

 Diocese of Carlisle

archdeacons' visitation news

Welcome

Welcome to this edition of Archdeacons' Visitation News

First, we need to say a huge thank you to all Churchwardens, for all your ministry – for the work you do is ministry!

Second, we need to say an equally huge thank you to all those who support you in your roles. Family, friends, others at church... thank you to all of them too.

Third, we need to say another thank you to Ecclesiastical Insurance for the 2023 edition of Archdeacons' Visitation News – and for all their support of churches. They look after us when things go wrong, they are there to offer advice and help to prevent things going wrong, and they support the Church with generous grants to each Diocese – they are (probably?!) the best insurers in the world!

Since the 2022 Archdeacons' News, Lee Townend has left the Diocese, so Stewart and Richard (still job-sharing) and Vernon are covering the three Archdeaconries. We are not sure what the future holds for the configuration of Archdeaconries in the Diocese, but are planning to apply in the autumn to the Church Commissioners for grant funding for a third time-limited Archdeacon post...

Finally, can we remind you about Churchwarden training:

7pm: Tues 12 Sept and Wed 20 Sept: hybrid (Zoom or in-person at Church House)

Thank you again – may God bless you, and may you be a blessing to others.



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Being a Bishop in Cumbria

It is quite hard to believe that for the last 21 years someone has actually paid me to drive around one of the most beautiful counties in England; meet some of the loveliest people on the planet, and be given innumerable opportunities to share the Gospel and hear how God has been at work in so many people and places. It has been the greatest privilege and joy of my life (after my marriage of course – Alison might read this!) and my first, abiding reflection is one of profound gratitude. We used to say that this is 'probably the best Diocese in which to live and work' – and, having served in four and visited most, I still think that wasn't mere hyperbole. I love Cumbria. I love its people, and I love God's Church here, and always will.

During those years we have together experienced the 'Health Churches Exercise'; 'From Survival to Revival'; Growing Disciples (remember the 'Green Book'?) and 'God for All': four 'initiatives' but one core vision which is rooted in discipleship. All of us are committed to deepening our own relationship with Jesus – and helping others to discover for themselves the meaning, purpose and peace which only He can provide. It has been a delight for me to pursue that end, not only with a succession of exceptional Anglican colleagues (in BLT, Church House and across the Diocese) but also of course with our ecumenical brothers and sisters, and the development of Mission Communities has been really exciting as well as deeply challenging.

Not that this has all been plain sailing. 2023 is not an easy time for Christians in the West and those of us who are passionate about growth look at declining numbers (country-wide) and diminishing finances with some alarm. Diocesan Bishops also have to juggle the demands of the National Church with those of the Diocese, and I have been no exception.

But those wider responsibilities have given the mission here a broader perspective, as too does the remarkable spiritual history of this wonderful county. So I find great comfort and re-assurance in the conviction that, whatever may be happening around us, God is the same: yesterday, today and forever – and that our times are in his hands and always will be. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle

Churchwardens as leaders of mission



It is well known that the Churchwardens have spiritual, as well as legal and practical responsibilities, but when we think of 'leaders in mission' perhaps you naturally think of other folk, e.g. parish clergy or licensed pioneers. But a great deal of what Churchwardens have responsibility for has mission at its heart.

If you've ever been involved with a building project, you'll know how much time is spent thinking about how church connects with community and tells the story of faith through its stones. Likewise, you'll have had many of the vicar's bright ideas run past you, because of the position you hold.

Churchwardens have a vital role in mission, whether through the Church fabric that is vested in them, or in their role of being 'foremost in representing the laity'. Churchwardens are key stewards of the Kingdom, ensuring that God's holy gifts serve God's holy people, keeping our vocation as church as the aim of all that we do: namely the great work by which Christ reconciles all things to himself (Colossians 1.20).

