

The Way



The FREE newspaper of the Church in Cumbria

Winter 2024/2025



Carlisle Street
Pastors' ministry to
end after 14 years

PAGE 7



May all our readers have
a wonderful Christmas
and Christ-filled 2025!

BLESSED TO GIVE

■ Celebrating generosity and kindness

THIS Christmas hundreds of children across the county will receive gifts they may not otherwise have had - thanks to the kindness and generosity of others.

In this edition of The Way, we hear more about the Salvation Army's Christmas Toy Appeal. In Carlisle, Captains Mel and Steve Scoulding, pictured, and scores of church volunteers have been busy packing dozens of Christmas goodie bags.

And in an edition which celebrates how Christians are serving their communities in many different ways, we give thanks for the ministry of the Carlisle Street Pastors which is set to end, we meet the churchwarden who has just been named Cumbria's Great Neighbour, and a husband-and-wife missionary team from Brazil explain why they've been called here to help grow the faith of our county's young people.

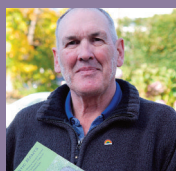
■ Read more about the Christmas Toy Appeal on page 5.



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COMMUNITY



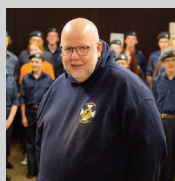
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The Way is the newspaper of the Church in Cumbria. It is produced in partnership between the Church of England Diocese of Carlisle, the Methodist District of Cumbria, the United Reformed Church in Cumbria and Churches Together in Cumbria. Through Churches 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

SERVING OTHERS

In this edition of *The Way* we consider the many ways that Christians across our county are looking to serve others. Undergirded by a spirit of Caring Deeply, we read of the generosity which abounds through a sense of giving, bearing witness through love and compassion. And below, our ecumenical leaders explore why as followers of Jesus we are all called to serve faithfully in so many different ways.



The Rt Rev Rob Saner-Haigh, Acting Bishop of Carlisle

ST PAUL saw the church as a body made up of many parts, each follower of Jesus a part of Christ's body, and together continuing the ministry of Jesus in the world. Famously, that idea is echoed in Teresa of Avila's saying that, "Christ has no body but yours".

Together, with our different skills, experiences and gifts, we are called to serve in myriad ways across the county, bringing something of the hope, life and healing of Jesus himself into all those places we go each week.

For some of us, our service will be focussed on church, enabling others through our

ministry. For more of us, our service will be focussed beyond the church; in our communities, in our work, with our friends and families. Each of these is part of our service to God and part of the work which He has called us to in this place.

We are partners in the gospel. Through giving to God in this way, we bless others, and we are blessed and grow ourselves.

It's amazing to see what God does in and through those who offer their gifts in this way, and what signs and examples of his kingdom we see grow.

Major David Taylor, Salvation Army Divisional Commander



ONE of my key maxims flows from the words of Jesus when he says that he "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45).

It is often stated that the 'S' found on each lapel of a Salvation Army soldier's uniform jacket, stands for 'saved to serve'. William Booth, the founder of The Salvation Army, once sent a one-word telegram to his officers - 'Others'.

If we were to put the gospel into a nutshell, then it could be concisely articulated that the good news is that God lovingly enables us each to join him in his mission for the world. The birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus mean that our life is joined with his in living for others. His extraordinary grace so generously bestowed on us, overflows in our thanksgiving back to God and to the world that God loves, by which the love we receive overflows for others.

May the season of Advent and the celebration of the birth of Jesus inspire us all to accept again God's call upon our lives to serve him, fully, faithfully and fruitfully.

Rev Dr James Tebbutt, Chair, NW England District of the Methodist Church

ELIZABETH and Zechariah, Mary and Joseph, were called to serve: were they willing, ambivalent, sometimes resentful; or caught up in their service, finding purpose and place, responding to God's call? It was costly, painfully so. Was there validation, fulfilment, peace, as with Simeon and Anna? These servants enabled an even greater service: through John, who inspires a turning around to prepare God's way; and through Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve, to give his life that we might live.

In turn, can we hear the call to serve, to take the bowl and wash the dirty, broken feet of this generation? Stretching out hands and minds, expanding hearts and wills, can we, in humility and hope, embody God's goodness through acts and words, small and large, to release God's compassion and care, inclusion and justice, into our despairing world?

Whatever the cost and hesitation, may the advent hope, the birth of Christ and the covenantal offering of a new year, enable us to serve again. Bless you, in the roles and relationships that you inhabit, willingly, reluctantly, unexpectedly, yet providentially, that all may be blessed by the God who loves and serves us all.



Rev Martyn Coe, Coordinator, United Reformed Church Cumbria Partnership

"BRING me flesh and bring me wine, bring me pine logs," says King Wenceslas in our Christmas song. They go to care for this struggling person. No question about why this person had not provided for themselves or about whether someone else might have helped.

