

The Meeting of the Waters



DECEMBER 2025 AND JANUARY 2026

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A LETTER FOR DECEMBER 2025 AND JANUARY 2026

Dark, short days can be challenging. December, and especially January, may find spirits dampening, while fatigue blunts the sharpness of our senses. Whether we feel distracted, flat, unwell, overstretched or grieving it's all too easy to stand on holy ground without realising it.

Yet God's fingerprints are everywhere: in the warmth of neighbours, in random kindnesses offered by strangers, in the affection given by a cat or dog, in the eerie beauty of rising mist, and, surprisingly (!), in each of our churches, places of welcome where wisdom and humility come to the fore.

The coming season marks the time when God took flesh and lived among human beings. Jesus' birth assures us that God wants our company, no matter who we are, how we feel or what we have done. God seeks us out, **always**.

For many, listening to carols is uplifting, or better still singing them. Not all of them relate to the Christmas season and we might choose to extend such simple pleasures well into the New Year.

As I write, I am co-ordinating Christmas singing for Bellingham on **Wednesday 3rd December**. This year there are plans to get lots of people joining in, **starting at the town hall from 5pm**. That includes **YOU!** There will be 20-30 minute bursts at different locations, featuring all kinds of favourite repertoire. Regular breaks may allow singers to drink, snack and shop if wished, supporting business people who keep our communities well supplied and content throughout the year.

For now I will leave you with lyrics I came across recently. In this first carol the light of Jesus shines beyond his humble bed – a cattle trough. It even makes the stones and stars find voices:

*A stable-lamp is lighted
whose glow shall wake the sky;
the stars shall bend their voices,
and every stone shall cry.
And every stone shall cry,
and straw like gold shall shine;
A barn shall harbour heaven,
a stall become a shrine.*

Richard Wilbur and David Hurd

And finally, a couplet from an old Scots carol:

*O my deir hert, young Jesus sweit,
Prepare thy creddill in my spreit,
And I sall rocke thee in my hert,
And neuer mair from thee depart*

*O my dear heart, young Jesus sweet,
Prepare thy cradle in my spirit,
And I shall rock thee in my heart,
And never more from thee depart.*

The deep Peace of Christ be with you, now and always. Roberta

SERVICES IN THE DEANERY IN DEC '25 AND JAN '26

1st to 6th December

Christmas Tree Festival at St
Cuthbert's, Bellingham

Saturday 6th December

10am-4pm: Crib Festival at St
Peter's, Humshaugh

**7th December: 2nd Sunday of
Advent**

8.30am Holy Communion at Wark
9.00am Holy Communion at
Bellingham
9.30am Holy Communion at Birtley
10.30am MURC Service at Wark
11.00am Holy Communion at
Simonburn
11.00am Holy Communion at Elsdon
11.00am Service of the Word at
Falstone
11.00am Family Crib Service at
Humshaugh
4.00pm Holy Communion at
Bingfield
5.00pm Holy Communion at All
Saints
West Woodburn
7.00pm Refresh Deanery
Contemporary Worship at
Humshaugh

Monday 8th December

2.30pm School Christingle in
Otterburn Church
5.30pm School Crib and Christingle
in Chollerton Church

Thursday 11th December

6.00pm Otterburn Carol Service

Friday 12th December

6.00pm Carols around the Tree at
Birtley Village Hall

7.00pm Carols at Chipchase Castle
Chapel (Ticket entry)

Saturday 13th December

7.30pm North Tyne and Redewater
Choral Society Concert, St
Cuthbert's Bellingham

**14th December: 3rd Sunday of
Advent**

9.00am Holy Communion at
Thockrington (BCP)
9.00am Holy Communion at
Thorneyburn
10.00am Service of the Word at
Chollerton
11.00am Holy Communion at Wall
11.00am Holy Communion at
Otterburn
6.00pm Christingle at Stonehaugh
6.00pm Evensong at Bellingham

16th December

4.00pm Song Reivers Carols by Car,
Taret and Falstone

18th December

7.00pm Churches Together Carol
Service St Oswald's,
Bellingham
7.00pm Village Carols and Readings
at Barrasford Village Hall

19th December

1.00pm Wark School Christingle
Service

**21st December 4th Sunday of
Advent**

9.00am Holy Communion at
Gunnerton
10.00am Carol Service at Birtley

SERVICES IN THE DEANERY CONTINUED...

