

The Way

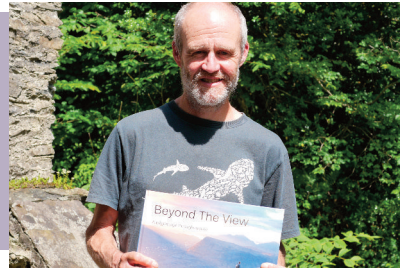


The FREE newspaper of the Church in Cumbria – Summer 2024



Ex-nun sets new novel in convent

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John wants us to see 'Beyond the View'

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PICTURE: BAE SYSTEMS

TONY'S 'PARISH' JUST GOT BIGGER...

■ **Barrow vicar takes on chaplaincy role in one of UK's largest shipyards**

"IT'S LIKE we've found another large parish within our community. It's wonderful to connect with so many new people."

The Rev Tony Ford, from St Mark's Barrow, is talking about a further role he's just taken on, providing chaplaincy to 13,500 people at the BAE Systems submarine shipyard in Barrow.

He's only been in post since March but says he's hugely encouraged at the support received and the openness to the chaplaincy from managers and workers at one of the UK's biggest shipyards.

He adds: "Within 12 months I'd love to see the news of the chaplaincy and the Good News of Jesus spread across the whole site as I look to help, support and draw alongside people of all faiths and none."

■ Turn to page 8 to read more about the BAE Systems' chaplaincy role.

INSIDE THIS EDITION



METHODISM



Fresh role, fresh ways of working

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The view from Peregrinos on the Camino

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FOCUS ON FAITH



Meet new diocesan director

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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

TREAD GENTLY

In recent editions of *The Way* our ecumenical leaders have explored the themes and priorities on which our God for All vision and strategy are based. In this publication we consider the fourth and final theme, 'Tread Gently' as together we strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, seeking to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The Rt Rev Rob Saner-Haigh, Bishop of Penrith

A SURPRISE television hit of the past few years has been *The Repair Shop*, in which expert craftspeople mend family treasures - from granny's roller skates to ancient clocks and favourite teddy bears. I'll confess that I love it, watching people using their long-practised skills to fix and give new life to something ordinary and precious.

Restoring, mending and reusing things is part of treading gently. We have, of course, been encouraged for many years to buy more stuff, find significance in having the latest shiny thing, and throwing things away when we tire of them, or they break. It was slightly



horrifying to read recently that many people wear an item of clothing only once and then throw it away. Online retailers reel us in through limitless choice, cheap deals and fast delivery. But is this good for us? Cheap is necessary for so many who

live with little, but what about those of us who are privileged to have a choice? Can we use these resources to encourage and support more sustainable practices? Can we teach ourselves to resist having the latest exciting thing? Can we spend our money in support of local shops, businesses and producers? Can we spend more to buy something which will last years, and which may be mended?

Treading gently is about our care for creation, our responsibility as stewards of our Lord's beautiful and precious world, but this mustn't be limited to finding 'greener' ways to mass produce, or changing how we generate our electricity, heat our homes and travel to work. It must surely also be about limiting how much we consume, and how we support local things: through buying less but buying local, and through making do and mending.

Major David Taylor, Salvation Army Divisional Commander



OUR priority to 'tread gently' is an urgent and yet inspiring opportunity to evaluate a wide range of areas in which we may strive to reduce our carbon footprint and live sustainably within God-honouring stewardship principles, for the health of our planet and each other.

I recently visited the stunning new Stanbrook Abbey in North Yorkshire and saw how different the future can look with careful planning and attention to a sustainable future. Opportunities to start from scratch are admittedly rare, and we must start from where we are, with the biblical mandate to be good stewards (Gen. 1:26) clear in our vision and determination.

The Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, in *God's Grandeur*, reminded us more than a century ago of realities that have only recently been more fully acknowledged: that the world is 'bleared, smeared with toil' and 'wears man's smudge and shares man's smell'. Yet he is equally optimistic of God's recreative powers, 'because the Holy Ghost over the bent world broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings'.

May all our efforts to tread gently and care for creation flow from this optimistic, hopeful vision that God is with us and calls us to be partners in God's good news mission (Phil. 1:5).

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

TO NOTICE again a butterfly's fragile, fluttering wing, or the unfurling beauty of a summer flower, fills the soul with gentle appreciation for the Creator who gave this world and its generous resources. The invitation to tread gently, reverently, should follow as naturally as the cycle of the seasons.

