

# The Way



The FREE newspaper of the Church in Cumbria – Spring 2023



The chaplain on a little red tractor

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Discipleship course opens new avenues

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## SAFE NOW

THE plight of asylum seekers has been very much in the headlines in recent weeks with the publication of the Government's new Illegal Migrant Bill.

But while the political arguments continue to swirl, in this edition of The Way we focus on the work which is being done to reach out to new asylum seeker communities that have formed in Cumbria.

In particular, we talk to ministry teams in Barrow who have drawn alongside refugees, offering them comfort, support and hope both practically and in their faith journeys. And we hear stories of why people felt forced to flee. Turn to pages 4 and 5 to read more.

■ Picture shows, from left, asylum seekers Adel and Reza with the Rev Tony Ford, the vicar of St Mark's, Barrow.

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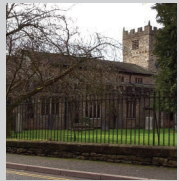


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**CONTACT US**

**EDITOR & ADVERTISING:**  
**Dave Roberts**



Mobile: 07469 153658  
Email: [communications@carlisle-diocese.org.uk](mailto:communications@carlisle-diocese.org.uk)

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

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

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

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**The Way**  
Newspaper of  
the Church  
in Cumbria

# REACHING OUT

There are currently 34 mission communities across Cumbria. These are groupings of mutually supportive and collaborative churches - in the main ecumenical - which have mission at their centre. They represent the foundational blocks upon which our county's God for All strategy is being built. Here our denominational leaders explain why mission communities remain such a vital part of our plan to continue to grow God's Kingdom in Cumbria.

**The Rt Rev James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle**



IN 2003, a book called 'Setting the Church of England free' was published. It contained a series of essays - including one by me on 'Transformation'. I talked about the transformation of individuals, structures and communities, and suggested that an ideal scenario for achieving that sort of transformation might lie in ecumenical units of mission 'about the size of half a deanery'. I had tried - without success - to introduce mission communities in Chester Diocese. So what a joy it is for me to see their development here in Cumbria as the fundamental building block in an ecumenical

county committed to our 'God for All' vision.

Some regard mission communities as a threat to the local church. In fact, they are exactly the opposite, and the name

says it all. In the first place, they are all about mission: not waiting for people to 'come to us' but reaching out to them - and engaging where they are. That shared mission, to which all of us are called, involves following daily, caring deeply, speaking boldly and treading gently. It is what the Christian Church exists to do - alongside worship.

Then there is 'community'. This mission is something we do together; and our partnership, within and between denominations, enables us to share precious resources, develop effective strategies, and combat the scourge of loneliness and isolation in ministry. No two mission communities are identical: but all rely on good leadership and mutual accountability as we share the Gospel with everyone in Cumbria.

**Rev Martyn Coe, Coordinator, United Reformed Church Cumbria Partnership**



BEING encouraged is always better than being compelled, and mission communities provide us with encouragement. Encouragement to work with others to change the world. Encouragement to find new ways of doing the things we have loved about our faith journey and to work with others on new things.

Many of us form our strongest bonds when we are working on a demanding common task, whether that is an environmental project, running a food bank or community project, ensuring regular worship in our area or developing a new way of exploring faith and spirituality with our neighbours.

In our mission communities, we are encouraged to do things that work in our own place - learning from others across the county but working together in the place where we worship. We are not told how to care deeply, tread gently, speak boldly or follow daily, because we are all being encouraged to prayerfully discover what these mean in our own place.

The town where I live has three partner churches. A few folk from each congregation are passionately setting about a demanding task that will build close bonds and will play its part in helping our town see that the Kingdom of God has come near.

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



JESUS called disciples who were from different backgrounds with diverse personalities and insights. They didn't always see the bigger picture or agree, but Jesus had the greater understanding: that not only does God love all, but that God wants to use all in the building and service of his kingdom. So, Jesus prayed that they, and we, might be one, that the world might believe, and that the world might be healed.

Ecumenical mission communities are right at the heart of the ecumenical vision and strategy for the future of God's Church in Cumbria, inclusively bringing together all sorts of Christians and seekers in time-honoured or fresh ways - to pray, share and reach out together; to be mutually supportive and accountable; and yet to be contextually sensitive and responsive, so as to work out flexibly what it means to be God's people together, in and for the particular places where God has placed you.

Bless you in your endeavours and, I pray, commitment to this, so that, as Jesus's disciples, even in sometimes surprising or challenging ways, you may grow in grace and witness, to love your neighbour and each other, as God first loved us.

**Rev Andrew Dodd, President, Churches Together In Cumbria**



HISTORY reveals many types of community. Often created out of deep desire to live out ethnic, political or religious convictions, communities have walked the knife edge of good and evil. In living memory we might recall the horrors of Cambodia, Rwanda and Waco. My own Anabaptist history sadly carries a religiously motivated uprising in Munster. Intending to create the Kingdom of Heaven on earth it became a living hell, violently extinguished by more sane earthly authorities.