- 11.00am Holy Communion at Falstone
- 11.00am Holy Communion at Humshaugh
- 11.30am Carol Service at Bingfield
- 3.00pm Carol Service at Horsley
- 6.00pm Carol Service at Wark
- 6.00pm Carol Service at Simonburn with Antiphon
- 6.30pm Carols by Candlelight at Elsdon

Tuesday 23rd December

- 7.00pm Candlelit Carol Service at Thorneyburn

24th December: Christmas Eve

Isaiah 52; 7-10; Hebrews 1; 1-4; John 1: 1-14 (set 3 readings)

- 4.00pm Christingle Service at Falstone
- 4.00pm Carol Service at Humshaugh
- 5.00pm Christingle Service at Bellingham
- 6.00pm Christmas Communion at Heavenfield
- 6.00pm Crib Service at Gunnerton
- 6.00pm Carols on the Green, Wark
- 9.00pm Midnight Communion at Elsdon
- 10.00pm Midnight Communion at Chollerton
- 11.15pm Midnight Communion at Bellingham
- 11.30pm Midnight Communion at Simonburn

25th December: Christmas Day

Isaiah 9: 2-7; Titus 2: 11-14; Luke 2: 1-14 (set 1 readings)

- 9.00am Christmas Communion at Thockrington

- 9.00am Christmas Family Communion at Otterburn
- 10.15am Christmas Family Communion at Wark
- 11.00am Christmas Family Communion at Thorneyburn
- 11.30am Christmas Communion at Birtley

28th December: 1st Sunday of Christmas

- 9.30am Deanery Zoom
- 11.00am Holy Communion at Bellingham
- 11.00am Holy Communion at Chollerton
- 11.00am Service of the Word at Wall
- 3.00pm Holy Communion at Byrness
- 6.00pm Evensong at Humshaugh
- 6.00pm Service of the Word at Wark

31st December: New Years Eve

- 6.30pm Service for the turning of the Year – Bingfield

4th January: Epiphany

Isaiah 60: 1-6; Ephesians 3: 1-12; Matthew 2: 1-12

- 8.30am Holy Communion (BCP) at Wark
- 9.00am Holy Communion at Bellingham
- 9.30am Holy Communion at Birtley
- 10.30am MURC Service at Wark
- 11.00am Service of the Word at Falstone
- 11.00am Holy Communion at Elsdon
- 11.00am Holy Communion at Simonburn
- 4.00pm Holy Communion at Bingfield

SERVICES IN THE DEANERY CONTINUED...

5.00pm Holy Communion at All Saints West Woodburn
(No Refresh in January)

11th January: Baptism of Christ/ Plough Sunday

9.00am Holy Communion at Thockrington BCP
9.00am Holy Communion at Thorneyburn
10.00am Service of the Word at Chollerton
11.00am Holy Communion at Otterburn
11.00am Holy Communion at Wall
6.00pm Holy Communion at Wark
6.00pm Evensong at Bellingham

18th January: 2nd Sunday of Epiphany (Week of Prayer for Christian Unity)

9.00am Holy Communion at Gunnerton
10.00am Service of the Word at Birtley
10.00am Service of the Word at Bellingham
10.30am MURC at Wark

11.00am Holy Communion at Falstone

11.00am Holy Communion at Humshaugh

11.00am Service of the Word at Otterburn

11.30am Service of the Word at Bingfield

3.00pm Holy Communion at Horsley

6.00pm Evensong at Simonburn for Feast of St Mungo

25th January: 3rd Sunday of Epiphany

9.30am Deanery Zoom
11.00am Holy Communion at Bellingham BCP
11.00am Holy Communion at Chollerton
11.00am Service of the Word at Elsdon
11.00am Service of the Word at Wall
3.00pm Holy Communion at Byrness
6.00pm Evensong at Humshaugh
6.00pm Service of the Word at Wark

Please note that it is possible there may be some minor changes to the rota - we will inform you via email, as usual, if this is the case.

