simply replicate it elsewhere; it doesn’t work like that. Context, place and people are so important.”

Having grown up in Newbury, Berkshire, John studied biochemistry at Southampton University where his faith grew through membership of the Christian Union. After a two-year internship in his home church, he served as worship pastor in Surbiton for five years while also training at St Mellitus College in London for three years.

A curacy followed at Greyfriars church in Reading – a Resource church with a history of planting – before the move to Cumbria with wife, Steph, and their two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Molly.

“Particularly when I was looking at curacy, the Director of Ordinands and others called it out of me to consider curacies with a potential planting element in them,” John adds. “All the way along I’ve always wanted to do what God is calling me to do. Often that can be more of a surprise.”



Rob Saner-Haigh: ‘John’s role is something new’

STUART WALKER

His role will take in communities from Keswick to Cocker-mouth and the Binsey Mission Community, with a specific remit to reach children, young people and young adults.

“Part of the beauty of this role is that I am here as an associate priest and have a dedicated connection to a mission community. So, part of my calling is to see churches in my parish continue growing alongside church plants.

“There is a certain narrative that church plants ‘steal’ Christians from elsewhere. There’s lots of research to show that is not the case and, in fact, when a church plant comes in, other congregations grow as well.”

His is one of a number of proposed church plant pioneer roles identified as part of the county’s refreshed ecumenical God for All vision and strategy.

Extra funding is being applied for through the Church of England’s Church Commissioners. This could see further church plants in Carlisle – in the west of the city and a city centre student plant – as well as others on the west coast and in Barrow.

The Bishop of Penrith, the Rt Rev Rob Saner-Haigh, explains: “Our church planting plans aim to help in two ways: firstly, by encouraging our mission communities to develop and grow their missional imagination and, secondly, to support those areas where we need to start new things to engage with people.

“John’s role as a rural church planter is something new for us. It’s exciting and we hope to learn from it over the coming years – what works well and



John Freeman: ‘Every church plant looks different’

DAVE ROBERTS

what doesn’t – so that can benefit other further plants.

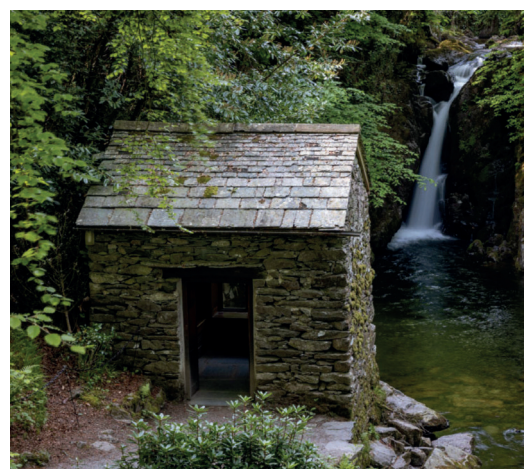
“Church planting is something that the church has always done, and it is a vital part of connecting – and re-connecting – with communities who perhaps we are not reaching so well. For instance, there may be areas of deprivation or even large estates where we can plant something new in support of the existing mission and ministry.

“Our fundamental commitment remains to the local church and the planting model is there to help and support churches as they try new ways of being worshipping communities.”

The church planting role is not a ‘quick fix’, and time will be needed to embed new worshipping communities which in turn grow new disciples.

John concludes: “My passion is to see the church flourish.

“I’d say there are three core values for any church plant – prayer, discipleship and mission – through which we can be with Jesus, become like Jesus and act like Jesus.”



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Church group reaches out with green fingers

■ St John's is one of nine county churches to sign up for nature count

By Dave Roberts

"IT'S great to see such a beautiful, thriving green space in an urban area," Valerie Hallard enthuses.

She is talking about the churchyard of St John's Workington where she and other members of the Green Space Friends team she has created are busy documenting the site's biodiversity.

It is all part of an annual nature count to which nine churches in Cumbria signed up this year.

The count is organised by Caring for God's Acre, a conservation charity looking after burial grounds across the UK. It also produces resources for education and runs training to promote the enjoyment of churchyards and support Eco Church awards.

"When comparing year-on-year figures, the biodiversity of the site has grown significantly," says Valerie, a member of St John's. "That is wonderful news and it's great to be able to evidence that, whilst encouraging other people to encounter nature and ultimately to contribute to a national database."

Team members use the iNaturalist app to identify and record plants, insects and birds, with the pictures then being uploaded to the national database.

