

and with Workington, she will be helping with the upfront parts of the assembly, while the rest of that team are performing with the puppets. *Ruth* will also very soon be editing the various elements of the Allerdale assembly she has filmed for us. Once editing is complete, we can then send a video version of 'The Donkey's Tale' out to those schools not receiving a live assembly this time!

And last, but not least, we are very thankful for all of you, our faithful prayer supporters! We could not do this work without you! We **SO** appreciate your prayers! May God bless you all, and the work to which He has called us.



**Maggie**

**Primary Puppet Team Leaders**

**Allerdale Team**

Maggie Cowles, 12 Harrot Hill, Cockermouth CA13 0BL Tel: 01900 824466

**Copeland Team**

Angela Scotchbrook, 39 Carlton Drive, Whitehaven CA28 6XB Tel: 01946 67298

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# PRAYER LETTER

Spring 2022

**Welcome.** We hope you enjoy reading about the variety of NISCU people and activities in this letter. Thank you for your continuing support in prayer, finance and as volunteers. Best wishes for a Happy Easter.



"See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands".  
(Isaiah 49:16)

**West Cumbria Chairman**

Simon Astill

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**Northern Inter Schools Christian Union**

NISCU West Cumbria is part of the Northern Inter-Schools

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## Ruth takes an RE Lesson on "Science and Creation"

I was recently asked by a teacher from one of the local Primary Schools if I could help her class of Year 5 and 6 pupils with their learning on this term's RE topic, based on the 'Understanding Christianity' RE module called **"Creation and Science – Conflicting or Complementary?"**. I could have been daunted by the prospect (because 10 and 11 year olds can ask some very thoughtful and challenging questions!), but I actually found that I was quite excited by the prospect of revisiting my own background in science. When I was a Biological Sciences student, over 30 years ago now, someone had asked me a similar question – "How can someone be a scientist, and also be a Christian?" So that became the starting point for my lesson. I was able to draw on resources used by fellow NISCU workers who have taught lessons on this topic before, and I raided the cupboards and shelves in my own home for visual aids – in my household we have scientists who specialise in different areas, fossil and mineral collectors, photographers and lots of interesting books!



The class had already started looking at the account of Creation in Genesis, and had some basic knowledge of the scientific models of cosmology (the origins of the universe) and evolution (the development of life on earth). We talked about how science can answer 'how' questions (but that scientists don't have all the answers, and don't always agree with each other!) while the Bible, which was written long before modern scientific words and concepts had been identified, could explore different questions such as 'who' and 'why'. The children were interested to see that the order of things created by God in the Genesis account was very similar to the development of life on earth as described in a science text book. They had compiled a list of questions, which I had fortunately had a chance to think about beforehand, and been able to do some research! These included "Who wrote Genesis?" "What about dinosaurs?" "What caused the Big Bang?" and as we discussed these things, one question led to another – at one point I was asked "So what is God really like?" – I was able to explain that for me, as a Christian, I was able to understand something of what God is like from his character, described so clearly in the Bible, and from considering his amazing creation which is all around us. There were too many questions to answer in one lesson, but I think it will open the door for me to visit this school

## Hello from Primary Puppets

This term's Easter assembly is called '*The Donkey's Tale*', which, praise God, is coming together in quite an amazing way! Early in the term we'd been praying and asking God for His leading. Suddenly when the thought of a donkey-themed assembly came to mind, we became excited by this idea! Shortly after, the different assembly elements began to fall into place ..... one after the other! Firstly, one team member mentioned about a 'Dave the Donkey' story written by Andrew McDonough. Then within a day, copyright permission was granted to us for use online and in our live assemblies, which was SO amazing - because normally it can take ages to hear back!! What an encouragement!



We quickly realised we would need new donkey puppets suitable for the part of young Dave, and wonderfully, Oneway UK were able to make these absolutely fabulous puppets for us, and in good time for our first practices!

Then we had to think and pray about who to ask to record their voices for our puppet play. It wasn't very long before we contacted *Pauline* and *Malcolm Peill*. We are greatly indebted to them for the wonderful recording they have put together in their own inimitable way! It involves a conversation in Cumbrian accents between Dave the Donkey and his Grandpa. Dave excitedly tells his Grandpa how he carried the King into Jerusalem and how the crowds reacted to Him. Then his Grandpa (who has also been in Jerusalem) tells Dave what happened after that to Jesus, and Dave is stunned at what his Grandpa shares with him. But then his Grandpa tells him that though Jesus really was dead and his body was placed in a sealed tomb, the tomb is now empty and Jesus is now alive forever and ever!

