

## The Benefice of Mitford and Hebron Newsletter January 2025

Dear Friends

Happy New Year

New Beginnings

As with any organisation the church is always looking for ways to improve how it functions within and how it serves God and others.

An element of that process involves exploring ways to best communicate with you all and as part of that development you will find the format of this Newsletter, different from the previous ones.

We are combining information from the January Notice Sheet with a message from Elaine and a roundup of Christmas activities and news.

For most of us now the festivities are over, and we are left to take down decorations, restore our houses back into order, after sessions of musical beds and the provision of never-ending food and beverages. A time to savour quietness and space.

There can be something deeply satisfying about sorting, clearing out and restoring. A sense of wellbeing is engendered, and we feel somehow released and reestablished. We also discover new ways to store and arrange our 'things' and the why did I never think of that before moments.



After marvelling with wonder at the birth of Jesus, God with us, over the Christmas time, perhaps the New Year is a time for us to restore our relationship with the holy child and move forward into 2025 with fresh insights renewed energy and rearranged lives and priorities.

Take time to clear out the clutter that prevents us spending time in quiet contemplation and study. Make a space and time each day to just be. Rethink, innovate and revise.

Such activity is not a one-off event, like our homes our lives will get messy again, vying pressures will demand our time and energy and further clearing and cleaning sessions will be required.

But remember and return to the peace and sense of wellbeing you feel when order is restored and our relationship with the child in the manger is re-established, when Jesus regains his rightful place in our lives.

Heavenly Father,

As I step into this new year, draw me closer to You in every way.

Help me to seek Your presence daily and to grow in my relationship with You.

May my faith deepen and my love for You increase.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRIEST IN CHARGE

### January Reflections

As we step into the New Year, I find myself looking back on the joy and hope of Christmas with a grateful heart. The celebration of Christ's birth reminds us that even in the darkest moments, God's light shines brightly, offering hope and renewal.



Over recent months, we have been prayerfully discerning where God is calling us to serve in His church. This has been a season of reflection and seeking His guidance as we explore how we, as a parish, can use our unique gifts and skills to serve together more fully.

This New Year brings a renewed sense of purpose and vision. As we dwell in God's Word and lean into His promises, we are reminded that He is faithful and steadfast, equipping us for the work He has set before us. Let us step forward together, united in hope, as we discover new ways to share His love and light with those around us.

May God bless you richly in this season of renewal, and may His guidance and peace sustain us all in the months ahead.

With every blessing

*Elaine*



### News from the Schools

Advent and Christmas saw a busy schedule with the three schools that we work in. The Children kicked off the season with a Christingle Service to set the tone for Waiting in Hope for Jesus. Every year, one of the highlights of the service is for the children to see which lucky teacher will be donning the inflatable Orange Christingle Suit! This year Mr Morris, Mrs Campbell and Mrs Stephenson did the honours much to the delight of all the pupils! As we lit our Christingles, we reflected on Jesus the Light of the World and how we can be like Him to be light bearers in the world.



In October, Tritlington First School welcomed a new Governor, Mrs Linda Fugill to the team. As a church school, it is a privilege to offer our support as a church to the governance and guidance of the school. Governors play a vital role in helping to shape the character of the school and work closely with the headteachers and staff to monitor and evaluate good practice in supporting the teaching and learning of pupils. In a church of England School, church governors are responsible for helping to shape the Christian character of the school and support staff in developing Collective Worship and Spiritual development. At Tritlington, the School Vision is 'Let your Light Shine' The Vision for the school springs from Jesus Christ's teaching in his 'Sermon on the Mount'.

**"You are the light of the world - like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see."**

*St Matthew 5:14-15 (New Living Translation)*

The children had a wonderful morning experiencing the Christmas story during our 'Experience Christmas' event. They journeyed through the Nativity, reflecting on the key figures and their significance. Together, we considered Mary's brave decision to become Jesus' mother, Joseph's trust in God's plan, the shepherds' faithful response to the angels' message, and the kind innkeeper's creative solution in offering a place for the Holy Family. These moments helped us think about how we can see God at work in our own lives.