There is a moral duty on all people to help others, and lots of people and groups do. I, however, believe Christian service is different (not always better or morally superior but different). In serving others we see not only the need, but a sibling made in the image of God. In serving others we see not only an individual in need but that the values of the kingdom of God drive us to help. Where we are called by God to serve in practical ways, we may also ask what is wrong with society if people need help with life's necessities.

I chair a foodbank, and we always try to help those in need but I also campaign for society to change so that they are no longer in need. We are called to serve in practical ways and called to change the world.

"Ye who now will bless the poor shall yourself find blessing."



Tiny community 'couldn't wish for better neighbour'

■ BBC Radio Cumbria award goes to Margaret

By Dave Roberts

"I LIKE to think I'm a good neighbour. If anyone needs a hand, then I'm more than willing to give it, but I'll never force the issue."

Margaret Grieve is quietly matter of fact when explaining how she cares for people within her north Cumbrian community.

She says she would rather shun the limelight when it comes to being praised for her good deeds, but her kind-heartedness has seen the Scaleby churchwarden named Great Neighbour of the Year at the BBC Radio Cumbria Make A Difference awards.

"As well as being a churchwarden for the last seven years, I also sit on the village hall committee," Margaret explains.

"The hall's got a bit tired in recent years so we've just got planning permission to refurbish it – although we've got to raise the money now.

"I work with my fellow churchwarden to ensure Scaleby church is kept spick and span.

"We have rotas for grass-cutting and flower-arranging, and I help oversee that.

"I also help to look out for a neighbour who is 90 years old. I'll bob in to check if she needs any shopping or to give her a lift anywhere.

"But I must stress that we all help out in this community, so I can't understand why I should be particularly recognised!"

Margaret, 72, lives with her husband, Michael, in the small community of Longpark, to the north-east of Carlisle.

They've been there for nearly 40 years, with Margaret originally hailing from a farming family who lived in The Knells, just a few miles away.

The mother of two and nana to three grandchildren was put up for the award by someone living nearby, with the associated nomination form stating: "All in all, the small community of Longpark couldn't wish for a better neighbour."



Margaret Grieve: 'I don't think I've done anything special; this is just about the way I was brought up'

DAVE ROBERTS



'Shocked and shaken': Margaret with her Make A Difference award at the ceremony at Kendal's Castle Green Hotel in September

That includes one neighbour whose house was badly damaged by a fire in January 2024.

Following the blaze, Margaret and another neighbour offered to store all the possessions that had been saved from the flames.

As a person of faith, the importance of being a good neighbour is not lost on Margaret.

She adds: "My faith is an important part of why I do what I do; it's about loving God and loving your neighbour.

"Take, for instance, what me and my fellow churchwarden do at Scaleby Church; we do it because the church is a focal point of the village. We want it to be open for everyone."

She learned she had been nominated for the award this summer and attended the BBC Radio Cumbria awards ceremony at the Castle Green Hotel in Kendal in September.

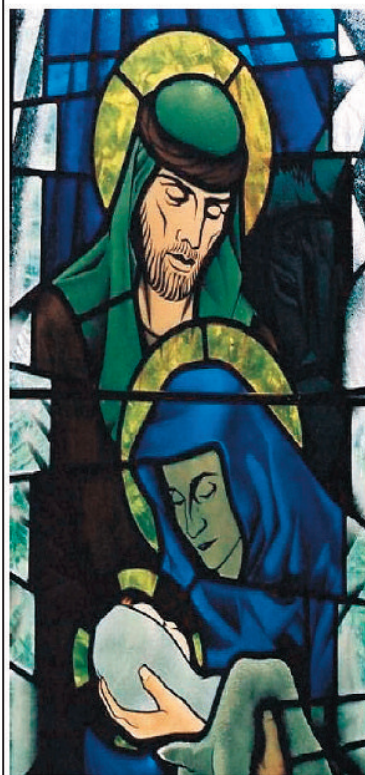
Cumbrian saxophonist Jess Gillam judged the Great Neighbour category.

"I was little bit shocked and shaken to win," Margaret says. "Whilst I would be quite happy not to have been recognised, people around here have been lovely about the award.

"Ultimately, it's important that if people do need a hand, then they know there are people they can ask.

"I don't think I've done anything special and this is just about the way I was brought up from being little; I learned from my mum and dad and I've just put that into practice."

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Book of rants coincides with end of poverty group's work

■ Commission brought together those who'd experienced hard times

By Dave Roberts

AS A farmer in the South Lakes, Jim Webster has lived experience of poverty. The 68-year-old says that, during decades of working the land on his 100-acre cattle farm in Furness, there have been numerous years where his outgoings have outstripped his earnings.