Yet the climate emergency, with its disrupted, violent weather, reveals our failure to steward the planet safely, with consequences too often inflicted on the poorest, in the excessively hot, arid, wet or storm-swept parts of the world.

If we are to care deeply, we must speak boldly about the environmental emergency and about justice for the poor, even as, daily, we seek to tread gently, yet purposefully, through all the complexities.

Thus, here in Cumbria, with its breathtaking landscapes, complex energy and wider farming structures that too often fail to support local, sustainable food security, how might we help each other to tread more effectively in God's world, with its attendant concerns for creatures and creation, near and far?

'Treading gently' demands so much of us: can we be worthy stewards, in small but vital ways; prophetically, powerfully responding to God's call, the God who is God of and for all?



Rev Martyn Coe, Coordinator, United Reformed Church Cumbria Partnership

"LYING prophets say there will be peace and plenty of food. But I say those same prophets will die from war and hunger." (Jer 14.15)

Treading Gently reminds us of God's call to care for each other and all creation. Eco Church Status shows that churches are serious about action. Without justice, without every nation treading more gently, the climate emergency will cause war, starvation and destruction. Heeding God's calls for justice for creation encourages a greener way of being, improving for God's world and the places we live and work.

Climate catastrophe will bring starvation and war unless nations tread gently and transform the future. Individuals make small differences but together we can push leaders of business and government to tread gently too.

The false prophets tell us climate change is natural or that we can do nothing, or it is too expensive to deal with; none of these is true. The costs of doing nothing are greater than the costs of a green transition but decisions need to be just so that the poorest in our nation and around the world shoulder only a fair burden.

Creator God, strengthen our resolve to be careful stewards of your creation.



Ex-nun recalls convent life in murder mystery

By Dave Roberts

“OBVIOUSLY there was never a murder in the convent where I was, but there were tensions and that’s what’s bubbling away in the background of my book,” Helen Weston explains.

The former nun, turned writer and therapist, is talking about her new murder mystery novel, *Silence Interrupted*.

And having spent five years in Anglican monastic houses in Oxford and London, Helen is well-placed to explore the world of Greater and Lesser Silences and the vows which mould convent life.

“The new novel takes readers deep into the heart of a community bound by the rule of silence, and absolute obedience to the Mother Superior,” Helen said. “The main character goes to the convent on a silent retreat and finds a tense and claustrophobic environment – where something has gone terribly wrong.

“I’ve drawn on my own experience of convent life to paint an intimate portrait of life in a closed community. It’s over 40 years since I was in the convent but there are certain things which I’ve never really been able to come to terms with about my time there, so writing the book has been quite cathartic as well as huge fun.”

Helen grew up in St Helens, but it was not until she attended Mass at the newly built Roman Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool that she felt touched by God.

She says: “As a teenager, I’d pray to God, ‘If you’re real then show me’, but nothing happened and so instead I’d look to the great writers and philosophers. However, in the cathedral that day it was as if the altar was suddenly transformed from a block of ice to something with a fiery core, and in turn that warmed me up. From that moment on, I knew that God was real.”

Helen went on to study English at Oxford University, later spending a year teaching English in Finland before moving back to Oxford to work in the visual aids department of Oxfam’s head office.

A friendship with a nun who occasionally attended her home church proved the catalyst for her to join the nearby Anglican convent, aged 26.

“I was looking for something meaningful to do with my life,” Helen reflects. “The plainsong, the



Helen Weston: ‘There are certain things I’ve never come to terms with about my time there’

DAVE ROBERTS

■ ‘There was a strong sense of vocation; it was as if I were falling in love with the simplicity and austerity of the life...’

silence and the sense of a dedicated life all seemed quite beautiful to me. There was a strong sense of vocation; it was as if I were falling in love with the simplicity and austerity of the life.”

Having made her first vows – obedience, chastity and poverty – Helen threw herself into her new life, working in an old people’s home which was affiliated to the convent and acting as a university college chaplain. But five years later, as final vows approached, she realised she could not continue. During that time, she had also met her future husband David, who was then a Benedictine abbot.

“It was hard for me to walk away,” Helen says, “and that was made even more difficult as David felt called to stay. It was so difficult for him as he had responsibility for all the monks in his monastery as well as a role in the wider Benedictine community. It took another four years before he felt

able to leave but he did so with no regrets.”

