

The Way



The FREE newspaper of the Church in Cumbria

Winter 2023/2024



Abbi has to keep mum
over her appearance
in TV's Bake Off

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Wishing all our readers
a wonderful Christmas
and Christ-filled 2024

HOME SWEET HOME



■ Schemes address Cumbria's lack of affordable housing

IN THIS edition of The Way we explore how, as Christians, we can challenge the lack of affordable housing in our county.

On page 4, we meet Cumbrian woman, Beki Winter, who is helping to advocate nationally on the issue and is supporting

churches and congregations to look for mutually beneficial ways in which we can face up to the challenge.

Bill Bewley, clerk of Keswick Quakers and chair of the town's Community Housing Trust, reflects on the wonderful work undertaken to provide more than 40

affordable homes in the town in the last 13 years.

There's more from Bill, who is pictured above, on page 5 as he explains: "The Bible tells us that we should love our neighbours as ourselves; that's exactly what we're doing!"

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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

FOLLOW DAILY

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. Here we explore 'Follow Daily' and how we can help each other to follow Jesus more closely, seeking to grow as his disciples in all aspects of life, both corporately and as individuals.



Major David Taylor, Salvation Army Divisional Commander

ONE of the significant features of the New Testament is the huge number of times that the phrase 'one another' is used (one word in New Testament Greek - ἀλλήλων), particularly by the Apostle Paul, writing to the churches about their lives together.

They are to love, encourage, forgive, serve, speak truth, bear with, pray for, be hospitable to, build up, be subject to, confess their sins, accept and be of one mind with 'one another' not to mention ways in which they shouldn't act, such as lie, grumble, judge, consume, envy, repay evil and complain against 'one another'.

Following Jesus daily is truly learned and demonstrated in

our common bonds of life and love together. It involves us being willing to regularly show up and to give of ourselves sacrificially, as much as it does being willing to humbly and gratefully receive from each other.

Following Jesus daily is simply to reflect or echo back to others the love, forgiveness, mercy and grace that we ourselves receive daily from God. As the song suggests, "freely, freely, you have received, freely, freely give".

May this advent season of waiting upon and receiving from God enrich us in ways that enable us to be God's good news to each other and to his world.

The Rt Rev Rob Saner-Haigh, Bishop of Penrith



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

MY HOPE is that you receive the encouragement to follow God daily, not as a burden, but as an invitation that is permissive, rooted and life-giving.

'Permissive', because spiritual practice need not be rigid but can be wide and flexible, from reflecting on the Bible to praying in all sorts of ways, from reflecting during a morning walk to engaging in music or other activity (including sometimes with others), to open yourself to God.

'Rooted', because all that helps you to engage with God will not only root you in God's being and presence but will help to root you in the very essence of who you are, which in turn will enable you more fully to be in relationship with others.

'Life giving', because not only do we become animated by the love and grace of God, but that love and grace then flows into our relating with others, through caring deeply, treading gently and sometimes speaking boldly.

May you explore, discover and cultivate all that helps you to follow daily, to become ever more open to the God who deepens our being, expands our horizons and inspires our purpose - the God who is for you, and for all.



Rev Martyn Coe, Coordinator, United Reformed Church Cumbria Partnership

I HAVE been reminded over the years by spiritual directors to 'Pray as you can, not as you can't'.

Perhaps this should apply to our whole faith journey.

Seek to follow God as you can, not as you can't. Be inspired by others, don't try to be them. Be inspired by those who have nurtured you in life and in church - maybe a friend, a Sunday school teacher, home group leader, pastor or preacher - but don't try to be them.

Be inspired by the biblical characters - like the woman at the well who called everyone to see Jesus or by John the Baptist or by St Andrew who both pointed away from themselves towards Jesus - but don't think you should be just like them.

Perhaps we all need to be a little of both Mary and Martha - listening to Jesus and acting on his behalf.

Following Jesus daily is our calling, and we should do it in our own way with the gifts and faith we have - not trying to be what we can't be. Follow daily and God has called you and loves you. As a follower of the living God, be yourself; you don't have to be like anybody else.



IN PAUL'S wonderful letter to the church in Philippi, he calls people in the church his 'partners' in the gospel and gives thanks that God will complete the good work that he has begun in them.