PARISH NOTICEBOARD

SERVICE FOR THE TURNING OF THE YEAR

All are invited to come to St Mary Bingfield, (the small church on a farm) at **6.30pm on December 31st**, to reflect upon the year passing, giving thanks for all that is good, and to light a candle in hope for the year to come. This is a quiet yet joyful and interactive short service using the ideas and symbols of first footing, followed by light refreshments! All is finished in time for any New Years Eve gatherings!

ADVENT GROUPS

There will be a variety of Advent Groups this year over Advent and through to Epiphany.

- Monday evenings (the first session was on 23rd November): In person at 4 The Glebe, Wark, hosted by Steve and Vicky on *'Journeying with the Magi'* Sessions start at 7pm
- Monday evening Zoom sessions: Advent Book Group. Sessions start on 1st December and are hosted by Claire and Sarah. In these sessions, we will reflect upon the book by Bishop Guli Francis-Dehquani *'Listening to the music of the Soul'*. 7.30pm start. Please let Sarah or Claire know if you would like to attend and we will send a Zoom code out to you!

TIME TO TALK!

- Do you have a favourite passage of the Bible, or one you really don't like?
- Are there things about church (the services, the buildings, or anything else) that you have wondered about and never known when, or who, to ask?

We would love to start a gathering each month to give space for any and all such questions. There will be coffee, tea and light refreshments, so even if you just want to come along and have a chat about things, then do feel welcome to come along as well. We will start and see what happens. The first session will be on Wednesday 14th January at 2.00pm in Gunnerton church. All are welcome. Sarah Lunn

Christmas Tree Festival



Monday 1st to Saturday 6th
December

*St Cuthbert's Church,
Bellingham*

Monday 1st to Saturday 6th
December

*Open every day
from 9am to 5pm*

North Tyne & Redewater Choral Society
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THE CHARACTERS OF CHRISTMAS

*Magnificat in Bb – Pergolesi
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*with music & readings introducing the
characters of the Christmas Story*

including

*The Infant King, Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, Kings,
Angels and the animals in the stall!*

St Cuthbert's Church, Bellingham

*Saturday December 13th 2025
at 7.30pm*

Admission: £10, plus seasonal refreshments



FALSTONE COFFEE MORNINGS

Thank you to everyone who came along to the October Coffee morning (in aid of Tynedale Hospice at Home). Lynn and Karen inspired us to donate to this worthwhile cause in October, and they brought along lots of lovely cakes - thank you! We had a fabulous turnout of folks and together raised a massive £300!

We received a lovely thank-you letter from the Fundraising Manager at Tynedale Hospice at Home who said: "Please pass on our thanks to everyone concerned. Your donation is greatly appreciated and will be spent wisely. The Hospice would not be here today if it were not for the individuals, organisations and community groups that are committed to helping us achieve our goal, which is to ease the end of life journey, allowing families and loved ones to enjoy precious time together by providing nursing care at home". We were proud to support such a worthwhile cause which touches many of our hearts. I'm sure it will be one of the charities we support at a future coffee morning in 2026.

At the time of submitting this article, November's Coffee morning has not yet happened, but it felt important to include information on it. In November, our coffee morning will be dedicated to the British Legion Poppy Appeal. We will be remembering, in particular, our good friend Jean Swailes, who raised funds for the Poppy Appeal for over 65 years! Jean was also the inspiration behind and founder of the Falstone coffee mornings, which she set up just after the covid 'lockdowns', with help from a few helpers amongst us. Jean wanted to bring people together and encourage people to meet up after covid. She continued to lead the coffee mornings until very recently, and was always there serving others with her cheery smile and infectious laugh. So this is our way of saying a huge "Thank you!" to Jean. We will miss you, and will raise a cuppa to you at our next coffee morning. xx

The next coffee morning will be on **Tuesday 16th December**, and is the *Christmas Celebration* coffee morning, with Christmas cake, mince pies, Christmas carols and songs - and possibly even a visit from Santa!! All sessions start at 10.30am in Falstone Village Hall.

Coffee Morning Dates for 2026: Tuesday 20th January, Tuesday 17th February and dates from March onwards are tbc

Do come along - we look forward to welcoming you!

