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Churches Together in Cumbria

November 2025 Newsletter

Actively Promoting God's Love for Everyone



Signpost near St John's Church, Hutton Roof, with thanks to Lol Wood.

Do you have a photograph of a Cumbrian landscape from your local area to share? Please send it to admin@churchestogethlercumbria.org.uk for it to be included in a future edition of the newsletter. Thank you in advance.

Index: In this month's newsletter

- Churches Together in Lancashire and Cumbria DEO Meeting
- Churches Together in England Conference
- A window into Churches Together groups
- Churches Together in Seascale and District
- Churches Together in Alston
- Churches Together in Carlisle and District City Harvest Festival Report
- Anna Chaplaincy
- Nicene Creed Conference Report
- Poem - Be Still by Joanne Maybury
- CTiC and Safeguarding Statement
- Every Life Matters - Autumn Seminar Series
- ACT Awareness Training Session - 4th November 2025
- Lancaster and District Choral Society Concert - 22nd November 2025
- Winter Concert at St Mary's, Westfield - 22nd November 2025
- Spiritual Accompaniment
- CTiC Trustees & Staff

Deadline for December/January Newsletter submissions: 21st November 2025

**Lancashire & Cumbria
Denominational Ecumenical
Officers (DEOs) Meeting
18 September, Hyning Monastery, Carnforth**



September was a busy month for Churches Together gatherings. In last month's newsletter, Jo reported on representing CTiC at a regional meeting in Manchester. So this month, I thought I'd share a little about attending a more local gathering, only just over the border in Lancashire, with DEOs from Lancashire and Cumbria.

We were very warmly welcomed by the sisters at Hynning - with a glorious lunchtime spread, largely created from their own produce - and also had the privilege of sharing in midday worship and prayer in the chapel and visiting their wonderful icon-writing studio.

As a newbie, there was lots for me to learn as different officers from different denominations reported on their local patches - much as the local groups report in this newsletter - on ecumenical services, events and initiatives. We talked a little about social audits (Cinnamon Trust and Gather) and also faith covenants, too. Doral Hayes and Sarah Ball also joined us from Churches Together in England and highlighted, among other things, the Bill Snelson Fund for young ecumenists (<https://cte.org.uk/working-together/young-ecumenists/snelson...>).

We also had a presentation from Prof John Whitton, Diocesan Environmental Officer for Blackburn, who is supporting all the north-west dioceses on what he prefers to call 'Creation Care' (rather than Net Zero Carbon 2030). He talked about measures being taken by rural and urban churches to reduce their carbon footprint - including the new infra-red heating at St Margaret's, Wythop, in Derwent Deanery, which has been a

huge hit with their PCC because it heats up in minutes (rather than hours!). Find out more here: <https://www.blackburn.anglican.org/creation-care-and-the-env...>

Lois Sparling, Community Social Action Team (West Cumbria)

Churches Together in England: All Ecumenical Reps Conference

**29 September-1 October, Hayes Conference
Centre, Swanwick**

This year's busy gathering of about a hundred ecumenical officers from all over England (and just one from Wales) had the theme 'Journeying Together'. We reflected on the meaning and power of pilgrimage in various ways - through the 4 contrasting artworks chosen for our shared 'visio divina' on Monday night led by Lindsey Brown, on our own sun-blessed group walk together in the fields to the east of Swanwick and by listening to stories of ecumenical pilgrimages in the West Midlands and hearing about a new 'how to' pack developed by Churches Together in Cornwall.

Other sessions took the 'distance travelled' motif to report on the processes and achievements of ecumenical groups on various issues - Diversity & Human Sexuality, Racial Justice and Inter-Faith Working. Time after time the same themes recurred - a sense of frustration at the rate of progress, even of going backwards in some regards especially in polarising times, but also the necessity of deep listening and relationship-building for meaningful and lasting change - and, finally, our shared commitment to working and praying for 'holy unity'.

I learned so much by taking part in all these plenaries - and also from Fr Dragos Herescu's fascinating introduction to the history, challenges and faith outlook of the Orthodox Church, and from our shared worship sessions - including Quaker prayer, Pentecostal praise and a Taize service. Most of all 'just' listening to, and building relationships with, so many kind and conscientious Christian colleagues - between the formal sessions - was, for me, a delightful three-day pilgrimage into ecumenism.

