

Spire Newsletter

FREE



**NEWS FROM THE PARISHES OF
GREAT AYTON WITH EASBY &
NEWTON UNDER ROSEBERRY**

**Issue no.10 :
Easter & April 2026**



**REV SARAH
DRAWS US
CLOSER TO
HOLY WEEK
&
EASTER**

Sarah writes:

Dear Friends and Neighbours

One minute I am writing about the cold post-Christmas days, where spring feels a long way off. Then suddenly Lent is here, bulbs are bursting through the dark soil, and we are hurtling into Spring proper. Daffodils are swaying in the breeze with their yellow happy faces, somehow always just in time for St David's Day. It has been a wet winter with not much ice and snow, well so far as I write this, but it's been dank and depressing. When the days are still short and the sun seems to have gone on an extended winter break far away, it can be hard to remember lush gardens and the sun in the sky. When we feel a bit jaded it's good to remind ourselves that the cold wet soil will bring forth new life and growth, the bare trees will be dotted with leaf buds and some with the delight of blossom. As the weather changes and Lent moves into Holy Week and then Easter Day arrives it can feel like we experience a huge mix of emotions in a few short weeks. The reflective nature of Lent and the simplicity of the church decoration and liturgy help us to dwell in stillness. The idea that we perhaps deprive ourselves of life's luxuries for this time is based on those forty days and nights Jesus was in the wilderness.

For some in our communities, depriving themselves of little luxuries is not through choice but necessity. For others it may have felt like an extended time of wilderness. Through Lent some of us have been watching the TV series *The Chosen*, a dramatised account of Jesus' life. It is really well acted, and the locations, sets, and costumes take us into Judea two thousand years ago. It helps us remember that Jesus was both fully man (we see him cooking, washing and working) and also fully Divine.

The special term for this is *Hypostatic Union* but don't worry about remembering that, or the other strange words we sometimes use in church. What we shouldn't forget is that Jesus felt real hunger in the wilderness, real feelings of anger when he saw the poor being cheated in the temple, and real and excruciating pain in his torture and death. Holy Week itself gives us time to ponder on the complex and fast-moving events of Jesus' final week with his friends and followers. We have the celebration of his entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday - although no fancy horse for King Jesus, but our 'Topsy Turvey King' rides on a donkey. Justice-seeking Jesus turns tables over in the Temple and we see angry Jesus. On Maundy Thursday Jesus the Servant King washes his disciples' feet, instigates Holy Communion and, after all that, he becomes a betrayed King, an imprisoned Jesus. Good Friday ends with an abandoned Jesus (by his friends, not his Father) on the cross. And then we wait..... For the first shafts of light on Easter Day.

The tomb is empty, King Jesus is victorious over death, he wins for us life everlasting and reconciliation with God, his love cancelling all our sin. We shout *Alleliua*, we sing our Easter hymns of praise... *Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son; endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.* We sample once again all the things we have given up - wine, chocolate, whatever it may be, but we need to remember that, whatever wilderness we find ourselves in life, whatever long winter, or whatever we don't understand, the King of Glory loves us whatever. He loves us in our anger and our grief, when we feel abandoned or betrayed or in pain - because he has gone through it for us. *'For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'* Mark 10:45. ***Easter Blessings - Sarah***

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The Quiet Revival: Gen Z leads rise in church attendance

250 Christians from across Teesside were at The Jubilee Church Centre in Stockton in February to hear how Gen Z is leading a rise in church attendance. Rev Geoff and Helen Land (along with others from our village) heard from author Andrew Ollerton that Church decline in England and Wales has not only stopped, but the Church is growing, as Gen Z leads an exciting turnaround in church attendance. See the graph below for a visual representation of the church's growth.

Like me your first question might be 'who are Gen Z'? The answer is: people born from 1997 to 2012 (so youngsters aged 14 to 29). Secondly you might wonder, who is Andrew Ollerton? Well, he's an author, theologian and presenter working with the Bible Society; two of our Discipleship groups have already read and discussed a couple of his books. Rev Jon's Thursday evening group has used 'God's Book; An Honest Look at the Bible's Seven Toughest Topics' and Helen's Wednesday evening group has used his 'Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life.'

