



The Official Newspaper to  
the Diocese of Lancaster

Issue 352 + September '23

INSIDE: pg8

Diaconate  
Ordinations



# New Rector for the Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham

**T**he Reverend Dr Robert Billing has been appointed the new Rector of the Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham in Norfolk. He will serve for a five-year term and will take up his new responsibilities from 1 September 2023. As Rector, Fr Billing will oversee the mission of the National

Shrine and will be responsible for the pastoral and spiritual care of pilgrims, the Shrine Chaplains and visiting clergy. The Rector also promotes the message and work of the Shrine nationally and internationally.

Fr Billing expressed his surprise and joy at his appointment:

"My appointment to serve as the new Rector of the Catholic National Shrine and Basilica of Our Lady of Walsingham comes as a big surprise. Of course, it is also a huge joy and honour. Only a year ago, I was appointed, after a number of years in diocesan administration, school chaplaincy, and, more recently, engaged in canon law studies, to pastor three small parishes north of Lancaster, each under the patronage of Our Blessed Lady. I had never expected my time in these parishes to be so short,

though in this year I have learnt much and received so much encouragement. Now, I take the faithful of these parishes with me in prayer to the heart of Our Lady's Dowry, to Walsingham. As I take up this further service to the Church, this time nationally, I venture, first, as a pilgrim, eager to learn and to serve closely with those who dedicate themselves to make Walsingham 'England's Nazareth' today. I hope to share and confirm that commitment."

... Continued on pg 7 >>

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*I have every confidence, given Fr Billing's considerable talents and experience, that he is a good choice for this significant position in the national church.*

The Right Reverend Paul Swarbrick  
Bishop of Lancaster

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## Kieron Bassett

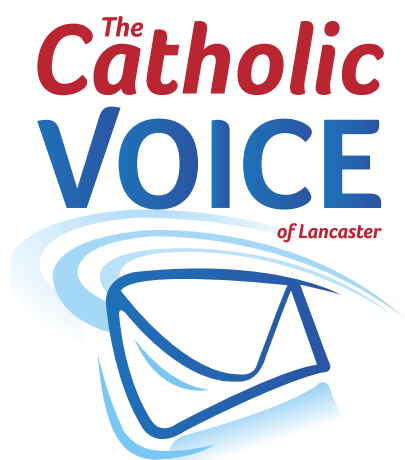
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**O**n a beautiful summers evening, Friday June 16th, 2023, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a Golden Jubilee Mass of Thanksgiving for Canon John Watson's ordination to the sacred priesthood was held at Our Lady and St Michael's, Workington in the parish of Christ the Good Shepherd.

People came from the four corners of the diocese and beyond to celebrate this great occasion. 32 priests concelebrated Mass assisted by a team of 28 altar servers, a full choir in fine voice and organ in full throttle. There were many representatives from Church's together in Workington and a full honour guard provided by the Knights of St Columba. Hundreds of lay faithful also gathered to raise their hearts, minds, and voices to God in thanksgiving for this humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord.

Canon John thanked all who helped and encouraged him from the beginning until now - 'my parents, family, Cleator priests and people who encouraged the green shoots of a vocation, the seminary staff who laid the foundations and saw me through to ordination by Bishop Pearson in 1973, all the peoples of the



# 50 Years of Priestly Service Celebrated

*parishes where I have served, living and deceased, who were such an inspiration and support, and also the bishops, priests and deacons of our diocese, who form such a happy diocesan family.'*

Fr Robert Billing offered a tribute of how dearly loved and treasured Fr John is to all who know him. Those to whom he is a priest, a friend, a guide. An eminent and well-loved priest of the diocese.

*'We salute you; we honour you for the figure of unity you are to priests of this diocese.'*

A wonderful spread of food and a beautiful cake awaited everyone after the Mass.

++ **Canon John Watson - Ad Multos annos!**

A recording of the Mass can be found at:  
++ <https://mcnmedia.tv/Cameras/Player/56812>  
A copy of his encomium can be found at:  
++ <https://www.christ-the-good-shepherd.co.uk/canon-john-watson-golden-jubilee>



“Planting trees provides a number of great benefits, including increased biodiversity, shelter, shade, allowing more water to infiltrate, amenity value, as well as sequestering carbon for the long term.”