Videos of, and resources from, some of the conference sessions are available on the Churches Together in England website (www.cte.org.uk). If you can't find what you're looking for, drop me an email and I'll do my best: community.chaplain.gmc@gmail.com

Lois Sparling, Community Social Action Team (West Cumbria)

A Window into a CT Group

Could you share something of the life and work of your Churches Together group to inform, inspire or encourage other groups around the county? If so, we would love to hear from you.

Please help us to raise the profile of the groups and encourage each other in the life and work that God has called us to, by sending in a short article. We will aim to share one 'window' a month (250-300 words, with a single photograph).

Please send your contribution to Lois Sparling from our Community Social Action Team at community.chaplain.gmc@gmail.com.

Thank you.

Praise and prayerful gifts for our neighbours

A window into Churches Together in Seascale and District

The members of our CT group are Seascale Methodist Church, Gosforth Methodist Congregation (worshipping in St Mary's Church Room), St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Seascale, and Anglican churches from Beckermeth in the north to

Waberthwaite in the south, and inland to Wasdale Head and Eskdale. (Not all of these send representatives to our committee meetings, and the main focus tends to be Drigg, Seascale and Gosforth.)

Over the years we have held outreach activities such as giving out mince pies at Christmas or hot cross buns at Easter, always with a short gospel message on a napkin or leaflet. When people ask, 'Are you collecting for something?' it is good to be able to reply, 'No, it's a gift from your local churches.' Local knitters have made duck-shaped bags in which we have given out chocolate eggs, and craftspeople have made pottery crosses which have also been distributed in the villages.

In recent years a very fruitful partnership has developed with **Phoenix Praise** worship band, who hold a monthly evening service in Gosforth. Three or four times a year (eg Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, an outdoor Pentecost service and an autumn service in the former One World Week) these become joint events with Churches Together, with publicity across the area and usually a visiting speaker. Our (fairly brief) Annual Meeting has sometimes been followed by a speaker, but in recent years has featured a quiz based on the format of TV quizzes (Only Connect and House of Games) but with church- and Bible-based questions.

Jonathan Falkner, Secretary, (pictured far right, above, with fellow CT-ers Sheila, Allison and Hannah, at a group meeting at St Peter's, Drigg, earlier this year)

The Chat Room

Shared space and fellowship on Alston Moor

Formal CT meetings have ceased between the churches on Alston Moor - we used to have a banner but no one knows where it has gone or whether it said 'Churches Together...' or 'Christians Together...' now. But that doesn't mean that we don't work well together [or that Churches Together in Cumbria doesn't want to hear your news - Ed!]. We see quite a lot of each other, in fact, and not just on ecumenical occasions like the World Day of Prayer and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, but also to celebrate each other's special events, too. For instance, Anglicans, Methodists

and Roman Catholics were on the bus that went to Andy Morsman's recent ordination as a Deacon in Newcastle Cathedral.

We also produce a magazine together called 'Faith in the Moor' with its title reflecting the double aim of celebrating that there are many in the area who are loved by God and called to be saints (not just those who attend the local churches or the Quaker Meeting House but also those who belong to fellowships elsewhere such as Weardale, Hexham and Penrith) and also that those very people love where they live and are involved in lots of the other groups that make this a flourishing community.

The Methodists worship in St Wulstan's, the Roman Catholic Church, and their funerals usually take place in St Augustine's, the Anglican Church in Alston. The Vicar of the Anglican Parish of Alston Moor has six churches to look after: three are in Cumbria and three in Northumberland, in the Diocese of Newcastle. The Catholic Parish of St John Boste serves Penrith, Alston, Appleby and Kirkby Stephen and the Methodist Church is part of a wider circuit.

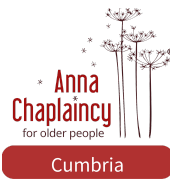
One blessing we are all grateful for is the **Chat Room** on Front Street, open for a couple of hours every weekday morning, for a cuppa and a chat, but also a very useful venue in a community without any church halls! Every Thursday there is a Holy Communion Service at midday to which all are welcome. We are very grateful to the married couple who had the vision to set this up.

Rev Mary Elliot, Supernumerary Methodist Minister

Churches Together in Carlisle and District City Harvest Festival

On 24 October, Churches Together in Carlisle & District (Lisa Wilson, CT President, pictured) held a successful City Harvest Festival at Borderway Auction Mart. It was a hugely uplifting time of ecumenical worship with people attending from across the city. We gave thanks to God for creation and the contributions of Cumbrian farmers to the city and prayed for the challenges they face. We very much hope it will become an annual event.

