

South East Northumberland Transforming Communities (SENT)

**A MISSION INITIATIVE ACROSS THE
PARISHES OF SEATON HIRST,
ASHINGTON, WOODHORN AND
NEWBIGGIN, IN THE DEANERY OF
MORPETH**

A BISHOP'S MISSION ORDER IN THE DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

Welcome to the diocese of Newcastle!

Thank you so much for your interest in this role, and I hope you enjoy reading the information contained in this brochure and will find it helpful for your discernment. These are exciting and challenging times in the Diocese of Newcastle. Exciting because we are at an early stage of a new season, challenging because like many dioceses we face conversations about our future and how best we use and deploy our resources.

Our Deanery Development work has engaged every parish and benefice in renewed conversations about mission and ministry, and we are in a process of entering a new phase in that work, mapping out our renewed strategy and vision. Our outward facing values of 'seeking, sharing, sending' stem from a commitment to be a Church turning outwards in mission and ministry, and younger and more diverse by: **SEEKING** through being open to God's transforming love; **SHARING** through being generous with God's transforming gifts; **SENDING** through being engaged in God's transforming work in the world. I am looking for clergy who are excited about the opportunities and challenges we face, who are happy to work collaboratively and imaginatively with colleagues, and who can inspire communities to roll up their sleeves and get stuck into God's mission, by affirming, enabling, and encouraging lay and clergy together.

As your Bishop, I am committed to your wellbeing and development, and I would love to explore with you whether God may be calling you to this role.



**THE RT REVD DR
HELEN-ANN HARTLEY
BISHOP OF NEWCASTLE**



The Diocese of Newcastle is the Church of England's most northerly diocese. This Diocese in the 'land of the Northern Saints' was formed in 1882 and comprises **169** parishes across **2,110** square miles. The Diocese covers the local authorities of Northumberland, Newcastle, North Tyneside and also small parts of County Durham and Cumbria. The **12** deaneries within **2** archdeaconries serve a population of about **831,600** people across a variety of communities ranging from sparse rural to large inner-city areas of deprivation.

Pioneer Minister's Parishes



The parishes of Seaton Hirst, Ashington and Woodhorn with Newbiggin play a full part in the life of Morpeth Deanery, under the leadership of the Area Dean, the Rev'd Chris Grocock, Vicar of Holy Sepulchre Ashington, and the Lay Chair Janice Robinson, Reader in the parishes of Mitford and Hebron. Morpeth Deanery is playing an active role in the Diocesan Deanery Planning programme. Each deanery is developing action plans in the key areas of: leadership and governance, mission and pastoral care, lay development, buildings fit for purpose and generous giving. These deanery plans are assisting us in our Vision of Seeking, Sharing Sending as we intentionally face outwards in mission and grow younger and more diverse.

The three parishes at the heart of SENT have been working together informally for some time, with priests and laity meeting regularly for prayer and discussion on mission possibilities. All ex-mining or fishing communities. They have experienced some socio-economic disadvantage in recent years, yet are places of hope and welcome and increasing diversity.

Seaton Hirst

Seaton Hirst parish overall is an area of high deprivation: it ranks at 485 out of the 12,382 parishes in England (where the highest deprivation is no 1). Levels of child poverty and working age poverty are particularly high. However, this masks a lot of local diversity within the parish, its demographics and housing, and it feels a generally hopeful place. Most people find it a happy and friendly place to live, with a strong sense of community. It is a place, like many in the north-east, where people still see the local Anglican churches as theirs, and look kindly on them, even if they are not regular attenders.

The Hirst, the core of the parish, around St Andrew's, is a large grid of straight rows of former colliery houses, each up to a mile long, interspersed by numbered cross-streets. Around this are large former council estates from the 1930s to the 1960s. Both areas have many people living in poverty and deprivation, but also many who are not so deprived. The parish also contains large, more prosperous private estates built from the 1970s up to the present. There is still a lot of active new housebuilding going on around the edges of the parish, and so a good deal of movement of households in and out.

Historically, the parish was very much a white British working-class community, based around a single industry, with very little ethnic diversity, but this has changed a lot in recent years. The influx to the new housing estates, and the settlement of asylum seekers and refugees here, especially in the Hirst, has led to an increase in diversity. St John's and St Andrew's have been active in welcoming and supporting the refugee community, through initiatives based at St Andrew's in which members of both congregations play an active part, and a number of asylum seekers and refugees worship regularly with us, though some are later rehoused elsewhere.