"You pay for the privilege of being a farmer," Jim explains. "I've been in agriculture all of my life and I've had years of negative income."

It's that experience that Jim has drawn on over the last 18 months to help others who are experiencing difficulties making ends meet.

The Rampside churchwarden – married to Brenda, with whom he has three grown-up daughters – was asked to join the South Lakeland Poverty Truth Commission (PTC) to act as a community commissioner, working alongside others who have also experienced tough times.

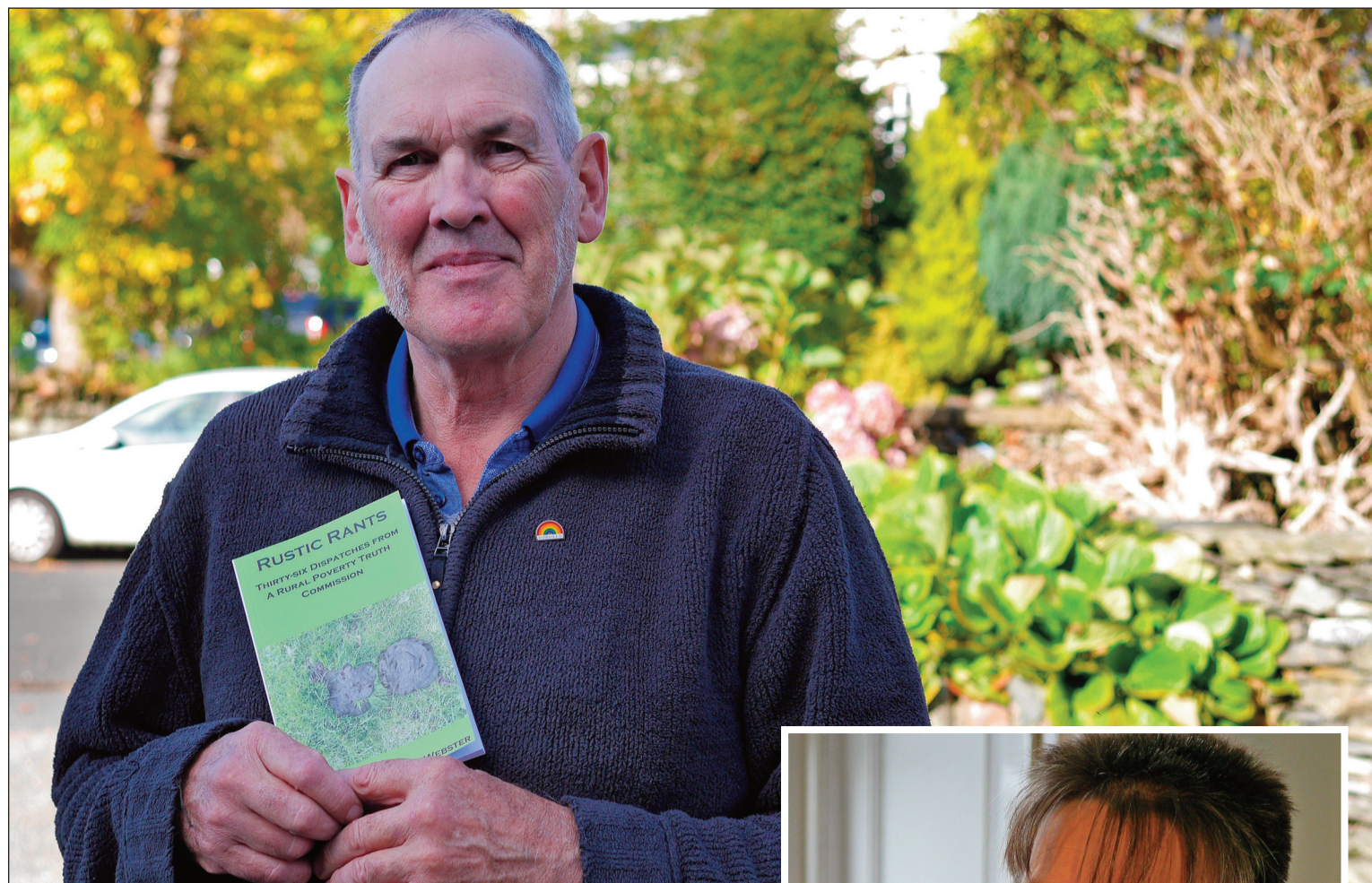
"As community commissioners, we began to meet fortnightly and then weekly for six months so that we could all get to know each other really well and build up the trust which is so vital in this work," says Jim. "As a group we explored what we had all experienced due to poverty."

"Then the civic commissioners were recruited to work alongside us. These are from the organisations who can help and support people in poverty – groups like the local councils, GPs and the agricultural chaplaincy. As someone who is involved with the Church, that has been helpful too; the Church should always be about building community."