The couple married in 1984 and have two sons. David took on the parish of Pilling in Lancashire, before later being appointed Bishop’s Chaplain in the Diocese of Carlisle. In turn, Helen was able to pursue a career, first as a teacher in adult education, then as a full-time therapist. Since retirement, she has continued to provide support through the Inter Diocesan Counselling Service and has developed a renewed focus on writing. *Silence Interrupted* is her third novel.

She concludes: “I’m delighted how the plot developed. When I started writing it, I didn’t even realise that there would be a murder or who would die! I’ve loved the writing process and I hope people enjoy the book.”

■ *Silence Interrupted*, published by Troubador at £10.99, is available in bookshops and online.

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James's role expands as Methodist areas merge

■ Five Districts become one as church shifts its attitude towards governance

By Dave Roberts

“MY TIME in Cumbria has been wonderful. It's been an absolute joy and privilege to be able to work ecumenically. I've experienced deep love and support working with colleagues from across the denominations and it is something I will forever cherish.”

The Rev Dr James Tebbutt, Chair of the Cumbria Methodist District and newly appointed Chair of the North West England District, reflects on his time in the county.

It's nearly five years since he, his wife Nicola and their 15-year-old daughter, Eleanor, moved to Cumbria from his previous post, serving as superintendent of a county circuit in Gloucestershire, taking in 48 churches.

His new role extends his ministry beyond Cumbria as the Methodist Church merges five Districts in the north-west of England – Cumbria; Lancashire; Bolton and Rochdale; Manchester and Stockport; and Liverpool – to create one.

James explains: “There was an understanding that we'd been spending too long on governance and structure and maintaining the organisation, rather than what we're primarily called to do which is mission, outreach and caring for our neighbour, supported by worship, fellowship and mutual support within our congregations and communities.

“So, the creation of a larger District will cut down on governance levels and enable us to do more effectively what it is we're called to be as Christians.

“In Cumbrian terms, we want to do more through our ecumenical God for All vision and strategy with its four priorities – Follow Daily, Speak Boldly, Care Deeply, Tread Gently. We are absolutely committed to that and know that our future in Cumbria is



James Tebbutt: ‘I want to take our Cumbrian insights and work as an ambassador for ecumenism’

DAVE ROBERTS

ecumenical. The more that we can work together, the more we can pool our efforts and work in a co-ordinated, complementary way, then the more we can move forward.”

His new ‘patch’ stretches down to the Wirral and Ellesmere Port, across to Alderley Edge in Cheshire, up to Buxton in Derbyshire and along the western edge of the Pennines to the Scottish border. In Cumbria he currently has responsibility for 2,500 Methodist members with 83 congregations. The new District takes in 18,000 members.

There has been a detailed, three-year consultation into the structural changes and James has been a member of a regional review group guiding the process of merger.

It's his experience working in Cumbria – England's first ecumenical county – that James wants to build on in his new role, which will last, initially, for six years.

He adds: “I know there is a long track record of ecumenism elsewhere in the North West – especially in Liverpool for example – but I also know colleagues

have been watching with real interest what has been going on in Cumbria through our ecumenical God for All vision and strategy and I want to take our Cumbrian insights and act as an ambassador for ecumenism.”

The new North West England District will be made up of four Mission Areas – Cumbria being one of them – to enable a particular local focus on mission to continue. From September, the Rev David Newlove – currently a Circuit superintendent in North Cumbria – will take on the role of Mission Area Lead and Deputy Chair for Cumbria.

Meanwhile, at the end of June the national Methodist Conference also ratified proposals to create a single Cumbria Methodist Circuit which will be coterminous with the county boundary.

It means that from September 2025 the present eight Circuits will merge into one again to minimise governance demands and enable a renewed focus on mission and outreach.

James explains: “There will be structural change but probably that won't really be noticed by those in our chapels and churches.

It will help in a variety of ways. We won't see the crossing of circuit boundaries any more for our mission communities and the difficulties that can create. Instead, we are encouraging our churches and chapels to very much have a mission community perspective.”

A special celebration of the Cumbria Methodist District took place at Penrith Methodist Church in July, where people had

opportunity to give thanks for all the District's ministry over the years, offering up memories and stories and thanking those who have held various roles.

James concludes: “It was lovely to be able to honour the Christian mission and service of all those who have gone before us in the Cumbria District. It was an opportunity to praise God for all that has passed and to trust God for all that is to come.”



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Just doing it... Crossing the high plains on the way to the Castilian town of Hornillos

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■ On this page and the next, we learn about what the Camino de Santiago means to two pilgrims who travelled from the UK to walk it

By Dave Roberts

THE smooth stone in the middle of the path was beautifully decorated with a simple phrase: 'Just do it!'