From Marie, Diane, Christine, Mike and Andy, and all the Falstone coffee morning team xx

REDESDALE SOCIETY - NOVEMBER 2025



On Friday 7th, the Redesdale Society held its November meeting, where an enthusiastic audience of members and guests heard a very interesting presentation by David Petts entitled "Recent work on the early medieval monastery of Lindisfarne". David is an associate professor at Durham University and one of the UK's leading experts on early medieval archaeology. He and his team have carried out an extensive survey of Lindisfarne in association with the not-for-profit company Dig Ventures.

This year marks the final season of a 10-year project exploring the archaeology of the major Anglo-Saxon monastic site of Lindisfarne. With considerable analysis still to be done, it is already clear that the digs and other work done over this period are yielding much detail to clarify the interpretation of the known history of the monastery and make sense of items found in earlier, more limited, digs.

The importance of the site arises from Lindisfarne's status as a major cradle of Christianity in England, starting from the year 635 when King Oswald of Northumbria summoned the monk Aidan from Iona to be bishop and granted the monks Lindisfarne as the site to found a monastery. In the 670s the monk Cuthbert joined the monastery and, as Prior, reformed the way of life to follow the religious practices of Rome rather than Ireland. Cuthbert died in 687 and became the subject of a cult, making Lindisfarne a major pilgrimage centre. In about 710-725 the Lindisfarne Gospels were produced showing the monastery to be a centre of Christian learning. However, the island came under threat from Scottish and Viking raiding parties, and in 793 Vikings made a devastating attack on the monastery. Eventually, in the 830s, the Lindisfarne monks retreated inland to Norham on the Scottish border and in 875 decided to leave Lindisfarne for good. A Christian community did, however, survive on Lindisfarne and the burial ground shows evidence of Christian burials to the late 10th century despite the Viking turmoil.



This history of a very turbulent period provides the background for the present project which, in ten years of digs, has added considerably to the knowledge of buildings, artefacts and general way of life. A particularly interesting aspect was the discovery of activity even before the construction of the monastery. The investigation of the burial ground has been important and complex since the graves have proved to be numerous, multi-use and spread over a considerable area. The use of carbon14 dating has been vital in the interpretation of findings. Artefacts of especial importance include prayer beads made from fish bones,

name stones (pictured), sacred stones and glass gaming pieces all of which enable us to gradually understand more of the way of life and interpretation of the history.

Another intriguing discovery was some bird bones identified as those of a great auk, a now long-extinct seabird. DNA testing of other bones found have enabled a greater appreciation of the many animal species, both terrestrial and maritime (the picture is of whale bone showing clear evidence of knife marks), utilised as food or



in other ways, as skins, etc. Evidence of more industrial activity, such as metal working has also been found.

In summary, David most enthusiastically covered the wide range of ways in which the project has moved on our knowledge of Lindisfarne monastery in the Anglo-Saxon period. It is difficult in a short article to do justice to it all but we hope this at least gives some impression of what was a most informative and enjoyable evening.

Finally, a note that our last meeting of 2025 is rapidly approaching. This will on Friday 28th November at 7.30 pm in Otterburn Memorial Hall. The speaker once again will be Bill Burlton, who this year will take us to *"Sri Lanka; People, Culture and Wildlife"*. This is in contrast to his talk last year on Svalbard and will be followed by our pre-Christmas get-together with highly-recommended nibbles and our Chairman's renowned mulled wine. We hope to see as many members and guests as possible there.

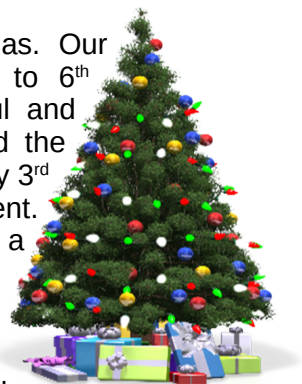
With warm wishes for Christmas and New Year! David Baines

NEWS FROM BELLINGHAM

News from St Cuthbert's: Firstly, thank you to all the volunteers who made our jumble sale in October a great success. Enormous thanks to everyone who donated items, organised the tombola and raffle, sorted jumble, set up stalls, made cakes, helped at the sale itself, made tea, tidied up and arranged the pick-up of the leftover jumble. The final total raised was an impressive £973.

