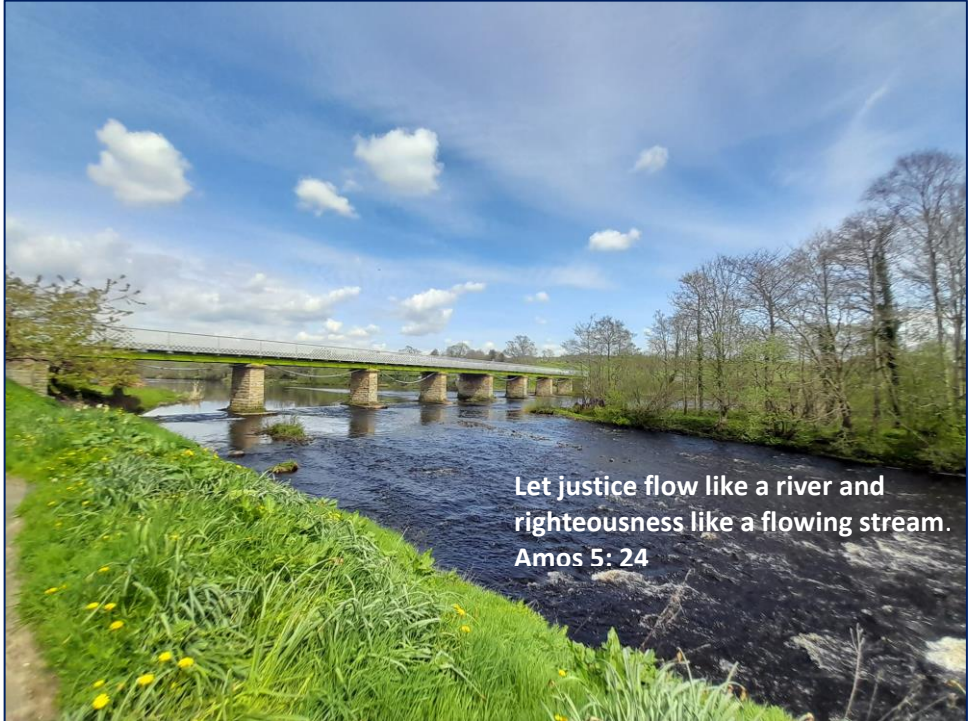


LIVING WATERS



Let justice flow like a river and
righteousness like a flowing stream.
Amos 5: 24

Wark Bridge, River North Tyne

***Encouraging Enabling Challenging
in the Tynedale Methodist Circuit***

AUTUMN 2025

Dear Friends,

As Summer draws to a close we look forward to a new connexional year with all the opportunities for mission in and around our church communities. We have faith that God is actively involved in all of life even when the evidence is not so obvious. At the moment of birth, in the loss of a loved one, in the joy of a new friendship, in the pain of an ended relationship, in the beauty of a sunset, in the devastation of war, in all things God sees, God hears, and God is aware.

Martin Luther said, "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of God's willingness." As followers of Christ, we have been instructed to pray and lay hold of God's desires for all creation and so praying for the world is one way to do that.

Here is a suggested method to try out:

- Begin by taking a few slow, deep breaths, centering your awareness in the present moment. Ask the Holy Spirit to flow through your heart, mind, and spirit as you pray.
- Envision the earth as astronauts in space see it. In your mind's eye, see the jewel-like orb: the blues of the bodies of water, the browns and greens of the land masses, and the clouds hovering around it all.
- Imagine the whole planet being surrounded with the light of God's compassion and love for all creatures. Let this light surround you also as you join in the Spirit's intercession for the world.
- Notice also individual stars of light within God's light— those children of God who care, pray, and work for good in the world. See how those stars are so numerous that they also encircle the globe. Acknowledge that your prayers join those of all who also love God.
- Focus on the places on the planet where particular situations of need or trouble exist. Be aware of these specific needs while remembering that God's light surrounds them all.
- Conclude the prayer with your agreement that "God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

*"If I take the wings of the morning
And settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
Even there your hand shall lead me,
And your right hand shall hold me fast." – Psalm 139:9-10*

Blessings and peace
Rev. Fiona





"OUR FRAGILE EARTH" Wylam Methodist Church is playing a major role in an event under the auspices of Wylam and District Churches and we invite interested people from around the Tynedale Circuit to come along to all or any part of this free event.