After an opening time of worship, Andrew shared some of the Bible Society's findings - which you can find on their website [The Quiet Revival: Gen Z leads rise in church attendance](https://www.biblesociety.org/quiet-revival). You can listen to the full presentation from Dr Andrew Ollerton about The Quiet Revival & Teesside here:

https://soundcloud.com/jubilee-church-teesside/3rd-february-2026-thequiet?si=47efe150ed2f4c6984be9ba9c293e340&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

Those who've been to our twice monthly Cafe Church will already be aware of the significant number of teenagers and young families who are worshipping and discussing faith together. How can we best respond to this interest? The Bible Society has identified that Raising Bible Confidence in our churches is key. Andrew has participated in a series of podcasts; do have a listen using this link: <https://share.transistor.fm/s/7d94667b>

Would you like to raise your Bible confidence? If so, take the next step and have a word with one of our ministers.



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER "I will give you rest"

Angela Jaques writes:

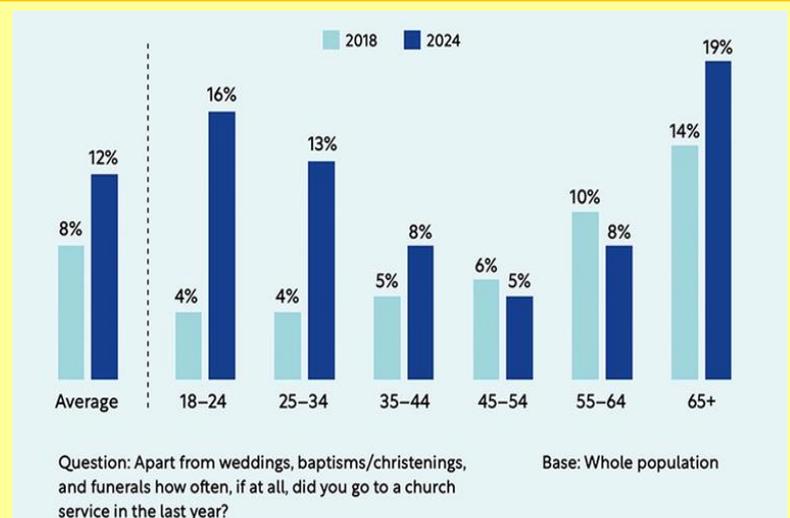
The 2026 World Day of Prayer was celebrated at the Friends' Meeting House on Friday 6th March. Over 40 people attended the service which takes place all over the world on the same day every year.

This year it was composed by the women of Nigeria on the theme "I will give you rest". Stories of Nigerian women inspire us to work towards a world without injustice, insecurity, persecution, poverty and despair, whilst lively songs, Bible readings, meditations and prayers all help us to unite as one in prayer and action. These photographs are from our event.

Donations given will support the ministry of World Day of Prayer in countries where help is needed the most. Thanks to all who helped make the service a joyful, happy, reflective and prayerful occasion. See you next year!

The rise in regular churchgoing

Percentage of age group population who describe themselves as Christian and go to church at least once a month



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OUR REGULAR CHURCH SERVICES

Christ Church, Great Ayton

Sunday 8.00am Holy Communion (every Sunday)
9:15am Parish Communion (every Sunday)
4:00pm for 4.30pm Café Church (2nd & 4th Sundays)
Monday 2.00pm Coffee Lounge Communion (1st Monday)
Tuesday 9.45am Little Fishes (not school holidays)
Wednesday 10.00 Holy Communion (BCP) or Morning Prayer

St Oswald's, Newton under Roseberry

Sunday 11.00 Holy Communion with hymns (1st & 5th Sundays)
All Age Service (3rd Sunday)

Solus ad Victimam

Alone to sacrifice



Some 900 years ago, the French philosopher, poet and monk, Peter Abelard, expressed his anguish over Christ's suffering on the cross on his behalf with these lines:

Alone to sacrifice thou goest, Lord,
giving thyself to Death whom thou hast slain.
For us, thy wretched folk, is any word
Who know that for our sins this is thy pain?

For they are ours, O Lord, our deeds, our deeds.
Why must thou suffer torture for our sin?
Let our hearts suffer in thy Passion, Lord,
that very suffering may thy mercy win.

This is the night of tears, the three days' space,
sorrow abiding of the eventide,
Until the day break with the risen Christ,
and hearts that sorrowed shall be satisfied.

So may our hearts share in thine anguish, Lord,
that they may sharers of thy glory be;
Heavy with weeping may the three days pass,
to win the laughter of thine Easter Day."

This English translation by Helen Waddell has been set to powerful music by Wakefield-born Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988) and our choir will be singing his anthem during communion at our Palm Sunday service.

Leighton's haunting choral word-painting captures the poet's torment and hope. The music, often uncomfortable to the ear, is largely solemn in mood (with effective use of discords to highlight words such as "pain" and "suffering") but eventually resolves on a final, glorious E major chord which points ahead to Easter and the joy and hope of the resurrection.