Funding for the Workington team came in 2021 through Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Planting for Pollinators scheme which provided wildflower seeds and plug plants. Members of the public joined people from the church to plant seeds and tend the land, the routine maintenance of which is overseen by Cumberland Council.

A Royal Horticultural Society grant for £2,500 – through its In Your Neighbourhood project – means there are plans to introduce a lockable notice board on site, detailing what to look out for each month and promote the nature group.

The team meets each Tuesday to work at the burial ground – which now includes a wildflower area – or in the town's Bankfield Mansion Gardens, where they are developing a herb garden with funding from Zero Carbon Cumbria and the Great Big Green Week. It has also provided a new way in which the church can reach out to the community.

"We were working one day planting some narcissi, when a young lady walked past and stopped to ask what we were doing," Valerie says. "We explained more about the project, and she said she'd not long moved to the area and was predominantly working from home so might come along. She's now become a star member of the group.

"Doing this kind of work is part of our mission as a church. You can't help but



Countdown: From left, the Rev Peter Powell, Ruth Singleton, Peter Todd and Val Hallard prepare for the survey

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS



Biodiversity: Ruth Singleton checks out the flora

feel better for being involved with nature, and working shoulder-to-shoulder with people also creates opportunities for conversations about Jesus."

The Green Space Friends team includes congregation members and those who don't attend church. For Peter Todd, 84, it's been a way to encourage him back to a worshipping community.

"This group provides a lovely social occasion, especially for someone like me

who now lives on his own," Peter says. "On Easter Sunday I was sat at home and decided that that would be the day I reacquainted myself with the church. I went along, saw Valerie there and realised I was surrounded by very lovely, helpful people.

"Equally, being part of the Green Space team gives me a wonderful sense of companionship and wellbeing. I feel that, together, we are really contributing to the community."

The scheme chimes particularly well with Tread Gently, one of the main themes of the ecumenical county's God for All vision and strategy.

The Rev Dr Peter Powell, Associate Priest at St John's, adds: "The beauty of God's creation and the need to care for that is at the heart of the Gospel message. I think the Church has woken up to how important that is.

"By using our heritage and our churchyards we can declare that beauty to the world and also link with partners beyond our churches who are equally fascinated at discovering nature on our doorsteps.

"A churchyard like this is a place in which people can enjoy peace, tranquility and reflection. It's a place where they can connect with nature and their Creator God."

■ For more details, visit www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk



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LEDs light the way to net zero in ancient buildings

■ Diocesan scheme funds cost of replacing bulbs and light fittings

By Dave Roberts

“SOME people may think this is a small step on the journey towards net zero carbon, but it’s definitely a move in the right direction which has already reaped results.”

Anna Newlove, Net Zero Officer for the Diocese of Carlisle, is talking about the LED Challenge 2023 through which churches, church halls and church schools are being encouraged to switch to LED bulbs to reduce energy consumption.

Under the scheme, the Diocese covers the cost of replacing bulbs – up to £1,000 for churches, halls and vicarages. It’s a project which resonates with one of the central themes of the county’s God for All ecumenical vision and strategy, to ‘Tread Gently’ which seeks to safeguard the integrity of God’s creation.

Anna explains: “This is an opportunity for us all to reduce our energy consumption, therefore reducing energy bills and carbon emissions.

“In Mike Berners-Lee’s book *How Bad are Bananas*, he gives the example of two bulbs being left on for a year and the emissions from this. A 5-watt, low-energy bulb would produce 15kg of carbon dioxide; a 100-watt, incandescent bulb would produce 300kg of carbon dioxide.

“You might think a move to LED bulbs would be inconsequential, but we have already seen an impact in terms of energy reduction, and we’d encourage more churches to contact us.”

Since the scheme’s launch in October 2022, 28 churches have benefited from LED grants through the diocese’s Parish Property Fund. Of those, 19 have just had to change bulbs while a further nine have changed bulbs and fittings. To date, 559 bulbs have been replaced in churches. Sixteen vicarages have also made the switch, with 268 bulbs provided. Using Energy Saving Trust figures of 5kg of carbon dioxide saved for every bulb switched to LED, this is equivalent to a carbon reduction of 1.34 tonnes.

One of the churches to benefit is St Michael’s



Illuminating: LEDs shed light on an information panel in St Michael’s

at Burgh by Sands, with up to 30 LED bulbs installed. The Grade I listed building has a rich history which pulled in an estimated 5,250 visitors last year.