Ministering in the parish already is an active retired priest and a full-time schools' chaplain, both living in the parish.

We have recently welcomed our newly appointed priest into the parish. Our two churches are important bases for our worship and mission, and, we hope, are welcoming spaces to the wider community. Both churches have the feel of holy places, where prayer is easier, because of the continuous life of prayer and worship they hold. But they don't feel like exclusive places.

The parish has a large number of occasional offices, especially baptisms and funerals, so large numbers of people beyond the congregation come through the doors, and they see the churches as theirs. The reordering of both churches has made them flexible and welcoming spaces, and events like school visits and brass band concerts are easily accommodated.



Woodhorn with Newbiggin

Woodhorn with Newbiggin has a population 6,300 and has one Church of England Primary School. It is also an area of significant socio-economic deprivation with large parts of the communities still made up of those who identify as ex-mining or ex-fishing communities.

The Church of St Bartholomew is 13th Century and has an electoral roll of 72, and regular average congregation of 40 at the main Sunday Service. Occasional offices form a core part of our ministry- approximately 10 weddings, 40 baptisms and 40-50 funerals per year. We have a Church Centre which has two large halls and a shop. Activities here include a weekly shop, fortnightly film club, and regular use by community groups.

There is an active Newbiggin Churches Together network and joint opportunities for worship and evangelism are increasing in a post lockdown world.

A Mission in Action Group was established in 2020 and its purpose is to consider how God calls the church to look outward and serve within the community. Our vision is that this lay group will become a key partner with the pioneer priest, and will work collaboratively and prayerfully in local mission.

Key partnerships within Newbiggin include Grace Darling CofE Primary School (two members of congregation now volunteer to support classroom activities, for example supporting children with reading as per National Curriculum and OFSTED priority). Other groups include Newbiggin Town Council, Newbiggin Traders' Association, Newbiggin RNLI, Newbiggin Veterans' Association.



Holy Sepulchre Ashington

The sinking of the Bothal mine shaft in 1867 led to the rapid growth of coal mining and development of Ashington, which by the mid 20th century had grown into one of the biggest pit villages in the world. Holy Sepulchre Church Ashington dates back to 1887 and was built as the miner's church, just a stone's throw away from the main colliery entrance. We have a Miner's Chapel which was opened and dedicated by Bishop Martin in January 2012.

Ashington today is virtually unrecognisable from the mining community of the mid 20th century and sadly lacks some opportunity for work or career advancement. Ashington is split into two Ecclesial parishes with Seaton Hirst to the East and Ashington to the West. We here, are regarded by many as the 'posh end' of the town, although still predominately working class. The town centre, which has undergone several reconstructions in recent years, falls within the parish boundary, as do two of the four Ashington Learning Partnership Schools and Ashington Academy. The town continues to grow with large housing developments at both ends seeing us now reach a population of close to 26,000 in total (9,000 Ashington, 17,000 the Hirst). The growth of housing has put considerable strain upon all the schools and community service providers, yet little new money is being spent here as many new arrivals seek their leisure and needs elsewhere

There is now a very close relationship between the three parishes, with regular worship opportunities shared and real community engagement. Following the direction of our Deanery Mission Plan we are together exploring how we can be churches with an outward facing mission which encourages community engagement and fosters service and vocations. We work well with the 'Ashington Churches Together' group of churches and see this as a further aspect of our partnership in sharing the good news across our town.

Tea Time Church has just recently restarted and engagement with the schools is starting to open up again after long COVID restrictions. The occasional offices have not recovered well here, which is a disappointment, but this grants us further opportunity to support the Hirst when required. Our regular Sunday attendance sit around 40, and our electoral roll is currently at 72.



Our Community Engagement Projects

Northumberland Country of Sanctuary (NCoS)

NCoS meet twice a week at St Andrew's Church Hall. There are a growing number of Christian asylum seekers and refugees who attend worship at St Andrew's and have been up to 10-15% of the congregation at times.

They usually move away from Ashington when they receive Home Office Leave to Remain.

Sally Milner in her role as Trust Chaplain liaises between the schools of the Trust, asylum seeker pupils and their families providing free uniform and sometimes household items donated by staff. NCoS recognises and promotes the work of LET

Churches Together

Across the parishes of the BMO we have potential for joint working and outward facing ecumenical services. With vision and enthusiasm the opportunity for growth and shared mission, bringing new ideas, will be a welcome drive for all denominations.

Messy Church and café church

Offers educational and fun session for young children and their families.

There has been an increase of attendees since it's launch.