We're now looking forward to Advent and Christmas. Our Christmas Tree Festival takes place from the 1st to 6th December and I know we will have some beautiful and imaginative trees. Entry to the Festival is free and the church will be open daily and until 8 pm on Wednesday 3rd December for Bellingham's Late Night Shopping Event. Organisations entering trees in the festival can make a donation which will go to a local charity.

Quickly following on from the festival repairs to the vestry window will begin – weather permitting. The gaps in the window have been making the vestry and the rest of the church very draughty for us in cold weather. The work shouldn't cause too much disruption, and the church will still be open. We had to apply for a Faculty before we could carry out the repair and we were also fortunate in being awarded a grant from the Diocese's *Net Zero* scheme towards the cost of the work.



Do come and join us for our Christmas services. There will be a Christmas concert by the North Tyne and Redewater Choral Society on the evening of 13th December in St Cuthbert's Church. The Village Carol Service on 18th December is at St Oswald's RC Church and will be followed by refreshments. On Christmas Eve there will be our usual Christingle Carol Service at 5pm and Midnight Mass at 11.15pm.

Best wishes, Cath Brennand (Churchwarden)

NEWS FROM BYRNESS AND HORSLEY

Well, the cold weather is sneaking in after a very wet and muddy November. St. Francis sometimes seems warmer in a cold snap. The more-or-less constant temperature (cold!) means that our flowers last for 3 weeks plus. However the cold also brings our wee wild mammals inside, so a long time is always spent disinfecting surfaces before our monthly service...time to get the peppermint oil out.

On Sunday 25th October, we had another visit from Bishop Helen Ann, which was lovely. The congregation was swelled by some of our Catholic friends from Otterburn, who have always supported St. Francis, and also by Moira and Jean from St. Johns. The service was thoroughly enjoyed by us all!

On 20th December at 4pm, we are having informal carols in Byrness Village Hall, led by Claire. Mulled wine, non alcoholic punch and mince pies will also be available and we hope folk will come along. There will also be music provided by Samantha and Kim Bull, so it will be a fun afternoon. Byrness Village Hall has been chosen as the venue mainly because it is warm and light, and parking in the dark at St. Francis can be a bit hairy. Last time we held our Carol Service there, we had Máire West trip and break her wrist.

In the village, Red Squirrels have been seen around the greens and along the forest ride, surprising noisy, caching their stash, and we've even had an Otter caught on door cams twice, casually trotting along South Green. It's wild up here!

At Holy Trinity last week, the funeral of Ian Roberts was held. Ian had been Churchwarden at Holy Trinity for many many years, and had also worked tirelessly for the Deanery. Ian was an historian with a vast knowledge of the area. Over 100 people attended the funeral, and it was a lovely service, with readings by Rupert and Helen Redesdale. Máire and Jonathan West, who had been good friends with Ian for a long time, delivered a warm, interesting and at times poignant eulogy, from which we learnt so much about Ian's life. It was a sad day, but a lovely celebration of a life well lived.

With all Best Wishes from Barb, Byrness

NEWS FROM CORSENSIDE

The Northumbrian Evening organised by Graham Dick was a huge success and raised £582 in total, with £241 going to the Air Ambulance and £291 to the upkeep of Corsenside Village Hall.

The clog dancing, poetry, singing, music and stories all made for a fantastic evening. Thanks to Graham, the Village Hall Committee, and all who contributed to the delicious feast and laden tables!

On Saturday 29th November, the Village Hall is hosting a table-top sale between 10am and 2pm. We hope to have the company of Rachel Raine and her rescued Shetland ponies (weather permitting, of course). There will be an opportunity to donate to the cause, and to stroke and pet the ponies. The table-top sale is always a popular event, and is an excellent opportunity to purchase unique and unusual Christmas gifts.