We are people in whom God has begun an ongoing work.

God is changing us to be more like Jesus Christ, and that is something which we participate in each day, throughout our lives.

It is, as the theologian Eugene Peterson put it, "a long obedience in the same direction".

God seeks to work in us and transform us, and we make a daily decision to be part of what he is doing in us.

We are also making a daily decision to be part of what God is doing through us.

Each of us has particular gifts, particular experiences and a particular context. Each of us, as partners in the gospel, is called by God to seek the hope, beauty and transformation of his kingdom in each of the places where we find ourselves.

We are sent out to do what only we can do, with our particular gifts, in each of the places where we are placed.

Abbi's secret ingredient? An appearance on Bake Off...

■ Deputy churchwarden had to tell congregation a little 'fib' while filming

By Dave Roberts

DEPUTY churchwarden Abbi Lawson admits she had to be a little 'sneaky' after being picked as a contestant in this year's *Great British Bake Off*.

Sworn to secrecy about her appearance on the Channel 4 show, Abbi told members of her congregation at St James' Tebay that she couldn't be at church as she was visiting friends in the south.

Little did they know that she was actually heading to the famous Bake Off tent for filming.

Abbi, 28, explained: "I was only able to tell my immediate family that I'd made it onto the show."

"I also told a couple of people at work because I was there when I took the phone call to say I'd been picked, and I couldn't work for the rest of the day because I was so excited!"

So, it came as a complete surprise for her church family when, a week before the first episode, the show's publicity announced Abbi as one of the 12 contestants.

"Applying for the show was something I'd always wanted to do," Abbi said. "And when one of my cakes won best in show at the Greenholme Show, I decided to go for it."

"When people at church eventually found out about it, they were all so excited."

She and her family moved to Tebay seven years ago and since then have been connected to the Anglican church which works closely with the local Methodist chapel. As well as her churchwarden duties, Abbi sits on the Parochial Church Council and is a Deanery Synod representative.

She is equally passionate about nature and sustainability as she is about baking. Abbi has just helped St James' gain a bronze Eco Church award and she works for Home Grown Here, an agricultural co-operative based out of Crosby Ravensworth which sources locally grown seasonal fruit and vegetables.

She brought that love of nature – and in particular foraging – to some of her Bake Off creations.

The first episode saw Abbi wow the judges in Cake Week, creating a vertically layered cake using wild blackcurrants and



'One of the best things I've ever done': Abbi baking at home in Tebay

DAVE ROBERTS

poppy seeds and foraged gorse petals for its decoration. She later drew on her Cumbrian home, designing a Herbert the Herdwick Sheep ginger sponge cake featuring a hazelnut praline crunch.

The following week saw her further excel when baking biscuits, but episode three – the bread-baking week – was to prove her downfall after a garlic-and-rosemary cottage loaf failed to rise. Despite being voted off at that point, Abbi says she had no regrets.

"Without a doubt, it's one of the best things I've ever done," she said. "It's given me a real sense of my own style of baking and what areas I'm particularly good at. I'm now less likely to simply follow a recipe book and will look to bring my own flavours to things I bake. Through my faith, I'm very passionate about nature and caring for the planet and so it's special to be able to reflect that in my baking."

"Taking part in the show was so special. I know it may sound

cheesy, but we all felt like one big, happy family. There was a sense that all the contestants were rooting for each other."

"In fact, when I told people in church that I was going down south to visit friends, I wasn't really telling a fib. It just so happened that all my friends were also all being filmed for Bake Off!"

Abbi also had an opportunity to share some of her faith journey as part of the process.

She added: "There was another baker in the tent, and we were able to share a little bit about our faith with each other. That was really good."

And the one draw-back from her role in the hit TV series?

Abbi joked: "Well I suppose I'll now always be the go-to when a cake needs baking for one of the various events we will hold at church! I won't mind that really."

■ To find out more about Home Grown Here, the Crosby Ravensworth-based agricultural co-operative, visit www.homegrownhere.co.uk.



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New developments 'not meeting housing needs'

■ National advocate champions project to ease Kendal's 'horrendous' homes crisis

By Dave Roberts

WHEN it comes to the provision of affordable housing, Beki Winter has a lot of fingers in a lot of pies.