The morning concluded with a fun manger craft activity, which the children thoroughly enjoyed. They were also delighted by a special visit from 'Sheila the Sheep,' who shared her perspective on that extraordinary night when the angels appeared to announce Jesus' birth to the shepherds on the hillside. What a night that must have been!



**Storytime Church**

In September, we launched our new *Storytime Church*—a monthly service designed especially for small children and their families. Held on the third Sunday of each month at 4 p.m. in church, this delightful gathering offers a warm and welcoming space for little ones to explore the Bible through the adventures of Dolly and Teddy.

Each session includes a short time of songs and storytelling, followed by a brief prayer and some exciting crafts for all ages to enjoy. Families can also look forward to hot chocolate and biscuits, with plenty of time for parents and carers to chat while the children get creative.

If you know families who would enjoy this special time together, please pass along the details—flyers are available in church. And if you're interested in helping to develop this wonderful service, feel free to reach out to Elaine or join us for an enquiry morning on Saturday, January 25th, at 10 a.m. in the stable room.

We'd love to have you be a part of this growing ministry!



## Services and Events over Christmas

Advent and Christmas brought people together from across our communities as we prepared for and celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ. The season began with an Advent Carol Service at Hebron, where we reflected on the anticipation of Jesus' arrival through scripture, carols, and thoughtful contemplation.

The festivities continued with a Christingle celebration at Hebron, where local community members joined Tritlington School pupils, staff, and parents. On Sunday, December 22nd, Mitford Church hosted a delightful, lively service filled with joy and creativity. The congregation was entertained by a charming yet somewhat distracted Millennial Angel recounting her visit to Mary (when she could remember to put her phone down!), a flustered innkeeper dealing with the chaos of census-time Bethlehem, and three "Uptown Funking" Kings presenting their gifts to Jesus. Together, we sang carols and enjoyed music from the band and musicians, reflecting on our collective journey to the manger. The service ended on a heartwarming note as children joined the baby Jesus in the stable for an impromptu rendition of *Away in a Manger*.

On Christmas Eve, we gathered to hear a creative retelling of the Journey to the Manger. Traditional carols and readings brought the story of the first Christmas to life. Children placed the Nativity characters at the crib and lovingly laid baby Jesus in the manger before everyone enjoyed fellowship over mulled wine and mince pies. Later that night, at 11 p.m., brave souls ventured out again for a Communion service, welcoming Christ on Christmas Day with reverence and joy.



It was a true delight to see so many new and familiar faces in our churches throughout the Christmas season. Together, we reflected on how the ancient story of Jesus—Emmanuel, God with us—continues to inspire and renew our hearts year after year, touching people of all ages in meaningful ways.

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## MISSION AND CHARITY GROUP

### WEST END REFUGEE SERVICE

Please see below a message from the West End Refugee Service

#### A Message of Hope this Christmas

As the year ends, we wish you and your loved ones a happy festive season and a New Year filled with hope and positive change.

Christmas is a time to cherish joy, belonging and the faith in brighter tomorrows. Yet, this year has reminded us how fragile those values can feel. Across the world, wars, poverty, climate disasters and conflict have forced millions to leave behind their homes, families and everything they know. Here in the Northeast, the riots we witnessed revealed how quickly hate and misinformation can spread, creating fear and deepening divisions within our society.

This is why the work we do together matters so deeply.

In the face of division and crisis, your support is a bold and powerful act of hope. It says: **we believe in something better.**

We help people not only rebuild their lives but achieve true independence. Through our Skillsmatch and Employability programmes, our clients gain the tools and opportunities to develop skills, grow in confidence and secure jobs where they can thrive. This year, we've seen many who arrived with little hope, carrying the weight of trauma, now earning their first wages – taking those crucial first steps towards stability and belonging.

Employment isn't simply about earning money – it's also about reclaiming the confidence to dream again.