Churchwarden Carolynne Baines explains: “I first heard of the scheme at a God for All roadshow and the following day made a call about it. It was a simple process to get funding for the bulbs and for some new fittings we needed.

“As a church we are open daily because so many people are interested in our history. Our lights are triggered by sensors so they’re not on all the time, but the fact that we now have LED bulbs helps even more with saving energy. I think it’s a great idea for churches.

“The only dates you need to remember for St Michael’s are 12th-century church, 13th-century north aisle, 14th-century tower and 21st-century LED lights!”

Applications for the LED Challenge can be made up to December 31. If applicants expect the cost of bulbs to be more than £1,000, they are encouraged to contact Anna Newlove before making any purchases.

Extra money is available for churches that need to change light fittings. In these cases, a review of applications runs until February 2024.

■ For more details, contact anna.newlove@carlisle-diocese.org.uk



Carolynne Baines: ‘It was a simple process’

DAVE ROBERTS

ONLINE SESSIONS ZOOM IN ON DIGITAL COMPETENCY

DO YOU wish you felt more confident online? Or perhaps you feel stuck in a rut and want to try something new? Look no further! This summer and autumn, God for All Digital Enabler, Eleanor Ledesma, is running short training sessions for all abilities. They will help equip you with the knowledge and skills to navigate the digital world with confidence.

In beginners’ sessions relating to Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter, you will be guided through the key features of these popular platforms and be shown

their benefits and limitations. There’s opportunity to understand more about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it’s shaping our digital experience.

Find out how to build a thriving online community, fostering authentic connections, nurturing engagement and creating a supportive digital community. And learn how to harness the advanced features of Zoom.

The various events take place on:

■ Wednesday July 26, 7.30-9pm - Creating engaging Zoom sessions

■ Monday July 31, 7.30-9pm - Facebook for total beginners

■ Monday August 21, 7.30-9pm - Creating community with social media

■ Thursday September 7, 7.30-9pm - Twitter, Instagram and TikTok for beginners

■ Wednesday September 20, 7.30-9pm - Facebook for total beginners

■ Thursday October 5, 7.30-9pm - Artificial Intelligence, an introduction and discussion

■ Thursday October 12, 7.30-8.30pm -

Using WhatsApp pastorally

■ Wednesday October 18, 7.30-9pm - Creating community with social media

■ Thursday November 2, 7.30-9pm - Getting the most from your YouTube channel

All sessions are conducted online via Zoom. If you would like to discuss in-person training sessions for your Mission Community or other group, please contact Eleanor.

To book your place, email Eleanor.ledesma@carlisle-diocese.org.uk

Vet has new flock to tend

■ Chris expects life to be 'full on' as he commits to two roles



New beginning: Chris being ordained by the Bishop of Carlisle, the RT Rev James Newcome
STUART WALKER

IT'S been a busy morning for veterinary surgeon Chris Smith. As well as successful treatments, he's had to deal with a particularly "fractious" cat who wouldn't allow a blood sample to be taken.

And things are set to get busier for the 32-year-old, who is one of three unsalaried, self-supporting ministers (SSMs) recently ordained Deacon at Carlisle Cathedral.

While continuing to work three days a week and on-call shifts at Furness Veterinary Centre in Dalton-in-Furness, he has also just moved house to serve his curacy in the Benefice of Hawkshead with Low Wray and Rusland and Satterthwaite, part of the Central Lakes Mission Community.

He laughs: "It's going to be a bit full on but I'm looking forward to it. There are definitely parallels between the two roles. My work as a vet may well have helped prepare me for some of the situations I will have to deal with in ministry, for instance around end of life and dealing with the associated emotions."

"My colleagues are aware of my ordination and, on the whole, they are very accepting of it. Some of my regular clients know too. There have been many supportive messages whilst there's also one client who simply can't understand why I'm doing what I am."

For Chris, the dual roles will provide opportunity to bear witness to his faith both at 'work' and within a church setting. He understands there will be something of a balancing act to make things work.

"It definitely feels right to me that God has called me to this way of life," he adds. "It will be nice to have the variety whilst also recognising that I have also got to earn enough to support my ministry."

"I know there will be some

By Dave Roberts

people who feel it odd that I am sacrificing earning potential. However, what is important is that, whether I'm at work as a vet or ministering, first and foremost I am always a Christian. My faith is the most important thing in my life."