That perfectly encapsulates what I'd say to anyone who is considering walking the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage across northern Spain.

The Camino – or the Way of St James – is a network of pilgrimages leading to the shrine of the apostle James in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia in northwestern Spain. Tradition holds that is where the remains of the apostle are buried and it's a place that has drawn pilgrims since the 10th century.

I'm now one of them, taking on the Camino Frances in stages. With nearly 500 miles to walk, the challenge is not inconsiderable, but the associated joys and the rhythm of pilgrim life are wonderful to experience.

It's a journey I'm currently completing with three friends: Mike Crawley – who I worship with at St Paul's Holme Eden near Carlisle – and sisters Fiona Richardson and Sandra Foster. We began back in 2019 but the Covid pandemic meant we could only return in 2023. This May we completed another 100 miles from Santa Domingo de la Calzada to Frómista.

But be warned, the Camino is not a gentle stroll. Plenty of pilgrims (or Peregrinos) suffer injuries along the way: many knees and ankles are



Selfie: Dave, centre, with fellows pilgrims, or Peregrinos, Fiona Richardson, left, Mike Crawley and Sandra Foster

strapped up and on the latest trip I met an American lady who had suffered a stress fracture of her ankle.

"The guidebooks talk at length about the beauty of the countryside," she remarked ruefully, "but they don't say how rocky the paths can be!"

The benefits far outweigh the challenges, however: the early rises, long walks, beautiful scenery, illuminating conversations and fellowship with fellow pilgrims over simple meals and the time to just 'be' with God present opportunities harder to experience at length in the fast-paced life of work and family.

Mike reflects: "The highlight for me were two meals we had at hostels where we were staying. There were

so many nationalities but there was a commonality among us all. It was lovely to listen to some of the stories as to why people were there."

Back in Cumbria, my thoughts and prayers are with so many of the pilgrims I had the privilege of drawing alongside.

I recall the conversations had with the American marriage and relationship counsellor who felt called to travel the Way; I think of the Texan woman who is walking the Camino as she navigates a divorce; and I think of the young Korean theology student who was battling sore knees but was intent on completing the route. I often wonder how they fared on their pilgrimage, and I wish them 'Buen Camino'.



Seen on the Way... From top, enjoying a meal at a hostel in Hornillos; the Canal de Castilla near Frómista; a wayside stone suggests pilgrims should trust their instincts, not their smartphones



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'Transformative': Sheila Owen and her husband John on the Camino

SHEILA Owen and her husband John - from Holyhead in Anglesey - are walking the Camino in stages. They took on the challenge after Sheila's recovery from breast cancer. Here she offers her reflections on the journey so far...

In the wake of breast cancer, I embarked on a transformative adventure - a pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago.

My goal extended beyond physical achievement; it was a quest for peace, tranquillity and a renewed faith for my husband John. Here are the highlights of my remarkable journey...

Like life's challenges, the Camino began with a climb - the breathtaking Pyrenees. As I crossed into Spain, the infinite-layered mountain vista mirrored my resilience.

In the shadow of Ernest Hemingway's trout-fishing tales, I explored Burqueto. Enchanted forests, wildflower-covered hills and native pine and oak forests whispered ancient secrets.

Passing through vineyards, I tasted the earth's bounty. Locals shared their warmth, reminding me that kindness transcends borders.

In the quiet embrace of the small village of Villamayor de Monjardin, I encountered a cross

that defied the ordinary. It stood there, not in the grandeur of a cathedral or atop a hill, but in the quiet of an unassuming moment.

The sun dipped, casting shadows across the path. Me, a lowly pilgrim seeking solace, stumbled upon this sacred symbol - an apparition etched in the air, its arms reached out, as if bridging the gap between heaven and earth. Yet, no one else noticed. The cross existed for me alone. Perhaps it was souls of pilgrims who had bled their prayers into the soil. It reminded me that the extraordinary can emerge on the Camino.

And on the long road to Los Arcos there was the fellow pilgrim, the one who no longer walked beside me. I extended a hand, shared a smile in that fleeting connection... and then it was gone. For isn't it true we touch infinity in the briefest encounters?

The Camino, with its ancient rhythms and timeless echoes; the cross at Villamayor I will carry forever. For I saw what others did not see: a cross where there was none, and a pilgrim who left no trace but has lingered in my heart.

May our steps continue to echo along the path, where the ordinary becomes sacred and the unseen whispers its truth.

When did you last stop to have silent time with God?