Whether it's because you've felt called to it, or simply left to get on with it, it's been heartening to see, as Mission Communities have developed, Churchwardens increasingly grow in their missional leadership and we're delighted to bring you two inspiring stories from daily life in our Cumbrian churches. We hope they might encourage you and help you to see the significance of your service as leaders of mission.

Stewart Fyfe
Archdeacon of West Cumberland

Churchwardens and staves



Churchwardens as leaders of mission



Finding ourselves in an indefinite period of 'vacancy' when our vicar was called to pastures new was initially very daunting. We (the Churchwardens, our Deanery Pioneer Ministers, and other young church families and volunteers) were keen to ensure that Messy Church continued during the vacancy.

A meeting was called, and after clearing a few hurdles of safeguarding and DBS issues, we planned our first event. With all of us very busy with jobs and parenting, we soon moved to a WhatsApp group for our planning – this has worked incredibly well, with everyone able to contribute quickly and easily, at any time of day. We use the WhatsApp group to share ideas for the theme, the activities, the songs, and other practical issues.

The internet holds a vast array of ideas and resources for crafts and activities, and we have played to the diverse strengths and skills of each team member – one of us organising the music, another excelling at food-based activities, and others presenting a Bible story, and running the craft activities. We advertise our Messy Church via Facebook, and also through the primary school by emailing the flyer to every family.

Whilst survival through the vacancy was our initial aim, we are now thriving and growing in all senses, with new families coming through the door and enjoying what we share.

Hannah Ellerton
Churchwarden, Morland

Calder Deanery NYC



It was Friday night and the teenagers had eaten their fill of toad-in-the-hole and chocolate cookies. We'd divided into small groups to read and reflect on the Scriptures.

“Who touched me?” Jesus asked.’

Four 13-year-old girls descended into giggles and knowing looks.

I glanced at my co-leader and good friend, Ang. She had her patient, saintly look on.

‘It means something else to us’, said the most vocal of the group. ‘Like if a teacher touches you, it means well, you know.’ Dramatic gestures followed to help us understand.

We continued to reading from Luke’s Gospel. The crowd pressed up against Jesus and the teenagers fell apart. The woman knelt trembling and I realised we were reading the Scriptures through the lens of a pornographic movie.

If like me you are repulsed, revolted by the idea that our sacred text could be read in such a way, please spare a thought and even a prayer for those of us who week in, week out seek to disciple the young, especially the unchurched. And please do pray for them. You see, after we had established that perhaps there were alternative readings of this account, one said, ‘Oh so Jesus is a healer – I didn’t know that’, and another asked, ‘Can he heal today? Is that physical healing as well as mental healing?’

And then (get your tissues ready), this group of beautiful youngsters began to share where they longed for healing in their own lives – healing for wounds made by words spoken over them that day by those who had bullied them, pushed them around, treated them like trash and told them they should kill themselves.

As Network Youth Church, we have the privilege of seeking out the youngsters who don’t yet know Jesus and His love for them. We have the privilege of sharing His invitation into full and abundant life through relationship with Him. We get to pray with young people that Jesus will heal them and set them free to be all that He is calling them into. It’s exhausting and upsetting at times, but we love what we do.

Later that night, when all was peaceful again, I asked Ang, my fellow-leader if she was OK, and she said that yes, she was, and that what we’d experienced together was really valuable for all of us. I do most whole-heartedly agree.

Alison Riley, NYC, Calder Minister

Furness Deanery NYC

The ministry of Furness NYC is, as you might expect from any church, hugely varied. From services and schools, food and fellowship, laughter and lament, we do it all.

I’ve been asked on many occasions what the secret to good youth ministry is. The answer, I think, is quite simple and is possibly the heart of all ministries.

Jesus, love, and time.

We keep Jesus at the centre, remember the reason for it all.

We love the young people as hard and as well as we can, and we show them God’s love.

We commit to spending regular time with them consistently.

Of course, we want to add more to this but I believe this is at the heart of it.