On Saturday 30th November, in Corsenside Village Hall, there is an opportunity to see a matinee performance of *Rumpelstiltskin and Other Equally 'Grimm' Tales* by the Northumberland Theatre Company. The play is aimed at families, so there is something to enjoy for adults and children alike. You can get your tickets at the West Woodburn Village Shop or you can reserve a seat and pay on the door by contacting Chris, the Parish Clerk, on 07737 518867 or by emailing her at corsensideparishclerk@hotmail.com. Tickets are heavily subsidised by Corsenside Parish Council and the Northumberland Theatre Company themselves, and this has enabled the ticket prices to remain very low this year. Thanks to this help, tickets cost just £7 per adult and £3.50 per child and you can even get a Family ticket for £17, which allows a maximum of 2 adults and 2 children. Please note that all children must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

On 2nd November, Claire Maxim led a reflective service for All Souls' Day at All Saints' Church in West Woodburn. The sermon was, as usual, excellent and certainly thought-provoking. She pointed out that from the day we are born, we start the process of dying - emphasising how transient life is. It was good to see Gillian Scott, Richard Virden and Ian Kitchen at the service.

Please note that on Wednesday afternoons, Corsenside Village Hall is open for cuppa and a chat from 2pm to 3.30pm.

On December 21st, there will be a carol service at All Saints', West Woodburn, led by Claire Maxim. Keep your eyes open for confirmation of the times (it is expected that it will start at 7.30pm, but this has yet to be confirmed).

On 9th November, Michael Nixon conducted a lovely service of Remembrance at Corsenside. It was good to hear the readings from John's Gospel and the Letter of James read by Richard Virden. Thank you to Andrea Ashcroft, Angela Wilson, Freddy McComb and Angela Newton for their invaluable catering skills

which were much appreciated by the 17 people who repaired to the Village Hall after the service. Thanks also to Peter Scott, Neil Traill, and Hugo Remnant for the part they played during the service. Afterwards, on *Songs of Praise*, there was a heart-warming rendition of 'Bring Him Home' from *Les Miserables*, which left me in flood of tears.

In the meantime, please accept my every good wish for a peaceful Christmas and a Happy and healthy New Year!

With all best wishes, from Diana

NEWS FROM ELSDON

Our traditional Carol service had a lovely surprise a few years back when a video was played. It's called '*Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*' by the Skit Guys and you can watch it on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLcTLCCpI5A> or by scanning the QR code below if you're on your phone (Note from the Editor: I've tried it and it works!):



So just how radical can we be with our 'traditional' services? Perhaps that's the wrong question and perhaps the right question should be: *How can we realise how radical our traditional services are?*

Our traditional carol service contains a radical, earth-shattering message of prophecies fulfilled. Not just one or two prophecies either - our traditional readings from Isaiah 9 verses 6 & 7 and Micah 5 verses 2-4 merely scratch the surface. There are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament of the Bible which are fulfilled by Jesus's life. Wow!

Our traditional carol service contains several the repeating phrase "Do not fear". The angel says this to Mary in Luke 1 v26-38 and later many angels say this to the shepherds in Luke 2 v8-19. Christmas is not usually associated with fear, but I'm sure if I encountered an angel, I would be terrified! Apparently the phrase, "Do not fear" occurs 365 times in the Bible, one for each day of the year. In a world where underneath the surface we all have a lot to fear, this is a surprising and strong message.

Finally, there is the defiance of a candlelit service, despite all health and safety regulations. Nothing can stop God's light banishing the darkness, not even the darkest days of winter. The message of '*light in the darkness*' in the traditional reading from John 1 verses 1-14 is an eternal word remaining strong throughout the centuries.

This year's candlelit Christmas Carol service in St. Cuthbert's Church Elsdon is at 6.30pm on **Sunday 14th December**. Come along prepared for the radical, traditional message of Christmas, with all its familiar surprises.

We finish with mince pies and mulled wine. Why not bring a friend - remember to dress warmly, though!

With all best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

from Helen Howie.

NEWS FROM FALSTONE

It is with immense sadness that I start my article this month letting you all know that recently two faithful and long-standing members of the congregation of St Peter's passed away within 5 days of each other. Jean Swailes died peacefully at home on the 28th of October and Anne Price died peacefully after a long illness on the 3rd of November.