SPECIAL SERVICES FOR HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Palm Sunday 29th March

Holy Communion with the Blessing of Palms

8.00 am Christ Church
9.15 am Christ Church
11.00 am St Oswald's

Monday

7.30pm Holy Communion Christ Church

Tuesday

7.30pm Holy Communion Christ Church

Wednesday

10.00am Holy Communion Christ Church
7.30pm Holy Communion St Oswald's

Maudy Thursday

7.30 pm Holy Communion with Stripping of the Altar Christ Church

Good Friday

7:30 am Morning Prayer St Oswald's
9:45 am Family Service in the Church Hall Christ Church
with children's craft activities and Hot Cross Buns
11:45am Walk of Witness - Churches Together

Easter Day 5th April

8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) Christ Church
9.15 am Parish Communion Christ Church
11.00am Holy Communion St Oswald's

WALK OF WITNESS, GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3RD.

Please join us for our annual Ecumenical Walk of Witness on Friday, 3rd April, organised by Rev. Rob and your Methodist friends. This year we start at the Methodist Church at 11:45 am. If you'd like a cuppa first, please come along from 11:15 am. We will be carrying the cross (please can we have volunteers to help, it's not too heavy). We will be singing familiar hymns and sharing readings outside each Church.

Our route will take us from the Methodist Church, through Hollygarth to St Margaret's for 12:00 pm, then to the bridge on Low Green via Race Terrace, West Terrace, across the footbridge to Christ Church for 12:20 pm, then over the road, walking along to the High Green in front of the Friends Meeting House to finish at about 12:40 pm. These times are approximate, so please be early if you are joining us en route.

It would be lovely to see as many of you as possible for all or some of the walk. Worship sheets will be provided. Last year we had a wonderful walk and were well noticed by our community. A builder working on the properties at Hollygarth commented positively: "You don't often see the Cross on Good Friday". Praise God!

Chris Stokeld (on behalf of Rev Rob Weir)

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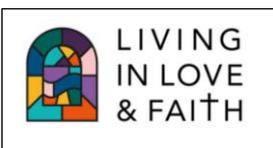
OUR GENERAL SYNOD

In an earlier issue of this newsletter, Dr Nick Land gave us a brief outline of how the Church of England is formally organised. At the 'top' of government is the General Synod, the most recent meeting of which Nick attended. So Spire invited him to give us this summary account.

The February 2026 meeting of the Church of England's General Synod met for five days at Church House, Westminster. It was the first Synod presided over by the new Archbishop of Canterbury, **Dame Sarah Mullally**, whose Presidential Address emphasised Servant Leadership, humility, and a commitment to rebuilding confidence in the Church's leadership. Her commitment to compassion, transparency, unity, and the strengthening of local parish ministry was warmly welcomed.

A theme throughout the sessions was **safeguarding reform**. Synod approved a new national safeguarding strategy centred on the creation of an **independent safeguarding charity**. This new authority, governed by a majority-independent board, will incorporate the National Safeguarding team and provide support and oversight to Diocesan Safeguarding with the aim of rebuilding trust after years of criticism regarding the Church's handling of abuse cases. Synod passed the amended **Clergy Conduct Measure**, following parliamentary insistence on disciplinary tribunals being held in public. This represents a substantial overhaul of clergy discipline processes, aiming to ensure greater transparency, fairness, and accountability.

Synod addressed a range of **social issues**, including a debate marking the 40th anniversary of *Faith in the City* when Members reaffirmed commitments to tackling poverty through advocacy and practical parish-based action. I spoke in favour of a proposal to give improved training to clergy and ordinands on how to support people with mental health difficulties in their parishes. Concern about the impact on pastoral ministry led Synod to reject a proposed £1000 increase in Church Yard Burial fees. We also recommended a review of how the central Church supports the poorest parishes through LInC (Lowest Income Communities) funding with a widespread view that this should be prioritised. We also debated the need to remove the obstacles to working class people entering ministry.



