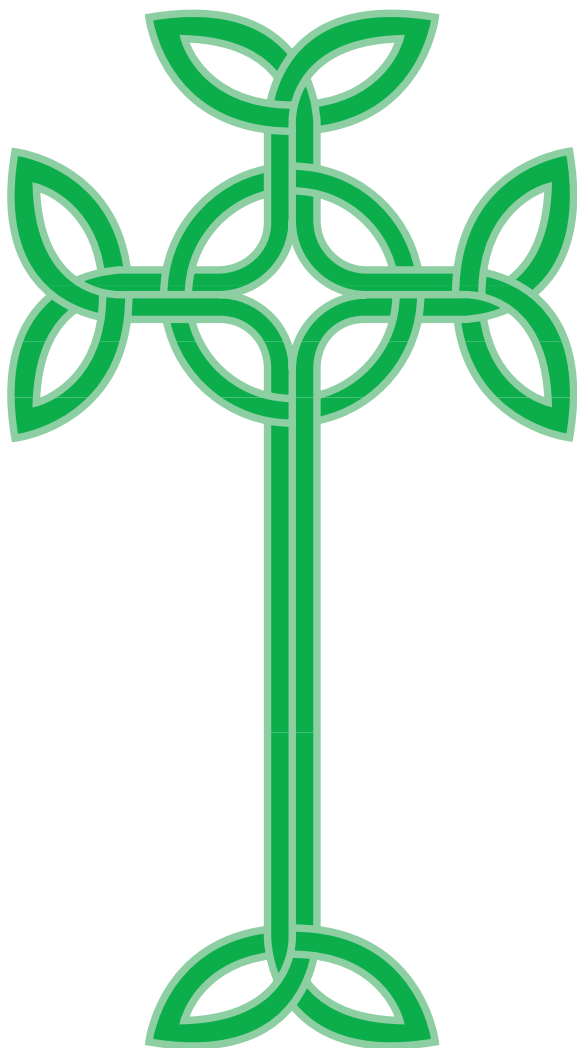


THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE
OF THE PARISH OF
HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING



St. Michael
AND ALL ANGELS

SEPTEMBER 2025

£1

SIGNPOST

THE PARISH CHURCH OF HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING

MINISTRY TEAM

Rector

Rev'd John Barron,
The Rectory, 5 Lingfield, Houghton-le-Spring,
Tyne & Wear, DH5 5QA.
Tel: (0191) 584 7657

We enjoy and benefit from the ministry of a number of retired clergy at St Michael's.

Readers

Susan Elsey (Reader)
Email: Suelsey2@gmail.com

Mrs. Ros Pickersgill (Reader)
Tel: (0191) 584 5642

Mrs. Anne Clappison (Reader)
Tel: (0191) 584 7533

Church Wardens

Mrs. Rita Turnbull
Tel: (0191) 584 1954

Mr. Alastair Bradley
Tel: (0191) 584 1455

Assistant Church Wardens

Mr. Simon Hardy
Tel: 07854 411884

Mr. Brian Scott
Tel: 07778 577898

Officers of the Parochial Church Council

Angela Slater (Secretary)
Tel: (0191) 584 2036

Mrs. Susan Bradley (Treasurer)
Tel: (0191) 584 1455

Organist & Director of Music

Mr. George Peebles
Tel: (0191) 584 1628

Verger

Mr. David Turnbull
Tel: (0191) 584 1954

Safeguarding

Alison Young (Safeguarding Officer)
Tel: 07532 036026

Mrs. Kathleen Close (DBS Officer)
Tel: (0191) 584 0353

Space4

76 Newbottle Street
Next to Houghton Library
Twitter @space4
Facebook houghtonspace4
Tel: (0191) 512 0676

Church Website

Our website contains information on most aspects of church life.
www.stmichaels-hls.org.uk

The Friends of Houghton Parish Church Trust

Contact: Mr. George Peebles, Membership
Secretary on (0191) 584 1628 for information and application forms.

St Michaels and All Angels Mothers Union

The Mothers Union meets on the last Monday of every month at 2pm in the Kepier Hall.

We welcome new members with open arms and if you require any further information please contact:-

Joan Beattie Tel: (0191) 512 6032
Sheila Wynne Tel: 07916 629043
Anne Todd Tel: (0191) 584 1032

UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS

Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers

Contact: Sheila Wynne, Tel: 07916629043

Beavers, Cubs and Scouts

Contact: Steve Gibson, Tel: 07507 161366
Website: www.1sthoughtonscouts.org.uk

REGULAR SERVICES

Our pattern of services at St Michael and All Angels over a 'normal' week:

Sun	8.30am	A shorter 'said' service of Communion.
Sun	10am	Parish Communion (a 'sung' service, with 'Young Church') (1st Sunday is 'All-age Communion').
Sun	6pm	Evening Service: 1st Sun 'Engage' – contemporary music & themed service; 2nd Sun 'Choral Evensong' – a traditional service led by our choir; 3rd Sun 'Service of Light' – a relaxed sung service; 4th Sun 'Celtic Eucharist' – 'Iona' style Communion.
Tues	7pm	Holy Communion (4th Sunday, during winter)
Thur	10am	Holy Communion with Hymns (& refreshments afterwards).

We hold a quieter service of Holy Communion on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 7pm. Our Young Church takes place during the 10am Sunday Holy Communion on the 2nd and 3rd Sunday of the month, with our All Age Service aim for the Young members of the congregation to be a part of on the 1st Sunday of the month.

Contact Information

Our website and Facebook page contain details of how to join others online for worship. We send regular updates via our church distribution list – please call us or email us if you know someone who would like to receive our email updates.