A poverty emergency was declared in the South Lakes in October 2020 after a report highlighted around 14 per cent of children in Ulverston, Windermere and Kendal were growing up in poverty. That led to the PTC being formed for a two-year project. A co-ordinator and a facilitator were appointed in September 2022.

Lois Sparling has been the co-ordinator for the South Lakeland PTC and is a newly licensed Reader. She is also hoping to take on a role as a church community worker in and around Cockermouth in the New Year.

"The PTC model is a very specific one and brings together people with lived experience of poverty with those who have particular influence in an area," Lois explains. "These



Jim Webster: 'You pay for the privilege of being a farmer'

PICTURES: DAVE ROBERTS

may be local business leaders, headteachers or council officials.

"The model revolves around trust, building relationships slowly and listening deeply to good-quality conversations. People need to feel able to talk about what they've been through without being judged."

In total, 12 community commissioners were recruited – including Jim – and 10 civics (including the Rev Richard Snow from Kirkby Lonsdale) with the PTC focussing on four key areas which are affected by poverty: mental health, community hubs, domestic abuse and person-centred services.

In October, an invited audience gathered in Windermere for a 'Nothing Without Us' event which highlighted the PTC's achievements.

"This has been about empowering people who know what it is like to live in poverty to be able to share the wisdom of their experience," Lois says. "Success for us is that once the PTC ends, the local authority will continue to consult those people living in poverty in a serious, meaningful way."

Funding for the PTC ends in

December, although Westmorland and Furness Council has agreed extra cash to enable it to continue to meet fortnightly for three months after that. Collaborative work also continues around a Poverty Action Plan.

Meanwhile, a surprise offshoot of Jim's involvement with the PTC has been the publication of a new book – *Rustic Rants* – which contains 36 reflections on the challenges of poverty.

He adds: "Somehow, I was cajoled into writing on the PTC Facebook page some of my observations around poverty and the associated challenges."

"I'm sure there will be people who read some of the *Rustic Rants* who are dumbfounded that this kind of thing still goes on today. I also hope there may be others from organisations out there who read the book and realise that they can help in some way. It will hopefully move people's thinking on."

■ To purchase a copy of *Rustic Rants*, go to www.amazon.co.uk. For more on the PTC, visit <https://cumbriacvs.org.uk/about-us/south-lakeland-ptc/>



Lois Sparling: 'The model revolves around trust'

Relieving the Christmas toy pressure on families

■ Almost 200 local children received gifts after last year's appeal

By Dave Roberts

“WE ALL spend so much money on our own children and grandchildren at Christmas but then there's the horrible realisation that there are other youngsters who won't get anything. It breaks your heart to think that this may be happening in your area, so if we can do something to alleviate that then we will.”

Captain Mel Scoulding, of the Salvation Army's Carlisle Corps, explains the thinking behind one of their most important annual projects – The Christmas Toy Appeal.

Mel, and her husband Captain Steve Scoulding, have overseen the appeal since they arrived in the city seven years ago, but say it existed for many years before that.

“We can't work miracles for people – that's God's job – but we can try to take the strain out of Christmas Day for people who may be worried that they have no gifts to give to their children,” Steve adds.

Last year, almost 200 children received gifts they would not otherwise have had after the Corps took referrals from social services, church groups and other community groups and projects including a women's refuge and a men's hostel.

The first Sunday in December is the Corps' toy service at which people attending are encouraged to bring along newly purchased, unwrapped toys or money. Similar services are held at St George's URC and Thurstonfield Methodist Church in support of the appeal.

For the last two years, staff at The Range store in Carlisle have provided a pallet of toys for the children, and the appeal is also supported by the Children's Book and Toy Bank, launched by Cockerham man Chris Bower in 2013.

“People are so kind with their donations,” Mel explains. “Chris has already been in touch to check on what we need for this year's appeal. Last year he came to us with three separate car-loads of deliveries.”

“Then you get the people who just knock on the door with gifts to give. One chap turns up every



Merry Christmas! Captains Steve and Mel Scoulding with presents destined for local children



Generosity: Bags are loaded into the Salvation Army van for delivery while other donated toys pile up inside the Corps' site on Abbey Street, Carlisle

year with ten selection boxes. Everyone is so generous.”

The Carlisle appeal also has a Just Giving page, with donations being made throughout the year.

Referrals to the appeal begin in October with a cut-off date in early December. After that, volunteers from other churches and Carlisle Cathedral begin packing Christmas gift bags suitable for all

ages – from babies through to 18-year-olds.

“We always have lots of dolls given to us – which is lovely – but finding gifts suitable for older teenagers is more difficult. We'd love more of those, if possible,” Steve says.

“Once the bags are made up, we load them into our van and take them to social services. The staff

there know exactly who is to get what Christmas gifts as the bags are labelled up with names on the referral forms. They then distribute them to the families they know.”

