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## Churches Together in Cumbria

February 2026 Newsletter

### Actively Promoting God's Love for Everyone



The River at Levens, 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@churchestogethercumbria.org.uk](mailto:admin@churchestogethercumbria.org.uk) for it to be included in a future edition of the newsletter. Thank you in advance.

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**Deadline for March Newsletter submissions: 20th February 2026**

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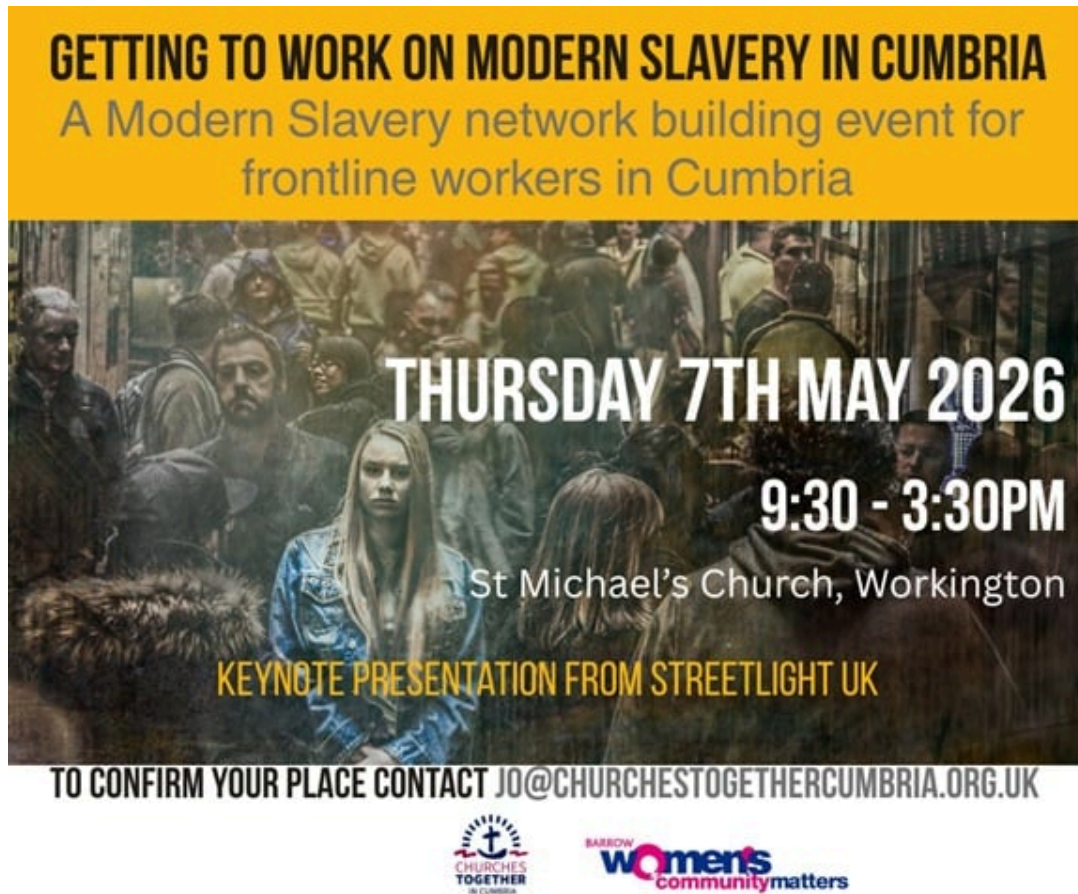
## Dates for your Diaries

### **Churches Together in Cumbria Annual Gathering 2026**

This year's Annual Gathering will be on **Thursday 4th June** at **St Michael's Church, Falcon Place, Workington**. Further details of the event and how to book your place will be made available in due course, but please do put this date into your new diaries now!

St Michael's Church is within easy walking distance of bus and rail links, and also has parking available on site. There is step free access throughout the building and an

accessible toilet for those who require it.





**GETTING TO WORK ON MODERN SLAVERY IN CUMBRIA**  
A Modern Slavery network building event for  
frontline workers in Cumbria

**THURSDAY 7TH MAY 2026**  
**9:30 - 3:30PM**  
St Michael's Church, Workington

**KEYNOTE PRESENTATION FROM STREETLIGHT UK**

**TO CONFIRM YOUR PLACE CONTACT [JO@CHURCHES TOGETHER CUMBRIA.ORG.UK](mailto:JO@CHURCHES TOGETHER CUMBRIA.ORG.UK)**

## Upcoming Cumbria Modern Slavery Champions Network Training Event

There will be a CMSCN event in Workington for the first time in May, which in the past, has resulted in new people coming along. Also, for the first time, I'm holding this network event in a church. I'm excited about our keynote speakers too, they're doing great work and it's so encouraging to hear about it and to connect Cumbrian folk with them.