Find us online at:

website: www.stmichaels.hls.org.uk

facebook: www.facebook.com/stmichaels.hls

The Parish Office is open between 9am & 3pm on a Tuesday and 9am & 2pm Thursday. You can contact us on Tel: (0191) 512 1769. On occasions, when we need to close the 'physical' office, you can contact us between these times on Mob: 07707 043 395. You can also contact us on email or message us during the week and we will respond during opening hours:

Email: stmichaels.hls@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/stmichaels.hls

Website: www.stmichaels-hls.org.uk

For urgent issues contact Rev'd John Barron on (0191) 584 7657.

If you'd like your child to be a part of Young Church contact Clare our Young Church leader at stmichaels.youngchurch@btinternet.com

To make an appointment for 'Vestry hour' to book baptisms and weddings call the Church Office or email us. Vestry Hour usually takes place on a Monday between 6 – 7pm. You will be able to talk to the team about all your Wedding and Christening needs, whether that is booking dates, finding prices or finding out the process in more details.

ABOUT SIGNPOST

Signpost is the magazine of the Parish Church of St. Michael & All Angels Houghton-le-Spring. In addition to providing information about the life of the church, it also aims to reflect the interests of the broader community and to provide a source of local news and a forum in which matters of common concern can be raised. The Editors welcome comments and suggestions, and invite contributions. Items to be included in Signpost should be submitted to the Editors by 10th of the month (end of 1st week of the month for memorials) to ensure inclusion in the next issue. It should be noted, however, that the Editors cannot guarantee to publish material and wish to point out that items included do not necessarily reflect their views nor those of the Parochial Church Council. Editor: Malcolm Foster, Tel: 07860 250 300. Distribution: Joan Bond, Tel: (0191) 584 1031.

Circulation: 300 copies per month.

Space4

At our community project, our aim is to provide 'Space4 everyone to flourish!'

We run out of our 'Hub' (next to the library) on Newbottle Street and the Kepier Hall (behind church). You can find us on our Space4 Facebook page: www.facebook.com/HoughtonSpace4/

There's lots going on throughout the week and all are welcome:

Mon	10am-1pm	Drop in (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
Tues	10am-12noon	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall)
	10am-1pm	Drop in (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
	3.30pm-5pm	Tuesday Treat
Wed	10am-1pm	Drop in & Craft Group (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
Thur	10am-1pm	Drop in (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
Fri	10am-12noon	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall)
	10am-1pm	Drop in (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
	2pm-4pm	Cake & Chat (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
Sat	2pm-4pm	Monthly Saturday Group (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)

Other events are advertised on Facebook and in the buildings.

Our Community Foodstore is open on a Tuesday and Friday: it is for anyone in the community who wants to use it, for a donation.

Rector's Letter

I've been reflecting on the recent increase in flying England flags in our communities. While some may be flown in support of our women's rugby team, I can imagine a range of reasons for an apparent outpouring of patriotism: some of it, sadly, as a result of recent prominent anti-immigration rhetoric. While national pride and identity are essential aspects of our lives, it's crucial to consider how our Christian values can help us strike a balance between patriotism, welcoming the outsider and giving sanctuary to those fleeing danger.

Our town of Houghton-le-Spring has a rich history rooted in the life and work of Bernard Gilpin, known as the "Apostle of the North." Gilpin's message of inclusivity and providing opportunities for all serves as a reminder that our identity as Christians extends beyond earthly borders. We are called to embrace diversity and offer a welcoming hand to those who may seem different from us.



Jesus taught us about the importance of welcoming outsiders. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), we learn of a man who is robbed and left injured on the side of the road. While those who were expected to help him passed by, it was an outsider, a Samaritan, who showed compassion and helped the man in need. This parable challenges us to look beyond our own

circles and recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every person, regardless of their background. Another powerful parable that speaks to this issue is the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24). In this story, a man prepares a grand feast and invites his friends to join him. However, they all make excuses and refuse to attend. In response, the man opens his doors to the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame, ensuring that his table is filled with those who were previously excluded. This parable emphasizes the importance of reaching out to those on the margins, inviting them into our lives, and sharing the abundance God has given us.

In a world that often struggles with division, let us remember the unity we share as children of God. Our Christian identity calls us to love and serve others, embracing the diversity that enriches our communities. Furthermore, as Christians we have a responsibility to stand up for justice and equality. We can do this in a number of ways. *Educating ourselves*: learning about different cultures, religions, and identities to better understand and appreciate our diverse world. *Modelling Christ-like behaviour*: treating others with kindness, respect, and compassion, even when they hold different views. *Speaking up*: gently but firmly challenging racist or bigoted remarks or actions when we witness them; using empathy and understanding to encourage growth and change. As we celebrate our national pride, let us also strive to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all, emulating the examples set by Bernard Gilpin and Jesus.

May we continue to grow together in faith, love, and understanding, creating a community that truly reflects the values of our Christian faith.

With my prayers and very best wishes.

The Rector of Houghton-le-Spring's Message for 'The Feast' 2025

On behalf of St Michael and All Angels, the Parish Church of Houghton-le-Spring I am delighted to add my welcome to this year's Houghton Feast: a great celebration of our town's rich history, vibrant present, and promising future!

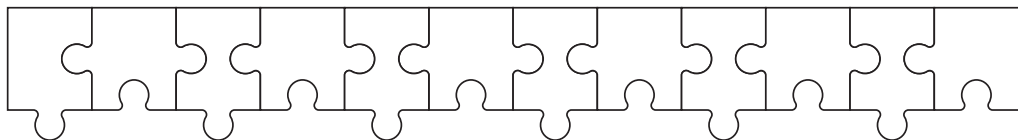
Our theme this year The Magic of Houghton allows us to reflect on the many special aspects of our local area. Houghton has a storied past, and in embracing lessons from our heritage we can truly appreciate the wonders of our town. The legacy of my predecessor Rector Bernard Gilpin, that we celebrate at Feast-time, reminds us of the importance of inclusivity and unity so evident in the stories of the warm welcome and hospitality he offered in his Rectory Garden. Gilpin's message of embracing diversity and providing opportunities for all is as relevant today as it was during his time.