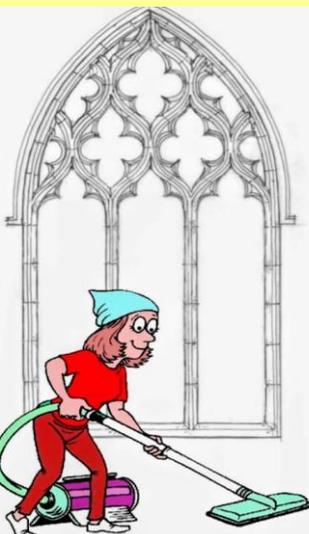
There was a five-hour debate on the Bishop's proposals to bringing the 7-year LLF (Living in Love and Faith) process to a conclusion. Following clear legal advice, it was recognised that bespoke services of blessing for same sex couples would require formal authorisation under Canon Law, whilst permitting clergy to enter same sex marriage would require legislation. Synod approved the proposal to establish a working group to consider how these legal

changes might be achieved together with what kind of alternative episcopal provision would be offered to those unhappy with such proposals.

There was a consideration of draft liturgical material marking a new **Feast of God the Creator** and the **Commemoration of the 21 Martyrs of Libya** – the latter remembers 21 young men murdered in 2012 by ISIS for refusing to renounce the name of Jesus. It movingly reminded us that thousands of Christians are still martyred every year for loving Jesus.

Individual Parishes can bring motions via their diocese and Synod backed a motion from Worcester Diocese on **sustainable church flowers**, encouraging churches and cathedrals to adopt more environmentally responsible ways of arranging flowers, including avoiding floral foam and sourcing flowers and foliage locally.

This is just a taster of General Synod; do get in touch if you want to hear more!



Christ Church Annual Spring Clean

Friday 20th March - from 4.00pm

Sat. 21st March - from 9.00am

PLEASE COME AND HELP!

Pop in anytime, even if it's just for an hour

Refreshments provided



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TWO CHORAL CONCERTS COMING TO CHRIST CHURCH IN APRIL

The Angrove Singers and VOX
present
Sacred Music for Good Friday
Friday 3rd April 2026 7.30 pm
Christ Church, Great Ayton, TS96AA

Eternal Light
Howard Goodall
with
sacred motets and anthems

Musical Director:
Jeremy Harbottle

Harp:
Sarah Paterson

Accompanist:
Jenny Hesford



Tickets: £10 (Adult) £5 (U18/Student)

From Thompson's Hardware, choir members,
ring Barbara 01642 941 732, or on the door
(cash or cheque)
Donations to charity from the proceeds

TWO EXTRA LENTEN OPPORTUNITIES EVERY WEEK

Remember - every Monday in Lent:

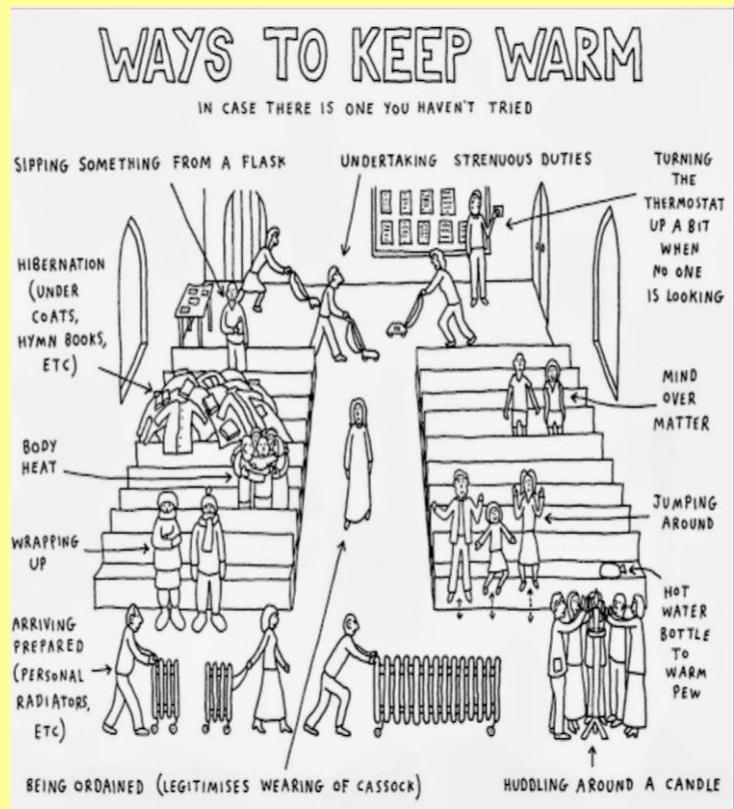
The Chosen at 6:30pm in Christ Church Coffee Lounge.

We watch an episode of the TV series then have time for discussion and a short time of prayer.

Prayer/Compline on zoom at 8:30 pm for 30 mins

Please see the weekly Pew Sheets or email the clergy or church office for further details.