Anne, who had until recently lived in Kielder Village was the dearly loved widow of Revd. Ivor John Price and mother of Jonathan and Beverley. Anne and I were churchwardens together for years. She taught me everything I know about being a good warden, how to light (and extinguish) the candles in the correct order (who knew there was an order??), choose appropriate hymns, lay out the altar for communion, and generally all things 'churchwardenly'! Her funeral was held at Mountsett Crematorium on the 26th of November and our love and thoughts go to her family and friends.

Jean Swailes (nee Taylor) who was known as *Auntie Jean* or *the Poppy Lady* to many folks (children and adults alike) had lived in Falstone since the age of 4. She was born in Dalbeattie in Scotland and was very proud of her Scottish roots. When her father James tragically died in an industrial accident, her mother Christina (Chrissey) and her brother Keith (then aged 12) moved to The Blackcock Inn in Falstone to live with her aunt and uncle, who ran the pub.

She met her late husband, Warren Swailes, in the 1960's - they were married in 1968 at St Peter's. Warren played the organ at St Peter's for over 50 years and the present organ was bought in memory of him in 1997. They had two children Nicola and David and always lived in Falstone.

Jean was the ultimate community-spirited volunteer and a pillar of the community. She was involved in lots of different groups in the local area. (there are photos of her volunteering, with her trusty teapot, at Kielder Winter Wonderland in 2015). She was Brown Owl for Bellingham Brownies for over 30 years, founded the Falstone Flower club with her sister-in-law Jenny, was on the tennis court and village hall committees, a member of St Peter's PCC, founded the local coffee morning, and organised the tombola stall at Falstone Border Shepherds' Show for 57 years. For many years, she coordinated

clothing collections for the Air Ambulance and was a volunteer for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal for an amazing 65 years. In 2020, she proudly received her official 60-year service medal from the Duchess of Northumberland - a moment that meant so much to her.

Jean's funeral was held at St Peter's on the 17th of November and led by Rev. Dr Claire Maxim, it was a bright and sunny day and there was standing room only in the church and even people standing outside - testament to how much Jean was loved and respected by her friends, family and the whole community. Falstone Flower Club decorated the church and thanks must go to Jenny Swailes, Katrine Anderson and Fiona Symons for their beautiful arrangements in remembrance of Jean. Richard Parkinson (a family friend) eloquently read Jean's eulogy, which had been written by Nicola and David and was a wonderful and heartfelt tribute to their Mam. Jean was buried in Falstone Cemetery next to her parents and her wake was held at The Blackcock Inn - which was very fitting, as this had been her childhood home. She will be missed by everyone who knew her - and especially by Nicola, David, daughter-in-law Jill, collie dog Pip and her beloved granddaughter Neave, aged 9, who was the absolute apple of Jean's eye. (see picture of Neave wrapped in Rev Claire's clock at Jean's funeral).



May Jean and Anne rest in peace and rise in glory with the saints.

This year's Remembrance Service was well attended. Falstone Toddlers made a wonderful banner and the church was decorated inside and out with knitted poppies. Neave Swailes and Meghan Dixon (aged 7) read out a beautiful poem about poppies. Rev. Mike Wilkinson led the service and the newly installed war memorial, which was moved from the URC earlier this year, was dedicated. £115 was donated for the RBL poppy appeal.

St Peter's was once again involved in the opening of Kielder Winter Wonderland where the children were told the real meaning of Christmas in story form, they made Christingles while they waited for Santa Klaus and his reindeer to arrive. Donations were collected for the Children's Society.

St Peter's will be holding its annual nativity/carol/Christingle service on Christmas Eve at 4pm. This is, dare I say, always a joyous, rather chaotic and noisy service as the hand-held musical instruments will be out in force and the children are always SUPER excitable. It is always great fun and this year, it is possible that I may be wearing a light-up tiara and fairy wings!!

This is my last article of the Meeting of the Waters in 2025, so behalf of St Peter's I would like to wish you all a happy Christmas and blessings for 2026.

The photos below were taken at the Harvest Festival Service this year in St Peter's.