"Our Fragile Earth", will take place over the weekend of Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th October 2025.

The aim is to help people to realise the threats generated by climate change, to our planet and the local environment, and what we can do to mitigate these threats.

On the Saturday afternoon from 2.00 to 5.30pm there will be a very wide range of exhibits, workshops, talks and demonstrations within the Methodist premises and also in the church hall at St Oswin's, Wylam's Parish Church. Refreshments will be available during this time.

Also on the Saturday, between 6.30 and 8.30pm in the Methodist Church, there will be a panel of speakers covering a range of environmental interests and expertise, chiefly debating questions posed by the audience. The panellists are Joe Morris M.P, Dr Wendy Fail, Senior Northumberland County Council Waste Management Officer, Rev David Coleman, Eco Chaplain for Scotland and Dr Stephen Westgarth, Chair of the "Clean Tyne River" Group.

On the Sunday, there will be a united Harvest Festival service at St Oswin's Church at 11.00am, at which the preacher will be Rev David Coleman. Visitors will, of course, be welcome to come along to this service, although the soup and cake lunch to follow will require a ticket.

Finally, on the Sunday afternoon, reflective walks are planned making use of the prayer labyrinth on the grass at the Methodist Church along with a litter pick around parts of the village, although as a visitor you won't be expected to assist with this!

Although this event is for one weekend, it is sincerely hoped that it will inspire and empower people of all ages in our community, and especially our churches, to engage with the change.

We are pleased to announce that Wylam Methodist Church has now received the 'bronze' level award in our ECO Church Project sponsored by "A ROCHA".

If you have any questions or would like further information about the event, or the "Eco Church" project, you are welcome to contact Ruth Barriskill at ruthiedb@talktalk.net

Brian Japes

PROFILE. Steven Talbot Supernumerary Minister

FAMILY:

- Married in 1980 to **Linda**; we met in Stockton just before we left for (different) universities at the age of 18. Linda went on to be a Speech and Language Therapist with the NHS.
- We have **two daughters**, Rosie and Gillian (30 and 29 respectively).
- **Rosie** is an astrophysicist who lives and works in Munich
- **Gillian** is a RAF Squadron Leader, working for the MoD in London.



"The photographer issued the command 'SIT'. Only one of us did"

LOCATIONS:

- Born in **Stockton-on-Tees**, Co.Durham
- Spent the first 21 years of life in **Co Durham**, with the last three years at Durham University.
- Work and further postgraduate studies led Linda and I to **Nottingham** (4 years), then back to **Durham City** (3 years) before settling in the **south-west of London** for 31 years (where our daughters were born and raised).
- Upon our retirement, Linda and I moved to **Hexham in 2016** (in what the Estate Agent called our "forever home") to be nearer, but not too close, to my siblings.

EMPLOYMENT:

- Whole working life spent as a university-based **medical bio-scientist**.
- Worked as a researcher, lecturer and, latterly, as a Head of Faculty.
- The final, and longest, employer was **Surrey University**.

METHODIST MINISTRY:

- **Ordained** as Methodist Minister in 2005.
- **Trained** at Oxford, including a Master's Degree in Theology.
- **Appointments** have all been unpaid ("**non-stipendiary**") while continuing to work in universities. Consequently, university and hospital **chaplaincies**, and **local churches** (eg Twickenham, Surbiton Hill) were always pleased to see me because I cost nothing.

"God grant that I may never live to be useless"

From 'How to Pray: John Wesley on Prayer'

PRUDHOE & STOCKSFIELD HOLIDAY CLUB

Prudhoe Methodist Church again hosted Prudhoe & Stocksfield Holiday Club from 21st to 25th July 2025.