History also reveals countless communities of change for good. Christian faith emerged from the deep history and faith community of the Jewish nation. The world of the early Church equally "held them in high esteem" (Acts 5 v 13) and accused of "turning the world upside down" (Acts 17 6-7). The development of mission communities in Cumbria, I see as a prophetic step by the four covenanting partners. Modelling the spirit and action of the early Church, the churches set an example to the Church locally, the county and country. Recognising them as communities within wider communities, they might serve to impact the whole Church and... turn the world upside down!

# The minister on a Massey

■ David's restored tractor becomes feature of agricultural chaplaincy

By Dave Roberts

IT ALL began when Methodist minister, the Rev David Newlove, and his son decided to repair a neighbour's old lawn mower.

Little did he realise that it would spark a passion for mechanical renovation which ultimately resulted in him painstakingly restoring a vintage tractor.

It is a pastime which David, Superintendent Minister for the North Cumbria Circuit of the Methodist Church, is now using to good missional effect, taking his beautifully renovated 1961 Massey Ferguson 35 to agricultural shows in Cumbria.

He says: "It all started with a friend's lawn mower which wouldn't work and which me and my son Alec said we'd have a go at fixing. We stripped it down together and got it going.

"Then we decided to focus on something bigger and so worked on a scrap Allen Scythe bar mower – a lethal machine! – which I'd bought online. After that Alec explained that there was a tractor for sale which we eventually bought. It was absolutely rotten! There were bits missing and the engine was seized solid.

"We stripped it down completely but then I was offered a new post up in Cumbria, so it had to come with us in bits. I've since done it up in the garage at home. The majority of that was during lockdown, so to be able to do that was an escape for me.

"It was like piecing a jigsaw puzzle together. I had to constantly ask myself 'What goes where?' and 'How can I manufacture something to repair this particular part?' It was a heck of a challenge."

The wonderfully restored tractor – originally built in Coventry and boasting a top speed of 15 miles per hour – is the result of hundreds of hours of work.

David, who also chairs the Cumbria Agricultural Chaplaincy Management Team, drove it to both the Dalston Show and the Cumberland Show last year. He says it's important to be seen wearing his dog-collar as he parades the tractor at the show grounds.

"We wanted to develop the chaplaincy into the agricultural shows," he explains. "Cumbria has a phenomenal number of these shows during the year; more than anywhere else.

"My being at the shows has sparked some great conversations. At one I spoke with a chap who later offered to enter me and the tractor into a ploughing match the next day, which was a Sunday. It made me think that we all need to



Labour of Newlove: David on his 1961 Massey Ferguson 35 and, inset, the same tractor before restoration



Visible presence: David (and tractor) at the Dalston Show last summer

have those same conversations about inviting people to church!"

His is both a farming and a mechanical background. He grew up on a farm on the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds in the East Riding of Yorkshire before later working as a panel beater and then a long-distance lorry driver.

Having grown up in a Methodist family, he eventually felt a call to preaching, studying at a Lay Training Bible College near Sheffield – where he met his wife Heather – and then studying for ministry in Bristol.

Postings followed in the small market town of Caistor in Lincolnshire followed by Louth and then the move to Carlisle in September 2018 – complete with the dismantled tractor, which con-

gregation members kindly paid to have transported north.

His ministry also includes agricultural chaplaincy at the Borderway Mart in Carlisle. He is a highly visible presence, wearing a chaplaincy jacket he had specially designed and which has since been adopted by other chaplains across the county.

"It's a busy mart," David explains, "but the local farmers go on a Wednesday, so that's the day I go down too. They're a friendly bunch and for me it's a local ministry reaching out to local people.

"There's a bit of ribbing sometimes, but there wouldn't be that banter if you hadn't been accepted into that community; they appreciate me being there.

"It's good to have conversations with the farmers around issues such as import prices, rising inflation, succession planning for their farms or even about a death in the family. They don't necessarily want answers; they want somebody to talk to. I feel so privileged to listen to them."

David says he and his tractor will be a fixture at several shows in the county this year.

"The original idea was to build the tractor and then sell it," he adds, "but it's become an important tool for mission. It's both a hobby and a blessing."

Alex Haynes  
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# Local congregations bring 'light' for asylum seekers

■ People fleeing persecution have found safe haven thanks to Barrow churches. We hear four of their stories on this page and the next...

By Dave Roberts

"THIS church is like a light in my life," 24-year-old Reza says. "I've made so many friends here. As soon as I walked in, I could feel the good energy and welcoming atmosphere."

He is talking about St Mark's in Barrow-in-Furness which has offered him a much-needed haven following a terrible 12 months in which he was forced to flee his native Iran.

Reza is one of a number of asylum seekers who are currently based in the town, waiting for their applications to be processed. He had to escape Iran after police there raided a Christian house church he attended, and later found his Bible and Christian DVDs in his home.