Chris was raised in London, later studying for five years at the capital's Royal Veterinary College where his faith grew. He was baptised and confirmed on the same day at St Paul's Cathedral in 2012. Two years later he moved to Broughton-in-Furness, after being offered his first job as a veterinary surgeon with a Cumbrian practice.

He explains: "A lot of people who become vets have always wanted to be one. Veterinary work is a bit like being a detective; you are trying to solve a problem and make a diagnosis. My dad was a policeman, and my mum is a nurse so perhaps my job is a combination of their roles."

While living in Broughton, he began to lead services and preach, mainly at St Mary Magdalene. He has completed three years of training, initially with Cumbria Christian Learning and then Emmanuel Theological College. He is now serving as one of more than 40 county SSMs, all supported by the Rev Canon Dr Nick Hallam, Diocesan Officer for SSM Ministry.

Nick, a Team Vicar in the Loughrigg Benefice and Assistant Priest in the Hawkshead Benefice, is a former hospital doctor who trained for ordination in the 1980s while practising as a junior doctor. He then continued to serve in both roles. He says: "Stipendiary ministry is extremely valuable. These are people who give their whole life to Christian ministry to lead parishes. They are vital.



'Day job': Chris will continue working as a vet in Dalton-in-Furness
DAVE ROBERTS

"There is a very important place for self-supporting ministry where there is the potential to have a foot in two camps: in the world of work or community and in church. Each part of an SSM's life can benefit the other. Doing the 'day job' means they can be a Christian presence in a host of ways – talking to colleagues, challenging decisions or exploring ethical issues."

"And when preaching they can also hopefully reflect the world beyond the church which can be helpful to members of the congregation."

Nick runs a monthly Zoom forum to which all SSMs and SSM ordinands are invited so they can chat together and pray.



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Researchers dig up lost stories buried in graveyard

■ Newspapers help team uncover hundreds of personal histories



'Rich history': Kristen Negaard O'Brien helped map and research monuments inside and outside Ulverston Parish Church

DAVE ROBERTS



THERE are not many churches which can claim their graveyard is the final resting place for a world champion.

Ulverston Parish Church can – because Tom Ray, a pole-vaulting champion in 1879, aged just 17, is thought to be buried there alongside his parents.

It is just one fascinating story among many to have been uncovered by a team which has painstakingly researched the hundreds of monuments there, both in the church building and surrounding graveyard.

Initially, bellringer and local historian Jennifer Snell created six maps of the whole churchyard, identifying the name, date and location of every monument.

In November 2019, she asked fellow bellringer Kristen Negaard O'Brien – who relocated to Ulverston with her husband five years ago from Connecticut – to help create an online resource. The work to document the monuments continued through the Covid-19 pandemic, in line with regulations, with the help of Kristen's friend Sue McKenzie.

Kristen, a former architectural illustrator, explains: "I went inside the church and photographed every window, every cross, chair; whatever was inscribed be it stone or metal.

"That gave us records for 183 items inside and 624 outside and so began our 'Marvellous Monumental Mapping Mission'!"

The team also worked alongside Cumbria-based surveying company Atlantic Geomatics – which has since partnered with the Church of England to digitally map 19,000 churchyards – to create an online resource.

"Once that mapping was completed, we could then shift our focus to the associated heritage stories," Kristen adds. "It means we now have around 300 stories about the people buried here, taken mostly from newspapers dated between 1750 and 1850.

"My prayer is that this churchyard is seen to be a community churchyard. The work has created some great opportunities for conversations. One man I was talking to said that only wealthy people were buried here, but I was able to tell him about the graves of a lamp lighter and the lady who played the church organ for 40 years."

By Dave Roberts

The team has also created a visitors' heritage sheet. It details 12 monuments, including the resting places of the pole-vaulter Tom Ray, the parents of Sir John Barrow – Second Secretary to the Admiralty for 40 years – Bible benefactor Roger Sawrey and master mariners James Cannon and Philip Priest.

Kristen adds: "Capturing what lies around us – often unnoticed – is so important. People don't realise the rich history which is within our churchyards. What Jennifer Snell and others have uncovered about this churchyard is amazing and people need to know about it."

The project has been welcomed and supported by church heritage organisations in the county. Jayne Potts, development officer for Churches Trust for Cumbria, says: "Our church monuments provide a rich historical thread through which our heritage can be further explored.