Each bag contains one or two main presents, at least one book and stocking fillers. There are around ten families each year who self-refer, and to whom the Salva-

tion Army team deliver personally. The same families have also been supported with food parcels.

“There was one family who approached us for help, and when we went back the following year to deliver to them again, they pressed bags of pennies into our hands asking us to take them to help others as they had been helped,” Mel recalls. “Despite the difficulties they were experiencing, they wanted to help others. It's amazing!”

Nationally, the Salvation Army distributed more than 76,000 toys as part of the appeal last year.

In Carlisle, the greatest demand was experienced in 2022, when gifts were given to more than 400 children. It's estimated that, through toys and donations, more than £3,000 is given each year to the local appeal.

Mel concludes: “It's essential that, as churches, we are involved in this kind of support. Christmas is a time when we are celebrating the birth of Jesus. We know there are children who are going without in our communities through no fault of their own. We are called to be generous and kind.”

Meet the white van vicar!

■ Restore takes to the road to offer support to local community groups



Ready to roll: From left, volunteer Lorraine Wilson with the Rev Beth Honey and the Rev Andrew Burrell beside the electric van

DAVE ROBERTS

“I’M THINKING about starting an Instagram account, @WhiteVanVicar,” the Rev Beth Honey jokes.

That wouldn’t be too far from the truth; Beth is the brains behind a new project which will see the Christian charity Restore take to the road in support of local community groups.

Restore – which grew from the Diocese of Carlisle’s former OpShop network – has four charity shops in Carlisle and a fifth in Penrith. Now, thanks to Beth’s vision – and the purchase of an electric van – the charity is set to connect further through Restore On The Road.

Beth, a Pioneer Enabler and chaplain with Restore, explains: “I lived in a village setting for the first three years that I was in Cumbria and I noticed the number of vans that were being driven around: vans to deliver the post, vans for fish and chips, library vans... That got me thinking about how we could connect people more with the concept of Restore using a van.

“The van looks really smart. It’s liveried with three of our Restore

By Dave Roberts

green logos on it so it will be a very visible presence.”

Through its charity shops which sell good-quality, pre-owned goods, Restore has particularly looked to build community with those who don’t normally attend traditional Church. The shops also seek to create communities where people feel welcomed, valued and supported. It’s that same ethos that Beth is now looking to grow through the Restore van in outlying villages in Cumbria.

“This is not about creating new groups; rather it is about us drawing alongside existing groups to provide help and support,” Beth explains. “It’s about us saying, ‘We have this new resource. How can we help you?’ The local leaders will still run things.”

Initially, the project – which has been two years in the planning – will focus on villages around Penrith and in the Eden Valley. One pilot will focus on the Heart of Eden Benefice, taking inspiration from the Welcome Inn, a Healthy Healing Hub initiative which runs out of St Lawrence’s Appleby and

Renew Wellbeing, with a view to taking that to outlying villages. A craft group in Stainton will also be supported and Beth is building further ties with community groups around Kirkoswald, connecting with a newly appointed Methodist worker.

Work has been ongoing to recruit three teams of volunteers who will drive the van three days a week.

Beth adds: “For me the exciting thing will be to work with volunteers, some of whom have long experience of church – including retired priests – but also those people who are really new to church and are just picking up a Bible for the first time.

“The discipleship that will happen as a result of that within the team of volunteers alone is so exciting. In turn, our prayer is that this will play out in the community groups we are looking to support. I feel it will be the church at its best, with a bunch of people reaching out and being supportive to others and looking to grow community.”

The three-seater Vauxhall Vivaro van will be based at Rheged, near Penrith, where a

designated charging point has been set aside for the vehicle.

There are also plans for the van to be driven to many of the agricultural shows that are held in the county during the summer, providing a Christian presence.

Beth concludes: “The reality is that, especially in the colder months, people tend to stay in their smaller centres and they are a little more isolated. The van will enable community initiatives to be

taken to them rather than they having to travel.

“If people see the vehicle and think, ‘That van is good news because the people who are driving it listen to you and think about you’, then I think that we will have achieved something really good. Helping create community is just so important.”

■ If you would like to volunteer for Restore On The Road, contact rotr@restorecumbria.co.uk



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Celebrating 14 years of tending to city revellers



In safe hands: David Howe, second left, and another street pastor with local police officers on Carlisle's Botchergate

By Dave Roberts

A SPECIAL service of thanksgiving will celebrate the work of a city centre Street Pastors scheme which is to end after 14 years.

Carlisle Street Pastors was set up in 2010 through Churches Together in Cumbria, operating under the national umbrella organisation, the Ascension Trust.

The inter-denominational group initially had more than 20 volunteers. They have been taking to the city's streets on Saturday nights from 10pm to 2am, offering help where needed to those on nights out.

