

A
NEWSLETTER
FROM THE ANGLICAN
CHURCHES OF
LANERCOST WITH WALTON,
GILSLAND AND
NETHER DENTON

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'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.' Christmas is coming and I for one am really looking forward to gathering family together and celebrating Christmas. I want to celebrate the birth of Christ, I want to give glory to God and I call out for and look forward to the peace that God promises.

The angels declare 'Peace on earth' at the birth of Jesus. It is salutary to compare that with the prophet Jeremiah saying, "'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace." Peace on earth is a wonderful aspiration but we have not achieved it yet. The birth of Jesus brings peace when we accept him but we cannot delude ourselves into thinking that all the world's troubles have ceased.

Jesus came as a moment in history to reveal God to us, to teach us how to live for Him and to redeem us from our sins to the love of God. Some might ask, why did God choose that moment in history? Would it not have been easier to wait until humanity had recording and broadcasting devices to send his message quickly round the world? Would it not have been easier to test and verify Jesus' claims now rather than 2,000 years ago?

The reality is that humanity has always been and will always be sceptical. People will question and test until they find truth. The timing of Jesus' life on earth fitted with the ability to write and record witness statements and the Roman Empire's ability to communicate information over thousands of miles. The spread of faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God was swift and steady. That is why nearly every one of our English villages has a clubhouse dedicated in his name!

Jesus revealed the glory of God to humanity and in doing so he showed us that God is love; that he longs for us to love him, be loved by him and to love each other. Jesus showed us that God's desire is not to condemn but to save; to forgive our transgressions and restore us to his love. That is what can bring peace to the earth and that is the most profound reason to celebrate Christmas. I encourage you all to join us in church this December to celebrate and give glory to God in the highest. Merry Christmas one and all. BP

Rev Ben Philips

**Benefice of Lanercost with Walton, Gilsland and Nether Denton
Services in December 2025 and January 2026**

DECEMBER

Lanercost: 11am

7th Morning Worship
 14th Holy Communion
 21st 6.30pm Carols and Readings
 24th 8.00pm 1st Communion of Christmas
 25th No service
 28th 10.30am Mission Communion Holy
 Communion at St Kentigern's
 Church, Irthington (no service at Priory)

Walton: 11am

7th 3pm Community Carols and lighting
 the Christmas Trees + refreshments
 14th No service
 21st Holy Communion
 24th 3pm Family Carol Service
 25th No service
 28th 10.30am Mission Communion Holy
 Communion at St Kentigern's
 Church, Irthington (no service at Walton)

Gilsland: 9.30am

7th No service
 14th Holy Communion
 23rd Tues: 6.30pm Carols by Candlelight
 24th No service
 25th No service
 28th 10.30am Mission Communion Holy
 Communion at St Kentigern's
 Church, Irthington (no service at Gilsland)

Nether Denton: 9.30am

7th Holy Communion
 14th No service
 21st 2pm Carol Service
 24th No service
 25th 9.30am Family Holy Communion
 28th 10.30am Mission Communion Holy
 Communion at St Kentigern's
 Church, Irthington (no service - N Denton)

January

Lanercost: 11am

4th Holy Communion
 11th Morning Worship
 18th Holy Communion
 25th 11am Covenant Service of Holy
 Communion at St Mary's Church
 Walton (no service at Lanercost)

Walton: 11am

4th Morning Worship
 11th No service
 18th No service
 25th 11am Covenant Service of Holy
 Communion

Gilsland: 9.30am

4th No service
 11th Morning Worship
 18th No service
 25th Holy Communion

Nether Denton: 9:30am

4th Holy Communion
 11th No service
 18th Morning Worship
 25th No service

*Wednesdays at 10am: a short service of Holy Communion alternates between
 The Cottage or St Martin's Church, Brampton and the Priory Church at Lanercost
 Brampton: Dec. 10th & Jan. 7th, 21st ----- Lanercost: Dec. 3rd, 17th, 31st & Jan. 14th, 28th*

All are welcome at any of the services

Vicar and Mission Community Leader: Revd Ben Phillips

Mobile: 07936 099 123

email: ben@lanercost.net

Christmas Unwrapped!