Links with Primary Schools

Church buildings are increasingly being used for school activities, services and performances. Young people from the schools are getting involved in church youth activities such as trips and outings.

Initiatives such as 'Open the Book' Messy Church, after school clubs and 'Church Mice' are offering opportunities for laity to volunteer time and skills.



Our Community Engagement Projects

Newbiggin Veterans' Association

This was launched as a church and community initiative to support older residents. The vicar of Newbiggin is their chaplain and the group is keen to be pro-active in supporting others for example through raising funds for local church and community projects such as 'Beyond youth' and local hospital chaplaincy work.



Learning English Together (LET)

This church-led project supports refugees and asylum seekers in their first six months of residence in the UK (after which they are eligible for classes at Northumberland college). Volunteers teach basic English language skills and offer hospitality, support and sign-posting to newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers. The group meets at St Andrew's Church Hall as this is in the area in which many asylum seekers are housed. It is run by volunteers from Holy Sepulchre, St Andrew's and St John's. The Clergy and churchwardens form a steering committee and all the churches ensure the project is well-resourced. The project is held in regular prayer and features as a standing item on PCC agendas. The project has grown in size during the duration of the BMO, with 37 students in summer 2022 and 66 by the end of that year. This is continuing to grow and old student also pop back in because they appreciate the fellowship.





Beyond Youth

Another key partner in the area is the youth project 'Beyond Youth'. Funded by the Lord Crewe Charity and launched in September 2023, it employs a youth co-ordinator and two youth enablers to facilitate church-based, community based, schools-based and detached youth work.

The aim is to build strong foundations for the future prosperity of young people coming to know Christ. It is important for us to build on the positive relationships with the area churches and encourage the congregations to be open and ready to receive young people in a variety of ways. This could be through increased school connections, services for young people, building Baptism communities for mutual support and growth, running courses that explore faith and leadership for young people, new worshipping communities, or other initiatives.

The team currently plays an active part within the area working alongside schools and community organisations to improve outcomes for young people. We are involved with Church School services, Collective Worship in schools, and pastoral care for staff. We run Prayer Spaces in response to world news, and the potential for further development in church-school-home links is huge.

We attend holiday clubs and activity sessions to provide support while getting to the community outside the walls of the churches. We are a sounding-board for the churches and provide support and advice on providing safe environments.

This is a difficult area for young people, and we see that this causes tensions; because of this we are assessing local need through detached youth work. We are intending on starting regular sessions within Hirst Park (near St Andrew's, in Seaton Hirst parish) to be a presence in that specific area.

We support and visit the youth club which is run at St Andrew's; this is enabled through the dedication of the church community to nurture the young folk attending. It is an expression of love for young people.

We link with the national Growing Faith team for learning and guidance. We are part of the missional youth church network and have strong links with ReNew North East.

We share in the vision for the churches to reach out into the communities they are part of. We have a deep desire to see this work flourish, enabling the churches to grow younger and more diverse.

The Objectives of SENT

To enable the PCCs to realise their ambition for mission and growth to take place, and enable the parishes to fulfil their contribution to the diocesan vision by:

- Deeper engagement with the wider communities in the parishes, building bridges between community initiatives and faith exploration,
- Spiritual and numerical growth of Christian communities.
- Development of lay ministries,
- Increased cross-parish working,
- Encouraging generous giving which permits sustainable provision of priestly ministry.'

A group of clergy and laity meet weekly for prayer and discussion under the umbrella of the SENT and this has become a place of inception, encouragement and development of ideas as we seek to dream dreams and share vision.

If you think God may be calling you to this opportunity then we look forward to exploring this with you.



The person God is calling to be the new pioneer priest to take a lead in SENT will have...

- Strong listening and communication skills
- A commitment to the communities that make up these parishes
- A true pioneer-spirit: the first to see possibilities and spot God at work
- Confidence in working beyond the boundaries of traditional church
- Reflective practitioner skills
- Collaboration and team skills
- Ability to recognise and enable the gifts of the laity, spotting vocations
- Self-starting and accountability skills
- A good sense of humour
- Willingness to take risks and learn from experience
- Flexibility and responsiveness
- Resilient with clear boundaries
- Skills for reading places and hearing what people say and what God says.





Housing

St Andrew's Vicarage

The house is situated in a convenient location in the parish of Seaton Hirst and comprises: 4 bedrooms, a dining room, kitchen, study, living room, bathroom, upstairs WC, downstairs WC, front garden, rear yard, attached garage.