As Houghton continues to evolve, we can also see the magic in our town's changing story. With recent arrivals of new families and individuals to our local area, our community becomes stronger and more diverse, enriching our culture and fostering growth. I am reminded of recent Feasts with the wonderful Ukrainian dancers dancing to the music of the Houghton Pipers and food events with delicious Bangladeshi food served alongside traditional Pies and Mushy Peas! I strongly believe that an important part of the magic of Houghton lies in our ability to embrace change while cherishing our history. We are proud of our town's heritage, and we are committed to building a bright future for all for generations to come.

As we enjoy the festivities of this year's Houghton Feast, let us remember the lessons of Bernard Gilpin and continue to promote unity, diversity, and inclusion. Together, let us ensure that the rich and evolving Magic of Houghton shines bright for years to come.

May God bless you all.

This message will be published in this year's Houghton Feast Brochure.



The Celebration Jigsaw

September Progress Report

Not far to go!

Our target was 420 pieces - and we got there! In fact, at the time of writing a magnificent 431 jigsaw pieces have been sponsored! Particular thanks go to the members of the HRUFC Boot Camp.

This month's photograph reveals that the jigsaw is almost complete - only 73 pieces remain, and that includes the four bonus pieces. So don't miss out: if you, or someone you know, would still like to sponsor a jigsaw piece, please get in touch before it's too late!

Pieces are available from Denise Hall (07896 648 857) or Dian Scott (07979 022 652) or me, Angela Slater (07931 064 891). Or catch us in Church.

Thank you for being a piece of St Michael's!

End of September total - 360 pieces...



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Hetton Town Trust

At the Hetton Centre: We have a function room available for up to 120 guests with a licensed bar, suitable for all gatherings such as **Weddings, Birthday Parties, Christenings, or Funeral Teas**, also suitable for **meetings or conferences**.

In-house catering available from our Centre Spot Café,
 open Monday - Friday 9.30am - 2pm.

Contact Kim Downing on **0191 561 6629 / 07923 239674**
 Email: **kim@hettontowntrust.co.uk**



HOUGHTON RUGBY CLUB

Dairy Lane, DH4 5BW

Function room available for Christenings and other functions Catering available if required

Contact: The Clubhouse 0191 584 1460
 Email: **houghtonrugbyclub@outlook.com**

Celebrating 200 years of the public railroads

Two hundred years ago, on 27th September 1825, the world's first public railway opened. It was the Stockton and Darlington Railway in north-east England.

Inspired and supported by a prominent Quaker, Edward Pease, and backed financially by many Quakers nationally, it has been described as “the great theatre of railway operations”, sparking the explosion of railways across the world and boosting the industrial revolution. About 20 miles of the original 25 mile stretch still exist, now as part of the Northern Rail line.

The technical expertise behind it all came from George Stephenson, an extraordinary self-taught engineer whose expertise, which originated in the mines, stretched beyond railways. His Locomotion No 1, built for the Stockton and Darlington line, was the first steam locomotive to carry passengers on a public rail line. He worked with his 18-year-old son Robert, who is known for creating the more famous Rocket four years later.

The first Stockton and Darlington train – which in fact ran from Old Etherley Colliery, some distance north of Darlington – was led by a man on horseback with a flag. The motto of the organising committee was “At private risk for public service”.

With brakemen stationed between the wagons, the train reached 12 to 15mph and was greeted by an estimated 10,000 people at the Darlington junction, where some passengers left and more boarded. The average speed was calculated at about 8mph. Six wagons of coal were given to the poor by way of celebration.

A nine-month festival in County Durham and the Tees Valley – with artwork, spectacles and community events – is marking the bicentenary of the opening of the railway.

As a tribute to his life and achievements, a bronze statue of George Stephenson was unveiled at Chesterfield railway station in 2005. An earlier statue stands in Neville Street, Newcastle.

More info at:

<https://railway200.co.uk>, <https://www.railwaymuseum.org.uk>

What is Theology?

Theology is the study of the nature of God and religious belief. There are different kinds of theology used in the study and understanding of Christianity. Our Western society tends to focus on logic and reasoning.

Jesus can be seen as a metaphorical theologian, which means he used one thing to stand for, or symbolise, something else. He used parables rather than logic and reasoning to do this.

Metaphors can help us to conjure up pictures and ideas which words alone cannot always convey to us. That old saying 'A picture paints a thousand words' comes to mind.

With this system it is possible to put ourselves in the place of the people in the stories and parables that Jesus told and we need to look at the circumstances from that perspective and culture.

In the parable of the prodigal son, in the culture of the Middle East at that time, if a son asked his father for his inheritance he was basically

saying: "drop dead". The father would be expected to retaliate and throw him out of the house. So, if we stand inside this parable as though it is a house with windows, each one we look out of shows us something different.

We can look at the behaviour of the father, the younger son, the older son and even the gentile employer who did not pay his pig herders so they could feed themselves.

What are all of these trying to convey to us about God himself and the way he deals with us?

We see Jesus as the true vine, the resurrection and the life, the good shepherd, the light of the world, the bread of life.

King David sees God as his rock, fortress, shield, stronghold and horn of salvation.

Metaphors to help us see the nature of God are woven throughout the scriptures.

References: Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes by Kenneth E. Bailey



Prayer for September

God's whisper to me

God whispered in my ear one day
And said how it would be
I shrugged and turned away and said
"No way, You can't mean me!"

Next time it wasn't a whisper
He spoke quite loud and clear
He had a job for me to do
He said "have faith, don't fear".

So I took the challenge offered
But how should I begin?
This task was much too big for me
I had to trust in Him.

When the problems overwhelmed me
And I couldn't see my way
I'd put my faith and hope in Him
Fall to my knees and pray.

And my God, He never failed me
Through good days and through bad
He filled me with a courage
I never knew I had.