All of us have received unwanted gifts at Christmas. For Joseph the gift of a child, as recorded in Matthew chapter 1, was not something he really wanted. Although he was engaged to Mary, her pregnancy would be grounds for divorce. Not surprisingly, with the associated social disgrace, Joseph wanted to divorce Mary quietly (Matthew 1:19). However, God intervened in a dream: *'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means, God with us.'* (1:23). In a scary and uncertain world, what does the message of **Immanuel** say to us today?

God is present with us

God assured Joseph that He was working in all that Joseph was going through. The eternal and creator God entered time and space as a baby. This baby is both uniquely divine but also fully human. This means that we can know God personally, not just know about Him. The Holy Spirit is committed to making Jesus' life and character real in us, and bringing meaning to our circumstances, just as He worked in Mary's life.

God is on our side

Christmas touches some raw nerves in our lives, including stress, family rows, loneliness and financial pressures. However, God does not remain aloof from our experiences. In Jesus He enters our world of hopes and fears, joys and disappointments. He understands what we are going through, as He is alongside us. By the cross and resurrection, He gave His life that we might know His love, joy, peace and forgiveness.

For Joseph, as well as us, the Christmas message is one of hope in an uncertain world. It is a time to re-consider the claims of **Immanuel** ('*God with us*') as we entrust ourselves to Him for the coming year.

Canon Paul Hardingham



Taking down the Christmas Tree

Many churches keep their decorations – or at least their nativity scene - in place until Candlemas at the beginning of February, but most of us take our domestic ones down around Epiphany, on 6th January, when we recall the arrival of the Three Kings.

But how do we manage them for the rest of the year, after we have taken them down?

Our Christmas 'baubles' come in all colours, in matt and shiny, in all shapes and sizes. They can remind us of people, who also come in all shapes and sizes, colours and tones. Baubles are very fragile, like we are sometimes.

This year as you take down your decorations, have a good look at them and think about the care that you take to store them safely, so that they will not break.

How much more care should you take in looking after the people who make up your life? Your family, friends, neighbours, church, colleagues, local shop keepers, and so on?

It's quick and easy to pick up the decorations and just drop them in a box, but without some gentle care, will they be okay for next year?

It's too easy to pass folk by, and get on with what we are doing for ourselves, our own plans and goals; but aren't people worth more than that?

Who do we know that would greatly benefit if we gave them just a bit more time, a bit more consideration?

This month: Have a look at your decorations and see if any of them need a bit of refreshing, some TLC, (tender loving care), just as we all do.

Revd Dr Jo White



A Catalan Christmas

A few years ago we were lucky enough to have a couple from Catalonia stay with us for Christmas. To our delight, they came equipped with two highly surprising articles to help us all celebrate Christmas the Catalan way. What followed was not for those of a squeamish disposition!

First we were presented with a Caganer – a pooping peasant!

The Caganer is a small figurine of a peasant, wearing a barretina, a traditional Catalan hat. He has his trousers round his knees and is squatting, bare bottomed, to “do his business” (as my granny used to say). This little chap is placed, discretely, somewhere in the family nativity scene.

WHY?

There are several possible reasons for this 18th century tradition; he may symbolise fertilizing the land to bring prosperity in the coming year, he may bring good luck and/or he may represent how everyone is equal in their humanity, bringing down the mighty.



These days, depictions of famous people as caganers are favoured... choose your favourite (or most disliked) pooping person to complete your nativity scene! (You can find them on line in hundreds of varieties... Donald Trump anyone?)

The scatological theme continues. with....

The Caga Tió - the pooping log

Yep. It's true In the days leading up to Christmas, a log, with a face, is cared for by the children of the house. It's kept warm with a blanket and fed delicious food (eaten by the parents once the children are in bed!) until, on Christmas Eve, the children attack it with sticks singing...

“Caga Tió, Tió de Nadal, no caguis arengades que són salades, caga torrons que són molt bons.”

Which apparently translates roughly as:

“Poo Tió, Christmas Tió, don't poo herrings, they're too salty, poo nougat, it's delicious.”

Whereupon the blanket is removed to reveal that the Tió has pooped treats for the children.