■ Meditation has roots 'deep within' Christianity

By Dave Roberts

"WE LIVE in a busy world. There is a lot going on. Even when we pray, we often do so actively, rather than just resting and enjoying God's presence."

The Rev Lisa Moore-Wilson reflects on the demands of everyday life – even our faith life – and the importance of simply stopping, breathing and being with God in silence.

It's for that reason that the Cumbria Missional Partnership URC minister – who presides at St George's URC in Carlisle city centre – has teamed up with musician and celebrant Diana Raven to launch a monthly Christian meditation group at the church.

Lisa explains: "Both Diana and I are members of Christian Meditation in Cumbria's steering group and had been separately wanting to start such a group. When we both became aware of that we decided to launch the monthly meetings."

"I've always been interested in things like meditation and yoga; practices that traditionally people may not think of as being Christian. But they have their roots deep within the Christian faith. Jesus prayed with people, but he also took himself off to pray in quietness as well."

The Christian Meditation Group – 'A Quiet Space in the City' – has been meeting for about a year, with between eight and 12 people coming together in the church for an hour. Usually, participants sit in a semi-circle, and begin with some form of spiritual exercise such as walking meditation, breath prayer, Lectio Divina (a method of praying with the Scriptures) or Taizé chanting.

A 20-minute period of silent meditation then follows with a focus on a particular mantra – 'Maranatha' which means 'Come Lord'. After that, people are invited to share personal reflections before refreshments. The group is made up of people from various denominations as well as those who are not regular church attenders.



Quiet space: Diana Raven, left, and the Rev Lisa Moore-Wilson have set up a Christian meditation group that meets on the first Thursday of the month in Carlisle

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS

THE POWER OF MEDITATING AS PART OF A GROUP

DANIEL THORBURN, 40, attends the Quaker Meeting House in Carlisle city centre and is also a member of the meditation group.



"I meditate myself so I thought it would be interesting to do so within a group setting. I've only ever done Quaker meetings so I thought it would be good to do something which is more church based."

"One of the things I like about

this meditation group is that they mix things up; there's always something different every time and so it's broadening my experience."

"Meditating as part of a group is a lot different to doing it at home. Sitting in silence as a group has a very different feel."

"One week we all went on a meditative walk, then we came back and sat in silence for 20 minutes. I found that very powerful and very affecting."

"It would be nice to see this group grow in size. I think it's more effective the more people there are; it's a little like a multiplier effect."

"The great thing about meditation is that it crosses any divide between denominations," Diana adds. "Anyone can take part without feeling that their own brand of Christianity has been 'compromised' in any way."

Lisa adds: "It can complement whatever your Christian tradition is. Likewise, it can appeal to people who don't go to church for a traditional Sunday service. It provides them with an opportunity to come and have some quiet time

with God but in a different way."

The group has loose connections to the World Community for Christian Meditation UK. The first Christian Meditation Centre was opened in 1975 by founder John Main who believed that meditation was relevant to all, helping create community and a path to spiritual growth.

It's that same sense of meditative community that Lisa and Diana are both keen to see grow in Carlisle.

The REV KATHLEEN REALE runs her own meditation group from her home in Dalston and attends the monthly meetings at St George's URC Church. She was a deaconess and among the first women to be ordained in 1994.



"I have been meditating for 25 years and it has taught me to know and love myself and therefore free me to know and love everybody else."

"I don't get angry or upset. I get

sad with the way of the world, but I think meditation is a way of us knowing ourselves. That is the answer; we have to know who we are. The spiritual side of us is the one which is part of eternity."

"I meditate twice a day on my own but it is important to be with a group, if possible, at least once a week. It's just like praying with other people."

"One of the wonderful things about meditation is that you can be with anyone, of any faith or no faith at all, because there are no words to divide you. You are just together, sitting with the being that we call God, reaching out and being ourselves."

"There's definitely a sense of warmth and connection which is built through sharing in meditation," Diana says. "I pray that this group provides a tool for people to feel a sense of connection to God."

Lisa concludes: "Through meditation you can become more self-aware. From a Christian point of view that helps you become more God-aware and there's a greater understanding of our interconnection with everything."

"There's something quite powerful about meditating in a group. There's a real energy to it and an unspoken connection. I'd love more people to experience knowing and feeling God's presence in this way."

The Christian Meditation Group meets on the first Thursday of the month at 3pm at St George's URC on West Walls in Carlisle.