So if you feel God calling you
Don't doubt and answer "no"
He knows the plans He has for you
Step out in faith...and go!

By Mallie Sharpe

FROM THE REGISTERS

Funerals

24 July	Ian Kenneth Tait Houghton-le-Spring	Age 60
25 July	Leanne Bainbridge East Rainton	Age 44
28 July	Bill Hiley Houghton-le-Spring	Age 86
7 Aug	Lesley Hughes Houghton-le-Spring	Age 91
15 Aug	Marie Bell Houghton-le-Spring	Age 58
27 Aug	Violet Daglish Houghton-le-Spring	Age 93
1 Sep	Joseph Lambton Houghton-le-Spring	Age 92

Memorials

Elizabeth Bulmer

Baptisms

17 Aug	Jack Harrison Wardle
17 Aug	Nina Rose Carr
17 Aug	Willow Ella Hartness
24 Aug	Lavinah Berry
24 Aug	Harrison Edward Wallace

Marriage

16 Aug	Richard Hall & Philippa Elsey
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THANK YOU

Jean and Ken would like to thank all those who dropped in to see us on 16th August as well as all those who sent cards etc. for my 80th birthday.

With the help of our family and friends, Jean had an amazing celebration.

The Friends of Houghton Parish Church Trust received £1,070 from the occasion which was fantastic.

Saint for September

25th Sept – St Ceolfrith (d 716) - baking and Bibles

Ceolfrith is a good patron saint for anyone who has studied hard for their profession, is strong in the face of tragedy, and who can also offer some homely care to others in need.

This well-loved abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow came from a noble Northumbrian family, and was ordained at Ripon when he was just 27. He travelled to Canterbury and Icanho (in East Anglia) where he studied ecclesiastical and monastic practices. But back at Ripon the monks soon came to appreciate him for another good reason: Ceolfrith was an outstanding cook. They asked him to be the monastery's baker, and he agreed.

In time Ceolfrith was moved on to Wearmouth, and then in 682, when the monastery at nearby Jarrow was founded, Ceolfrith became abbot. It was here that disaster struck, when a plague killed all of the monks who could sing or read. Only Ceolfrith and the boy Bede were left alive. It would have been so easy to flee that empty house of death, but instead, Ceolfrith and the young Bede faithfully stayed on, because they believed God had called them to be there. Soon Jarrow prospered once more, and by 689 Ceolfrith was made abbot of both Wearmouth and Jarrow.

Ceolfrith seems to have been a kindly and energetic leader. During his rule 600 monks joined the monastery, the library was doubled, and the endowments increased. But Ceolfrith's biggest legacy to history came when he commissioned from his own scriptoria three Pandects (complete Bibles in single volumes) in uncial script. One still survives today, as the Codex Amiatinus, an enormous volume in the Bibiloteca Laurenziana in Florence. It is the oldest surviving complete Latin Bible in one volume.

A kindly baking abbot who also happened to leave us the earliest complete Latin Bible – not a bad combination of skills!

Publication of Durham Diocese' Independent Safeguarding Audit

An independent audit has praised a robust and proactive approach to safeguarding across the Diocese of Durham, within Durham Cathedral and at parish level.

The intensive audit, conducted by the INEQE Safeguarding Group, highlighted a “growing sense that safeguarding is becoming deeply embedded in practice.” In a newly-published report, the auditors acknowledged the strong and compassionate leadership of the Acting Bishop of Durham and the Dean of Durham, while recognising the key role of all safeguarding officers and other key players. Commissioned by the Archbishops' Council and overseen by the Church of England's National Safeguarding Team (NST), the audit assesses safeguarding arrangements against National Safeguarding Standards and is being carried out in every diocese and cathedral.

The auditors concluded that people in the Diocese of Durham feel confident in raising safeguarding concerns without fear or reprisal. The dedication of Parish Safeguarding Officers, who serve on the frontline of church safeguarding, was praised, with the level of training and support they receive described as good. They commented on the ‘optimism’ of PSOs for the future with strengths across several key areas, including in safer recruitment, the use of the Parish Dashboard and the active promotion of awareness-raising activities. The report recognised the financial constraints upon the Diocese and Cathedral, but indicated that increasing professional capacity within safeguarding support was a key area for improvement, which if addressed, would build upon the considerable progress made so far.

The Right Reverend Sarah Clark, Acting Bishop of Durham, said: “It is vital that our churches and parishes are safe and welcoming places for everyone. It is reassuring that the Audit Team has given this vote of confidence in our existing safeguarding practices and also in the support we provide for victims and survivors. While this is an important step on our journey of continuous growth in our safeguarding culture and practise we are absolutely committed to further improvement, welcoming the recommendations of the Audit report which we accept in full. I will work with the Diocesan Board of Finance trustees to implement the recommendations without delay. I thank the Audit Team for their attentive, robust and fair engagement throughout the process.”

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer Beth Miller said: “The findings of the independent audit are testimony to the commitment our parishes have to safeguarding and the importance they place on embedding a healthy safeguarding culture in the local context. This is in no small part due to the work and dedication of our amazing Parish Safeguarding Officers. I personally wish to extend my thanks to them and everyone across the Diocese for their engagement in the audit process.”

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

*Green Tomato
Chutney*

- 1 lb. green tomatoes
- 1 lb. onions
- 1 lb. any firm tart apples
- 1 lb. brown sugar
- 1 pint malt vinegar
- ½ teaspoon mixed spice
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 ounces salt

Method

Finely chop the tomatoes, apples and onions. Put them in a bowl and sprinkle with the salt. Cover and leave somewhere cool overnight.

Strain off the resulting salty juice and discard. Put the remains of the onion tomato, apple mix into a pan and add the vinegar, spice, mustard and pepper. Bring to the boil and simmer for about 1 1/2 hours, stirring occasionally.

You will know when it is ready because the chutney will start to become 'thick' in texture.