A WARM CHRIST CHURCH ?



YES, QUITE SOON !

Spire asked our treasurer, Ken Taylor, to tell us more...

Especially during the colder months, Christ Church – being a big, cavernous stone building - can sometimes be very cold when congregations arrive.

So, the PCC, in conjunction with Richard Scott, has investigated installing a remote timer to enable the electric heaters to start warming up as early as the weather requires. Richard has come up trumps and will be fitting the new controls over the next couple of weeks. The cost is £1,670 but the Diocese has kindly made us a grant from their "Quick Wins" fund to cover the cost.

So by the time you read this the church should feel a little warmer when you arrive on a cold Sunday morning!

ERIMUS SINGERS
THIS SCEPTRED ISLE
A CELEBRATION OF BRITISH CHORAL MUSIC
DIRECTED BY JOHN DIXON ACCOMPANIST JENNY HESFORD
CHRIST CHURCH GREAT AYTON
SUNDAY 26TH APRIL - 2PM
TICKETS £12 (AVAILABLE VIA EMAIL OR ON THE DOOR)
WWW.ERIMUSSINGERS.CO.UK ERIMUS.SINGERS2@GMAIL.COM

The **ERIMUS Singers**, a small chamber choir, will be performing some beautiful choral music, both sacred and secular, all by British composers – including Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens*, Howells' *'Gloucester' Evening Service*, Leighton's *Te Deum*, Bainton's *And God Shall Wipe Away All Tears*, Vaughan Williams' *In Windsor Forest* and works by Handel, Harris, Dove and Macmillan. Will finish by 4pm.

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THE ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING

will take place at Christ Church
on Wednesday 18th March at 7.30 pm

for the purpose of electing our two Churchwardens and members of the Church Council and receiving reports on the last year.

Only a shortened **Annual Report** has been produced this year primarily to publish the Annual Report and Accounts. The report can be obtained through the link below and a few paper copies will be available at the back of Church.

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=927b351c88&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-f:1858631736977228596&th=19cb2fb7a2cb8334&view=att&zw&disp=inline>

CHURCHWARDEN NEEDED



Rosemary; our Retiring Church Warden

Rosemary Wheway (left) has decided not to stand again at the next Annual Church Meeting after many splendid years as one of the two churchwardens at Christ Church; she returned last year for a second stint, as it was going to be a most important one for us and for our (then) new incumbent; the continuity she has offered and all her contributions have been highly valued. Happily for us, Rosemary will continue serving as one of our Authorised Lay Ministers.

So....is it time for **you** to offer your services? (Or could you suggest it to someone appropriate?) Do please give it some serious thought and have a chat with a warden about it.

THINKING OF OTHERS

Throughout the year, usually in the week leading to the 3rd Sunday of each month, Christ Church collects goods to donate to the **Food Bank**. Do please consider helping others.



DEPUTY VERGER

We are also looking for someone to deputise as Verger when Mandy Johnson is unavailable to support the very occasional funerals and weddings at the back of church. Training would be given and it could be a role shared by two people. Please ask a warden if you would like to know more or may be interested.

EASTER FLOWERS

At Christ Church we are very fortunate always to have some most beautiful and artistic flower arrangements from our talented flower arrangers for our major celebrations. If you would like to sponsor one of this Easter's arrangements, do please discuss with Marina Charlton at church or on 01642 723087 as soon as possible. You may like to donate £30 towards the flowers.



CONTACT DETAILS

Rev Sarah Cliff 07355 711010
sarah@christchurchgreatayton.onmicrosoft.com

For events and bookings:

Church Office: 01642 722665
gapo1876@outlook.com

For Safeguarding issues:

Mary Mason 07788 643930
mary.mason@gmx.co.uk

Church website address:
<https://www.achurchnearyou.com>

Our Facebook pages

Christ Church, Great Ayton;
St Oswald's, Newton under Roseberry;
All Saints Church, Great Ayton;
Christ Church Choir, Great Ayton
Little Fishes have a Private Group on Facebook for parents and carers of pre-school children; you can request to join it.
The Adult Discipleship Group also has a Private Group.

Note that the church is gradually moving our information from our former **website** to the above national CofE site.

Many thanks to all who contributed these articles. The next issue of this *Spire Newsletter*, planned for the end of April, will cover both May and June. If you would like to submit an article, news or details of events likely to interest our readers or merely offer suggestions for future possible issues, you are welcome to send them to the editor, Stephen Whitehead, at: stephen.whitehead1948@gmail.com. The closing date for the next issue will be 15th April.