■ For more details, contact the Rev Lisa Moore-Wilson at lisa.wilson@nwsynod.org.uk

Shipyard has a chaplain again after six-year gap

■ Vicar of St Mark's, Barrow, takes on additional role at BAE Systems

By Dave Roberts

"IT'S THE heartbeat of the town," the Rev Tony Ford explains. "Most people either work here or have friends and family who do, so the connections are massive, particularly as we're a town-centre church."

Tony is talking about BAE Systems Barrow, the home of UK submarine building, with a workforce of more than 13,500 people, set to grow to 17,000.

And it's here that Tony, the vicar of St Mark's, Barrow, has been ministering as a chaplain since March. The site had previously been without a chaplain for six years.

"I first made contact with the company about two and a half years ago to see if we could look to reintroduce the chaplaincy," Tony explains.

"Understandably, it's taken time for us to get to this point as there have been all the necessary clearances and paperwork to go through, but I'm thrilled to be in post now. It's such a wonderful opportunity to be able to draw alongside so many people; those of a Christian faith, those of other faiths or those without faith.

"Due to the nature of the business, there are a lot of ex-military people working here who are very pro-chaplaincy. So, the support I've had in the early stages has been wonderful."

His chaplaincy falls under the company's Diversity Equity and Inclusion team. He has shared office facilities in the £25 million Submarine Academy for Skills and Knowledge training hub, where scores of apprentices are taught.

Neil Doherty, social impact manager at BAE Systems Submarines, reflects: "Historically, we've always had a chaplain here at BAE Systems but for one reason or another – probably partly to do with Covid – that support structure wasn't in place.

"It's wonderful to have Tony on board. He's a valuable support to those colleagues who may be seeking advice or guidance. Equally, as a company, we are reaching out more and more into the local community and so we have this strong relationship with St Mark's and all the good work going on there.

"The independent nature of



Tony Ford: 'Since I arrived, there's been a real openness from everyone I've met for me to share more about my chaplaincy'

Tony's chaplaincy is also important. It provides another option among the many on offer to colleagues who may want to reach out. It's about providing another listening ear and it's also important that Tony's there to help celebrate the good times in life with people too."

Tony bases himself on site every Monday and regularly visits Portland Walk Campus, a careers inspiration hub in the town centre, which BAE Systems is currently developing to support job creation and training.

It's a careful balancing act, as he remains fully committed to his

ministry at St Mark's and his other chaplaincy role with Barrow Raiders rugby league team.

He has been supported and encouraged in his BAE Systems' chaplaincy by Jason Dobb, a chief naval architect who has been a member of St Mark's for more than 30 years.



'Opportunities': Jason Dobb



'Valuable': Neil Doherty

Jason explains: "I was disappointed that the chaplaincy paused, and I've always wanted to see it brought back to the site. There are all kinds of opportunities here in which people can be helped with pastoral issues, and the chaplaincy offers a wonderful befriending service.

"It represents an outworking of God's love into society which is integral to the church's mission. Working in the shipyard is an immense privilege but those who work here are not immune to the pressures of the world. So, if there are hints of need, Tony, as chaplain, is there to help."

It's still early days, but Tony says, eventually, he would like to see a chaplaincy team developed. He's currently busy promoting his role across the BAE Systems Barrow site.

He adds: "There's an online group of Christians from across the whole of BAE Systems that pray together every Thursday lunchtime. We also have a smaller support group here in Barrow that meets once a month online.

"As well as being an important platform to share stories, it's also helpful to tap into people's knowledge so I can better understand who's the go-to person for different scenarios.

"Since I arrived there's been a real openness from everyone I've met for me to share more about my chaplaincy. I pray that God continues to bless this work and those I draw alongside."

PICTURES: BAE SYSTEMS

■ Computer system helps experienced bellringers and newcomers alike

Andy's digital technology for campanology hits right note

By Dave Roberts

A BARROW bellringing team are using specialist digital technology to encourage others to learn the skill.

Andy Pollock, tower captain at St James the Great Barrow, secured fundraising from various organisations to pay for a new Wombel system.

The Wombel (or one-bell) simulator is a wooden bell frame and wheel with two metal bell-shaped weight plates attached to the wheel and a bell rope. It sits on a purpose-built metal frame and uses switch sensors to send signals to a laptop when the bell is rung, enabling ringers to practise with a team of computer-simulated bellringers.

Andy explained: "For ten years we could not ring the bells at St James as they needed to be restored. When we were fundraising for the restoration, we heard that there was a Wombel simulator in Yorkshire, and we borrowed it when we were running an open day.