Strong stomachs required! This is a tradition that some of our grandchildren have since adopted!



Catalan children, however, unlike them, do not receive big gifts on Christmas day. They must wait for the arrival of the Three Kings.

On the evening of January 5th, every town and village holds a celebration where the Kings parade through the streets throwing sweets to the crowds. The following morning presents are discovered under the Christmas tree.

Lunch that day includes *Tortell de Reis*, a ring-shaped cake with glazed fruit stuffed with marzipan and cream. Hidden inside are a bean and a small figurine of a king. Whoever finds the bean must pay for the cake but whoever finds the king is crowned king for the day!



Now that's a tradition I'd gladly adopt!

Alison Higgs



Autumn Term has got off to a flying start.

We started off the new school year with a very successful bake sale to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Research to help support our two members of staff who took part in the Northumberland Coast Mighty Hike, a challenging but very worthwhile 26 miles.



In September the children held a Harvest service for the community to attend. The staff and families in school each donated a piece of non-perishable food, which created a great hamper that then got donated to Brampton Food Bank.

We then had a very exciting visitor into school, Tim, who is in the Royal Navy. Linking to our topic 'In the dark', we learnt about what could be found deep down at sea. The children had an opportunity to look at some of the sonar equipment used and looked through some amazing photographs of the things it has found, including some shipwrecks.

Just before the half term break our KS1 and KS2 children went on a visit to the Sill, this linked to our termly topic of Space. We had a fantastic morning; it began with a dark skies workshop then some time exploring the exhibition with lots of interactive displays. This was a great way for our children to learn more about the Northumberland National Park.

After a short break, we started off the second half of the autumn term with a visit to Carlisle Cathedral to take part in a Remembrance workshop. KS1 and KS2 had a very informative morning learning more about the features of the cathedral, relating to WW1. We made our own school poppy string that the children added to the Border Regiment chapel. Members of staff attended the Remembrance service at St Mary's Church, Walton, laying a wreath and giving a reading on behalf of the school.

Both KS1 and KS2 pupils are enjoying our weekly collaboration with Gilsland CE Primary School, taking part in PE together and exploring in their Muddy Monday sessions.



The run up to Christmas is here and we are beginning to think about exciting Christmas events. On Thursday 4th December, Reception to Year 6 pupils will be heading off to Keswick to the museum and the Theatre by the Lake to watch a performance of The Wizard of Oz. This is a wonderful end of term treat, and we are all very excited about it.

The PTFA are hosting a Community Festive Brunch to raise money for school funds and ICU, Children's ward at the RVI Newcastle. This will be held in our school hall on Sunday 7th December 10am-1pm. Adult Brunch will be £10 and a Child, we ask for a donation. We look forward to welcoming you all for what will be a morning filled with lots of Christmas cheer.

Children will also enjoy our annual school Christmas Party, where we all celebrate the joy of Christmas together, sharing a special Christmas buffet, games and dancing. We have also been reliably informed that a very special guest is going to come all the way from the North Pole to deliver some early Christmas presents too!

Our children will be heading to Walton on December 16th for Carol Singing around the village from 2pm. Do keep a look out for us, and perhaps even join us for some songs if you can.

After such a busy term, we will all be ready for a peaceful and restful Christmas Holiday. We hope, when the time comes, that all our pupils, their families and all of you from the wider community have a truly blessed Christmastime and a very happy New Year.

Pilgrimage

Several times over past years, I have been on pilgrimages, sometimes on my own, sometimes with a friend and/or a member of my family. A friend with whom I have walked has told me of the reactions of other friends of his to his embarking on ventures of this nature, most of which indicated scepticism, bemusement, even disbelief. Pilgrimage is not a concept entertained by many.

Pilgrimage may be defined as stepping out of the normal run of one's life for a while and going on a journey, perhaps to a place of spiritual significance for a spiritual purpose. It may involve discomfort, even pain, deprivation or hardship. In some faiths, it constitutes an obligation. Muslims, for example, are obliged, at least one in their life, to undertake the haaj, to Mecca. James IV of Scotland undertook, every year of his reign (1488 -1513), a pilgrimage to Isle of Whithorn, in the south of Galloway, the end of a pilgrim trail that begins at St Mungo's Cathedral in Glasgow..