Her passion for ensuring people have safe, sustainable, secure homes, is played out in her role as Housing Enabler at Housing Justice – a national charity which aims to “mobilise Christian action on homelessness and housing need through love, justice, advocacy and nurture”.

She is also a member of the Church of England's Housing Initiative and a board member for Mitre Housing Association, the Diocese of Carlisle's housing association which has about 150 properties across the county.

In 2021, Beki founded Kendal Community Land Trust (KCLT), a not-for-profit, member-owned organisation dedicated to providing sustainable, affordable housing and other benefits to the local community in and around Kendal, where she and her family now live.

Beki explains: “I drew together a group of people who could commit to the trust and then we went for charitable status. There are now eight of us on the board, including a development manager, an architect and an accountant.

“We conducted surveys and ran events to check local people agreed with the trust's aims and objectives. Everything we've had back confirms that's the case. It's a no-brainer; everybody knows we need more affordable accommodation here.”

The trust can dip into Community Housing Fund grants, made available to the south Lakes because it is an area which has a high percentage of holiday lets and second-home ownership.

Beki and other trust members are now looking to secure ownership of the town's Bushier Walk site – opposite Kendal Fire Station – to provide around 10 affordable housing units.

“The lack of affordable homes here is horrendous,” Beki says. “Many of my peers simply can't afford properties in this area. When a three-bed property for rent becomes available, I've seen friends competing against other friends over it. I've also had friends having to live with mates because they've had nowhere to go.

“It's a situation which does not get any easier. The new housing



Beki Winter: Works locally and nationally to develop affordable homes on church land

DAVE ROBERTS

developments in Kendal are simply not meeting these needs.”

Originally from Gilgarran in west Cumbria, Beki returned to her native county five years ago, after 15 years' supporting rough sleepers in London.

Back in the north, she became a community-led housing officer for Lancaster City Council, a job that provided invaluable skills for her role with KCLT and her work with Housing Justice.

She's been with the national Christian charity for nearly two years, working alongside churches to help them consider how their land and buildings could best be used to support affordable housing.

As part of that role, she is looking to work alongside the Diocese of Carlisle in further mapping designated church land in Cumbria. At the Diocese's October Synod, members endorsed a motion calling on churches to consider how best to use land for affordable housing.

Beki says: “My main objective is to help develop affordable homes on church land. I work locally, regionally and nationally towards that end.”

Ongoing projects include the potential development of a Methodist chapel and associated

land in the north-east and plans to develop up to ten homes in the Eden Valley.

Housing Justice fed into the Archbishop's Commission on Housing, Church and Community leading to the publication of a report, *Coming Home*, in February 2021 which detailed the church's response to the housing crisis.

In turn, Beki and her colleague at Housing Justice were invited to sit on a national executive team looking at the next steps for the church around provision of affordable housing. This has seen the creation of a national Church Housing Foundation, through which grant funding and resources are available.

Beki concludes: “For me it's brilliant to be working in the housing sector now after so many years supporting those who are rough sleeping.

“While I'm not a person of faith, I feel closely allied to Christian values and feel at home among Christians tackling social justice issues. My task is to advise and guide them around affordable housing development so that together we can turn things around.”

■ For more details, visit www.churchhousingfoundation.org, www.housingjustice.org.uk and www.kendalcommunitylandtrust.co.uk.

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Churches help address affordable homes crisis

■ Trust builds houses as tourist town loses more residential properties

By Dave Roberts

“I THINK if you worship on a Sunday, you are trying to get as close as you can to the power of God,” says Bill Bewley.

“In turn that must touch you and leave you with the feeling that you’ve got to do something for your community. It’s not a duty – you can enjoy it – and this is the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done.”

Bill is talking about his work as chair of the Keswick Community Housing Trust (KCHT), a body set up after a Churches Together survey in 2009 revealed an affordable housing crisis in the town.

Nearly 14 years on and KCHT now boasts net assets of £6 million and a burgeoning property portfolio, all aimed at supporting local people to find affordable homes. And church communities have been front and centre of the organisation’s growth.