It meant the photographer, who also ran his own advertising agency, had to be smuggled out of the country. He undertook a tortuous 45-day journey by truck.

He explains: "It ended when I was thrown out of a van and told to run to a boat in the sea. I was terrified. I had no idea where I was and no one could understand me. I didn't want to go on the boat, but I was pushed onto it. Six hours later, we were picked up by a British ship."

Since arriving in Barrow, Reza has been supported by St Mark's, both practically and with his faith. He has received clothing from a Clothes Bank which is run from there, attends weekly church services and has been baptised.

The church has thrown open its doors to around 100 asylum seekers, with 15 of those attending a mid-week Communion service and 20 at Sunday worship. For the Rev Tony Ford, vicar of St Mark's, the ministry with asylum seekers is an extension of the community-focused mission of the church.

"Part of the beauty of St Marks' is that we are such a welcoming church," Tony says. "The congregation invites everyone in. This is one of the most deprived parishes in Cumbria with a lot of different needs. As part of that, the people here are delighted to support asylum seekers."

"You think about God saying that we should go to the ends of



Ministry: The Rev Simon Jones leads the weekly Bible study with a group of asylum seekers PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS



Reza: 'I could feel the good energy...'

the earth with the Good News of Jesus, well God in his Grace has brought people from Iran to us. It's been a real blessing.

"They are lovely people. They serve in the Clothes Bank and do anything they can to help. They have a wonderful manner and are so grateful for what we are able to do for them. Life for them is not easy. Many want to work but are not allowed to do so at the

## 'This is one of the most deprived parishes in Cumbria. As part of that, the people here are delighted to support asylum seekers'

moment. These are people with real skills – accountants, solicitors and surgeons."

To date, Tony has baptised about 30 asylum seekers and says a careful vetting process ensures all candidates profess a real and profound faith.

He adds: "We had a group of lads who were baptised together. They'd all managed to get white shirts for their baptisms and people said they looked like a boy band at the front of church! Everyone here loved it."

Across town at St Paul's, the Rev Simon Jones has also drawn alongside a group of asylum seekers. Since last July he has been running a weekly Bible study group while also providing some basic English lessons. It draws on similar ministry he had previously carried out in London.

Using Google Translate, Simon asks group members to read passages from the Bible in Farsi and

then discusses with them the messages behind the readings.

"I remember on my first Sunday here, we were blessed to have about a dozen or so Iranian asylum seekers arrive," explains Simon, who is a curate at St Paul's.

"As well as our weekly Bible studies we have also run a 10-week Christianity Explored course in Farsi and sourced Farsi Bibles."

"In November, all 12 were baptised. It was a great event. They were really keen to cook Persian food for the church family to celebrate after the service. It was wonderful to see them serving others and thoroughly enjoy giving back to those who'd supported them."

They have been encouraged to integrate into church life, joining the church family for a summer social on the beach as well as being invited to congregation members' homes over Christmas.

Some of the asylum seekers

have since been moved to other towns in the north-west but Simon has been able to pair them with churches in their new locations.

There have been difficulties for some of the asylum seekers. Reza and others say they have been subjected to isolated incidents of verbal abuse and others report physical attacks, but he is heartened by the support he and others have received from church goers.

"Most of the people in Barrow have been so good to us," he says. "They are very helpful. I've had to leave 24 years behind me and I'm starting from zero again. It's been really hard. I've struggled to sleep at night because of nightmares about the bad things that have happened to me. But I know there are people here who care about us."

"People in the church were so happy when we were baptised. They clapped and cheered. It felt like I'd be born again."



Adel: Joined protests

## Adel misses family, but faith helps

**SINCE arriving in Barrow, Adel has been supported by the congregation and community at St Mark's Church.**

"I lived in Iran with my wife and children and I worked in a quarry, mining stone. We were all very happy as a family. But then protests began to happen in Iran about women's freedom.

"I have two daughters and I understand how hard it is for women to live there, so I got involved with the protests because I love my family.

"There was a particular attack on a young girl and I felt called to join the protests against that. As a result, the police found me and arrested me, but I managed to escape.

"I had to leave the country because I feared for my life. I didn't know where I would go; I was in the hands of the people smugglers. I had to pay them to help me get out of the country.

"When I arrived here in Barrow, I was so upset and sad; I'd had to leave my family behind.

"I met Reza who spoke to me a lot and he invited me along to St Mark's. He explained it was a place that makes you happy.

"I came along and met people at the Clothes Bank. They helped me become more positive. I'm also a good runner and so have been able to join a running club; that's helped me start my life here.

"I have found peace and light in my life here in this church; it is a positive place for me. I could easily feel alone and isolated but I don't.

"Reza helped me to read the Bible and I understood about the importance of being baptised. I still feel very sad that I can't be with my family at the moment, but my faith helps lift me."