There are many who undertake the Camino de Santiago, probably the best known pilgrim trail in Europe, who share thoughts on Facebook and other media. I recently read this, written by a pilgrim by the name of Charlene Lucas, 'Camino de Santiago humbled me, it stripped my vanity and my anxiety. I've learned to sleep with the rest of the pilgrims in an Albergue (a simple pilgrim hostel), and to ask for water and kindness with strangers. Trust that God will get me through the pain, the hunger, and the exhaustion. And HE did, I made it.' These words sum up the feelings of many.

My solace and my reflexion are found in poetry, as I become increasingly aware of the history and geography over and through which I walk. Here's one offering which is an attempt to capture that awareness in words:

Tread gently on this path, my friend;
it's been stepped on by many feet.
Walk with respect along this way
and give a smile to those you meet.

Breathe softly, please, this air, my friend;
it's precious still to those who walk
this way through fields and over stiles.
Raise high your gaze, keep low your talk.

Skip lightly o'er this land, my friend,
and leave no mark here as you pass,
save where you brush along a hedge
or leave a footprint on the grass.

Treat the way with love, my friend,
remember that it's lent to you,
and pass it on, just as it is,
that others may enjoy it too.

I close with the acclamation exchanged on the Camino, '¡Ultreia et suseia!' (Onwards, and then further!)

David Bamford



Lanercost

Funerals

15th August John Calvert

21st November June Robinson

Baptism

24th August Harriet Natalie Croom

Bethany Emily Croom

From the Registers

Baptism

5th October Evie Sarah Foster

Marriage

6th September Joshua French and Rosalind Sutcliffe

Gisland CE Primary School News



In the Children's Forest

Kingfisher class (Key Stage 2) had two very wet, but very enjoyable days at the Children's forest working with Lulu McGuiness and Alison Clarricoats to learn more about our local environment, see how the trees they planted earlier in the year are thriving and plant the next section of trees for the forest. It was lovely for the children to meet up again with their friends from Shankhill CE Primary School.

The children were very respectful during our Remembrance Assembly. George brought in some of his Great Grandad's war medals and told us about them. Some of the children read out their Remembrance Haiku poems they had written. Thank you to everyone who contributed so generously to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

We kicked off anti bullying week with everyone wearing odd socks to celebrate individuality and to show that it's okay to be different. The mismatched socks symbolize that everyone is unique and should be accepted for who they are, helping to raise awareness about bullying and promote kindness and respect. This year the focus of Anti-Bullying week was 'The Power of Good' which children looked into in more detail during their MSSC morning which focused on the theme 'Power of Good' and linked to our Christian values of compassion and friendship.

The children also enjoyed learning more about the



Learning about Children in Need

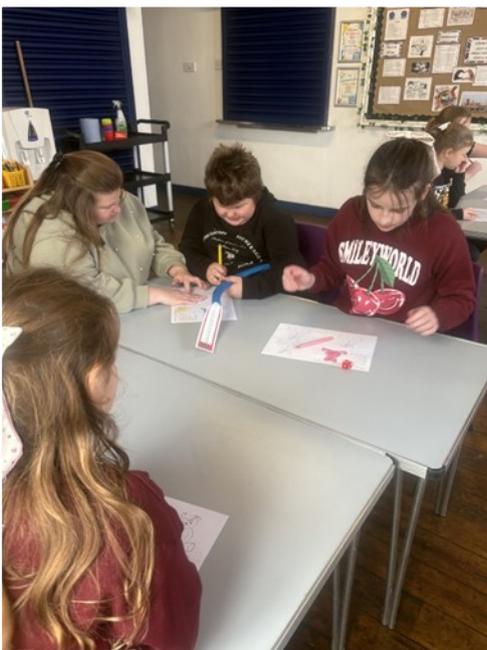
great work Children in Need do to

support projects and charities across the UK that help disadvantaged children and young people. Our school families once again contributed kindly.

We looking forward to welcoming Revd. Ben Phillips into our Gilsland school family to share a collective worship at the beginning of December and have many exciting activities planned for the lead up to Christmas, including our Christmas trip to Cragg House Farm in Buttermere. We have already begun practicing for our Christmas Production this year which will take place on **Tuesday 16 th December**.