# St Benedict's High School Whitehaven Planting for the Future

St. Benedict's Catholic High School has recently been granted funds from the Cumbria Coastal Community Forest Trees for Climate Fund, which has enabled staff and pupils to plant over 2000 trees around the outskirts of the Campus Whitehaven grounds.

When the Campus Whitehaven facility was first constructed, a large area of trees had to be cut down. As a result, there are very few mature trees around the dual-school site. Some trees were planted in early 2022, but much land remains available for further planting.

The site is near the coast and feels exposed, planting exposure tolerant species such as sycamore on the fringes should help shelter the other trees. Species planted are those suitable for wetter ground, including Downy Birch, Sycamore, Aspen, Black Poplar, Grey Alder, Shining Gum, Rowan and Goat Willow.

Angus Walsh from Cumbria Woodlands helped facilitate the planting said: "Planting trees provides a number of great benefits, including increased biodiversity, shelter, shade, allowing more water to infiltrate, amenity value, as well as sequestering carbon for the long term. Most importantly on this site, organising tree planting days allowed the pupils

a chance to get inspired about nature and showcase forestry as a potential career choice."

To give the young trees, the best chance of success, they were planted before the end of April – this gave St Benedict's about seven days to get them in the ground. Nevertheless, staff and students did not disappoint and were exceptional in their work ethic to get the mix of young trees in the ground. Mrs Lee, Geography teacher at St Benedict's said: "We're excited that this project is now nearly completed. Our aim is to create a woodland area that allows our students to have access to a range of activities. From fieldwork in Geography lessons and experiments in Science to Outdoor learning through forest school activities and eco-therapy, where appropriate".

As part of this work in the outdoors, St Benedict's have also benefitted from funding for an Octagonal Shelter, with solid sides, seats and decking. This is to ensure sessions can continue in the outdoors, whatever the West Cumbrian weather throws at us!

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**As I write, it's the last day in July and there's not a lot happening! In the world of education things seem to drop off massively during the holidays. That said though, there are still some fun things to report. These ones, in fact:**

#### Keswick Convention

During the first two weeks (*ish*) of the summer holidays, we host the youth team of the Keswick Convention. For the uninitiated, the Convention is a huge, (*more than 20,000 people a year*), Christian festival that happens each year in Keswick. For a few decades now, Castlerigg has housed the team that runs the Youth Ministry side of the convention and it's always a real joy.

#### World Youth Day 2023

27 pilgrims from the diocese made their way to Portugal for World Youth Day 2023!! The international World Youth Day festivals are held each year in a different world city, and this year it was the turn of Lisbon. Due to covid, there hasn't been an international World Youth Day since Panama in 2019 which is why people were excited to see it return. A week of festivities in Lisbon culminated with a big Mass with Pope Francis on Sunday August 6th. There will be a full report in next month's edition of the *Catholic Voice* together with some photos!

#### Improvements for the New Year

One thing we like to do in the Youth Service is to constantly improve. A lot of good work has been done at Castlerigg and beyond over the years but it's important to keep moving forward. In

the past few years, we've renovated the games room and the Chapel and a few other areas. But what will you see that's new if you come this year?

**A nicer building** // Remember the incredibly tatty side of the building facing the road? That's now been repainted, and it looks lovely! We've also just added custom made signs around the building which look lovely!

**Nicer rooms** // we now have some lovely permanent lighting in the chapel and depending on when you visit, you might even see our new projection system in operation too. We also have a new sound system and lighting in the main lounge.

For the last few months, we've also had five dedicated small group rooms which we can use alongside the existing areas. These are going to be kitted out and decorated as the year goes on.

**New games room tables** // Remember the pool table, table football, and table tennis table that were falling to bits?? Well, by the time you read this, they will have been chucked in the skip and some nice new equipment will have been installed. At the minute we are discerning (*read: disagreeing about*) what to get, but at least two NEW tables will be added very soon!

**Bedrooms** // In October, we will begin a programme of redecorating the bedrooms. It's not just a lick of paint though – every room will be stripped and gutted and started from scratch! We are aiming to do at least one room every half term, which means we will get through all of them in a couple of years.