StreetlightUK is a frontline specialist support service, specifically focused on providing women with tangible and material pathways out of a lifestyle of prostitution and violence, and has developed its specialism and understanding of women involved in prostitution across the UK since 2012. They recently started working up North, and more importantly, in Cumbria and I'm excited for them to come and share some of that with the network.

The Clewer Initiative, have been partnering with us for years now, and are dear friends. They've just been through a tough time with restructuring and finding new streams of funding support. I'm so impressed with their new strategic approach and emerging plans.

It's designed for those on the frontline, who work or volunteer in roles where you might come across those vulnerable to or involved with exploitation or modern slavery. We can all do our part to be observant to spot the signs, and report or refer if something doesn't seem right.

Or perhaps you know someone who might find this useful? If so, please do let them know about it and encourage them to get in touch to register for the event.

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May, 09:30-15:30 – St Michael's Church, Workington.**

Jo Phillips - Community Social Action Team Member and Modern Slavery Lead

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# **CTE NW Regional County Ecumenical Officer Meeting**

## **22 January 2026**

This group tries to meet together three or four times a year to give updates from the various Churches Together county-groups in the North West. It's always a joy to gather for the encouragement it brings.

We were warmly and generously hosted by our dear friends Mel & Steve Scoulding at the Salvation Army Carlisle Citadel on Abbey Street. Many of us have known them for years as friends and ecumenical colleagues, and we will be sad to see them leave Carlisle later in 2026.

Also gathered there were: Anton Muller (CT Lancashire), Elisabeth Hachmoeller (Merseyside & Cheshire), Alan Kennedy (Greater Manchester), Peter Colwell (Chair of CT Lancs & Dep. Gen. Sec. CTBI), Darren Holland (Ecumenical Officer, URC NW Synod), and myself Jo Phillips (Cumbria).

Darren shared some devotions with us from Ephesians 4:1-6 (also in use in this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity) – and we prayerfully discussed different approaches to baptism, and its resonance in an ecumenical setting.

*"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."*

Some bullet points that might be of interest:

- This year will see the retirement of Clare Downing and the new nominated URC NW Synod Moderator, Mike Thomason taking up the role. Conversation continues around possible restructuring.
- CTBI are working on a new Interfaith Toolkit. More information and resources can be found on their webpage – and you'll find the Toolkit there when it is launched - [Inter Faith - CTBI](#)
- We're grateful for the CTBI Week of Prayer for Christian Unity resources we've been using focussing on Armenia. [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 – One Body One Spirit – Churches Together in England](#) Next year's will come from Ireland, and following year, from Cuba.
- Last year CT in Merseyside with Together Liverpool celebrated Faith in the City's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. They launched a Manifesto of Hope renewing the call for justice, compassion and unity, based on a regional research survey."
- In Greater Manchester, they are busy planning their annual assembly which will take place in Salford cathedral, focussing on the Quiet Revival. They also look forward to a Pentecost service in Sale, to be held at the Salvation Army Citadel.
- CT Lancashire gave updates on the great work in their stand at the Royal Lancashire Show, and the plans to enable continued ministry there this year. They also reported on how they partnered with the cathedral in the planning of the ecumenical Nicaea Creed conference in Blackburn in September last year. ['Nicaea: Now and Then' – conference report – Churches Together in England](#). We also heard how two young adults from Lancashire have been granted CTE Snelson Fund grants enabling ecumenical experiences abroad. [First Snelson Fund grants of 2026 announced – Churches Together in England](#)

Please continue to hold our regional ecumenical Church family in your prayers as we journey together in pursuit and practice of Christian unity.

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





## Please let us know what you're up to!

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. We aim to share a couple of articles a month - it could be a brief mention of some new shared ministry that's gone well (c150 words), or a longer reflection on how ecumenical work is going in your area (c300) and we would like at least one photograph, please.

Please send your contribution to Lois Sparling from our Community Social Action Team at [community.chaplain.gmc@gmail.com](mailto:community.chaplain.gmc@gmail.com). Thank you.