Nic Atkinson, Head Teacher

016977 47302 admin@gilsland.cumbria.sch.uk



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Autumn Full of Bright Sparks at Lanercost

As autumn has unfolded across Lanercost C of E Primary School, the term has been filled with energy, reflection, creativity and community spirit. From the beginning of October through to November, the school has enjoyed an inspiring season of learning and togetherness, with children living out our vision of *life in all its fullness* and demonstrating our values of love, respect, perseverance and creativity in every part of school life.

October opened with a wonderful sense of connection as families gathered for the Board Games Afternoon. Children and adults sat together across different classrooms, sharing puzzles, strategy games and plenty of laughter. This simple time of togetherness reminded everyone how important shared play is for wellbeing, friendship and strengthening our community. Shortly afterwards, Class 1 welcomed their grandparents into school for a joyful morning of stories and homemade apple crumble, baked using apples collected from the school's own trees. The interactions between children and grandparents created a warm atmosphere, full of pride and simple moments of togetherness.

Reflective learning also played an important role during October. Throughout RE-themed activities, classes explored heroes of Christianity and individuals whose lives model values such as compassion, courage, generosity and service. Class 3 worked alongside their parents to create pots of positivity, each one filled with handwritten messages of appreciation for staff at Carlisle Hospital. These thoughtful pots were then delivered in person during a visit supported by Rev. Jane and Joan, offering a moment of encouragement to those who support the community every day.

Collective Worship supported this reflective atmosphere as children learned about the Jewish festival of Sukkot. Working in house groups, they built their own sukkots outside using branches, leaves and natural materials found around school. The activity brought together teamwork, problem-solving and creativity, helping the children explore themes of shelter, gratitude and community in a meaningful and practical way.

As autumn deepened, the school began preparing for Remembrance. Class 1 created their own poppies with great care and concentration, linking fine motor skills with thoughtful conversation.

In the woods, Class 3 developed this theme further during their woodland learning session with Anna. They completed a poppy hunt, decorated leaf-inspired poppy templates and took time in the fresh air for peaceful reflection. A whole-school Remembrance Service



The autumn term has also brought a great deal of outdoor challenge and physical learning. Karate sessions in Dacre Hall have introduced children to basic techniques, blocking actions and reaction drills. These sessions have encouraged perseverance, confidence and enjoyment across the school. Orienteering Club has been equally vibrant, with children developing navigation skills, teamwork and problem-solving. Some pupils represented



the school at the Border Liners Orienteering event at Talkin Tarn, demonstrating determination and resilience as they completed the course. Cross-country practice along Hadrian's Wall has given children a remarkable setting for strengthening stamina ahead of the upcoming competition at Talkin Tarn.

Creativity has shone brightly this term. Class 4 worked with artist Abby on a Frida Kahlo-inspired afternoon, exploring bold colours, personal expression and perseverance through art. Each child created an individual piece that will form

part of a vibrant collaborative display. Class 1 also welcomed parents into school for a maths sharing session, where the children confidently demonstrated their reasoning and problem-solving skills. Their enthusiasm and clarity in explaining how they approached mathematical challenges offered parents a wonderful insight into the children's growing confidence as learners.



The kindness within the school community has been equally notable this autumn. The Shoebox Appeal, introduced by a visit from Rev. Tokunbo and members of the Methodist Church, received generous support from families. Beautifully filled boxes were sent in to bring joy to children and families elsewhere during the festive season. Cultural appreciation was also nurtured when the Li and Wang families kindly brought mooncakes for the children to taste. This created curiosity and conversations about traditions, festivals and foods from around the world.



Learning beyond the classroom has continued to bring excitement. The Library Bus visited school, allowing children to climb aboard, enjoy a story read aloud and choose a book to take back to class. The experience reinforced the joy of reading and the power of stories to spark imagination.



As autumn transitioned into November, the school came together once more at the Priory for an especially reflective Remembrance Service led by Rev. Ben. The presence of families contributed to a strong sense of unity and community, marking an important moment of shared honour and respect.