**BUT** // while the look-and-feel of the place is important, it's the programme that people come to us for, and we've made a lot of changes there. For instance...

#### Our New Retreats

Since 2020, we have been redeveloping our retreat programme. We probably always will be. This isn't something that will ever be finished, but we've now got some amazing programmes:

**Let Your Light Shine** // This is our Primary school programme with activities including stain glass window making!! It's a chance to think about how amazing God is and how amazing he wants (*and made*) us to be!

**Growth** // This is a programme which we use with year 7 and 8. We think a lot about gardens and things that grow as a way of getting us to think about how we can grow. How does God water us and feed us? There is a treasure hunt, a slightly wacky design-a-garden- activity, and everyone left with their own bulb planted in a pot!

**Wild Goose** // This Year 8 & 9 programme focuses on the Holy Spirit, having a bit of fun with the 'Wild Goose' metaphor. There is a duck hunt and a game of 'bible basketball' among many other things, hopefully helping us to appreciate the role that the Holy Spirit plays in our lives.

**Identity** // This programme is for Year 10 and 11. There are so many influences these days telling us that we need to fit this stereotype or that, or telling us who the world wants us to be. God has

a different idea of who we are though, and it's far more beautiful. This retreat is designed to help young people who are getting ready to leave school to realise the beauty of who they are in God!

**Evidence** // This is our Sixth Form programme and it's about God. And us. And the world around us. What proof is there that God exists? What about miracles? What proof is there that we matter? Activities include a quiz night and a murder mystery we've written especially for the retreat!

Away from the main themes and sessions, there are a few other changes you will see too. The main one is break time activities. From September we will be offering some fun structured activities for young people during break times including making smores!!

And don't forget, we are also enhancing the open retreat programme. The first retreat is the Advent Retreat in December.

Bookings will be open by the time you read this, or shortly thereafter, so keep an eye on our website and social media!

#### Catholic Youth Ministry Internship Programme

Another big chance for the year ahead is that we have rebranded our Gap Year programme and made some significant changes. Our volunteers are now '*interns*' and they are following an enhanced programme of training and experience that will give them some recognised qualifications and solid experience across a few different settings. *Jack Regan*



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**David Pope** dip FD MBIFD

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  - Amend or shorten letters or to refuse to publish them (no correspondence to discuss decisions taken will be entered into)
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Dear Editor,

I heartily support the Fix the Food Campaign and the desire of small scale farmers in Bangladesh and elsewhere to have access to a wide variety of seeds. It is iniquitous that United States conglomerates such as Monsanto and billionaires like the odious Gates are allowed to fix the market to increase their wealth at the expense of farmers and consumers. However, the CAFOD article your June 2023 issue implies that the 'climate crisis' and the Ukraine conflict have negatively impacted on the supply and price of wheat. There was a spike in wheat prices in mid 2022 soon after the conflict began but the future price has since dropped dramatically and is now no higher than it was in 2008.<https://markets.businessinsider.com/commodities/wheat-price>

Furthermore, the United States Department of Agriculture believes that for 2023/24 (<https://notalotofpeopleknowthat.wordpress.com/2023/05/24/record-world-cereal-outputs-forecast-for-2023-24/>) there will be record high productions of rice, wheat and corn that will meet or surpass consumption. If the price of staples does not reduce in your supermarket the blame cannot be placed on supply issues. CAFOD does itself no favours when it parrots the 'climate crisis' mantra which is a chimera created by billionaires whose goal is to enslave others as it dramatically reduces the world's population.

John Ellwood, Carnforth



# Preston Celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi

**F**or the tenth year running Preston came together for their annual Corpus Christi Procession.


The large Procession began, as usual, in St. Walburge's Shrine Church and stopped at one internal and three external station altars on route and then onto the local roads before returning to church.

As the Blessed Sacrament was brought back into church, Cubs and Scouts from Our Lady and St. Edward's, Fulwood rang hand bells until the Blessed Sacrament reached the Altar. Benediction followed.