We ran Teambuilders which included stories from the old and new testaments and was set in a local multi-sports club. This year was very successful when we welcomed 84 children aged 5-10 through the doors over the course of 5 days and a team of 12 apprentices. Also 31 families attended Holiday Club Toddlers in the Parish Hall. We had great help from 72 volunteers from 7 churches. This year we started 8 young leaders who were a great support and we feel the future of the Holiday Club.

Of those children, some were hearing a coherent message about Jesus for the very first time. Some of the children possibly prayed for the very first time. We know some even decided to ask Jesus to forgive them and welcome them onto God's team

Every year we pray that the experiences of these children and their families at Holiday Club will be a stepping stone, a building block, a seed planted - a step along the way to establishing their own relationship with Jesus and finding a church family to support them in their faith. And we trust God to do the rest!

Grateful thanks have been recorded to all who contributed to Holiday Club by volunteering, by financial support, by praying, by baking, by planning crafts, by planning games and by preparing hundreds of refreshments and thousands of chopped fruits for hungry mouths.

Peter Chapman (from an original report by Samatha Freyhan}.



As the children listen to the daily Bible story.



For a third year **Hexham Holiday Club** based a theme around Bible stories found in Open the Book storytelling books. Each morning, from 21st. to 25th. July, as part of the bandstand start of a Holiday Club day, a dramatised version of the story for the day was enacted by members of local OtB storyteller teams with the theme 'The Great Outdoors'. When people met with Jesus in the open.

- JESUS UP A MOUNTAIN. After the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus came down to be accosted by a teacher of law asking who was his neighbour.
- JESUS ON A WALK. On the way to heal Jairus' daughter, a woman sought healing by touching Jesus' cloak
- JESUS AT A PICNIC. The feeding of 5,000
- JESUS AT THE LAKE. When Peter tried his faith to emulate Jesus walking on the water
- JESUS IN THE GARDEN. Mary Magdalene recognises Jesus at Gethsemane.

As the children would have been familiar with Open the Book, it being part of regular First School assemblies in Hexham, there was no shortage of volunteers to get 'dressed up' and be part of the story.



Some of the storytellers preparing for the Good Samaritan story at the bandstand.

The stories had follow up resources for each age group. The seven venues covered

- » 'Babes & Toddlers', (Storytime - at Trinity)
- » those leaving Nursery (Sticky Fingers – St.Aidan's),
- » those leaving Reception (Busy Bees – St.Mary's),
- » those leaving Year 1 (Rockets – St Mary's School),
- » leaving school year 2 (Eagles – Salvation Army),
- » school years 3 & 4 (Xtreme – Community Church)
- » leaving school years 5-7 (The Zone – West End Methodist Church).

Integrated within the programmes there were mental health touchpoints. These were developed by Martha Flavell of the Bible Society. Representatives of the Bible Society came to see 'the action' as they are hoping to offer the material as a Holiday Club resource for Open the Book teams across the country as 'Explore the Book'.

The Zone



Age 9 – 12 years (leaving school years 5, 6 or 7)

At West End Methodist Church Hall

125 children and young people from 83 families (excluding 'Storytimers') were welcomed over the week from 10.00 am to 12.30pm.

Holiday Club leaders Dan Thomas and Tim Belton were ably assisted on the programme with 24 Adult Team, 5 Young Leaders and 17 Junior Team. It is greatly encouraging to see Young Leaders (ex Junior Team) who have been part of Holiday Club over many years, grow in their faith and take responsibility within the club.

The leaders were also assisted with a Registration Team, a 'techy' team, Catering Teams for team lunches and a prayer group as well as the OtB storytellers. All from different Hexham churches. A big thank you to all who helped.

Additionally for those aged 13 + there was 'Nightshift' from 6.30 – 8pm offering Big Games and BBQ on the Sele Park, Bowling at Wentworth Bowl, Build Your Pizza Night at the Abbey and Café & Karaoke Night at the Rising Café. A meaningful testimony was shared each evening as to how a team member became a Christian and what it means to live as one.