Across October and November, Lanercost C of E Primary School has been a place of warmth, creativity, generosity and determination. From shared learning with parents to cross-country practice along historic landscapes, from bold artwork to acts of kindness extended to the wider community, these months have truly captured the spirit of our school. It has been a season full of colour, compassion and curiosity — one that reflects not only what we do, but who we are as a community dedicated to living life in all its fullness.



All is Well

In the silence of meditation,
Maybe, for brief moments of complete stillness,
We lose awareness of the body and mind.

This is the blissful peace which
Passes all understanding, because
The mystery is in the unknowing.

Awareness is of the eternal spirit only.
A knowing that we are neither born,
Nor die. Immortal and invisible.
In the outer world of body and mind
Everything unfolds as it should
In the dream material world of doing.

After meditation, back in the dream
Of seeming reality, there is a lingering and
Profound peace; surrounded by naked Love.
An understanding that nothing can harm us,
As we are separate from the relative universe.
Not part of this changing world.

When we surrender our body and mind
To the truth of our divine being,
Our natural Self emerges, as a wonderful
Expression of bliss; a knowing that
All is well, and forever shall be,
In timeless eternity.

Bob Morley, January 2025



This is not Goodbye

Jo Grundy has been working in our benefice as a lay minister and pastoral visitor since her commissioning in 2007 and after 18 years of service she has decided that now is the time to retire. Many of you will have attended worship led by Jo and enjoyed, been inspired or informed by her homilies. You may also have been the recipient of her loving care and wisdom through home visits or conversations after the service and I am sure you will want to join with me in thanking Jo for her many years of service to our church communities.

Jo would like to express her thanks to everyone for their support and encouragement and wishes you all well for the future—” May the benefice go from strength to strength”

May you, also , go from strength to strength Jo and may God bless your journey with peace, joy and protection.

Alison Higgs

A poster for a concert titled 'A Ceremony of Carols'. The background is dark with a harp and hands playing it. Text on the poster includes: 'Sunday 14 December at 3pm Lanercost Priory CA8 2HQ', 'A CEREMONY of CAROLS', 'Sparkling seasonal works from the Renaissance onwards, including Benjamin Britten's A Ceremony of Carols for voices and harp', 'Brampton Chamber Choir Directed by Simon Mortimer Harp soloist Lucy Nolan', '£10 on the door, students & under 16s free', 'Brampton Chamber Choir', 'making music', and 'www.bramptonchamberchoir.co.uk'. A photo credit 'Photo by Nathan Dainour' is on the right side.

Sunday 14 December at 3pm
Lanercost Priory CA8 2HQ

A CEREMONY of CAROLS

Sparkling seasonal works from the Renaissance onwards, including Benjamin Britten's A Ceremony of Carols for voices and harp

Brampton Chamber Choir
Directed by Simon Mortimer
Harp soloist Lucy Nolan

£10 on the door, students & under 16s free

Brampton Chamber Choir www.bramptonchamberchoir.co.uk

Photo by Nathan Dainour

USED POSTAGE STAMPS AT THE PRIORY CHURCH

- I have now decided to ask you all to stop collecting your used postage stamps for the Priory Church, and thank everyone who has donated their old stamps down the years. I have a large number of stamps still to process – I think everyone had a good clear-out during the Covid lockdowns! It is also more difficult to find charities that now easily accept used stamps.
- If anyone knows a good collection point for these used stamps and/or would like to continue collecting and passing them on to charities, please let me know – contact details below. Thank you.



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Gilsland:

Keith Nightingale 07736725143

Nether Denton

Amanda Nixon 07968 983664

Carlisle Diocese Safeguarding Advisor

Joanna Van Lachterop 07458 016884

safeguarding.adviser@carlisle-diocese.org.uk

Christmas services

Sunday 21st December

2pm Carol service

Nether Denton

6.30 Carols and readings

Lanercost

Tuesday 23rd December

6.30 Carols by Candlelight

Gilsland

Christmas Eve

3pm Family Carols *Walton*

8pm First communion of Christmas

Lanercost

Christmas Day

9.30 Family Communion

Nether Denton

Lanercosted@gmail.com

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