Bill, who is Clerk of Keswick Quakers and a Trustee of Churches Together in Cumbria, says: “When we were looking to start off, someone suggested we speak to all the local churches to see what deals they may be able to do with us. So, we knocked on the door of Keswick St John’s and the then vicar, Stephen Pye, came up with an idea that we could take the lower portion of an extension to their graveyard, which was not suitable for burial.”

That proved the catalyst for growth. The trust raised £60,000 through community shares and secured a further £115,000 grant through the then Homes and Communities Agency. As a result, 11 three-bedroomed houses were built on the site, now known as The Hopes. One was sold outright to a local person, generating capital for the trust, half-shares were sold in five houses and the other five were rented out. It’s a development model which has worked well.

What followed was the offer of a redundant public toilet block by Allerdale Borough Council for £1. That enabled the trust to develop a further four one-bedroomed apartments.

In 2015 the trust drew alongside a contractor to oversee the development of its third project – 22 houses at the town’s Calvert Way. Eighteen months ago, the fourth project was completed at the rear of Keswick Methodist Church on Southey Street. That’s provided three three-bedroomed houses and a two-bedroom property.

“The connections between ourselves and the local Methodists were ever so good,” Bill adds.

The trust’s most recent scheme has seen it lease four one-bedroomed apartments from the local authority for five years which they now manage as a



Bill Bewley: ‘This is the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done’

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS

registered provider. Rents – while affordable – are a little higher than social rents to provide an income stream to pay off loans. Property management is equally as important to the trust as their development.

Bill says: “We have a high reputation for looking after any issues which there may be in a property and dealing with them in a timely manner. Managing the properties is so important; I can’t understand why other registered providers don’t act as quickly.”

With more than 40 properties in their charge, the trust has done a lot to support those looking for affordable homes, but there’s still a long way to go.

The town continues to lose homes to the holiday let market or second homes. National Park figures show that since

the trust’s first project in 2015, 280 homes in the town are no longer residential.

“In that same time, we’ve built 44 affordable homes so you can see the growing problem that there is,” Bill says. “In total about 80 affordable houses have been built here so in essence we’re slipping backwards.”

But Bill remains committed to his work with the Trust, work which he says has God at its heart.

He concludes: “We’re a community land trust, we are totally community based. About half of the people involved with the trust are not churchgoers but they are committed to social justice. The Bible tells us we should love our neighbours as ourselves; that’s exactly what we’re doing.”



Filling a gap: New homes behind Keswick’s Methodist Church on Southey Street



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Hard work paying off: Dotti Kuchta and other volunteers, left and centre, help prepare and serve food to the club members, right

God has guided lunch club founder for three decades

■ Dozens get boost from meals provided by award-winning volunteers

By Dave Roberts

"I OFTEN refer to this as our feeding of the 5,000 because we have never, ever run out of food," jokes Anne MacDonald, founder of the Penrith Methodist Church Luncheon Club. "I admit that occasionally it's been a bit hit and miss, but there's always been enough for everyone."

It is now 31 years since Anne first came up with the idea of providing the community service which is run out of one of the halls in the Wordsworth Street church.

In 1992, with a background in cooking but also caring for two school-aged children, she decided to volunteer for a couple of lunch clubs in the town – the Stick and Wheel and Age UK. That then sparked her decision to form PMC's club.

Anne explains: "I thought to myself, 'Well I worship here, and I know we've got the facilities, so why not run one ourselves?' I chatted to a few people, and no one said it was a stupid idea."

"We put out notices and grew a team of volunteers and very quickly we were serving lunches for up to 50 people. Social services and Age UK had heard about us and made referrals and people from other denominations also came along."

At its height, 80 people were being fed weekly. It's a service which has continued every Friday, though the Covid pandemic did mean people couldn't meet during the lockdowns.

There is a four-week rota of eight to 10 volunteers who cook a two-course meal while three



Anne MacDonald: 'Winning the award was the icing on the cake really'

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS

volunteer drivers provide a taxi service to collect 20 people who would otherwise not be able to attend.

The day I meet Anne and her

team, mince beef with dumplings, mashed potato, carrot, swede, broccoli and gravy as well as a dessert of crumble and custard are all on offer, plus a hot drink and a



Iris Caben: 'It counters the lonely time'

biscuit. The church hall is buzzing with conversation as people tuck into their meals, which are priced at just £4 to cover food costs and heating, although many people offer more.