# Witness and Welcoming the Vulnerable

## Churches Together in Penrith



Our members are King's Church Eden, Penrith Methodist Church, Penrith Quaker Meeting, the Parish of Penrith, St Catherine's Roman Catholic Church and the Salvation Army, with additional friends from the URC who no longer have their own church in the town. We cover Penrith and the surrounding villages and, as Social Responsibility Officer, I work closely with various organisations to ensure our voice is continually heard.

One key shared project is Penrith Linking Lives which we set up in 2021 – a befriending service for people who feel isolated or lonely and welcome someone to chat to for about an hour each week. At the moment we have around 30 link friends (clients) but would like to support more and need more volunteers all the time. (To volunteer, please contact Co-ordinator Sam Pester at [penrith@linkinglives.uk](mailto:penrith@linkinglives.uk), tel 07951 738540.)

Every year we welcome refugees from the North East for our 'Day in the Lakes' – a day out at Glenridding, supported by the church at Patterdale – and every summer we provide 'It's your move' booklets to all our Year 6 pupils as they move on to secondary school. Since 2017 we've run a weekly Dementia-Friendly Tea Service together at

Christ Church for anyone who welcomes a simple, short service followed by tea and cake.

In the past month, we've enjoyed our annual carol sing with Penrith Town Band and held our Christmas Eve service in St Andrew's churchyard as usual. We run joint services and events throughout the year, culminating in the Walk of Witness on Good Friday, led through the town by the Band to a service in St Andrew's Church, and the dawn service on Easter Sunday, again with the Band, up on the Beacon. Another early morning practice we have up there is our 'Weekly Blessings' first thing every Wednesday.

Margaret Irving, Churches Together in Penrith

*Pictured (Left to Right): Revd Mary Edwards, Parish of Penrith; Revd David Sargent, Parish of Penrith; Stuart Campbell, St Catherine's RC Church; Heather Watson, Salvation Army; Carol Mitchell, Quakers; Dean Lawson, Methodist Circuit; Vivien and Peter Davidson URC*

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## Together at Christmas in Kendal



Sunday 28 December saw a packed Salvation Army Hall in Kendal as over 80 folks from the Helm Mission Community churches came together to worship, led by Captain Hilary Borthwick. Of course the super bacon baps might have been a draw, but Hilary was definitely in charge as she guided us through the morning service.



This included readings, carols by request, prayers and, to conclude, singing the well-known allegorical Christian carol which has a strong Christian meaning, 'The Twelve Days of Christmas', with everyone performing the actions, ably helped by Hilary.

During the service, three-minute talks were given by our Ministers and Elders – Revs Marion, Martin, Mark, Lucy and Terry (all pictured), all fitting together beautifully. There was also an opportunity for three volunteers to give thanks to God for His goodness – and they did! One particularly amazing testimony about God's recent provision in an airport! That's got you guessing!

The Gospel message (John 21:9-14) was read very clearly by Kupa who regularly attends the Army with his family. After sharing briefly how she was reminded how God welcomes our thanks, Hilary led us into prayer, and using 'the hopes and fears of all the years' inviting us to pray and then come forward to place our tea lights onto a wooden cross. A very moving act, creating a tangibly reverent atmosphere.

We give thanks to God for a wonderful time of worship to Our Lord that morning.

Delphine Gratrix

*Pictured (Left to Right): Revs Martyn, Marion, Capt Hilary, Rev Lucy, URC Elder Mark and Rev Terry*

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## Anna Chaplaincy



### Spirituality in Later Years

Spirituality can help to provide a sense of purpose, value, hope and meaning in life, particularly amongst those approaching their later years. Historically, the term

spirituality was associated with religion; describing a life orientated towards God or the Holy Spirit, it meant living in alignment with divine will.

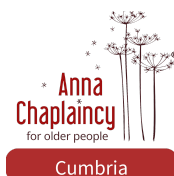
Today, our understanding of spirituality is much broader. For instance, it can mean recognising, celebrating, and finding meaning in our lives beyond daily survival, and seeking purpose beyond material success or needs. In this sense, spirituality is a living concept which evolves along with our own personal experiences; some people find it in religion, others in meditation, nature, creativity and the arts, and so on.

Spirituality is more than a spiritual affiliation; it includes the search for meaning, purpose, value and hope in life and beyond. Spiritual needs in our older life may leave us considering not only the good things which have happened in our lives, but also certain regrets, hurts and past issues that remain unresolved. Reconciliation and healing may be deeply desired. Our experience is that with good spiritual care one can age well, and fully celebrate their life with purpose, value, meaning and hope.

So, what is missing if spiritual care is absent?