Canon Adrian Towers was the Celebrant. Taking part were Clergy and Religious


Sisters, altar servers, banner carriers, First Holy Communion children who strewed petals along the whole route, Cubs and Scouts and their leaders, Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, the Polish community {who faithfully set up two external station altars and walked in traditional costume}, members from St. Alphonsa who carried the delightful Blessed Sacrament umbrellas, the Knights of St. Columba who assisted with the marshalling and parishioners from Preston parishes who helped with giving out orders of service, doing the collection and giving out souvenir cards. The sun had been in doubt but came out on time and Our Lord was honoured in this special way.

Ian Mulholland



# St. Mary's Catholic Academy

St. Walburga's Road, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY3 7EQ



## Year 7 Parents' Evening

### 25th September 2023

Please visit our website for further information  
[www.st-mary.blackpool.sch.uk](http://www.st-mary.blackpool.sch.uk)



Continued from Page 1 >>

The Bishop of Lancaster, the Right Reverend Paul Swarbrick, welcomed the news:

*"It is an honour for the Diocese of Lancaster for one of our priests to be chosen as Rector for the National Shrine to Our Blessed Lady at Walsingham. I am delighted that Fr Billing has accepted this appointment."*

*"When I was first asked to release him, I must confess that I said 'no' because I believed the need of the Diocese could not spare him. Further reflection followed and I sensed that this request was actually*

*coming from Our Blessed Lady, and I decided that I did not want to get on the wrong side of her!*

*"I have every confidence, given Fr Billing's considerable talents and experience, that he is a good choice for this significant position in the national church. The work of the Shrine will be safe in his care. Our Lady of Walsingham, pray for us."*

As Bishop of the Diocese of East Anglia, it was the Right Reverend Peter Collins' responsibility to appoint a new Rector for the National Marian Shrine:

*"I am immensely grateful to Bishop Paul Swarbrick of Lancaster for his generosity in*

*releasing Fr Robert for this important role. Fr Robert brings with him a wealth of talent and experience that will stimulate our vision of the future.*

*"His spiritual, pastoral and administrative abilities will undoubtedly bear abundant fruit within the national and international mission of Walsingham."*

*"I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Fr James Mary OFM Conv. for his contribution over recent months as Acting Rector at the Shrine. As we look forward to welcoming Fr Robert let us be united and committed in praying for him in the weeks ahead. Our Lady of Walsingham – Pray for us."*

Bishop Alan Hopes, Chair of the Walsingham Trust and Bishop Emeritus of East Anglia, said:

*"I am delighted that Fr Robert Billing from the Diocese of Lancaster has been appointed as the new Rector of the National Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham."*

*"With his undoubted spiritual and pastoral gifts, Fr Robert will bring renewal and fresh vision to the mission and work of the Shrine, promoting its message, both nationally and further afield."*

*"We entrust him to the prayers of Our Lady of Walsingham as he prepares to take up this important task."*

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David Greaves and David Pope were ordained to the Permanent Diaconate in July at the Cathedral by Bishop Paul Swarbrick. Deacon David Greaves will serve the parishes Appleby, Penrith and Alston. Deacon David Pope will serve the parishes of Ansdell and Lytham. Both Deacons have written short pieces for publication.





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Rev David Pope

The call to vocation for myself has always been there. At the age of 16 I left St. Mary’s High School, Blackpool and became a Funeral Director. The influence of my employer, colleagues and family and friends always confirmed that I had made the right choice for a career. 36 years later, I am still a Funeral Director and even more aware of how much of a vocation this is for me.

The sense of vocation has been at the heart of my career as a Funeral Director. This has never been a “job” to me but a definite vocation.

At the age of 18 I began to feel a call to a different vocation, priesthood. I approached the diocesan vocations director and discussed the possibility. This wasn’t to be as I fell in love with a girl who became my wife and 32 years later, we are the proud parents of 5 children and grandparents to 2.

For many years, too many to count, priests, parishioners and friends have often said to me, I should consider the Permanent Diaconate. The time never seemed right. Gill and I started a family, the family grew and I started my own business. I was always active in the parish, St. Peter’s, Lytham, but there was not enough time to spare for the demands that the diaconate programme would expect.