For people like Iris Caben, the lunch club offers a chance to mix with others as well as enjoy the food.

She says: "I try to come every week if I can because it means you get out and meet your friends. Everybody is so friendly and happy here, so it counters the lonely time when you are on your own. The team that run things are absolutely lovely and they look after us all so well."

And it's a community service which has now received official recognition. The PMC Lunch Club won the Community Group Award at this year's BBC Radio Cumbria *Make a Difference* awards ceremony.

Anne adds: "Winning the award was the icing on the cake really. We've had articles in the local newspaper over the years to keep people informed of what we were up to, but this was the first time we've really received official acknowledgment."

Anne is also involved in a 4F

project at the church – Friendship, Food, Fun and Free – which is supported with government funding. The initiative supports local families and refugee families through food, craft and sporting events every week during the school holidays. The church has also been able to take families on days out to a gymnastics centre, a swimming pool and a farm park.

The volunteers include people of faith and people with no faith. All demonstrate a calling to care for others which Anne says reflects the sense of Biblical hospitality at the heart of the club.

"At the end of the day this is all about caring for people," Anne says. "This is one of the biggest ways in which we as a church can support people in mission and outreach and show them that we are always here for them."

"I get so much out of it personally and I know that all our other team members feel the same. And as for where God is in all of this? Well, he's sat right here on my shoulder guiding me through it all!"

■ If you would like to consider volunteering for the Lunch Club, please contact admin@penrithmethodist.co.uk.

'It's no sacrifice; we feel needed. That's fulfilling'

■ Medics feel 'blessed' bringing up family in village in Sierra Leone

By Dave Roberts

"I STEPPED over a snake as I was walking to work the other day," Hannah Ashley laughs. "There are plenty of deadly snakes here, but I don't think that was one!"

For Hannah and her husband Thomas it's just another part of their daily working lives as medics in the northern province of his native Sierra Leone.

Despite the dangerous reptiles – and the army of biting ants which had marched into their home on the day of our Zoom interview – both say they were called by God to this mission.

In the spring of 2019, *The Way* featured the couple as they prepared to move to Africa, where they'd originally met eight years before. The Covid pandemic delayed plans but Thomas's international visa was extended meaning he could continue in his role as a surgical registrar at Carlisle's Cumberland Infirmary while Hannah worked as a GP in Penrith.

Eventually, in 2021, the couple and their two sons – Thomas, seven, and Samuel, five – were able to fly out, initially basing themselves in the country's capital, Freetown.

"There is such poverty," Hannah says. "People go for surgery, but they have to pay for every last thing: every piece of cotton wool, every needle, every piece of gauze. It means that often Thomas was operating on people who were so sick because they'd had to wait to get money together to pay for the surgery."

"There are also no reliable blood banks so people would bring along their relatives who could donate blood if needed. It's a very challenging situation and can be quite demoralising."

In Freetown, Thomas worked in the main university teaching hospital, focusing on surgery and his passion for training junior doctors and medical students. Hannah worked with Christian relief and development organisation, World Hope International, on a low-cost cervical cancer screening programme for 5,000 women living in outlying villages. She also drew alongside another British GP who has been based in Sierra Leone for five years, supporting a palliative care programme.

"I was really traumatised for the first few months," Thomas explains. "Some people simply didn't have the money to pay for surgery and they died. I'd just come from working within the NHS with all the high-tech resources which were on offer in Cumbria. I cried sometimes."

It was always the couple's intention to



Simple: Nearly half a million people depend on the Masanga Hospital for health care

move to the provinces, relocating to the Masanga Hospital – a former leprosy hospital and now a training base for clinical health officers. Around 440,000 people are dependent on the 120-bed hospital in the north of the country which provides emergency surgical, obstetrical and paediatric care, as well as general health care for about 12,000 patients per year.

The couple work alongside CapaCare, a Norwegian charity which aims to build up surgical capacity in the country through training. As training co-ordinator, Thomas ensures the students have skills for procedures such as caesareans, appendectomies and abdominal surgery.

"It was never our intention to remain in the city," Thomas says, "And what I'm doing in Masanga is helping to expand surgical activity in Sierra Leone. That's what I feel I've been called by God to do. It feels that we are able to bless the people we are working with."