Friday evening saw the usual end of Holiday Club show where each age group could demonstrate what they had been doing during the week to their parents, grandparents et al. This also included the traditional puppet show where they sang 'Nothing is Impossible'; Young Leaders who are puppet trained directed eight Junior Team to deliver the song.





CULTIVATING A DEEPER CONNECTION:

Simplifying Your Prayer Life

By Daryl Ralston, Local Preacher on Trial, Tynedale Circuit

1 August 2025

I was once asked, “What is the perfect prayer life?” In a world often characterised by busyness and complexity, the notion of perfecting our prayer life can seem daunting.

However, I believe prayer is fundamentally relational. We cultivate a perfect prayer life through regular prayer, which strengthens our connection with God and allows us to experience His unwavering love for us, much like the bond between a loving parent and child.

Prayer is an uncomplicated conversation aimed at fostering a deeper relationship. Just as human relationships flourish through open communication, our connection with the divine strengthens when we simply talk to God as ourselves, without pretence or the need to impress. This relational approach underscores that God desires our genuine presence, not elaborate performances.

A cornerstone of this simplified prayer life, I’ve found, is consistency. Whilst acknowledging the ebb and flow inherent in personal spiritual practices (my own included!), I’ve observed the tangible difference a prayerful start can make to my day. This regularity, even in short bursts, contributes significantly to nurturing closeness with God.

The nature of prayer is varied. It’s important to understand that prayer needn’t conform to a specific length or style. Whether brief or extended, eloquent or simple, the efficacy of prayer doesn’t hinge on emotional intensity or the fleeting sensation of “goosebumps.” I want to reassure you of a crucial point: even when the presence of God is not overtly felt, the Holy Spirit is still working and interceding for us (Romans 8:26-27). God remains ever-present and attentive.

Perhaps one of the most comforting takeaways I can offer is the emphasis on God’s unwavering love and grace. This divine steadfastness allows us to consistently return to Him, regardless of past inconsistencies in our prayer life. It’s a message of steadfast acceptance and an open invitation to reconnect at any moment.

For those seeking a starting point, I suggest beginning prayers with gratitude. In a world that often highlights faults, cultivating a thankful heart, particularly as people of faith, offers a powerful lens through which to approach God. And for moments when words prove elusive, I thoughtfully recommend a prayer book by my father-in-law, Reverend Chris Keating, titled *Work and Prayer*, as a valuable tool for finding structure and rekindling conversation with God.

Ultimately, I believe the essence of prayer can be distilled into three powerful 'Rs': Regularity, Relationship, and Relentless love. By embracing these principles, we are encouraged to cultivate a consistent, authentic connection with God, thereby opening ourselves to experience the profound and overflowing nature of His love. It's a timely reminder that a rich spiritual life is not about perfection, but about an ongoing, heartfelt conversation.

This article is part of a project submission for a training module as a Local Preacher on Trial in the Tynedale Circuit. It was adapted from a video I produced for Trinity

TYNEDALE CIRCUIT EASTER OFFERING SERVICE AT CATTON



Twenty-four ladies and six men, from Catton, Corbridge, Fourstones, Haltwhistle, Haydon Bridge, Hexham West End, Prudhoe, Riding Mill, and Stocksfield, met at Catton Methodist Church on the evening of Sunday 25th May 2025.

We were delighted to be together in the friendly informal cafe-style setting offered by our hosts, Catton ladies.

With lovely cloths and small vases of freshly picked brightly coloured garden, field and hedgerow flowers adorning the tables - such thought and care.

Lynne Graham led our Dedication Service for the £1866.76 raised this year for the Methodist Church World Mission Fund from our Easter Offering Envelopes, and involved as many readers in the proceedings as possible. Julie Woodford accompanying our singing on the organ, Lynne Graham and Glen Smith mime-danced / signed 'Brother Sister let me serve you' which was beautiful, and Glen Smith updated everyone on the progress made educating women and children in the charity she and her husband founded over twenty years ago 'Hope For South Africa's Children' where all the trustees are members of Prudhoe Methodist Church, and this account further complimented the four set stories read out. It was a very enlightening time of worship, and we felt truly blessed to be supporting the work of our partner churches overseas.