Turn off the heat and leave it in the pan to cool. Once it is at room temperature, then decant it into clean storage jars, seal and put to one side for use.

This can be eaten immediately after cooking, but you will find that the flavour improves if left for a few weeks in the jars before eating.

If you think it's a good idea to share your recipes with our readership, please forward them to emme0707@gmail.com. Thank you.

The Month Ahead... September

1	Mon	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		6.00 pm	Vestry hour (call Parish Office for appointment)
		7.00 pm	Rehearsal for Baptism Families
2	Tues	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		1.15 pm	'Light' – Drop In Bereavement Group (The Hub, Newbottle Street)
3	Wed	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
4	Thur	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice (Choir Vestry)
5	Fri	9.30 am	Stay & Play (Kepier Hall, until 11.15 am)
		9.30 am	Community Food Store (Kepier)
		2.00 pm	Cake & Chat (Hub, Newbottle Street)
6	Sat	2.00 pm	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
7	Sun	Twelfth Sunday after Trinity	
		8.30 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church & Facebook)
		6.00 pm	Service of Light (in Church)
8	Mon	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		4.00 pm	Community Food Store (Kepier)
		6.00 pm	Vestry hour (call Parish Office for appointment)
9	Tues	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		2.00 pm	Mothers' Union 'Rise up' Service (Lumley Church)
10	Wed	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
11	Thur	10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice (Choir Vestry)
12	Fri	9.30 am	Stay & Play (Kepier Hall, until 11.15 am)
		9.30 am	Community Food Store (Kepier)
		2.00 pm	Cake & Chat (Hub, Newbottle Street)
14	Sun	Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity/Holy Cross Day	
		8.30 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church & Facebook)
		6.00 pm	Choral Evensong (in Church)
15	Mon	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		4.00 pm	Community Food Store (Kepier)
		6.00 pm	Vestry hour (call Parish Office for appointment)

16	Tues	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
17	Wed	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
18	Thur	10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice (Choir Vestry)
19	Fri	9.30 am	Stay & Play (Kepier Hall, until 11.15 am)
		9.30 am	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall)
		2.00 pm	Cake & Chat (Hub, Newbottle Street)
21	Sun	Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity/St Matthew	
		8.30 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Special All-Age Holy Communion (in Church & Facebook) followed by Teddy Bear's Picnic – Bring & Share Brunch
		12.30 pm	Baptism
		6.00 pm	Celtic Eucharist
22	Mon	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		4.00 pm	Community Food Store (Kepier)
		6.00 pm	Vestry hour (call Parish Office for appointment)
23	Tues	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		7.00 pm	Holy Communion (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		7.30 pm	PCC (Hub, Newbottle Street)
24	Wed	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
25	Thur	10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice (Choir Vestry)
26	Fri	9.30 am	Stay & Play (Kepier Hall, until 11.15 am)
		9.30 am	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall)
		2.00 pm	Cake & Chat (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		2.00 pm	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
28	Sun	Patronal Festival	
		8.30 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church & Facebook)
		6.00 pm	Reflective Service (in Church)
29	Mon	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		4.00 pm	Community Food Store (Kepier)
		6.00 pm	Vestry hour (call Parish Office for appointment)
30	Tues	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		12.45 pm	Stay & Play (Kepier Hall, until 2.30pm)
		3.30 pm	Tuesday Treat (Hub, Newbottle Street)

General Synod calls for a funding of palliative care instead of 'unworkable and unsafe' assisted suicide law

General Synod has called on the Government to improve funding for "desperately needed" palliative care, rather than putting vulnerable people at risk through "unworkable and unsafe" legislation to introduce assisted suicide.

Members of the Synod recently backed a call by the Bishop of London for the Government to increase funding for palliative care and palliative care research to enable people to live their lives in full until they die. The debate heard speeches opposing a change in the law and backing increased funding for palliative care from a range of different Synod members including clergy who work in hospice care, NHS consultant surgeons, GPs and a psychiatrist.

Bishop Sarah Mullally, who is a former Chief Nursing Officer for England, said she was "deeply concerned" by the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, which would legalise assisted suicide, being brought by Kim Leadbeater Bill MP. And she called on General Synod members to pray and to "engage" with peers in the House of Lords as the Bill goes to the House of Lords.

She told the Synod the Bill was "unsafe and unworkable" and would put vulnerable groups at risk, including terminally ill people who cannot access the end-of-life care they need.

"Successive governments have failed to reduce inequalities in health," she said. "These inequalities mean that some people will have up to 20 fewer good years in health than others and certain groups face persistently worse health outcomes than others. These inequalities are also pronounced at the end of life, with only one in four people who need end-of-life care being able to access it, and there continues to widespread misunderstanding and distrust of palliative care. It is into this context that the Terminally Ill Adults Bill is being proposed. So, with only a third of all hospice care being funded by the NHS, the proposals are accompanied by a government commitment to fund in full an assisted suicide service should the bill be passed. Rather than funding assisted dying, the Government should be funding palliative care and palliative care research to enable people to live their lives to the full until they die."

Bishop Sarah said the Government's own equality impact assessment recognised that some vulnerable people may choose an "assisted" death either because they cannot access the care that they need, or because they may feel pressure to end their lives due to the cost of the care.

The Magic of Houghton Map

your chance to be a part of ‘Stitching our Stories’

At this year's Houghton Feast, the "Magic of Houghton" Map is a unique and creative collaboration celebrating the past, present, and future of our beloved Houghton-le-Spring community. Inspired by this year's Feast theme "The Magic of Houghton", we're going to create a fabric map of Houghton-le-Spring and including our favourite 'magical' places in and around the town. Where did your most magical memories and stories happen? It could be something big like the house you grew up in or where you first met your best friend, or something ordinary like the place you had an amazing chocolate brownie, or you stopped to say hello to a very friendly cat! We're inviting people from across our community to come together to stitch together a map of Houghton and mark our personal stories into the Map. Together we'll create a vibrant picture of Houghton, representing the different places and events that make up our collective identity and capture something of 'The Magic of Houghton'.