"Kristen has kept me posted about the work that's been going on at Ulverston Parish Church and I've been delighted to support them along the way. The team members have devoted thousands of hours of investigation and research just in the first year of this three-year project and the records provide a fascinating insight into bygone times and the people connected to the town and the county."

A further welcome off-shoot of the mapping project has been the opportunity to celebrate the biodiversity in the churchyard.

In October 2021, they were awarded Cumbria in Bloom silver-gilt awards for Woodland Copse and Biodiversity.

To further boost nature, church members have introduced five bird boxes, four hedgehog houses, three bat boxes and a roost for tawny owls.

The heritage team behind the monument mapping project now meet at the church twice a month. They are also looking to publish a book, detailing up to 30 of the personal and heritage stories behind the monuments.

Kristen concludes: "There are so many wonderful stories to tell connected with our monuments. The challenge will be to decide which of those should feature in a book."

'I pray local churches will feel encouraged in mission'

Q Please tell us a little bit about yourself?

A I was born in Oxford and lived in a number of places as a child before later studying psychology at Durham University.

I'm 64 years old and have been a minister for the United Reformed Church for the last 25 years. I trained from 1994 to 1998 and started my ministry journey in Leicester serving contrasting churches: one in a multi-faith, multi-cultural area and the other on an outer estate.

I spent time focussing on specialist inter-faith training work.

For the last 12 years I have been with the URC's Wessex Synod – covering a large swathe of southern England – as Synod Moderator.

I will be with the North Western for the next three years before retirement.

Prior to ministry, I worked in social work, particularly with children in care.

I'm married to John, who has just retired from his role as a URC minister, and we have two boys in their 30s, and four grandchildren.

I came to faith in my early teens and have belonged to a number of different denominations as I moved around quite a lot. I landed in the URC when I joined a local church and that seems to have been as good a fit as I could find.

I was inducted into my new role on June 10, and we're currently in temporary accommodation in the Salford Quays area, though we're hoping to move to Manchester from our home in Basingstoke soon.

Q What does your new role entail?

A The North Western Synod for the URC covers Cumbria, Lancashire and Greater Manchester as well as taking in a few small areas of Cheshire and Derbyshire. It takes in over 100 churches.

My role has several different strands to it: encouraging what's going on in local churches, encouraging people to think missionally and supporting those in our committee structures.

It will be very much about visiting churches, getting to know people and drawing alongside them. I want them to know that what they are doing matters to the wider church as well.

I'll be leading worship and



Clare Downing: Will be encouraging and supporting more than 100 churches in north-west England

■ In our latest Focus on Faith, we meet the Rev Clare Downing, the United Reformed Church's new Moderator for its North Western Synod

visiting our partnerships which work across wide areas, especially in Cumbria where that's countywide.

I will also be reaching out to all the various ecumenical and Churches Together contacts in the area.

It's important to have a listening ear so that I can bring people together who may be thinking about developing similar strands of mission.

I'll also be representing the Synod in the wider URC.

Q What excites you about the new role?

A Mostly it's about meeting people – I love that – and in turn getting to know what is going on and hopefully bringing fresh eyes to some

situations. It's 30 years since I last lived in this area so I'm conscious that there will be much for me to be reacquainted with.

There are exciting things going on in churches. For instance, I'm aware of a church which, since lockdown, is now meeting totally online. Hopefully, this Fresh Expression will be officially recognised as a new congregation by our General Assembly this year.

Q What are the challenges faced by the Church?

A The Church is facing a huge number of challenges. Partly, that is due to the fact that, for many people in my generation and younger generations, church has

not been part of their experience. They have had very little to do with it.

It's quite hard to explain more about church to people who may only know about it from sit-coms on the telly or attending the odd funeral.

In most of our churches, our age profile is not getting younger; partly that reflects the fact that people do not stay put for as long these days and so links through to a 'sense of place'.

I also think it's critically important to 'gossip the Gospel'. Many churches still just expect people to come to them, but it doesn't work like that any more.

If a person's relationship with Jesus is important to them then it's worth sharing and getting

past the embarrassment of doing that.

We also have buildings which are now in the wrong places. That's a challenge faced by so many different denominations. We must ensure that our buildings serve us rather than we serve our buildings.

Q What would be your prayer for your ministry?

A I pray that our local churches will feel supported from the central structures and that they will be encouraged in mission, feeling that they belong to something bigger.

I also pray that we intentionally look to develop ministry which is not about maintenance but is about mission.