So, after years of putting off answering God’s call to another vocation, and with the permission and encouragement of my wife, Gill, I gave in. It was 2016 and I approached the diocese to offer myself for the Permanent Diaconate. So, the

whole process of interviews began and I was sent to St. Luke’s Centre, Manchester to undergo a series of tests and more interviews. It was here that I met David Greaves, my companion on this journey.

We were both accepted by the diocese and we began our formal training and formation in Scotland. After some time, we were transferred back to England by Bishop Paul to continue our formation and training with the Northern Diaconal Formation Partnership. Here I met other men from around the North of England and we have journeyed together for the last 4 years.

The time of formation has been interesting and enriching. I have greatly appreciated our times together in prayer and worship. Formation hasn’t stopped, I am still learning and growing in my faith, God always has something new for me. I am grateful to Fr David Burns for supporting me in my early stages of formation and discernment, to Fr Philip Conner for his spiritual guidance and to Fr Peter Clarke, who as my Parish Priest, has and is being a constant support and encouragement.

Thanks, must also go to Fr Bob Halshaw and Fr John-Paul Evans for looking after me over the last few years.

My ministry has begun, having been ordained for the parishes of St. Joseph, Ansdell and St. Peter, Lytham. I look forward to praying with them and ministering to them. Once again, I cannot stress enough how none of this can be possible without the love, support and patience of my family, especially my wife, Gill. I am so blessed to have them. *St. Joseph and St. Peter, pray for me.*





## Rev Deacon David Greaves

Perhaps one of the most frequent questions I hear is “*what does a Deacon do*”? But for those in formation it may be better to ask what are we to become? And for those Ordained, What have we become?

Through ordination the Deacon is permanently and publicly configured to Christ the Servant, he shares in the overall pastoral responsibility of the Bishop to care for all the people of the Diocese and becomes an integral part of the clerical structure of the Church in partnership with priests, serving the needs of the entire diocese.

Deacons assist at Mass thereby participating in a unique way at the Eucharistic Celebration, they are official teachers and preachers of the Gospel, they preside at celebrations of Baptism, Marriage, Funerals, Benediction and other forms of community prayer. Deacons are to visit the sick, the housebound, those imprisoned, He is to be the “*icon*” or the “*Sacramental sign of Christ in His people who came not to be served but to serve*” (Mk 10:45).

With this in mind we can see that to become a Deacon it is necessary to undertake a process of formation which is academic, pastoral and practical

while at the same time deepening our relationship with Christ, the one to whom we are to be configured.

Those embarking on the Diaconal formation process have ahead of them four years of formation. A formation of getting to know Christ better, for the reality is that it is our relationship with Christ that lies at the very heart of our vocation to serve, to serve His people, the People of Christ.

Over the four years of formation, along with nine other men from the Northern Province, we have together gathered in Leeds for our academic studies and in Liverpool for our practical training alongside our Parish placements.

Together, supported by many, we have begun that process of change, that process of getting to know Christ better through Prayer and study. Along the way we have shared our struggles and our joys as brothers and the bonds of friendship made in our four years together will, I am sure, last a lifetime. We all shared a common goal, a goal to discern what Almighty God was asking of each one of us. By setting our hearts and minds on knowing Christ better, by spending time in prayer and study we have changed, we have been formed in some way to answer that call from God, to have the courage to say “*yes*” to what is being asked of us and to freely say, “*here I am Lord, I come to do your will*”.



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The Reliquary  
(centre), Columba  
Cross (left) and  
Fraternal Cross  
(right) on display in  
Aylesford Priory.



The Knights of St Columba undertook to send the Relics of St Columba of Iona, St Andrew the Apostle, and St Margaret of Scotland, in a Reliquary around Great Britain including stop offs in Preston and Carlisle.



On May 3rd 1983 at the Cumbria Grand in Grange-over-Sands the inauguration of the 299 Circle of the Catenian Association took place with some 28 brothers forming a new Circle drawn from the Catholic professional and business men of the area.