Thanks to you, we can welcome people seeking asylum with open hearts and minds helping them feel not only safe but at home. Your kindness builds the connections that strengthen our community and lay the foundations for a future rooted in understanding, compassion and humanity.

As the challenges of conflict, displacement and the climate crisis grow, hope can feel like a fragile thread. But it is the thread that holds us together – linking lives, communities and nations, And thanks to people like you, that thread remains strong.

From all of us at WERS, thank you for standing with us and with those who need it most. We wish you and your loved ones a peaceful Christmas and a New Year full of hope, belonging and possibility.

In solidarity

Team WERS



## THE HUB

Thanks to a donation from the Mission and Charity Group, the Hub were able to cater for their Christmas Party.

To supplement this donation Linda and Sheila arrived with a boot full of Christmas biscuits, chocolates and sweets. Thank you to all who donated – they were much appreciated and well sampled.

This is always well attended, and the meeting hall was full of both adults and children. Several of the attendees had visited Mitford in previous years and spoke fondly about their trip to see us.

The Hub provides a vital meeting place for the refugees and asylum seekers to socialise with each other, sharing experiences and information. There is also practical help and advice available with writing letters, filling out forms, general bureaucracy etc.

It is much needed and much used resource.

## CHRISTMAS COFFEE MORNING

Thanks to all who attended the Christmas Coffee Morning and who donated so generously. A total of £900 was raised.

Not only was it successful in monetary terms, but it was also a great social event, with people lingering to catch up with old friends and taking time to make new ones. The coffee and conversations flowed freely and there was a delightful array of Christmas goodies to tempt and sustain.

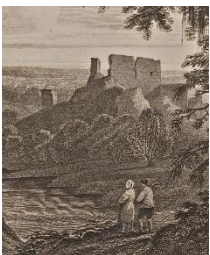


All raffle prizes have by now reached their lucky winners, so we are sorry to disappoint you if you have not been contacted! – better luck next time.

## CHILDRENS VISION

There is a separate attachment included in the email sending this Newsletter. Please take time to read about Richard's work in Bogota.

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## MITFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Meetings of the Society have paused for the winter period. However, the committee will be spending this time securing a range of speakers for next year's meetings. Watch out for full details in the Spring.

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## A PRAYER FOR TODAY

Dear God,

Thank you that you make all things new. Thank you for all that you've allowed into our lives this past year, the good along with the hard things, which have reminded us how much we need you and rely on your presence filling us every single day. We pray for your Spirit to lead us each step of this New Year. We ask that you guide our decisions and turn our hearts to deeply desire you above all else. We ask that you open doors needing to

be opened and close the ones needing to be shut tight. We ask that you help us release our grip on the things to which you've said 'no,' 'not yet,' or 'wait.' We ask for help to pursue you first; above every dream and desire you've put within our hearts.

Amen

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# St Mary Magdalene Mitford & St Cuthbert's Hebron