Meanwhile, Hannah is now Country Director for CapaCare, overseeing liaison between Norway and the 10-strong staff team in Sierra Leone and various financial donors.

She adds: "Ultimately, we are training up people who will go on to work in other rural areas. That is what is so necessary. We feel very much needed here and that's very fulfilling."

"People may think we have made a sacrifice to come here but we feel we have been blessed and that we can make a difference. It is such a privilege."

The tiny village of Masanga where they are now based feels a far cry from the couple's previous homes in Wetheral near Carlisle and latterly Kirkby Stephen.

"Essentially we are in the jungle and close to a huge river where there's mining for gold," Hannah says.

"Our boys are home-schooled but also enjoy huge freedom and most afternoons



Making a difference: Hannah and Thomas with their sons Thomas, seven, and Samuel, five, at home in Sierra Leone

are outside playing football with a young coach who has set up a team called Young Boys FC!"

As for church, a small congregation currently meets each Sunday in the hospital's under-fives clinic, with plans for a church to be built in the village.

And their faith remains central to the journey they've been on, as Thomas concludes: "We would not be here if it wasn't for God."

■ If you would like to donate to the work of the Masanga Hospital, visit <https://www.masangauk.co.uk/donate> or, to the surgical training programme, go to <https://capacare.org/service/make-a-donation/>

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Being a school governor led to profound changes

■ Volunteers find a 'massive sense of purpose' from taking on role in C of E schools

THE Rev Jackie Oakes says that becoming a foundation governor at a Cumbrian primary school proved to be her first step on the road to ordination.

Jackie has been a governor at St Bega's C of E Primary for eight years. Having previously moved away from her faith, she says the Holy Spirit "got hold" of her after she took up the school role.

"It was here that I experienced a group of Christian people working together in service of others and felt the love of God in a way that I hadn't felt for a long time," she says.

"St Bega's is regularly described by parents, staff, governors, visitors and inspectors as 'a very special school' and my recent studying of missional ecclesiology has led me to thinking about the extent to which it is actually a form of church."

The role and relationships which Jackie developed with the head-teacher and local vicar had a profound effect on her. So much so, that in 2020 she started theological training and was ordained this year as a self-supporting minister for the Whitehaven Mission Community.

Nestled in Eskdale in west Cumbria, St Bega's is a small village school with around 30 pupils from nursery to Year 6. It is one of 104 Diocesan church schools across the county, with each offering positions on the governing body for foundation governors.

Governors are generally asked to offer up eight to 10 hours per term towards school life, including attending full governing board meetings each term, spending some time in school and possibly joining a sub-group or committee which has a particular focus.

As well as being active in the life of the local community, foundation governors promote the link between the local church and the local school and help ensure the Christian vision and character of a school is upheld. A full training and support programme is offered through the National Governance Associa-

By Dave Roberts

tion and in-house Diocesan courses. Lisa Pettifer, governance officer for the Diocesan Board of Education, explains: "A foundation governor is there first and foremost to keep reminding all other governors and the school that this is a church school which is underpinned by a Christian ethos."

"It's not enough to pin a Bible verse to a school jumper or on a letterhead, it has to be something of the lived reality of the school on a daily basis. A foundation governor looks to ensure that happens."

While Lisa has overseen 41 new appointments across 25 schools since starting in post in September, there is still a need to seek new foundation governors. Latest figures for the Diocese's church schools show that nearly half of them have at least one vacancy.

Lisa adds: "There's a massive sense of purpose for anyone who becomes a foundation governor and that what they are doing is something for the common good. There are also people who have brought particular skills to the role – human resources or accountancy, for example – and as a result they have developed personally while also contributing to a community that they really value."

For Jackie, the role means she has to juggle her commitments at school with those of the church and her human resources job at Sellafield. But she says she has made a long-term pledge to support the primary school.

She concludes: "St Bega's feels strongly to me as though it is a community of faith. I think it might even be considered an expression of church."