Fast forward forty years to May 30th 2023 and two of the Founding members, Bros Paul Bates and John Kitchen celebrated their ruby anniversaries at a special lunch at Stone Cross Manor in Kendal with Circle members, relatives and other visitors from throughout Province 10. The Provincial President, Bro. Mike O'Malley and his wife Anne-Marie, who had also been a Grand President in 2006-2007, were also present. In the presentation of commemorative scrolls that followed the

The Reliquary is accompanied by the Order's Fraternal Cross, which displays all the Catholics Men's Orders from countries around the world, and the Columba Cross, a gift that was given to the Order by Brother Knights of the Knights of St Columbanus in Ireland, to commemorate the Knights of St Columba turning 100 years old as an Order in 2019. In late August the Relics visited St Mary's Brownedge, Preston and the churches of St Bede, Christ the King, St Margaret Mary, Our Lady and St Wilfred and Our Lady & St Joseph in Carlisle.

For more details of venues in September, please visit the website:  
<https://ksc.org.uk/news-events/>

**Rwanda Group Trust**

Trustees Mark Ibison and Michael Dolan are planning to walk the St Mary's Pilgrim Way from Lancaster Cathedral to St Mary's church Cleator. They intend to arrive in time to coincide with the diocesan pilgrimage there on the 10th of September.

Their aim is to raise money for the Rwanda charity via donations and sponsorship. And they would appreciate any help you could give. Donations can be made on Just Giving for "St Mary's Pilgrims Way Walk for Rwanda Charity". Alternatively ring Michael Dolan on 07864 990941 for other ways to donate.

## Catenian News – 40 year Celebration of Westmorland Circle – 1983-2023

lunch, the Director, author of this report, praised the contribution that John and Paul had made not only to the Circle but also to the wider Catholic community. Paul had been chosen as Secretary from the first meeting, a position he still manages to fulfil to this present day. He has had some breaks from the role over the years!! John and Paul had both been Circle Presidents and taken on other roles as required.

The Director said that two of the most essential pillars of our society are doctors and teachers. We all remember a good teacher like we all remember a good and caring doctor. These remarkable individuals play a vital role in shaping the future of our communities, and their unwavering dedication deserves our

utmost respect and gratitude. Today gives us an opportunity to thank John and Paul who have over the years worked tirelessly to make a difference in our lives through their professionalism, plus their contributions to the Circle and the Catholic community.

In conclusion, doctors and teachers hold the power to heal, nurture, and transform lives. John and Paul have been beacons of hope and knowledge in our world and we are grateful for all that they have done not only for the Association but the local Catholic community as well.

For more information about this Catholic men's Association which promotes family, faith and friendship please visit [www.thecatenians.org](http://www.thecatenians.org) Terence Donnelly



# The Season of Creation

The Season of Creation is a worldwide ecumenical celebration of the generosity of God. And this year it lasts from 1 September (*World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*) until 4 October (*Feast of St Francis*). Pope Francis made it part of the calendar for the Catholic Church in 2015.

“

*St Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness*

”

Pope Francis  
Laudato Si #12

**T**his is a time of hope and renewal, reminding us that the earth is the Lord's and that we are mere stewards, entrusted to care for it. It is a time to reflect on and appreciate the beauty of Creation and, in doing so, seek to protect it.

Never has this been more important as today, because every day, somewhere in the world, there are floods, fires and tropical storms, whilst the ravaging of the rainforests is but one symptom of what the Head of the UN describes, bluntly, as our “war on nature”.

We live in one of the most beautiful parts of the world, so let's celebrate it. What better way than by having a “Creation Mass” one Sunday during the Season for, as Pope Francis says “It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation”.

The Season coincides with harvest-time, so it is a wonderful opportunity to decorate the church with the fruits of the harvest as a visible act of gratitude. In my own church we also brought out the crib figures to celebrate God's gift of his Son

and the animal world. It was unseasonal, but it felt right.

On reflecting on last year's celebration, I realised that something was missing. We had overlooked all the small organisms that are so critical to the healthy function of our ecosystems - the insects and the fungi that are being wiped out by our indiscriminate use of insecticides and fungicides around the world - we must celebrate them too!

Then I thought, “*don't children just love drawing spiders and creepy-crawlies and toadstools - not forgetting all the wonderful life in our oceans, such as octopuses and seahorses. Wouldn't it be great to decorate the church with children's artwork celebrating these wonderful examples of God's ingenuity?*”

At the entrance procession one might bring to the altar: seeds, earth and water as a reminder of what is needed to produce the bread of life and in anticipation of the later offering of the gifts “*Blessed are you Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer...*”

Let us draw particular attention to the references to Creation in our great profession of faith - the Nicene Creed: “*I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.....through whom all things were made.....the Lord, the giver of life*”.