Kathy Howe, area co-ordinator for the Street Pastors, said: "The strapline of the Street Pastors is 'Listening, Caring and Helping' and that is what we do.

"We're there to help people on the street and show God's love to whoever needs it and in whatever form that may be.

"This is not about evangelising as we're not allowed to do that. If someone asks us about God then we can talk to them about faith, but essentially it's doing what Jesus would do if he was on the streets at night; he would listen to people, help them and care for them."

The group offers flip-flops to people who may have lost shoes, organises taxis for those who may be vulnerable through drink and collects bottles and glasses from the streets.

They have worked in close consultation with Cumbria Constabulary and the local authority. Due to a fall in the number of volunteers and an apparent drop in the volume of city centre late-night revellers, Carlisle Street Pastor will disband at the end of the year.



Ready: Kathy Howe with her husband David out in Carlisle

Volunteer street pastors offered help to those on nights out

There are only eight Christian volunteers left in the team – with one team member travelling from Kendal and others from Skelton, Brampton and outlying areas of Carlisle. The fall in volunteer numbers means the team is no longer able to operate each week.

Kathy added: "We have struggled to recruit new members, and I fully understand that this type of ministry would not be easy for many church members to get involved with due to their age and the hours we are working.

"We have also found that, since

Covid, there are far fewer people out in the city centre, and we are frequently finishing earlier than we used to. That's another reason for the decision to finish."

There will be a service of thanksgiving at St Michael's Stanwix on Sunday January 26 at 3pm for all Street Pastors, present and past, Prayer Pastors and well-wishers.

Kathy said: "We'd love to see as many people as possible at the service to help celebrate with us. Who knows, there may even be cake at the end!"

Mark's upcycling creates cross

A BEAUTIFUL wooden cross bearing the figure of Christ fashioned from copper wiring and metal piping has been commissioned for the chapel at Bishop's House in Keswick

The cross, which stands on the chapel's altar, is the work of self-taught artist Mark Hunt, who previously produced a six-foot high cross which is displayed outdoors at St Anthony's Cartmel Fell. Mark upcycles and recycles

material for his artwork.

He said: "The chapel's cross is layered and made of pine and oak. It took over three weeks to work on before I then started to work on the figure of Christ. All the materials are reclaimed, which is important to me.

"I'm delighted that I was asked to do this and that it has taken its place in the chapel."

Mark's work has previously featured in *The Way*.

Latest artwork:
Mark with the cross



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Service that's more than just a wing and a prayer

By Dave Roberts

IT'S A busy Monday night of drills and training for the RAF Air Cadets of 2223 Ulverston Squadron.

On hand to greet nearly 20 young people is their Squadron Leader Liz Parker along with Wing and Squadron Chaplain Glyn Shephard who has dropped by to check in on the cadets and staff.

As well as having specific ties to the Ulverston Squadron, Glyn's role as Wing Chaplain means he has oversight of 31 RAFAC squadrons across Cumbria and Lancashire.

He says: "The main thrust of my Wing Chaplaincy role is to ensure every squadron has access to a chaplain. We're actively looking to recruit to make sure that happens. I also help to backfill when there isn't a chaplain in place locally. It means I'm regularly travelling to Carlisle, Preston, Leyland, Lancaster, Kendal and Windermere. I'm here at Ulverston once a fortnight and in between times I'll be visiting other squadrons."

Glyn, 57, attended RAF Air Cadets while growing up in Sheffield. He left school at 17 to join the RAF and spent 23 years in service as an electronics specialist. He left the forces aged 40, and now works for BAE Systems Submarines in Barrow.

"I knew that having worn the uniform for so many years, I wanted to give something back to it and my chaplain's role enables me to do that," he explains. "At the same time, I'd been exploring my faith and felt called to be a Reader. This meant the Air Force then allowed me to become a squadron chaplain."

"Someone took the time when I was a kid to look after me when I was a cadet myself. It gave me a sense of purpose. I have seen what value chaplaincy can give; it's that person who can listen to your issues but who sits outside the rank system. It's a pastoral ministry and it's equally important to be there for the staff members too."

"As chaplains we are all men and women of faith. I work with Methodist, Wesleyan and Muslim padres. We are called to serve our communities. God is ever present for me in this ministry. He's there to say, 'Go and look after these cadets and when you need looking after I'll be there as well'."



Pastoral care: Cadets Sam, 15, left, and Thomas, 16, with Glyn Shephard

DAVE ROBERTS

■ RAF Air Cadets on hunt for more chaplains in Cumbria

The Cadets system allows young people to gain flying skills – with many looking to careers in the forces. The Ulverston Squadron takes up to six cadets a time over to RAF Leeming in North Yorkshire for Air Experience Flights, with the cadets also completing flight simulation training and theory on piloting skills and navigation at their twice-weekly meetings.