"It was wonderful to see people aged from six through to 80 have a go at ringing the bell digitally. They loved it. It was a huge hit. It can sometimes be a struggle to encourage people to come into church to find out more about bellringing but the Wombel means we can now take bellringing out to them."

The new simulator is currently erected in the church but the plan is for it to be made available to other teams in Cumbria to help encourage people to take up ringing.

It complements a further simulator system which is housed in the bells in St James's church tower, and which can be cabled up to four laptops to enable silent bellringing practice when the clappers are tied.

Andy added: "The aim is to take the Wombel out to community spaces – schools, halls, youth clubs – to enable us to demonstrate what bellringing is all about and to educate people about the history of bells and the variety that there are around the world.

"As well as encouraging people to have a go, this digital technology also helps ringers improve as you can analyse your ringing after you've finished. It can also give you a score out of ten which can



Ring the changes: Above, Andy Pollock with the simulator behind; right, Mayor Judith McEwan and husband Bill try the Wombel during an event at St James; below, pupils from St James CE Primary with ringers in the bell tower



be a really positive thing for our younger, more competitive ringers. It motivates them to make quicker progress as they seek to beat their last score."

Andy, a software engineer at BAE Systems, took up bellringing in his mid-20s. Allowing for the 10 years when the bells at St James's couldn't be used, he has rung for 25 years. His twin 21-year-old sons – Jason and Cameron – have also followed in their father's bellringing footsteps.

Andy leads a team of between six and eight ringers in Barrow and also works closely with colleagues in Dalton.

He has overseen fundraising for the Wombel, securing a £3,000 'Micro to Mighty' grant managed by Westmorland and Furness Council and underwritten by the Heritage Lottery Fund; £688 from BAE Systems' Community Investment Fund; £350 from a God for All Digital Innovation Fund which paid for a laptop computer;

and grants from the local bellringing associations.

The Wombel was first used in March, on the tenth anniversary of the restoration of St James' bells.

Andy added: "It's always pleasing to see people's positive reactions when they've tried ringing on the Wombel. I've no doubt this will help keep the tradition of bellringing alive, which is important because it's part of our national heritage and culture.

"It's such a great activity for

those leading the ringing but also for the people in the parish. The ringers have an opportunity to enjoy a wonderful, social hobby – whether they are Christian or not – and as a ringer you are calling people to worship. For people who hear the bells it can act as a comfort. You are letting them know that, as a church we are here, praising God. For those of us who are Christian bellringers, it's our way of showing we are using God's gifts to praise him in another way."

Helping others explore the spiritual in creation

■ ‘Nature demonstrating the word of God’ is idea behind new project set up by outdoor enthusiast

By Dave Roberts

IT’S A beautiful, baking-hot day when I visit John Fleetwood. Sitting in the patio area of his home in Garnett Bridge, we watch trout swimming in a beck below.

For many years, a connection to nature has been the driving force for John and his faith, and it’s also the catalyst for a new, exciting project which he has just launched.

He has founded Beyond The View which aims to help people see God more clearly in nature and their surroundings in three principle ways: through connection, reflection and action.

“I’m a very keen outdoors person,” John explains. “I spend a lot of my time running, walking, mountaineering or taking photographs. So, for me, nature demonstrates the word of God as expressed in creation. Beyond The View is about helping people to see that.

“We want to do that in Christian circles and also much wider ones, so we choose the language more carefully when we are working with non-Christians. But the aim is still very much to engage with the sacred.

“We want to help people connect more deeply with the experience of nature, in turn that will help them reflect on their experience and where God is in that and finally the action would be to bring in the Kingdom of God. This is not just about self-improvement or better mental health; it’s about using that experience to inform how you see the world and grow your relationship with a creator God.”

John and his GP wife, Alison, the Diocese of Carlisle’s Healing Adviser, have lived in the Lake District for 27 years. With a background in finance, he set up a ratings company for social and environmental funds and then sold the business, allowing himself more time to concentrate on pro-

jects such as Beyond The View.

There are plans to form a registered charity and John is also looking to develop a series of pilgrimages and retreats. As part of that, he recently welcomed a group of *Big Issue* sellers to the Lakes for a retreat which will also feature in the *Big Issue* magazine.

He explains: “It was wonderful to be able to welcome this group. This represents a proper retreat for them, in a mountain hut above Coniston. It was an opportunity for them to experience nature through reflection. It’s really exciting to reach out in this way.”