"Worship, prayer and RE are strong themes. Collective worship happens every day, the children are invited to pray if they want to, there are visits to church, I pray with the head before school on Friday mornings when we can, the RE curriculum has been refreshed and the Christian content is up to date



New direction: Jackie Oakes's ordination

STUART WALKER



St Bega's, Eskdale: One of 104 Diocesan schools around the county

and attractively presented for both staff and children. There has also been a Church after-school club and confirmation classes have been run with the vicar.

"I have a sense of gratitude that this is happening on my doorstep and that I have been able to be involved. My calling is to work as a self-supporting minister around here after curacy, and so I am in it for the long haul."

I'm looking forward to the time when I eventually finish work and have more time to spend in school trying to keep up with what God is doing here."

■ If you are interested in becoming a foundation governor, contact lisa.pettifer@carlisle-diocese.org.uk



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'Meant to be': Fiona and Mark with the sculpture that fit into the church's mounting block DAVE ROBERTS

Ancient and modern in perfect harmony

AN HISTORIC Lakeland church is exhibiting stunning modern sculptures which have also been celebrated in an art trail.

Christ on the Cross - a 6ft-high wooden cross including the figure of Christ, fashioned from copper wiring and piping - a smaller version of the cross and an interpretation of The Creation of Adam are all on show at St Anthony's Cartmel Fell.

They are the work of self-taught artist Mark Hunt, who church officers contacted after reading about the sculptures in the summer edition of *The Way*.

Mark said: "It was always my intention that the artwork should be displayed in a church in the county, so I was thrilled when the approach was made. I'm delighted the works have found a home and are being viewed and appreciated by members of the congregation as well as visitors to this beautiful church."

"When I arrived, there was some discussion as to where the large cross could be sited but amazingly it slotted perfectly into a hole in the church's mounting

block. It was meant to be!"

Mark, 63, upcycles and recycles material for his artwork, reclaiming timber pieces from his garden and unsheathing coils of copper wire from which he fashioned the body of Christ.

Parochial Church Council member Fiona Daley says the modern sculptures complement the early 16th-century church.

She said: "I saw the article in *The Way* and thought the artwork would look great in the church. We were all overwhelmed by how wonderful they looked and how well they fit into our church. They may be quite radical and modernistic in design, but they are all incredibly spiritual as well as being beautifully and lovingly made."

A smaller Christ on the Cross installation was placed on the church's altar with plans to use it as a centre piece at festival services including Lent and Advent. The Creation of Adam - again fashioned from timber and copper - can be seen in the window above the Burblethwaite pew.

'Social media isn't a big, bad bogeyman...'

■ Digital Sunday helps congregations put online activities into perspective

■ Organisers to repeat event in 2024

Allison Lee:
'I spoke about how there are positives and negatives, just like anything else'

DAVE ROBERTS



THE first Digital Sunday took place on June 25 and saw congregations across Cumbria think about the impact of their online activities.

Allison Lee, from St Paul's Church, in Holme Eden, was one of those who preached on the day.

She said: "We have an older congregation, some of whom feel quite negative about the digital world. So, I decided to talk about balance. I spoke about how there are positives and negatives, just like anything else."

"I spoke about knives and the knife angel, and bread and how bread can be very good for you, but not if you eat too much of it!"

"I told the congregation about my own break from Facebook, to show that you can find a balance."

"I then brought in ways that I benefit from the online content that other people share, and about

By Eleanor Ledesma
God for All Digital Support Enabler

a prayer group that I'm a member of on WhatsApp.

"It was a simple message, but it encouraged people to see that social media isn't a big, bad bogeyman, and that we can reach people online with the gospel that we wouldn't reach otherwise."

"One of the ladies signed up on Facebook afterwards. She has been able to keep in touch with previous members of the congregation much more easily."

"She has even taken to sharing helpful Christian posts from Facebook with her WhatsApp contacts. She can see that it's an excellent way to share the gospel message."

The church also used the Digital Health Check resource which reinforced the message of balance and taking what's good while avoiding the bad.

Allison added: "If there hadn't been a Digital Sunday, I don't think a church like ours would have thought about holding a service on this topic - we needed a push - but it's good that we took part. I would do it again. It was good to shine a light on social media, and to help people see that it is a tool that can be used for passing on the message."

In the Digital Sunday post-event survey, 86 per cent of churches who had taken part this year said that they would like to do so again in 2024.