We'd love for YOU to be part of this and for YOUR stories to be part of the Magic of Houghton Map. Anyone can be a part, all you need is a willingness to join in: we'll teach adults and children the very simple stitches we'll be sewing. To make this as easy as possible for anyone who wants to be a part of the project we're going to have regular times when we'll be working on the Map in St Michael's church and at our 'Space4' Hub next to the Library on Newbottle Street. It's going to be really easy for you to visit the Map and add your memories as it's being created.

Please get in touch and let us know how you can be involved in this exciting project. Let's stitch our stories together and create something that truly celebrate the 'Magic of Houghton'.

For more information or to let us know you'd like to be involved please contact Claire Cullingworth on 07968 946011 or email Claire@ragbagmending.co.uk. You can also find more of Claire's projects under the name Ragbag Mending on Facebook and Instagram.

Evening Chronicle The Northern Echo

4th

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THE GREAT DAILY OF THE NORTH

87p

*Snippets from the Evening Chronicle and The Northern Echo
which you may have missed.*

North East stream otters and fish have returned to is like ‘looking into an aquarium’

Otters are now a regular sight on the Rainton Burn, as are trout and freshwater shrimp.

A stream where otters, fish and birds have returned to in recent years is like “looking into an aquarium”, says the man whose garden it runs through. When Dave Ford moved into his home in Houghton-le-Spring 20 years ago, the only creature he saw on the Rainton Burn was the occasional duck.

In fact, Dave was more likely to be clearing rubbish from the stream and his garden than appreciating the wildlife. However, two decades on and otters, trout and heron can regularly be spotted on the burn.

Dave told ChronicleLive: “I first started seeing the fish maybe ten years ago. Gradually, there were more of them.

“It’s quite interesting, they come late spring and early autumn and they just suddenly appear. About five or six years ago I saw the first otter, which believe it or not, was pulling an adult male mallard under the water - they’ll eat anything they can get a hold of!”

77-year-old Dave puts the return of the wildlife down to the improvement in water quality in the stream. Several years ago, he was approached by Northumbrian Water about putting a data-gathering monitor in the stream in his garden.

The solar-powered monitors, which are around the size of a small suitcase, measures a series of elements in the watercourse every 15 minutes and help teams to respond quicker to any problems or issues. So far, 31 monitors have been installed in areas including Houghton-le-Spring and Rainton, and over the next four years, 390 more will be deployed in locations from North Northumberland to North Yorkshire.

It is hoped that the scheme will help protect local rivers, streams and becks; and that in turn that will encourage wildlife to return - as appears to have happened in the Ariston Burn. Dave continued: “It’s fantastic, I’ve always been interested in nature.

“In fact, I waste an awful lot of time just standing looking because the stream is quite shallow, but there are two parts which are quite deep and that’s where the fish gather. On a sunny day, it’s like looking into an aquarium.”

Northumbrian Water chiefs say the “vital” data gathered in Dave’s garden helps them understand the quality of the stream, as they monitor for any impact from storm overflows as well as issues like misconnections or local pollution from other sources. The further rollout of monitors is a £51m investment that comes as part of the company’s wider £1.7b planned spend over the next five years to improve the wastewater network and health of the local environment.

Richard Warneford, wastewater director at Northumbrian Water, said: “It’s fantastic to see the wildlife returning in these areas. We’re very passionate about the environment, and we’re really proud to be part of this project along with the communities in our region, as well as our partners.”

90s pop icons Vengaboys to headline huge Halloween festival in the North East

We Like To Party stars Vengaboys have been announced as the first act for a Halloween festival in the North East.

- If, when it comes to a Halloween party, you’d prefer a hearty serving of nostalgia rather than being scared out of your wits, it’s been announced that the Vengaboys will headline a huge festival in the North East at the end of October. So prepare to get your best fancy dress costume on and dance away to hits like We Like To Party and Boom Boom Boom Boom.
- If you’re more excited about Halloween being on the horizon, never fear, we’ve got you covered as well. Over the next few weeks we’ll be bringing up updates on the spooktacular events happening in the region this year and one of those is definitely the Halloween Vibes festival. which will be taking over the Sunderland Live Arena in Rainton Meadows on Friday, October 31.

Following on from the success of Summer Vibes in July, which saw sets from the likes of DJ Sammy, Bongo’s Bingo, Tom Zanetti and Gareth Gates, Halloween Vibes looks set to unite a whole host of pop and dance icons and at the top of the bill are Vengaboys. We don’t want to make anyone feel old here, but it’s now been 27 years since the European collective made their UK chart debut with Up and Down.

After that single made the top 5, the hits kept coming thick and fast for Vengaboys, with We Like To Party and Sha-la-la-la-la making the top five and Boom Boom Boom Boom and We’re Going to Ibiza both making number 1. All those songs are bound to be on their setlist for Halloween Vibes and, if you fancy being there to see them, tickets are already on sale from Skiddle, priced just £16.75.

As well as live music and DJ sets on stage, Sunderland Live Arena will be home to a wealth of food stalls and plenty of Halloween trick and treats to mark the occasion in style.

On Retreat with Gather

Gather is a lay-led initiative initially started in Teesdale. It is described as a “roaming moveable church community” which blends together different rural spaces. It has oversight from the Rev. Canon Eileen Harrop, Priest in Charge at St. Mary’s Church, Gainford and St. Andrew’s Church Winston and has a joint leadership team led by Tom Deakin. They blend together diverse rural spaces by seamlessly transitioning between indoor and outdoor environments. Upon reading about an up and coming three day Retreat starting from the 18th July to be put on by Gather up in the Hadrians Wall area in Northumberland I was inspired to give this a go. The second day, which, coincidentally, was my birthday, included a pilgrimage walk around the Hadrians wall area. I had twenty years experience of walking with Ramblers which had to cease over five years ago due to arthritis in my right hip and a subsequent hip replacement operation. So I knew this would be a challenge. I dug my boots out and after giving them a clean and applying water proofing to them I tried them on and they were fine.