January 2025

<b>Benefice Diary January</b>		
Saturday 4 <sup>th</sup>	9.30am – Monthly Prayer Gathering	Mitford Stable Room
Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> Elaine Off	10.00am - Holy Communion 10.00am - Holy Communion 10.30am - Holy Communion in Traditional Language 4.00pm - Evensong	Mitford Longhorsley Hartburn Hebron
Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup>	10.15am – Collective Worship in School	Longhorsley
Wednesday 8 <sup>th</sup>	9.30am - Morning Prayer and Community Warm Hub 10.30am – Collective Worship in School	Mitford Village Hall Tritlington
Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup>	10.15am – Collective Worship in School 7.00pm – Deanery Synod	Whalton Ashington Parish Room
Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am – Holy Communion 10.00am – Morning Prayer 10.am – All Age Worship 10.30am – Holy Communion	Hebron Longhorsley Mitford Whalton
Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup>	12.00pm – Hartburn Community Lunch 7.00pm – PCC	Hartburn
Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup>	9.30am – Morning Prayer and Community Coffee 7.45pm – Mission and Charities Group Meeting	Netherwitton Mitford Stable Room
Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup>	9.30-4.30pm – Sewing Group	Mitford Stable Room
Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am – All Age Worship 10.30am – Holy Communion 10.30am – Morning Prayer and Baptism 4.00pm – Storytime Church 4.00pm – Café Church	Mitford Netherwitton Whalton Mitford Longhorsley
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	9.30am – Morning Prayer and Coffee 7.00pm – PCC Longhorsley	Hebron Longhorsley
Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm – Anna Chaplains Service	Hebron
Friday 24 <sup>th</sup>	9.00am – All Age Worship with School	Whalton
Saturday 25 <sup>th</sup>	10.00 – 12.00pm Children and Family Ministry Enquiry Meeting 7.00 - Burns Night Whalton	Mitford Stable Room  Whalton Village Hall
Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am – Morning Prayer 10.00am – BCP Morning Prayer 10.00am – Café Church 10.30am - Holy Communion	Longhorsley Mitford Mitford Village Hall Bolam
<b>Notices this Month</b>		
<p>There will be a meeting on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January at 10 till 12pm for anyone who would like to explore becoming part of a <b>children and family ministry</b> across the benefice. This will include school and community opportunities as well as how we can welcome and nurture children and families in the church. If this is something you would like to explore then come along! We will meet in the Stable Room.</p>		
<p><b>Refreshments</b> – If you would like to offer your support serving refreshments after the services please speak to Wendy Laverick.</p>		



**Monthly Prayer Gathering** – Join us at 9.30am on the first Saturday of the month for coffee and refreshments before gathering to pray as a community for our world and each other. For more details speak to Izzy Quinby.

There will be a small group of ladies travelling to the **New Wine Women’s Conference** on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February in Newcastle. Please speak to Lou Hancox for more details or to book.

**Serving at Mitford and Hebron Church** – If you would like to chat with someone about how you can use your gifts and skills to serve in our church and community, please do drop Elaine an email and arrange a meet up! Even if you are just thinking about where God might be calling you – it is really important that we prayerfully discern together and explore what comes next!

**Safeguarding** – If you are involved in any ministry that requires safeguarding training that needs refreshing, please get in touch with Sadie or Izzy who can book you onto an upcoming training course. For all safeguarding queries please contact Izzy Quinby or Rev Elaine.

**Mission and Charities Group** – There will be a Mission and Charity Group meeting on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January to which you are all warmly invited! The meeting will take place in the Stable Room and will start at 19:45 and finish at 21:15. If you or anyone you know of anyone in the Mitford and Hebron congregations, who you think would be interested in being part of the Mission & Charity Group, do feel free to invite them along. For more information please speak to Alice Lane.

**Do You need Logs?**

If you burn logs at home and would like a little top up – there are some available for you to help yourself to by the front gate of the Vicarage.



Mitford Church hosts a collection point for the Foodbank. If you would like to contribute or offer assistance, please let us know. If you are in need of food, please contact Revd. Elaine or Sadie at the office for a referral to receive a food parcel.



If you or someone you know would benefit from pastoral support, prayer, or communion, please contact the office. We will gladly arrange for a member of our team to visit you.

**How to Get in Touch**

<p><b>Revd Elaine Jones</b>  <b>Priest in Charge</b>          07521 106158  <a href="mailto:revelainejones@gmail.com">revelainejones@gmail.com</a></p>		<p><b>Sadie Flanagan</b>  <b>Benefice Administrator</b>          01670 913414          Monday – 9-5          Wednesday &amp; Thursday 9-1  <a href="mailto:Wansbeckvicarhelp@gmail.com">Wansbeckvicarhelp@gmail.com</a></p>	
<p><b>Churchwardens</b>  <b>Hebron</b>  <i>James Roff</i>  <i>Ian Craigs</i></p>	<p><b>Churchwardens</b>  <b>Mitford</b>  <i>Janice Robinson</i>  <i>Richard Addison</i></p>	<p><b>Contact the wardens via the church office:</b>  <b>01670 913414</b></p>	
<p><a href="http://mitfordandwansbeckchurches.com">mitfordandwansbeckchurches.com</a></p>			