Responding to this demand, Digital Sunday 2024 will take place on June 23, and will be supported by a new sermon outline, children's resources and prayers.

The resources will encourage people to examine what it means to be a Christian in a digital age and will aim to inspire them to use their digital influence to help build God's kingdom.

Juggling three jobs, three children and 11 chaplains

Q Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

A I've lived in the south Lakes nearly all my life – apart from going to university – and we are the sixth generation on our family farm, which is run by my brother. Agriculture runs through my veins.

I live on another rented farm near Kirkby Lonsdale with my husband, Simon, and our three children: Emma, 18 (who's now at university), Hester, 12, and Lewis, aged three.

As well as working as the co-ordinator for the agricultural chaplaincy, I'm administrator and fundraiser for the Kirkby Lonsdale Community Cupboard, which is a foodbank and community support organisation.

My husband and I also run our own hog roast catering business, using pigs from our family farm.

Although my family have always gone to the local Anglican church, when my first child was born, I started to go to sessions called 'See and Know' run by Kirkby Lonsdale Methodist Church. I was really inspired by what was happening there and it opened my eyes to faith being lived out in practice and God's love in action. I then completed an Alpha Course.

Holding down three jobs and having three children can make it difficult to get to church on a Sunday so it made me question 'What does my church look like?'. That's led to me being the co-ordinator of the chaplaincy and working with the Community Cupboard, although that's not a faith-based organisation. For me it's about living out my faith for others.

Q What does your job as co-ordinator for the chaplaincy entail?

A I first saw the job for the co-ordinator advertised in 2018 in our church newsletter and thought it matched certain skills I possessed and the passion I have to support the farming community.

My role is to provide information to our 11 chaplains who are based all around the county. Most of them may not have been as embedded in agriculture as I have been, so I keep them updated with issues which may be particularly relevant to farming in Cumbria or that people may be struggling with.



Amanda Gorton: 'Our chaplains are independent, they have no agenda'

DAVE ROBERTS

■ In our latest Focus on Faith, we meet Amanda Gorton, 47, who is the co-ordinator for Cumbria Agricultural Chaplaincy

It's important that our chaplains have all the necessary background information so that they can have those discussions around issues such as subsidies or bovine TB and how that is affecting the person they're speaking to.

I also act as a filter for information from other support organisations such as the Farming Community Network, the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution and the Royal Countryside Trust.

It's not about me making our chaplains 'experts' – they're not in the post for that – but they are there to be a listening ear and to feed into those conversations.

We are also currently acting as gatekeepers for some funding from Westmorland and Furness Council which is to help farming families in the south Lakes who may be struggling. The grants are between £50 and £250 and I'm looking to speak to families

who can benefit from support with the cost of living.

Q How important is the chaplaincy to the local agricultural industry?

A There's been a lot of research conducted in recent years which demonstrates how important the chaplaincy is. We are one part of the overall support structure, but our chaplains are independent, they have no agenda, they are not coming from any financial standpoint. They are there to listen. That's the biggest message we can give and demonstrates God's love being played out.

I'm also a great believer in offering practical support to people and that's what our chaplains do. They are also brilliant at building up a trusted relationship with the people they draw alongside every week. Building those relationships can

be a challenge and that takes a lot of work and time. But by doing that it shows we value the agricultural community.

Q How did the Covid pandemic affect your role?

A Because the auction marts were shut during the lockdowns, it made it very difficult for us to operate as a chaplaincy. The marts are where our chaplains meet the farmers, where they have those discussions and listen to any problems there may be. It wasn't until the marts finally reopened that we could properly draw alongside people again. It was a really difficult time.

Q Do you ever come together as a whole chaplaincy team?

A That's one of the greatest challenges we face. All of our chaplains are

volunteers, and they are spread across the whole of the county.

All but one is a minister or a vicar.

We are an ecumenical team with Anglican, Methodist and Baptist involvement.

Those people are already very busy, so it can be quite hard to bring the team together because of competing demands.

Q What are your prayers for the agricultural chaplaincy team?

A Knowing and understanding how important the agricultural chaplaincy is, I pray that it is given the recognition, support and prayers it needs to keep going for many years to come.

■ For more about the agricultural chaplaincy team contact Amanda on cumbriaagchap@outlook.com.