So on July the 18th off I went arriving at the Sill Youth Hostel about 5.00 PM. Shortly after I arrived Tom Deakin who would be leading the pilgrimage arrived. He would be in the same dormitory as myself. It is about twenty five years since I last stayed at a Youth Hostel. I had previously stayed at this one a couple of times when it was known as the Once Brewed but this was a completely new building. “Back in my day” if you wanted an evening meal it had to be ordered first thing in the morning, we just ordered our meals when we were ready to eat, sat at a table and waited about 30 minutes. Also, before people left they had to do a job, even the cleaning of toilets and wash basins had to be done. Nine people had signed up for the Retreat but there was only myself and three people from Gather, Rev. Eileen Harrop, Tom Deakin and Sheila Jones who organised the Retreat. Seven of the others had cancelled and one would be coming tomorrow just for the day. After our dinner and getting to know each other, as it was a warm evening we sat outside to go through the weekends itinerary.

The following morning we met up for breakfast, a choice of continental or full English cooked breakfast, Sheila ordered the packed lunches. I am on a gluten free diet so had brought some gluten free bread. However, I need not have bothered as the Hostel provided gluten free bread for my packed lunch. Following breakfast it was time to get kitted up. Sarah Fells joined us for the day. It was a perfect day for walking, Warm and sunny but not too hot. Tom led the walk, I had two walking poles as I knew I would need them. We stopped several times for a bible reading and prayers led by Tom. We hadn’t walked long when we hit our first hurdle, well, a hurdle for me. We had to climb over a locked gate. When it came my turn it was, shall we say, challenging, Two people at the back and two at the front trying to get me over. The main problem was getting my left leg over. Anyway, we eventually managed. We walked over to the long lamented sight of the Sycamore Gap, a very sad sight indeed. It is now fenced off. At least the miscreants are now under lock and key. Our route took us to Housteads Roman Fort. We had a look around the Visitor Centre. We arrived back at the Sill about 2.30. Others in the group went to look around an

arts and crafts exhibition in the Hostel Visitor Centre but I declined going back to get changed. When I met up with the group they had been kind enough to buy me a birthday card. I thanked them with a group hug. We joined by the Rev. Canon David Glover, the Rector of Hexham Abbey who led a talk called Living Stones. This took the form of three bible passages, John 2.13-22: Jesus cleanses the Temple, Matthew 16.13-19: Peter's declaration about Jesus and Peter 2.4-10: Living stones, followed by questions and discussion.

The evening was spent relaxing at the Twice Brewed pub just a short walk from the hostel where we each had a meal and spent the evening reflecting on the day and getting to know each other even more.

The final day started with a short walk and an open air short service led by Eileen. We even sung a hymn. Then it was back to the hostel and a visit to the hostel coffee shop for a reflection on the weekend. Everyone thought it had gone well and we had been blessed by good weather. Sheila was presented with a gift for organising the Retreat. We finished at the back of the hostel by saying the Grace.

David Hann



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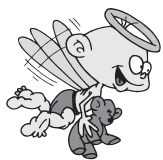
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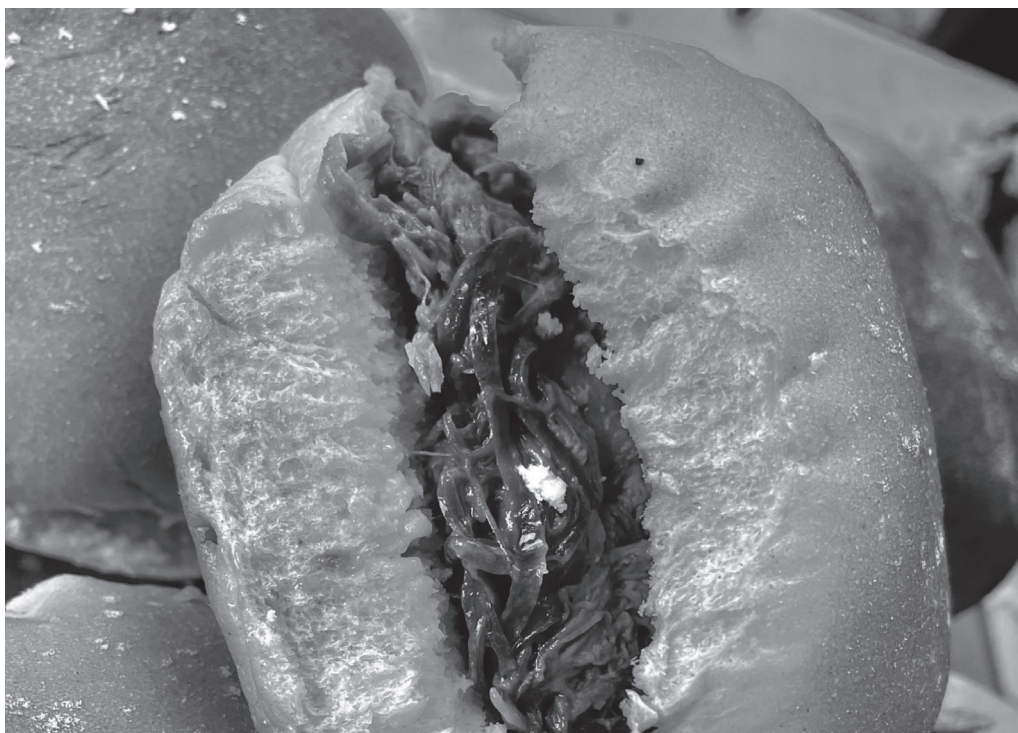
Michael's Angels

Luke 2

Go Tell It!