Lisa Wilson



For any enquiries about Anna Chaplaincy in Cumbria do get in touch at ac@churchestogethercumbria.org.uk

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook for ongoing news.

Anna Chaplaincy Cumbria Facebook Page

**The Council of Nicaea 1700th
Anniversary: Honest
Disagreement in Love: Nicaea
Then & Now**

(Conference in Blackburn 12th – 13th Sep 2025)

In September, the 1700th anniversary was marked by an ecumenical conference in Blackburn Cathedral, organised in partnership with Churches Together in Lancashire (Anton Muller).

The First Council of Nicaea, held in 325 AD, was the first ecumenical council of the Christian Church, convened by Emperor Constantine I in what is now modern-day Turkey. It aimed to address some growing divisions within Christianity and to establish a unified doctrine. One key outcome was the formulation of the Nicene Creed, articulating the foundational beliefs of Christianity.

Theologians, ecumenical leaders and local participants engaged in meaningful conversations about unity, respectful disagreement and how faith communities can respond to contemporary conflict in the world; demonstrating how the work at that first Council is still resonating in the Church today.

Professor Rachel Muers from the University of Edinburgh presented on the Friday evening, there was a choice of different debates and workshops to attend on the Saturday, an ecumenical act of worship and the sermon in the cathedral on the Sunday morning.

Other contributors included: Fr Andrew Louth, Fr Aidan Nichols, Fr Damian Platt, Rev Dr Jeremy Morris, Rt Rev Philip North, Dr Victoria Turner, Rev Dr Peter Colwell, Tim Norwood and Stephen Cooper.

Jo Phillips – Community Social Action Team Member &
Modern Slavery Lead

Psalm 46

Amidst the rubble, in the bomb shelter, *be still.*

Through the desert, across the wadi, *I am God.*

Deafened by lies, pierced by betrayal, *know.*

Hungry and worn down, *ever present.*

Fearing the next bill, the next demand, *help in trouble.*

Alone and lonely, *I am.*

Floods and famine, sickness and dying, *be still.*

And know that I am God, *an ever present help in trouble.*

Joanne Maybury

CTiC and Safeguarding

Churches Together in Cumbria (CTiC) are grateful to the Diocese for agreeing that Jo Van Lachterop, the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, will be available to provide advice and support for safeguarding concerns and queries to the end of the year. This includes all who come under CTiC's umbrella:

a. the Cumbria Ecumenical Spirituality Group (CESG) network - both directors and directees.

b. Anna Chaplaincy

In the event of a Safeguarding concern, Jo can be contacted on:

safeguarding.adviser@carlisle-diocese.org.uk or on 07458 016884.

Every Life Matters

Two training seminars are being hosted by the Cumbrian suicide prevention charity, Every Life Matters. The upcoming events are on Autism and Suicide

Prevention, and will be held in **Barrow on Tuesday 11th November and Workington on Thursday 13th November.**

For more information and to book a place, please visit: <https://www.every-life-matters.org.uk/project/autumn-seminar...>

ACT Awareness Session

Counter Terrorism Policing Northwest has been providing free online training sessions for places of worship in recent weeks, the last of which will be on Tuesday 4th November, from 1-2.30pm. The session will cover:

- Introduction & Current Threat
- Identifying and Responding to Suspicious Activity
- Identifying and Dealing with Suspicious Items
- Responding to a Firearms or Weapon Attacks
- First Aid
- E-Learning and Guidance (Inc E-Learning, ACT in a Box, Personal Security, Funding, Security Minded Comms for POW)

To find out more and book a place, please click here <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/places-of-worship-act-awareene...>

Lancaster and District Choral Society Concert

Lancaster and District Choral Society will be performing **Handel's Messiah on Saturday 22nd November, 7.30pm, at Lancaster Priory.** For further information, please visit <http://ldcs-choral.org.uk/>.

Spiritual Accompaniment

You, Me and God - journeying together

For further information contact

Ruth Lee

e: sd.cesg@gmail.com

t: 01768 898604

w: cesg.org.uk

Cumbria Ecumenical Spirituality Group

CTiC Trustees and Staff

Our Trustees:

Revd Kath Dodd - CTiC Treasurer - kath.dodd@btinternet.com

Revd Derek Lacey - Community Social Action Team

Bill Bewley - Church Leaders Representative

Paul Burden - Churches Together Group Representative

Revd Alistair Smeaton

Our Staff:

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