## 'THAT BITTER, BLACK AND TERRIBLE DAY CAME'

**KESHVAD Mahmoodi, 46, is being supported by members of St Paul's congregation.**

"I was born in a small village in Iran and have four brothers and one sister. I was four years old when the war between Iran and Iraq started and continued for eight years. I witnessed the bombing of cities and the killing of people and the displacement of people.

"I graduated in the field of agricultural engineering, did two years of compulsory military service and then entered the labour market. After some time, I opened a coffee shop: a calm, cozy and friendly environment. Everything was going well.

"I was always looking for the truth and I was never able to communicate with the official religion of Iran; I had not accepted Islam, but according to the laws of the Islamic Republic, I had to be a Muslim. Finally, one day I got to know Christianity through one of my friends. On the advice of my friend, I started studying the Bible. The more I read, the more interested I became.

"I saw the source of love, grace and truth and the light of truth set me free. I couldn't understand many parts of the book, so I started researching in the virtual world. During my research, I connected to a Persian-speaking church in America. They prayed for my salvation; and, thank God, we still have a good relationship.

"I communicated with a number of other believers and we formed a house church. In Iran, if someone leaves Islam and becomes a Christian, he is considered a criminal, especially if he wants to evangelize, which is much worse. We were arrested in our home church by Islamic Revolutionary Guards. I managed to escape and,



**Keshvad Mahmoodi: 'Barrow has very warm people... unlike the weather!'**

on the advice of my friends, I decided to leave Iran for fear of being imprisoned.

"Finally, that bitter, black and terrible day came. I left my wife, children, parents, relatives and friends of many years and ran away. This was the most difficult and painful phase of my life. I pray to God that no other human being is forced to leave their family. It was a road full of ups and downs. Hunger, cold, loneliness, illness and, most importantly, the thought of my wife, children and family; that bothers me so much.

"I thank God for the existence of this country and these good people and thank God for the existence of God's church. We were well received by the Rev Robin Ham at St Paul's Church in Barrow. Educational classes on the principles of Christian faith were held by the Rev Simon Jones. I was baptised by the grace of Christ in St Paul's Church.

"It is a great place to pray and worship God. In the church, I feel that I am among my true brothers and sisters. The church also offers good services such as providing suitable clothes to us. Through

holding parties and nature trips, we have got to know the culture and customs of the English people to some extent.

"Barrow has very warm and kind people, unlike the cold weather!

"I participate in English and maths classes held in the library. I have good teachers who are interested in teaching and work hard for me, and I sincerely thank them. In the end, I pray that in the name of Jesus Christ, love, friendship, and freedom of expression and thought will replace cruelty, selfishness and evil in the world. Amen"

## Being Christian is a crime

**ALI is 27 years old and is a member of the congregation at St Paul's Barrow**



**Ali: 'Most people are kind'**

"I had to leave my country because I came out of Islam and became a Christian; that is a crime in my country and my life was in danger.

"Life in Barrow is good and peaceful, but unfortunately, sometimes the asylum seekers are attacked racially and I was also a victim of these attacks.

"Most of the people here are kind and good people and help us in all areas. I go to St Paul's Church. It has helped us a lot to grow in our faith and in the community so that we can get to know the culture here.

"Pastor Simon and Pastor Robin gave us a Bible class to grow in Christ and our faith; to live and walk in the path of God with love and affection. The church has given us a language class.

"The people of the church help us to connect to the community: they invite us to their

homes, we go to the seaside with them, we go to the forest, and we have become a family with all the members of the church - and they are our family.

"We pray for the salvation of the whole world. Unfortunately, not many young people come to church, and I would like more young people to do that.

"My prayer for the future is that the world will become a better place for all people with peace, friendship and love, and everyone can live freely in their own country with any belief they want. Amen. Thank you and God bless you."

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# First intern Eve leads way in young leaders scheme

■ Project will bring ‘life, energy, capacity and creativity’ to Cumbria

By Dave Roberts

“WHEN I was three years old, I walked into the kitchen and told my mum that I had been praying and had felt a warm glow. She told me that was God giving me a hug. So, there’s never been a doubt for me as to whether God existed; it was simply a question of me wanting to explore more.”

It’s that sense of exploration which, four months ago, brought 20-year-old Eve Brett to Cumbria as the Diocese of Carlisle’s first UK intern from the Church of England’s national intern programme, the Ministry Experience Scheme (MES).

Based at St James Carlisle, her role involves working with children and families, and supporting the church’s Cornerstone café and charity shop. She also works in schools alongside the Northern Inter Schools Christian Union and is studying theology through Emmanuel Theological College.

Eve explains: “I’ve really enjoyed my time here so far. I’ve been given the opportunity to run children and families’ work – or be heavily involved with it – so I now know I could actually do that on my own. It’s been good to test my capabilities in different areas and I definitely feel I can already do more.”

“I’m looking to do a second year here in Cumbria – where exactly I’m not sure yet; it could be here at St James. That will allow me to see if going into ministry really is the right path for me. At the moment, I think it probably is.”