Fifteen-year-old Sam, who has been a cadet for three years, explains: "I learn discipline and leadership skills as a cadet. It's also great to be able to talk to the padre about the importance of religion and to explore how God is doing so much good in the world."

Squadron Leader Liz Parker, who is also Sector Two Commander taking in Barrow, Ulverston, Windermere and Kendal, has been with the Ulverston Squadron for 14 years.

She says: "Having a chaplain is so important for our cadets. Glyn is ex-military so he can talk to them about that life and he can talk to them about his

faith if they want to explore that. Glyn is so open and willing to talk to everyone. If the cadets want to talk to someone about their feelings and faith, they know they have the padre to turn to."

Glyn says his experience of talking to his own padre when he was a young RAF Air Cadet has helped form his ministry.

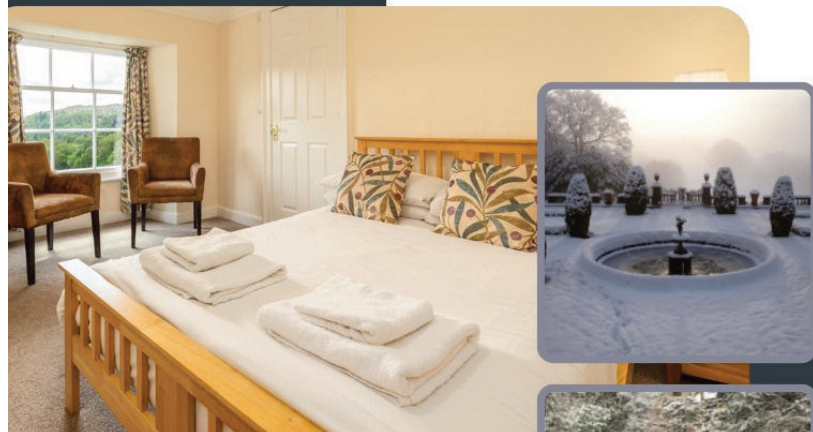
"My chaplain also happened to be my parish priest, so I knew him well," Glyn recalls. "Whilst I may not have needed to speak to him, I knew I could direct others to him if they were struggling. That's what I want the cadets to be able to do with me."

Chaplains must be Licensed Lay Ministers or ordained. There's generally a day's in-person training plus online training as well as an option to attend a week-long chaplaincy course. When on duty, chaplains are paid. There are a number of vacancies across Cumbria which Glyn is keen to fill.


■ For more on volunteering as an RAFAC chaplain, email chaplain.clancs@rafac.mod.gov.uk

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Family's 6,000-mile move to support NYC in Carlisle

■ Brazilian couple's 'burning for mission' brings them to Cumbria

By Dave Roberts

"WHEN I was a teenager, I began to hear God's calling for me to do something with my life," Samuel Coswig explains. "I wasn't very clear at first what that was, but I knew that I had a heart that was burning for mission."

It is a passion he shares with his wife, Karla, and which has now seen the couple travel nearly 6,000 miles from their home in Brazil to take up a three-year post supporting the Network Youth Church (NYC) in Carlisle. The couple have made the journey with their sons – Caleb, 11, and Thomas, nine.

"We visited in January and realised we really wanted to make this happen," Samuel says. "It's been such a busy time since then, but we moved here in August and we are all very excited."

Samuel and Karla both hail from southern Brazil. When Samuel finished secondary school he moved to the city of Curitiba and began work as a graphic designer while also studying part-time for a degree in theology.

Karla began confirmation classes at the age of 12 and, five years later, felt a calling from God to be a missionary. She studied education for a year and then enrolled on the same theology course in Curitiba, where the couple met.

Through ties with the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS), they were able separately to experience missionary work in Norway – Samuel spending 11 months there and Karla travelling there later.

"That was a time in which my horizons grew and I was also able to better understand myself," Samuel explains.

"When I was in Norway, I felt God opening my heart and mind to new things," Karla adds. "When you live in the same place for many years your mind can become closed but by travelling to Norway, I felt God opening my heart and eyes to new people and new ways of doing faith."

"After such an amazing exchange we both knew God was calling us for something else – for trans-cultural mission."

After the couple married in 2006, Samuel was ordained in the Lutheran church and the couple moved to Petrolina in northeast Brazil to plant a church, with congregants meeting in the garage attached to their home. They lived and ministered there for seven-and-a-half years.

Karla adds: "While there, we started kids' and youth ministry. We started new women's ministry. So much happened and it's a blessing to know



Karla and Samuel Coswig: Felt God was telling them that Carlisle was 'the right place to come to'

DAVE ROBERTS

that everything is continuing through lay leadership."