- The space for stories to be heard
- Making sense of life and finding peace
- Exploring the big questions of life
- Practising faith in ways relevant to later life
- Expressing who we really are, what makes me 'me'
- Being prepared to face the end of my life

Beverley Moore, Anna Chaplain



For any enquiries about Anna Chaplaincy in Cumbria do get in touch at [ac@churchestogethercumbria.org.uk](mailto:ac@churchestogethercumbria.org.uk)

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

Anna Chaplaincy Cumbria Facebook Page

# A Big Thank You to Richard and Alistair



Over the last few years Churches Together in Cumbria has been changing in various ways. At times we have faced disappointments and difficulties. At other times we have been able to rejoice as we notice the Spirit of God at work.

We are encouraged by the continued growth of Anna Chaplaincy in Cumbria and are excited about the recently formed Community Social Action Team. And we continue to value the less visible work of the Cumbria Ecumenical Spirituality Group.

The trustees are also less visible but have been playing a vital role during a period of change. We now face change as a group as Richard Snow and Alistair Smeaton complete their service and move on. They will be hard to replace given their depth of experience and we would like to say a big thank you to them for their commitment and service.

The trustees still have much to do to ensure that we are ready to support the work of a wide range of Christians across Cumbria now and in the coming years. We will be working with the various denominations to identify new trustees and are interested to hear from anybody who has an interest in churches working together who might have suitable experience and skills to work as a trustee.

Derek Lacey, Trustee

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## Mystery

Nature is thick with mystery. It has the capacity to surprise at any time, and this lends an air of mystery to its exploration, whereby the ordinary is transformed into the extraordinary. Nature does not have straight lines. It's messy, multi-layered and always changing. We can never fully know nature, which is part of its attraction. It will always be mysterious, intriguing, dangerous. Fables have long reflected this, stimulating the imagination with tales of misty mountains, dark forests and weird creatures.

Imagination doesn't mean made up – rather, it takes us into something bigger – a playground for the imagination or a place of enchantment. This enchantment is beguiling. It draws us in, inviting exploration of hitherto undiscovered corners revealing new layers of understanding, calling us again and again. It keeps the journey fresh, renewed, reborn.

Exploring new places, or familiar places in new circumstances keeps the mystery alive. It allows a sparking of the imagination. Most of us can relate to lying on our backs and staring up at the clouds and dreaming something into being. Why, after all, do we have an urge to name stalagmites and stalactites after forms that they barely resemble? The answer is clear: we imagine them as something quite else. The mineral formations are no longer geophysical forms – they become something far more mystical and spirit filled. Imagination adds a dimension to plain matter. The spirit within us reaches out for the spirit implanted in all of creation.

With thanks to John Fleetwood



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## Every Life Matters - Suicide Prevention Conference 2026



Take action. Prevent suicide.

A day dedicated to taking action to prevent suicide and support those affected by it. With inspirational speakers, interactive workshops, and practical strategies, the conference equips everyone — from workplaces and schools to community groups and individuals — to make a real difference in creating a Suicide Safer Cumbria.

Find out more here: <https://www.every-life-matters.org.uk/suicide-prevention-con...>

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## 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**

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## **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](mailto:safeguarding.adviser@carlisle-diocese.org.uk) or on 07458 016884.

# CTiC Trustees and Staff

## **Our Trustees:**

Revd Kath Dodd - CTiC Treasurer, Acting Administrator - [kath.dodd@btinternet.com](mailto:kath.dodd@btinternet.com)

Revd Derek Lacey - Community Social Action Team

Bill Bewley - Church Leaders Representative

Paul Burden - Churches Together Group Representative, Anna Chaplaincy Chair

## **Our Staff:**

Samantha Pester - Anna Chaplaincy Lead - [ac@churchestogethercumbria.org.uk](mailto:ac@churchestogethercumbria.org.uk)

Charlotte Lait - Admin Support - [admin@churchestogethercumbria.org.uk](mailto:admin@churchestogethercumbria.org.uk)

(Please use this email address for general enquiries.)

## **Community Social Action Team:**

Revd Jonny Gios - [jgios@me.com](mailto:jgios@me.com)

Jo Phillips - [jo@churchestogethercumbria.org.uk](mailto:jo@churchestogethercumbria.org.uk)

Lois Sparling - [community.chaplain.gmc@gmail.com](mailto:community.chaplain.gmc@gmail.com)

## **Churches Together in Cumbria**

Church House, 19-24 Friargate, Penrith

CA11 7XR

United Kingdom

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