“Before coming here, I was living quite happily in Germany, working as an au pair. Then I had a video call from my mum, who said, ‘Eve, I think you should become a vicar!’ Initially, I laughed it off and tried to ignore it but then the reasons not to explore further were crossed off the list, so I started looking at the options open to me. My internship is really helping with that sense of exploration.”

Eve grew up in a non-denominational free-church setting on the outskirts of Lincoln, attending a Catholic secondary school. She says her ministry has been widened by the move to the north of England, and she has also enjoyed building ties with Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) interns. NMS has long had links with the Diocese of Carlisle.

Under the leadership of the Rev Andy Smith, the Growing Younger Enabler for the Diocese, there are now plans for up to ten interns to begin posts in Cumbria in September.

He has developed the Northern Young Leaders Project for 18 to 30-year-olds which will see three UK interns join via the MES while up to seven more could



Eve Brett: Considering entering the ministry PICTURE: DAVE ROBERTS

come from overseas through the NMS link.

“The intern programme sees young adults develop in their Christian leadership,” Andy says. “It also brings life, energy, capacity and creativity to churches in Cumbria. It can help change our narrative, so the needs of young people are more in focus.”

“We have a God for All Growing Younger Strategy which has five parts to it. The fourth element talks of investing in people who are able to lead younger people. There are a number of ways in which we want to do that but one is to attract people to this county – through such projects as internship – who may then stay on to serve in ordained or lay roles. Ultimately, this is about creating a pipeline of leaders for 10 years’ time who can support our mission communities and our pioneer ministers, and for church planting.”

“It’s really exciting. There’s been a huge amount of work to get to where we are. I set up the intern scheme for Winchester Diocese when I was a vicar there and ran it for five years. I did it be-

cause I wanted to invest in younger leaders but also because I saw what interns could bring in terms of culture change at the parish church I was a part of.”

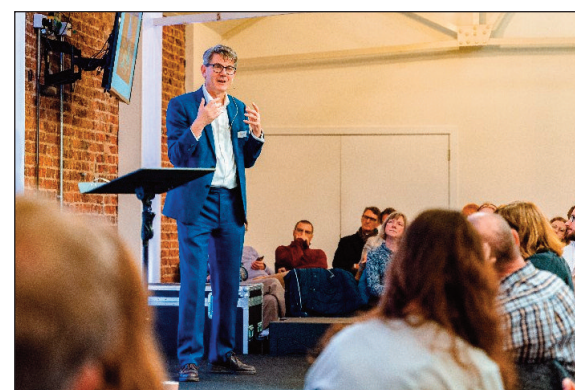
Training and mentoring programmes are being developed to build relationships between the UK and international interns. That’s something Eve says has already helped her; as has attending the MES national conference.

She says: “I was really attracted to the Diocese of Carlisle because of the links there are with the Norwegian Mission Society. If I eventually move into ministry in the Church of England, I want to see its wider world perspective, so this was a great way to do that.”

“Although my internship is slightly different, I’ve been able to form some good links with the NMS. We have get-togethers at the start of the year, mid-term and end of the year to tell each other how things have been going.”

“And, as for what my mum said on that video call, well I’m still exploring lots of things but I think she might be right!”

■ For more, visit [www.nylp.org.uk](http://www.nylp.org.uk)



Inspiring: Andrew Tremlett, Dean of St Paul’s Cathedral, addresses the Ministry Experience Scheme’s national conference



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# What is discipleship?

## ■ Lay ministry explored on new course

By Dave Roberts

“I READ about it and thought it may well be a good stepping stone for me to move forward with my faith. It’s given me a wonderful opportunity to think about where I want to go and how best I can grow as a Christian and serve others.”

Ian Henderson, 66, is talking about the Discipleship Project, a course which he enrolled on last September and which encourages people across Cumbria to explore what lay ministry they may be being called to.

It’s an ecumenical course, with six core sessions held over the year from the Diocese of Carlisle’s Church House offices in Penrith and other supplementary modules available across the county.

Ian, an assistant church warden at St Paul’s Frizington and member of the Crosslacon lay ministry team, is one of 15 people who signed up.

He is just over halfway through the modules and says it’s helped him hugely to consider next steps for ministry.

“Initially I had a chat with a vocations adviser and decided to give the course a go after also completing a leaders’ worship course at church,” he says. “I’d realised I wanted to go further and consider becoming a Licensed Lay Reader. The Discipleship Project has been a wonderful way in which I can explore that next step.”

The course supports those who want to explore the idea of ministry in or outside of a church context.

Created by the Rev Nicky Smith, Director of Ministry Development for the Diocese of Carlisle, it sits within the county’s ecumenical God for All vision and strategy and the associated four main themes: follow daily, speak boldly, care deeply and tread gently.

Participants are encouraged to gain confidence in their personal ministry giftings, grow as disciples, explore new ways of being church and open up new ministry possibilities.