Best wishes from Jill Swaile (Churchwarden)

alanswaile@aol.com 01434 240168



NEWS FROM THORNEYBURN

Some good news this month! With the weather being mild, we have managed to repair the north chancel window (next to the organ). The scaffolding is now down and it all looks good. We had an all-woman team from Iona Glass repairing the window and Derek



from Classic Masonry whose firm replaced the lintel. See the pictures of the work. Derek told me he is a churchwarden for his church at St James's Jesmond and sings in the choir and offered to bring the choir to us sometime so a plan for the summer maybe. It has been busy with maintenance tasks, and we also cleared



the gutters and downpipes which, thankfully, are all working well. We did find some flashing on the roof which had moved - although luckily, on closer inspection (by me up on the scaffolding!), it looks like a minor job and there is no sign of missing lead or major repairs. I have tasked someone to do this for us and hopefully, it should be done soon. We do however need a church and churchyard clear up before our Christmas festivities so I will be in touch soon.

We had a thought-provoking Remembrance communion service where Claire reminded us that war is always the last resort, where talking and negotiating have failed. She tasked us to ensure we continued to talk and seek understanding with all we we're in conflict or disagreement with. In this troubled world, it is everyone's job to keep talking and to prevent further polarisation. Let's all try and do this in our own lives.

The Soup and Pud social went well with about 30 there and 10 helpers (see pictures on the cover of this magazine) . As we had 7 soups and 6 puds, everyone was well fed and had a great time. Thank you to all the hard work, cooking, setting up, washing up and waiting on folks. It is very well appreciated by the community, and we got lots of great comments. We will plan another in February hopefully.

Looking forward to Advent and Christmas, the December Services will be Communion on 14th at 9am. Our Candlelit Community Carol Service on 23rd at 7pm. With readings, where Song Reivers will sing, the Ceilidh band will play, and everyone will be able to sing their favourite Carols and come together to celebrate Jesus's Birth. Afterwards Kate has invited us to the Old Rectory for mulled wine and mince pies. Then our Christmas Day Communion is on 25th at 11am. We won't be having a service on 28th December. I look forward to seeing you all at some of these services.

For January, we will have communion on Sunday 11th January at 9am, but there will be no evening service that month.

You are always welcome to come to any service, to visit the church anytime as it is always open or come and enjoy the tranquillity of our churchyard and reflection area.

Caroline Waitt (Churchwarden)

caroline.waitt@btinternet.com 01434 240210

A BRIEF WORD FROM THE EDITOR

This month's cover photos were provided by Caroline Waitt and were taken at the Soup and Pud Social Event, held at Tarsset Village Hall.

If you have anything you would like to see included in the magazine (articles, cartoons, news, photos, events, birthdays, etc.), please feel free to email it to: **sarahMOTW@btinternet.com**

Please note that the next issue of the magazine will not be until February 2026, so in the meantime, I hope you all have a lovely Christmas and New Year, however you choose to celebrate the season!

The copy deadline for the next issue is:
MONDAY 12th JANUARY 2026

Please note: Any views, thoughts or opinions expressed within this magazine are those of the authors/contributors and do not officially represent those of the wider church or of any other group or individual.

NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE MEETING OF THE WATERS

We would like to say a huge thank you for supporting this publication. If you are an occasional reader and would like a regular copy, please contact your local distributor below - the annual sub is just £7 for 11 issues. If you would just like an occasional copy, feel free to pick one up at your local church, where a donation in the box would be gratefully received and very much appreciated!

A monthly electronic version of the magazine is also available and if you would like to be added to the online subscription list, please email sarahmotw@btinternet.com directly, and she will add you to the list.

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Email: revclairemaxim@gmail.com

Please note: Friday is my day off and I will respond to any queries when I return to work

Area Dean

The Revd Canon Sarah Lunn

Chollerton Vicarage, Hexham, NE46 4TF

Tel: 01434 681 721

Email: sarahlunn63@gmail.com

OTHER LOCAL CLERGY

Bellingham MURC

Revd Roberta Ritson

42 Woodcroft Road, Wylam. NE41 8DH

Tel: 01661 852702

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Cath Brennand

Tel: 01434 220631

Email: cath.brennand@btinternet.com

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Tel: 01434 240337

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