Eventually they felt called to return to southern Brazil to work in a Lutheran church serving seven communities – two urban and five rural – focussing on discipleship and fellowship. Seven years later they felt a new calling and, with mission partners in 2022, began exploring the possibility of moving to Cumbria.

"I can tell you that it was not easy to leave that ministry behind to move to England," Samuel says. "We had worked so hard to establish new ministries there and everything was running well. But we felt God telling us Carlisle was the right place to come to."

A primary focus will be to help grow the Carlisle NYC and they have already helped out at the annual Big One youth event in Keswick in October. Across the county, NYC connects with 3,000 young people each month. The couple will also look to support a church planting revitalisation in west Carlisle.

"We prayed about this potential move, and knew God was listening to our prayers," Samuel reflects. "Initially we could see so many things that could go wrong, yet they've never happened, and God has opened the doors to make this happen."

Karla adds: "It's important that our boys have been a part of the discussion and prayers about this move. We didn't want to force their hands; we wanted them to feel part of a family decision."

The family are scheduled to spend the next three years in Carlisle, with hopes that their ministry can be extended for a further three years. Their mission is co-sponsored by NMS, Missão Zero and the Diocese of Carlisle.

Samuel concludes: "Our call here feels like that of Barnabas, where we draw alongside people and travel with them so that they can find their own ministries. I pray that God uses us during our time here to build a living church and to build discipleship."



Farewell: The Coswigs at the commission service at their home church in Panambi ahead of them travelling to the UK



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Local theology graduate lands a key national role

■ In our latest Focus on Faith, we meet Bea Hulme, 22, of Penrith, who has just been elected as the national Methodist Youth President

Q Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

A I was brought up as a Christian; I was literally taken to Penrith Methodist Church (PMC) on the day I was born.

I have a lot of great experience of church as a family and growing up within a church setting. I started leading worship when I was 16 and that really helped in developing my faith and me getting involved with church a lot more.

I have just gained a first-class honours degree in theology at Chester University. My dissertation was on making a gender-fluid Christology. That's about all the different ways that people view Christ and picture him within their context. I'm also part of the LGBT community and a Christian so it was something I particularly wanted to research.

I'm the youngest of three and my mum, Sarah, is the Rural Mission and Ministry Officer for the Methodist Church. My dad is a retired teacher.

PMC is so important to me. I've loved coming back from uni to this community and to see the friends I have in church, particularly those in the house group I attend and which I love.

I'll be concentrating on my role as national Methodist Youth President for the next year and after that I'd be more than happy to continue to work for the Church in some way or resume studies.

Q How did your new Methodist role come about?

A As with many people who take on this role, my parents suggested I should apply. Initially, I didn't realise it was a position I could go for but I came across the application form last summer when I was just recovering from Covid and helping to run our church holiday club. I got home and was really tired but my mum said, 'How about filling in that form?' I also spoke to my minister who said I should apply.

Three people were shortlisted for the post, and then there were elections held during 3Generation – the children's and youth assembly of the Methodist Church which meets every year in Birmingham. There were about 1,700 young people there.

I found out I'd got the position when I was back at uni and took a call while I was in a lecture on ancient Israel!

Q What does the role entail?

A I took on the post in August and it will last for a year. The first month I was able to work alongside my predecessor. There's so much to the role. I get asked the question so much that I've started to do a 'Come with me on a day in the life of the Youth President' series on social media. I'm trying to show people as many different scenarios as possible.

I've recently got back from Chemnitz in Germany following a trip to meet Barry Sloan who is our global relations person for Europe. I was able to visit Inspire, the community project he has set up there with his wife Gillian.

I will also get to help plan 3Gen for 2025 and I'm invited to give an address to the whole Methodist Conference next June on behalf of young people. I'll be doing a fair bit of travelling to listen to young people's voices and understand what it is they want from church, and then I'll take their feedback to the conference. There are also a few festivals I'll be attending, and I have in my diary a number of youth District Days too.

Q Why is it important that the church hears from young people?

A I think young people are thought of far too much as being the church of tomorrow. We run the risk of young people then being pushed off to the side. If young people are treated as being part of the church of today, then they feel engaged and want to be involved more. Even if they need a little guidance, young people still have amazing things to offer.

Being at 3Gen is wonderful as you are able to talk to other kids and realise that they have so much more of a greater understanding about church and faith than people may think.

While in this post, my primary focus is to encourage young people and to give them the push, the fire and the energy they need. It is not about me getting my ideas out there; it's about uplifting others' ideas and helping make them happen.

Q What is your prayer for your year's ministry?

A I pray for energy for myself, and that the congregations that young people bring themselves to, listen to them, look to get things done with them and are like Christ-like figures for them. Amen.



Bea Hulme: 'I'm invited to give an address to the whole Methodist Conference next June on behalf of young people'

DAVE ROBERTS