Nicky explains: “The course has been developed around the sense of vocation, regardless of what context people may find themselves in. Perhaps you work full-time or part-time; perhaps you are retired or supporting your young family. This course offers something for everyone.

“What we’re called to be as disciples of Jesus looks different for everyone and that is what this course looks to celebrate. It’s about helping people consider what giftings they have to help serve



**Ian Henderson:** ‘It has been a wonderful way in which I can explore the next step’

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS

God’s church in this county and beyond.”

As well as the core module, people can also sign up for optional modules including theology, chaplaincy, mental health first aid and pioneer ministry.

The course is not certificated but the hope is that those who complete the modules may then consider exploring ordination, Reader ministry or new models of ministry.

A network of mentors within local church settings has also been created to support those on the course.

Ian says he’s delighted with how things have gone to date. It’s two years since he and his wife, Kerry, retired to Cumbria. Ian had previously spent nearly 25 years in the RAF and later worked with the Ministry of Defence and then the Ministry of Justice.

Throughout his years in service, he always kept his faith. It was a particular

comfort to him when, at the age of 11, he lost his younger brother, Peter, to meningitis.

“The church became my rock, my life and my community,” Ian says. “At that time, I even went and lived with the vicar, his twin sons and their sister for a while. They saved me because my life was so difficult. I’d been challenged and I became a bit unruly as my parents were really struggling to cope with everything that had happened. My faith got me through that.”

“The Discipleship Project has been fascinating. It’s made me challenge myself more. It’s cemented everything together for me.”

There are plans to run a further Discipleship Project course, starting in autumn 2023, with teaching sites in the north, south and west of the county.

■ For more details, visit [www.godforall.org.uk/the-discipleship-project/](http://www.godforall.org.uk/the-discipleship-project/)

## ‘MY FAITH BRINGS A SENSE OF CALM’



**‘Fascinating’:** Neil Barrett is taking part in the Discipleship Project course

**NEIL Barrett, 69, is a former Head of Finance for the Diocese of Carlisle and is a member of the first Discipleship Project cohort.**

I GREW up in Essex and went to college in London, eventually qualifying as a chartered accountant. I met my wife, Julie, when I later moved to Lincoln.

I suppose it was through the influence of Julie’s parents that I first explored my faith. I would have been in my mid-30s then. Julie and I later became PCC members of our local church; I was churchwarden and Julie took on the treasurer’s role.

After moving to Cumbria to take on my diocesan role, my faith became stronger and stronger.

During our time here I’ve been churchwarden at St Andrew’s Penrith and am in that role in the church we attend in Lazonby where we now live.

My faith is essential to me; I can’t imagine life without it. It brings a sense of calm. In the past I could be a bit uptight, but I’d like to think I’m more patient now. It’s certainly changed my political views; more than ever, I focus on social justice.

Having been involved with finance all my life, I wanted to focus on something different and that’s what drew me to the Discipleship Project. I’d been asking myself the question ‘What is a disciple?’ and amazingly the first session asked that question. There’s also been another session about God Encounters. I thought I’d never had any such encounters but when you begin to dig into it you realise that’s not the case. It’s also been fascinating to listen to other people’s powerful testimony.

I’ve really enjoyed it. It’s made me consider what could be next for me. Our local school is looking for two foundation governors. Being a governor had never crossed my mind before, but I’ve made an approach. I can’t imagine I’d have done that before being on the Discipleship Project.”

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# Gifts just keep on giving to our churches in need

■ With Legacy Week imminent, The Way visits two Cumbrian churches that have benefited significantly from people's wills

By Dave Roberts

IT'S A busy morning at St Andrew's Sedbergh; a weekly coffee morning and drop-in session is running, and there's a real buzz about the building.

But just like so many other churches and chapels across the county, the church is not without its challenges. Money has been tight recently, and the Covid-19 pandemic hasn't helped.

That's why a number of legacies have been of such vital importance for the congregation here.

Treasurer Martin Gray explains: "The legacies we have received have made all the difference to the finances of the church. The truth is that this parish – which is made up of six churches – can't meet our expenses, including the cost of having a full-time vicar, from our regular donations and fundraising activities.

"Therefore, legacies make all the difference, both to paying the bills and having the cash flow to make payments when they fall due."

In recent years, the church has benefited from a couple of sizeable legacies – running to tens of thousands of pounds – as well as a series of smaller giftings.

"They kept the church going well before Covid and through the pandemic when income fell right away," Martin adds. "We've also had about ten smaller legacies in the last three years. These smaller legacies are just as important as the bigger ones. An accumulation of smaller ones adds up and makes all the difference."

And it is the potential for people to think about legacies for their churches when writing their wills that is now being gently encouraged.

Sophie Hodge, the Diocese's Stewardship Enabler, is working with national church colleagues to help promote the importance of legacy giving for churches. Churches are being encouraged to run a Legacy Sunday service in April, a first for the Diocese of Carlisle.