There are so many stories I could tell you of joy at laser quest, escape rooms or crazy golf. More stories from regular groups developing into services. Even more from discussions that are coming out of new resources we’re making. But with only a limited number of words let me tell you the joy of walking alongside someone, in this case

a teenager, who claims to have never believed in God and thinking church is stupid. For them to then ask if there is a Bible around, go and get it to read a short passage and have questions and such insightful reflections. All from building up relationships over time, them knowing they are loved and it’s a safe space to ask and explore and wanting to know more. I’m sure I learn more from them than they ever could from me!

Ruth Hutchings, NYC, Furness Deanery

Changes to the Offer System



Many of you will be aware of recent changes that have been made to the ‘Offer System’, the mechanism through which we together fund local ministry here in the Diocese of Carlisle.

Parishes are being encouraged to set their Offers in the context of a dialogue between the local Church (as expressed through Mission Communities) and the Episcopal (i.e. the Bishop, usually represented by the Archdeacon) which addresses three key questions:

- What are the plans for mission in your Mission Community?**
- How should ministry be shaped in support of those plans?**
- How can that ministry be funded?**

As part of these conversations, the Diocese will also explore with Mission Communities the potential for entering a three-year ‘Partnership Agreement’. A Partnership Agreement represents a three-year commitment between Mission Communities and the Diocese to work together in partnership, to commit to a certain level of finance and to provide local ministry in support of your mission.

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What are the benefits of the Partnership Agreement?

- Mission Communities are empowered to make local, strategic decisions around resourcing, ministry and mission.
- Mission Communities can have a high degree of certainty in their deployment for the duration of the Partnership Agreement period – no more worrying whether posts may be under threat at the next vacancy.
- The Diocese has more confidence about future levels of Ministry Offer and therefore its ability to fund local ministry.
- Resourcing and deployment decisions are taken in a spirit of partnership and with complete transparency.

Taking note of feedback we received from Mission Communities and local churches engaging in these conversations, and following a consultation process, we have taken the decision to change some of the language relating to this process:

1. 'Parish Offer' will now be called 'Ministry Offer'.

This is to avoid confusion as we increasingly think of a Mission Community Offer. We hope the continued use of the word 'Offer' will help the transition, and that 'Ministry Offer' will be largely self-explanatory.

2. 'Covenants' will now be called 'Mission and Ministry Partnership Agreements', commonly referred to as 'Partnership Agreements'.



Some Mission Communities were understandably nervous about committing to anything that could be perceived as legally or spiritually binding. We hope 'Partnership Agreement' expresses our desire to work together as members of the same body, to resource God's work here on earth.

Sophie Hodge

Diocesan Stewardship Enabler

Where can I find out more information?

Email: Sophie.hodge@carlisle-diocese.org.uk or visit: www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/finance2/ministry-offer/



Buildings strategy

Bishops James and Rob have been relaunching the God for All strategy around the diocese. It is a wide-ranging strategy but, at its heart, we are being called to use the things we have – time and energy, people, imagination and skills, money, and physical resources – to bring people to God and God to people.

For most of us, our key resource is our church buildings. In turn, our church buildings take up a lot of the time, energy and money of our committed PCC members, with much of the burden of care falling on Churchwardens.

The demands of caring for large, old buildings are so great, we don't always have the capacity to take on other more people-focussed activities that show God's love for his people and bring life to the church.

The building component of the God for All strategy aims to bring some balance to the considerable efforts of church members. Over the next year, the Archdeacons will be introducing how church groups can work together to manage their buildings.

In keeping with the innovative nature of our diocese, this will entail working at a Mission Community level – i.e. across the denominations in our own geographical area – to create a local buildings plan.

Working together means that we can create efficiencies and share the burden of management and maintenance. It also gives us the opportunity to understand the strengths and weaknesses of our fellow church groups, and the needs of the people around us. It will give us the opportunity to think strategically and imaginatively about our buildings.

Polly Evans, Buildings Strategy editor

For more information

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