The evening concluded with a marvellous and delicious faith supper, along with a lot of catching up with friends around the Circuit.

Jane Dixon

Some Dates for Your Diaries: Haydon Bridge Methodist Chapel

- Saturday 11th. October. 7pm Concert with Hexham Brass
- Tuesday 4th. November. 7pm Quiz Night with Pie and Pea Supper

PRAYER WALKING DOWN THE VALLEY

As part of the **North Tyne Pilgrim Prayer Journey**, we prayer walked down the North Tyne valley over four days from Wed 16th to Sat 19th July. It was forty-nine miles in total, from the source, near Deadwater, to the Meeting of the Waters, using the Tyne Trail developed by the charity 'Daft as a Brush'.



Bob & Mary Bain

We were joined each day by different people on the route, who walked sections of it with us. We had a few breaks to meet with others on the way, in various tearooms and homes. Voluntary drivers dropped us at our starting point each day. We said hello to Fr Jim Dunne in Bellingham and Revd Sarah Lunn in Chollerton as we walked through. Each day, we posted photos on social media, and realised others were praying with us online, and sending encouraging messages.

At one point, near Kielder Water, we missed a turn and walked along a redundant tarmac road for a few yards, before it disappeared into the reservoir! It was the old road through the now flooded valley. We were very surprised to see two adders there, basking in the sun beside the road! Later, we sat on a lovely bench, carved with animals – an otter, an eagle and a salmon.

We liked the two wooden sets of Noah's Ark on display by the fonts at St Peters church, Falstone. We ate the fruit of the land – raspberries growing on the roadside at Falstone and Redesmouth. We had to be brave a couple of times walking carefully by some bullocks! At one point, the path suddenly became very obscure. We hacked our way through in faith, believing the path was still there, hidden in the undergrowth.

On the final afternoon, we had a very wet walk down to the Meeting of the Waters. It was raining so hard, we felt the waters had met us! We loved standing by the water's edge, looking down the Tyne and then up the respective tributaries of North and South, as they flowed in together.

We stayed in Brown Rigg, the former school in Bellingham for some of our accommodation, and later at a friend's house. After walking all day, we really appreciated the hot showers. We weathered the walk well with just a few insect bites and a few blisters.

The day after we completed the walk, we attended the early morning communion service at Gunnerton, St. Christopher's as a way of saying thank you to God, for such an amazing four days.

We felt that the experience God had given us had brought a calmness and a slowing down to our lives; an element of timelessness and disconnect from our normal routines, which we very much appreciated!

Our aim throughout the 'Pilgrim Prayer journey' year has been to pray and bless the communities in the North Tyne valley at five different prayer gatherings over the course of the year. Our final two prayer meetings will be:-

- Sat 20th Sept Meet in Humshaugh at the Village Hall at 2pm. Finish by 4pm.
- **Sat 15th November Meet at Acomb Methodist Church, 12 noon.
Finish by 2pm.**

Come and join us if you are free on those dates.

Please contact us for the details. Bob & Mary Bain 07988 564299

bobbain@hotmail.co.uk



The North Tyne Pilgrim Prayer Journey is being organised by Welcome Network CIO, a national charity which seeks to connect people together to show God's love and power in their community.

They help individuals and churches in a local area to connect together in worship and prayer, and to serve the community in collaborative projects

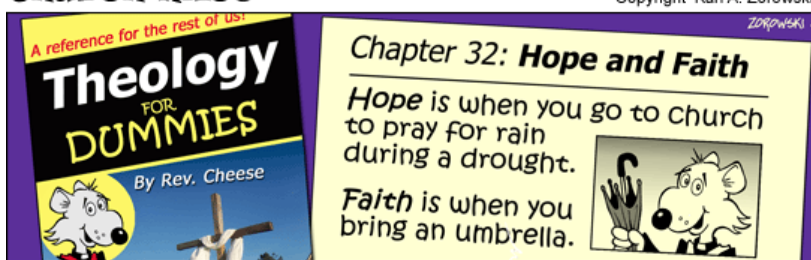


Bob & Mary with some of those who joined them on the Barrasford to Warden leg.