"Legacies aren't rare or mythical," Sophie says. "Every year, churches in the Diocese of Carlisle receive on average over £1 million through gifts in wills – representing over 80 donations – so it is a significant part of the local church economy."

"As we look to roll out a Legacy Sunday, we want to support churches as much as possible. We created a whole suite of resources which people can tap into to help promote something which could be of vital importance financially as congregations look to grow God's Kingdom."

Over on the Solway coast there's another



'All the difference': Martin Gray is Treasurer at St Andrew's Sedbergh; inset, the church's weekly coffee morning



Rev Mary Day: 'The money has helped us to keep going'

legacy beneficiary in Christ Church Allonby. It's a smaller church building and congregation than St Andrew's but a legacy has proved equally important.

Vicar, the Rev Mary Day, says: "In my time here we have received two big legacy gifts of several thousand pounds each. Both have been wonderful gifts and have

helped us to do the things we needed to do in this church.

"The money has lasted us a long time; we have been very careful with it. Over more than 20 years, it has helped us to keep going. We are just a small congregation, but the money has supported us."

A new fence at the front of the church and new gates into the churchyard have been funded through the legacies, and windows have been replaced and decorating carried out where needed.

Mary adds: "We thank God for these gifts which have been so important to our church."

Churches are being encouraged to consider running a Legacy Sunday service on either April 23 or 30. Martin Gray says they will present a good opportunity to explore ways to boost finances.

He concludes: "It's important to remember that many of our churches are Grade I listed buildings and PCCs have a duty to keep them in good nick. Regular maintenance is so important and much of that could be funded through legacies."

"Most churches are unable to meet their expenses just from their income. It's legacies which make the difference."

## WHAT IS LEGACY WEEK?

LEGACY Week is a period when the Diocese of Carlisle will support parishes in promoting Legacy Giving. Churches are being encouraged to designate a Legacy Sunday – either April 23 or April 30.

They will be supported in holding a Legacy Sunday by:

- Signposting to a recorded online training event for treasurers, clergy or stewardship/giving officers
- Making 50 free Wills available to individuals in the Diocese via a will writing partnership with the national Church of England over this period
- Providing free legacy literature to display in churches
- Offering preaching templates and orders of service to cover Legacy Sunday.

Visit the Stewardship section of the Diocese of Carlisle website for more information and to sign up for legacy resources and support.



# Learning from lockdowns

■ On June 25, churches around the county will be taking part in the God for All Digital Sunday. Digital Enabler Eleanor Ledesma explains more



**Innovation:** Digital Enabler Eleanor Ledesma is at the forefront of Digital Sunday  
DAVE ROBERTS

COMMUNICATION has shifted dramatically over the past couple of years. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, churches found new, creative and imaginative ways to reach their congregations and local communities.

Zoom calls, WhatsApp groups and live streams sprung up to unite families and friends in worship and fellowship.

We want to build on this to help mission communities, churches and individual Christians in Cumbria to find innovative ways to make natural and meaningful connections

with the people around them.

God for All Digital Sunday is all about celebrating stories from around our county and shining a light on the tremendous work that local churches have accomplished through the use of digital channels and technologies.

It's about looking at what it means to be a follower of Jesus in the digital age.

While the bible doesn't mention social media, it does have plenty to say about speech, identity and authenticity.

So, as part of Digital Sunday, we'll be looking at how the gospel can transform our online

identity, so that what we say and do online points towards God's glory and the hope that we have in Jesus.

Resources such as a sermon outline and prayers will be made available so that churches can hold a Digital Sunday service instead of their usual teaching.

There will be a mixture of resources, so that different expressions of church can choose the best ones for their setting. Some of these are listed at the bottom of this page.

■ For more details, visit [www.godforall.org.uk/digital-sunday/](http://www.godforall.org.uk/digital-sunday/)

## Online lives reflecting our faith

THE Rev Robin Ham, minister at St Paul's Barrow and joint leader of Barrow Mission Community, is keen that the church community considers how our online lives reflect our faith in Jesus Christ.

He explains: "Last year we did a teaching series reflecting on how our small daily habits have a huge impact. How we spend our days is how we spend our lives.

"For most of us, a large part of our everyday lives involves the internet, in particular our smartphones. So we looked at how we can be intentional about the impact of our digital habits, both in our personal discipleship and in our witness."

He added that Digital Sunday would be an exciting moment for the whole Church in Cumbria to pause and do that important work of reflecting on our digital lives – both as a Church and as individual Christians.

"Social media is such a massive opportunity to testify to the life-



**The Rev Robin Ham:** 'It will be an exciting moment'

changing gospel of Jesus – and often that can be in very normal, below-the-radar ways.

"But maybe we also need to consider how it's 'evangelising' us."

One study suggests the average smartphone user touches, taps or swipes their phone more than 2,600 times a day. So how does

that affect us? Are our relationships, families, even our perspectives on life, being shaped more than we realise?