There are also various resources available, including a beautifully printed 250-page coffee-table book of stunning photographs taken by John over the years, alongside thought-provoking prose and poetry around themes including connection, spirit, nature’s trinity, space and how to ‘see beyond the view’.

An associated website includes special reflective postcards by which people can connect more deeply with nature in nine different ways.

“I view this very much as a movement,” John adds. “It’s a drawing together of the work of lots of different people and organisations throughout the UK. Ultimately, I want to be able to take this out into the secular world to connect with new people in new ways.”

That Beyond The View becomes widely known in the secular world as a place to explore spiritual connection in creation, remains a primary aim for John.

He concludes: “I want to create a countywide SSSI. But this would not be a Site of Special Scientific Interest, rather it would be a Site of Special Spiritual Interest!”

■ Copies of the Beyond The View book can be purchased via <https://beyondtheview.org.uk/product/beyond-the-view-the-book/>



John Fleetwood: ‘This is not just about self-improvement or better mental health’

DAVE ROBERTS



Beyond The View: A coffee-table book of photography, prose and poetry

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Diocesan director reflects on first six months in post

Q Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

A I moved to Cumbria in 1996 and for the last 24 years have lived in Keswick with my husband, Martin. We have a teenage son and worship at Crosthwaite Church in Keswick.

My father is a retired clergy person, having previously served as vicar of St John's Keswick and as a Rural Dean before becoming an Archdeacon on the Isle of Man.

I originally trained as a nurse before moving into the charity sector where I worked with children and young people and families in their communities for nearly 30 years.

For 22 of those I worked for Barnardo's and was an original member of the charity's first Cumbrian team.

Before taking up my latest role, I was the Head of Children and Young Peoples Services at the Brathay Trust, whose charitable mission is to support and develop children and young people through both residential and community development programmes across the north of England.

Q What do you consider to be the priority focus?

A We need to develop momentum in implementing the strategy, and people need to feel they are part of that journey. Some are still struggling to understand what the God for All vision and strategy is about; there are various reasons for that, but the Covid pandemic is a particularly significant factor.

A key priority will be the development of mission communities and their leaders so that across the county we can deliver mission in a way which is encouraging, fruitful and creative.

The first six months has seen me build key relationships with these leaders and more broadly across the diocese and with our ecumenical partners. Other key areas include Growing Younger – working closely with our church schools through a combined strategy – as well as Church Planting and Pioneering.

And there needs to be a focus on ministry development; we must increase our breadth and inclusivity around vocation pathways to ensure we enable people of all backgrounds and



Rachel Head: 'Some are still struggling to understand what the God for All vision and strategy is about' **DAVE ROBERTS**

■ In our regular Focus on Faith feature, we speak to Rachel Head who took up her post as new Director of Mission and Ministry, Support and Innovation in January

abilities to explore and develop their call to serve God in their place. In time, this will enable us to grow and sustain our capacity for a shepherd in every flock and a local church in every place.

Q What are the challenges?

A We know that the numbers of people attending church are falling, that buildings can feel both a blessing and a burden at times, and that some church officer roles are not being filled as people are 'time poor' or have come to the end of their season of service.

Nationally, we are also seeing a decline in clergy numbers and that's impacting on recruitment

for us, too. In our local context, we have a number of multi-parishes (particularly in a rural context) where clergy are spread very thinly in a governance system with high administrative demands.

Post-Covid, there's still an impact on people's wellbeing in terms of capacity and sense of wellness.

Q What excites you about the role?

A There are some amazing people here who are doing great things; I've met some welcoming, supportive, caring people who want the best for their congregations and their communities.

There are 'places of light' that we need to give recognition to and to give a platform to. There is also fresh leadership in the Diocese and people who have taken up new roles who are bringing a fresh way of looking at things and bringing new energy, creativity and commitment. There's also a high level of expertise and experience in the team which I now lead and there's a great desire to serve.

We have new appointments around Growing Younger, Vocations and Church Planting which will see new skill sets introduced. And we're planning to make a bid through the Diocesan Investment Programme so there's potential for even more growth.

Q What would be your prayer as you move forward in the role?

A That I listen carefully to where God is leading me (and us) both in hope and with confidence. I pray for openness and that folk will get on-board. I pray for persistence and patience and that I will help to lead and enable the freedom for creativity and faithful improvisation. I pray that we create a culture which enables church leaders to try new things; to recognise innovation inevitably leads to some things not working; and to share with one another what we learn as we serve together, seeking to grow God's kingdom in Cumbria with worshipping, praying and serving local communities.