They are writing a book 'Praying Along the North Tyne' which should be available for the meeting at Acomb Methodist Chapel in November.

Church Mice

Copyright Karl A. Zorowski



On 12 June Circuit Meeting, continuing their tour of churches in the Circuit, met at Haydon Bridge Methodist Church

Following the welcome and recording of attendance by Rev Marie Beard, the meeting heard and considered various items of business involved in running the Circuit and the Churches.

The members of Circuit Meeting heard:

- that Advanced Module Safeguarding Training had been held in May at Stocksfield Methodist Church;
- that the Local Preachers' Meeting would hold its annual rededication meeting in July;
- that the Trustees Annual Report be accepted and submitted to the Charity Commission; and
- that the Circuit is still looking to recruit more Circuit Stewards.

The financial situation within the Circuit and its Churches remains difficult and new ways of calculating the assessment is being considered by the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT).

When considering the Circuit properties, it was noted that manses will be expected to achieve an EPC rating of C (this is the measure of energy efficiency within properties).

The Circuit is currently seeking permission from the District Policy Committee to either sell or lease the premises at Hexham West End. Permission to sell the manse at Wylam has already been granted.

A request to close Catton chapel was received and discussed. The Catton congregation plan to continue meeting in other local buildings to continue the 200 years of witness in their community. It is expected that the chapel building will close on the weekend of 18/19 October with a weekend of events and a final service of thanksgiving and hope. Rev Michael Holland thanked everyone who has been involved in the work at Catton chapel over the years and that whilst there is sadness at this decision there is also a peace with it.

The final item of discussion looked at the future structure of the Circuit. Rev Gareth Sherwood will be moving on in September 2026 meaning that the Circuit will then only have three ministers with Rev Roberta Ritson continuing her ministry in the North Tyne section.

Following discussions in churches, the original proposal to create a one Church Circuit, challenges with this model have become apparent. Rev Marie invited questions/comments from the floor about the future restructuring of the Circuit which will be taken to CLT for discussion.

The next Circuit Meeting will be held on **Thursday, 18 September 2025, at 7.30pm.**
Venue: Prudhoe Methodist Church. The meeting then closed in prayer.

N.B. the Circuit Office is relocating to Haydon Bridge. Circuit Enabling Services Manager Laura Wolfe's days and times in the office will vary according to meeting schedules. Circuit Suptd., Rev. Marie Beard is moving into an office at Hexham Trinity. To make appointments with either Laura or Marie it is best via their emails.

laura.wolfe@tyndalemethcircuit.org

marie.beard@methodist.org.uk



Hexham Wesleyan Sunday School Teaching Staff (about 1882)

A quiz. 'A photo of Hexham Wesleyan Sunday School Teaching Staff (about 1882)*
Where was the site of this chapel before the Wesleyan Methodists built their church on Beaumont Street – opened in 1887? (Now Trinity)

Answers to John Martin. john_martin_sb@yahoo.co.uk No prize – but a mention in the winter edition of Living Waters.

One wonders how many more Sunday School teachers there were in Hexham at this time. There was also the Primitive Methodist Hebborn Memorial chapel in what is now St. Mary's Chare AND the United Methodist Free Chapel down on Tanner's Row. AND one wonders how large the Abbey Sunday School was.

Interestingly, the Wesleyan's had to enlarge the Sunday School in 1909, the same year that the Primitive's opened their new church at the top of Beaumont Street

*Photo acknowledgement. Hexham Local History Society

We are very proud of our eldest son Michael and his Ukrainian wife Svetlana who have been living and working in Japan for 20 years now and during that time have not only established their own Church and English School but are raising four daughters ranging in ages from 17 down to 6 yrs old, Obviously life has not been easy for them but their Church (run from a rented Community Centre and their English School (run from another rented building nearby) as well as the ups and downs of raising family away from the help of grandparents, has had many challenges. You will read his testimony below and account of a recent very special visit, as well as two pictures from that time spent together.