The theme for the 2023 Season is “*Let Justice and Peace Flow*”, reminding us that we cannot truly care for creation whilst there remains injustice and inequality in the world, so prayers of intercession, hymns and the homily might reflect both the celebration of creation and the need for justice. There are Collects appropriate to these themes; a Preface of Creation and the lovely Eucharistic Prayer IV, so plenty of ideas in the great repository for prayers for use at Mass.

We have now held three “*Creation Masses*” in my parish. People leave church clearly uplifted. We pray that they also leave with a greater commitment to do what they can to love and care for our wonderful world.

*Stephen Garsed,  
Environmental Justice Lead, Lancaster  
Diocese Faith & Justice Commission*

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# Old Tools Given a New Start in Africa

## *A plea from Windermere Tools for Self Reliance*

In the cellars of Windermere's United Reformed Church, a small group of men and women recycle unwanted tools, preparing them for a new lease of life in Africa. For ten years, Windermere Tools for Self Reliance, a branch of the Southampton based national charity, Tools for Self Reliance, has been collecting redundant hand and electric tools and returning them to reusable condition.

**T**ools for Self Reliance (T.F.S.R.) was founded in 1979 by Glyn Roberts, a dedicated and observant worker in voluntary services in the Third World. Glyn had witnessed the dire shortage of tradesmen's tools and the ineffectiveness of aid programmes while he was travelling and working in Africa during the early 1970s. He saw people trying to learn trades and professions with little in the way of useful equipment: misshapen hammers, chisels sharpened down to the last centimetre, and flat rocks used as anvils.

For Glyn, the problem appeared to be straightforward. A simple hand plane would cost a carpenter a full week's wages, wages which couldn't be earned because the carpenter had no tools! His plan was to be able to provide complete sets of tools specific to a trade or profession, and then donate the kits to trainees once they had completed a training course. In this way recipients could start earning money immediately, thus providing for their families, paying for children's education, and contributing to local community needs. Glyn's inspiration became reality when he cleared out his deceased father's shed and started restoring the tools he found there.

The Windermere group was formed by Ruth Ogden, a longstanding volunteer at Southampton. Ruth and her husband, Steven, retired to the Lake District in 2010. Tragically, her vision for the future was shattered when Steven died unexpectedly. During her bereavement, Ruth stoically threw herself into a world of purpose and established a Windermere branch of her old charity.

The town's United Reformed Church generously provided workshop space and Ruth recruited four enthusiastic tool renovators: an engineer, a craftsman joiner and two experienced handymen.

10 years on the group has become firmly established and has sent thousands of refurbished tools to Africa and has raised over £20,000 to help fund training and transportation of tools abroad.

At the Windermere workshops, each tool is refurbished as closely to the original maker's specification as possible, in terms of both functionality and appearance. The repaired items are rigorously checked for quality before being protected, wrapped and packed for shipment. Donated tools that are not suitable for Africa are also refurbished but are sold at auctions or at car boot sales to raise funds for shipping. A full

container of tools can cost upwards of £3,000 to transport. Tools that are beyond repair are sold as scrap to metal reclaimers. We try to ensure that nothing is wasted, a minimum going to landfill, and as many tools as possible given a second life. At present, T.F.S.R. has training partners in Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia. These organisations identify a training requirement and recruit trainers to cover a broad range of skills: practical, administrative, health and life skills. This education helps the trainees to make the most of their potential.

We normally associate 'tools' with engineers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, welders, electricians and mechanics, however an important part of the group's work involves collecting and sending off sewing machines, fabrics and other haberdashery items, giving women and men the opportunity to become skilled in making and repairing clothes. Sadly, recent government foreign aid cuts prevented a shipment of sewing machines to Ghana. The machines were to support a project involved with the making of reusable sanitary products, essential items without which women remain trapped in 'period poverty' and are unable to leave home, attend school or work.

During the Covid pandemic, the donation of tools naturally dried up and the group urgently needs tools to refurbish.