The Christian writer John Mark Comer has challenged the Church, observing that "the modern world is a virtual conspiracy against the interior life".

Robin continues: "On Digital Sunday, I'm looking forward to working with the God for All team to provide a teaching outline that people can either use as a 'ready-to-go' sermon or adapt for their context.

"We'll look at healthy rhythms, opportunities and even digital sabbaths. And it will be exciting to use the other resources that colleagues around the county are providing as part of the event. It should all add up to be a very refreshing and thought-provoking Sunday."

■ Follow Robin on Twitter @rhamage or read his blog at [www.thathappycertainty.com](http://www.thathappycertainty.com)

### RESOURCES WILL INCLUDE:

- A sermon outline, which can be used as it is or adapted
- A choice of prayers
- Films
- Conversation starters
- Young people's resource
- A printed resource for people to take home
- Social media content for churches to use



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# 'I've seen people come away from the fells with a fresh perspective of who they are'

■ Paul Rose, a Pioneer Enabler for Outdoors and Education, talks about creator God and mountains in our latest Focus on Faith

**Q Please tell us a little bit about yourself?**

**A** I'm married to Karoline and we have two daughters. I was born and raised in an old mining village just outside Nottingham, before leaving to study medical biochemistry at university in Sheffield. I was brought up in a Christian family and it was in my hometown that I first made a faith commitment.

I felt called into full-time ministry about 25 years ago and so trained with the Church Army, being commissioned as an officer in 2006. I moved to Cumbria just over 16 years ago where I worked on a Church Army outdoor project with an organisation called In2Venture, and alongside the Northern Inter-Schools Christian Union.

The focus was on encouraging people to explore faith and spirituality through outdoor activities. As the funding came to an end for that project I came to understand that I wanted to be based long-term within a community and that led to me becoming the Youth Team leader at Penrith Methodist Church for 10 years. That enabled me to further explore ministry in the outdoors and saw my first foray into Mountain Pilgrims. Through that I was eventually appointed Pioneer Enabler for Outdoors and Education with the Diocese of Carlisle.

**Q What does your current role entail?**

**A** It is focussed around developing fresh expressions of church based in the outdoors whilst also taking those kinds of activities into school settings. By that we can open young people up to the impact of deep connections with nature and how that can touch the whole of life.

It's particularly relevant for

Cumbria because it's such a rural county, with the Lakes at the heart of it. The outdoors is already a source of spiritual encounter for lots of people. I feel most alive in the mountains. They are places where I encounter something of the God which invites us into a fullness of life.

So, part of my role is to help encourage people to step more fully into these outdoor experiences and so to realise the impact they are having at a deeper level.

For a few years now I've played with the idea that nature is in fact a minister. As humans we're merely joining in to try to enjoy and deepen the experience. The advantage of working in the outdoors is that the natural environment is working with us on behalf of God; half the work is already done and we are then joining in with that.

**Q How have you seen nature's ministry work with those people you take out on the fells?**

**A** You notice that people come back from those outdoor experiences feeling less burdened; they have a spring in their step and feel liberated from a weight they may have been carrying.

There's something about a healing in that process. As we uncover more and more about the science of well-being and the way that nature interacts with who we are as humans, it takes me back to the person of Jesus as the healer.

I think people experience a sense of awe and wonder both at a macro level – looking at amazing views – and at a micro level – understanding more about plants, animals and how the eco-systems work together. I've seen people coming away from the fells with a fresh perspective of who they are and with a sense of liberation.



Paul Rose: Called to full-time ministry about 25 years ago

**Q As part of your role, you also head up Mountain Pilgrims. Can you tell us more about that?**

**A** It's been going for about six years now. We first started with the idea to draw together other Christians who recognise there is something special about the mountain environment through which they can connect with God.

It's steadily evolved over the years. We now have an umbrella movement which has a focus on inviting people to have a deeper experience of nature through reflection, connect and action. Some groups within Mountain Pilgrims use that as an

opportunity to 'do church'.

I'm part of three different groups; two are definitely church but one is more of a community gathering based around Christian values. It's important not to deny our heritage but at the same time to have a broad language about what we can do to connect with the secular world of mountaineering and adventure.

We usually meet monthly as groups, with 90 regular attenders and 40 more on the fringe. As well as groups in Penrith, we have others in Tebay, Kendal, Furness, Kirkby Lonsdale and Dent.

Through our annual Fresh Expressions Day, we had visitors

come along from Wales and the North East who have since put Mountain Pilgrims into practice in their own setting. We've also developed international Mountain Pilgrims links too in Spain, the USA and north Africa.

**Q What would be your prayer for your ministry?**

**A** That we can become a respected voice within the secular world of mountaineering and adventure, bringing a spiritual lens to everyone's mountain experience that encourages people to explore further. Ultimately, through that, I would hope more people come to know the hope that is in Jesus.