Luke 2:8-20 tells us the good news that the angels told the shepherds. Find the picture in each group that is different from the others and circle the letter below it. Then write the circled letters in the spaces at the bottom to find the good news. Then, go tell it!

		
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SUMMER CONCERT 2025

The annual summer concert was held in Church on Sunday 3rd August. The large audience arrived looking forward to an evening of beautiful music and singing and were certainly not disappointed.



The concert started with the hymn Guide me, O thou great Redeemer. Sam Scott and Carole King delighted us with a range of music showcasing their beautiful voices.

Pieces by Adam Nyberg on violin, David Clappison on guitar and Lucy Smy on flute were very much enjoyed by the appreciative audience. As always, Graham Brown enthralled us with a piece by Chopin demonstrating his amazing talent.

The first half of the concert concluded with the Church Choir singing Christ The Lord Is Risen Again, To You, I Lift My Soul and Sunshine On Leith.

Refreshments were served in the interval. The second half of the concert began with the music group playing Seek ye first the kingdom of God. Stuart Clappison played pieces on guitar, on piano June Lang performed 2 preludes by Bach and Carole and Nikki played a flute duet.

Songs from Michael Beck and Rector John showcased their vocal talents. The Gilpin Singers sang Pure Imagination, Holding Out For Hero and Memory. The concert finished with Jerusalem and the National Anthem.

Thanks must go to George for his commitment to the beautiful music we all enjoy in Church and to Nikki for her hard work in conducting the Church Choir and the Gilpin Singers and making the concert run smoothly.

We must also thank everyone who worked in the background preparing for the concert. Finally, thank you to everyone who attended, your support is very much appreciated. The retiring collection raised £571, which will enable us to support and encourage our music traditions at St. Michael's.

Dian Scott

150 years of the Keswick Convention

An iconic Christian convention is celebrating 150 years this year. From the humble beginnings of a vicar holding a meeting on his vicarage lawn back in 1875, the Keswick Convention now runs a year-round Christian teaching ministry and attracts 15,000 to its annual three-week summer convention.

The Keswick Convention was the brainchild of Canon Thomas Harford-Battersby, Vicar of St John's Keswick. He had attended a Christian conference in Oxford, and found it life changing. "Christ was revealed to me so powerfully and sweetly as the present Saviour in His all sufficiency." And later he added: "I found He was all I wanted: I shall never forget it... How it humbled me and what peace it brought."

Harford-Battersby wanted to share this joy in Christ with others. So, with the help of a friend, he erected a tent on his vicarage lawn that summer and simply invited local people to come along.

Even that first year, it was a success. Over the week, nearly 400 people attended. And in the following years, more people came. Hundreds, thousands of them, from many denominations, eager to learn more about the Bible. Within a few years of its starting, Christians all over the world were making an annual pilgrimage to the little Lake District town, to hear the best Bible teachers that were available.

Some highlights along the way:

1875 - first convention, in St John's vicarage garden in Keswick

1901 - the first marquee was erected on the Skiddaw Street site

1969 - the second week of convention was started, aimed more at families

1997 - the Rawnsley Hall in Keswick was bought, to extend youth ministry

2001 - the third week of the convention was launched

2015 - the Pencil Mill in Keswick was acquired, and it is now an integrated home for the Convention

Many missionary societies and theological colleges owe their roots to the Keswick Convention: Hudson Taylor of China and Amy Carmichael of India had close ties with Keswick.

In recent times, speakers have included some of the best-known preachers in the evangelical world: John Stott, Donald English, George Duncan, David Coffey, and Anne Graham Lotz.

Today many Keswick teaching events are held around the world: in Africa, Australia, New Zealand, North America, India, Jamaica and Japan. The Convention's motto remains – 'All One in Christ Jesus'.

More at: <https://keswickministries.org>

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Should you wish for a loved one to be remembered on their anniversary in the weekly prayers read during the Sunday services, please complete the slip opposite.

Cut out the slip and place it in the intercessions box at least one week prior to the Sunday for remembrance.

If you are unable to get to church, please post the slip to the Church Administrator: Mrs Philippa Elsey, Parish Church of St Michael and All Angels, The Broadway, Houghton-le-Spring.

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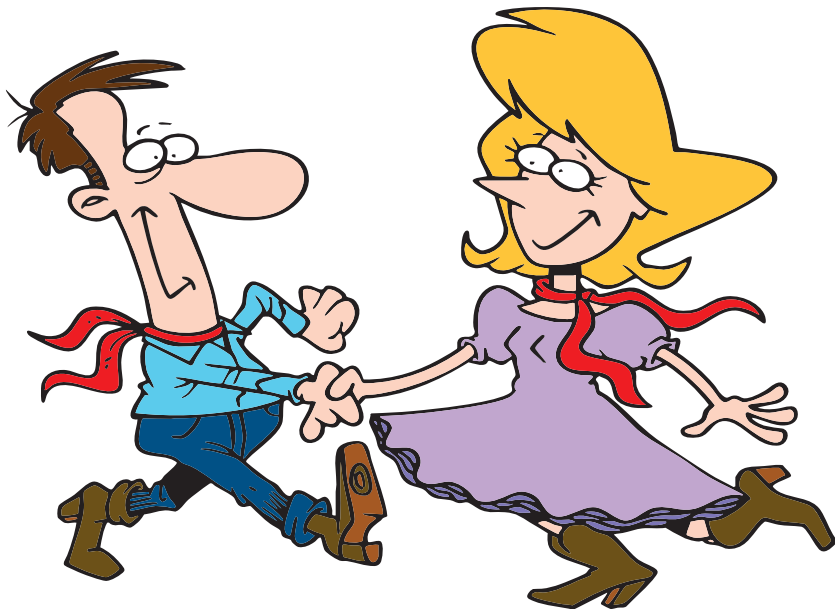
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