There are 34 groups and 640 volunteers across the country, most of which are in a similar situation to ours. Any hand or power tools are acceptable, whether they be for engineers, mechanics, joiners, blacksmiths, tailors, seamstresses, builders, electricians, etc. We can also take some gardening tools which are refurbished and sold to raise funds.

Your donation of tools has a small but significant impact on poverty and self-sufficiency in Africa. It will cost you, the donor, absolutely nothing; we will collect anything you wish to donate. All we ask is that you look through your garage, shed, attic, understairs cupboards, and kitchen drawers. Please let us know if you have tools you do not need, then phone the number below and leave the rest to us.

The donation you make will become a gift to others that will last a lifetime.

**Thank you.**

Please contact: Bill Norris  
Tel: **01539 721196**  
More information can be found at:  
**[www.tfsr.org](http://www.tfsr.org)**





Michael Ayela, trainee carpenter, Uganda.



Volunteer Bill Norris.



Volunteer Ruth Ogden painting tools.



Carpentry workshop, Uganda.



Saada Mamatovu, seamstress, Uganda.



Roydah Nalungwe, seamstress working from home, Zambia.



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**Liberty Doyle of St Joseph's Ansdell has just received her Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award at Buckingham Palace.**

**H**i, my name is Liberty. I have completed the Bronze, Silver and Gold Duke of Edinburgh awards. I recently went to Buckingham palace to celebrate my Gold award. It was lovely to see some of my friends there as well as His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh.

There are four main sections for DofE; the expedition, which gets longer every award, volunteering, skills and physical. In the Gold award another section gets added on where you must spend four nights away somewhere with no one you really know. For that I decided I would join the Lancaster Diocese in the pilgrimage to Lourdes in 2022.

I did my Silver volunteering in Church. It was during the pandemic so I helped maintain the register and make sure everyone was wearing a mask and maintaining a social distance. I helped with the collection and ensured everything was in place after Mass had ended.

The Gold expedition was very trying, my group spent 4 nights in the Scottish Highlands, two of those nights were without a campsite. The walks were really long and difficult, it definitely strengthened my faith in God as I was praying for the walk to be over every day. Overall, it was an amazing experience that my group and I will never forget. It

gave me many different skills, especially in teamwork.

A highlight of my Duke of Edinburgh experience, was going to Buckingham Palace to celebrate achieving my Gold. It was nice to meet HRH as well as Jeanette and Aljaž from Strictly Come Dancing. The gardens in Buckingham palace were so beautiful and it was so fun to spend a couple days in London before my A-Levels started.

For my residential, I travelled to Lourdes with the Lancaster diocese last year. This was an amazing experience. I didn't know anyone else on this trip, so this was really outside of my comfort zone to travel somewhere new with no one who I was friends with. But it gave me an opportunity to make new friends and I had a really good time.

Every day we went to a new church, we took part in processions and even did a dress as your favourite Saint night. I helped with pushing wheelchairs and helped serve on the altar by holding an umbrella for Bishop Paul during communion whilst it was pouring it down. I will definitely go to Lourdes again as I loved every moment of it.

DofE gave me so many opportunities to do new things and meet new people. I would recommend it to all young people.

*Liberty Doyle*

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# Bethlehem to get Clean Water

The Association Pro Terra Sancta and Friends of the Holy Land Association have recently signed an agreement to install water tanks or solar panels in the houses of families in need in the Bethlehem area.

This agreement is part of our year-long cooperation between the two organizations in the social and aid fields.

This specific project, named the “Water Emergency & House Rehabilitation Project,” aims to improve living conditions, promote sustainability, and provide clean water to people in the Bethlehem area. We aim to help a minimum of 40 households in phase 1 through this project.

*Pro Terra Sancta & Friends of the Holy Land*

Friends of the Holy Land patrons include the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Archbishop of Westminster Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Birmingham Bernard Longley and Dr Rowan Williams.

FHL operates an office in Bethlehem to support vulnerable Christians. In addition to meeting their direct emergency needs, when families fall into financial difficulty, FHL’s team in Bethlehem also works with other partner agencies to support vulnerable Christians with medical costs and school fees.

Both of which can be very expensive often accounting for as much as a quarter of a normal household’s yearly income.



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