For any further information of Michael's work, please e mail Kathleen armstrongkathleen66@gmail.com

Kathleen and David Armstrong, Haydon Bridge

NEWS FROM JAPAN

One sacrifice of a missionary is to leave his home and his family behind and go to live in a foreign land. That, of course, means no weekends to go and see Grandma and Grandpa. But this summer we had the privilege of having Svetlana's parents and sister from Ukraine come for three weeks and stay with us. They had taken a long arduous and dangerous journey through war torn Ukraine.

I hadn't seen them for ten years. They had never met their youngest granddaughter Victoria. We had an unforgettable time with them. They left refreshed and with precious memories of our time together. One of their greatest memories was riding a tandem bicycle together. This was the first time my Mother-in-Law had ridden a bike.

At our church service the family shared with our people how God had touched their lives and Svetlana's mother told how she nearly lost Svetlana during childbirth.

It's amazing to watch how God orchestrates, protects and leads us into His perfect plan. I think of how suddenly I had an interest in studying Russian. If I hadn't then I would never have met my lovely wife. There was no voice from Heaven telling me to study Russian. It was just a sudden desire and interest.

We should pay attention to the talents and abilities and interests that we have because these are the things that God put in us before the foundation of the earth so that we can affect and shine in the world around us for Jesus Christ.

With love and blessings to our friends in Tynedale. Michael Armstrong.





L- R Victoria (now 6), Svetlana, Svetlana's Mum Larisa, Svetlana's Dad Vladimir, Hannah (15), Svetlana's sister Oksana, Abigail (17), Zoe (12) and Michael.



Generation Z is leading a turnaround in the popularity of Christianity and a rise in church attendance in England and Wales, according to research published in April.

A survey by the **Bible Society** and **YouGov** finds those aged 18-34, which includes Gen Z and Millennials, are newly drawn to Christian beliefs, with renewed interest not only in being part of a church but also in prayer, reading the Bible and social activism based on faith.

After years of declining congregations, the most dramatic increase in churchgoing, according to the research, is among young men. The image of churches being filled by elderly women and few others is no longer true, the society says.

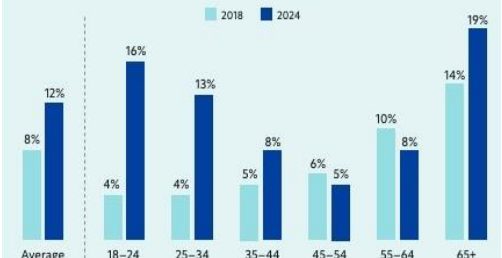
"The results are pointing to community being the key. We are looking at young adults coming along with friends. They are not totally unchurched; sometimes grandparents have had an impact on their faith."

The most significant upturn was among the 18-24s (Gen Z) with 16 per cent of them attending church at least once a month; six years earlier, only 4 per cent did so.

Is YOUR church or community experiencing the effect of God's Holy Spirit amongst young people? Or, more importantly, are you praying that young people will seek a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ – and that you may be available to help them in this.

The rise in regular churchgoing

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





Tynedale

Methodist Circuit

Bellingham and North Tyne MURC

Wark Joint Partnership

Rev Roberta Ritson

Hexham Trinity

Acomb

Rev Gareth Sherwood

Riding Mill

Corbridge with Slaley JP

Haltwhistle

Rev Marie Beard

Wylam

Prudhoe

Stocksfield

Rev Fiona Calverey

Allen Valley

Haydon Bridge

Fourstones with Warden

Rev Michael Holland

www.tynedalemethcircuit.org

Living Waters is co-ordinated by John Martin for the Tynedale Circuit.

If you have any comments / suggestions / ideas / photos for the Winter edition
please send to: -

John Martin

email: john_martin_sb@yahoo.co.uk

'phone 01434 674425

By **Monday 17th. November 2025** please.