The choice of game and puppet song also very quickly fell into place!

These puppet assemblies couldn't happen without the faithful support and commitment of our volunteer puppet team members, and we are so grateful to them! We are also grateful to *Ruth Smith* who is able to be involved in Workington and Allerdale assemblies this time.

In the Allerdale live assemblies, during the puppet play *Ruth* will be projecting some appropriate thought bubbles onto a screen at the side of the theatre which will augment the presentation;



## NISCU 1-2-1 Listening Service – What is it and who is it for?

The Service is a relatively new development in our work in local schools. It is based on a model of listening, developed by the Acorn Christian Foundation, which creates a safe space for someone, child or adult, to talk and be listened to. That in itself can provide huge benefits for someone who needs to know that their feelings and worries have been heard and

acknowledged, and can give them the opportunity to deal with issues and move forward. Effective listening (which doesn't involve counselling) has been recognised as a valuable tool in many contexts, including doctor's surgeries, and is something that can be learnt and used in our everyday relationships. For a child, having an opportunity to be listened to can help them work through the things that might be bothering them, and improve their learning and relationships at school and at home.

I first became involved about 4 years ago when I completed the training myself and am now able to train volunteers. By early 2020 NISCU had a number of trained volunteers in West Cumbria and were ready to start offering the service to schools, the idea being that Listeners would work alongside the pastoral team who would identify children that might benefit. Then of course, everything was disrupted by Covid! In September 2021, NISCU appointed a part time Listening Services Manager, Jane Callow, who is based in Lancaster but who is overseeing everything. Now that schools are reopening to visitors, we are reconnecting with our volunteers and giving some refresher training, although circumstances have changed for many of them so we are moving quite slowly at the moment.

As part of my work with NISCU, I am often in conversation with head teachers, some of whom have heard about the Listening Service and would love to have it in their school. If we are to move forward with this, we need some more local folk who feel they could undertake the training and be part of a team of volunteers who could serve one of their local schools in this way – it would most likely involve a commitment of one morning or afternoon a week, and full training and support would be given.

If you would like to find out more about the Listening Service and how to get involved, there is a brief outline at <https://niscu.org.uk/121listening/> Or you can contact Jane Callow (NISCU Listening Services Manager) ([jane.callow@niscu.org.uk](mailto:jane.callow@niscu.org.uk)) or Ruth ([ruth.smith@niscu.org.uk](mailto:ruth.smith@niscu.org.uk))

and others again, to help the children learn more about what Christians believe, and the difference that it makes to our lives. And I really hope that some of them will go on to discover that science is exciting too!

**Ruth**

## PRAYER DIARY

### March

- Wed 2 Allerdale PPT Practice (am)
- Fri 4 Workington PPT Practice (am)
- Tue 8 Collective worship at All Saint's Primary, Cocker mouth (10am)
- Wed 9 Allerdale PPT at St Michael's Primary, Bothel (10am)
- Fri 11 Workington PPT at Flimby Primary (2.30pm)
- Tue 15 Collective Worship at All Saint's Primary, Cocker mouth (10am)
- Wed 16 Allerdale PPT at Dean Primary (10.30am)
- Wed 16 QM Club at Whitehaven Academy
- Fri 18 Workington PPT at St. Michael's Infants, Workington (9.30am)
- Wed 23 Allerdale PPT at Bassenthwaite School (10am)
- Wed 23 QM Club at Whitehaven Academy
- Fri 25 Workington PPT in school - tbc
- Tue 29 Workington PPT at Maryport Primary (2 Assemblies, 9.30 & 10am)
- Tue 29 Copeland PPT meet to practise
- Wed 30 Allerdale PPT at Threlkeld School (10am)
- Wed 30 QM Club at Whitehaven Academy
- Dates tbc Easter lessons

### April

- Fri 1 Workington PPT at Westfield Primary, Workington (10.30am)
- Sat 2- Mon 18 **Easter Holidays**
- Sun 3 Workington PPT at Christ Central Church, Workington (pm)
- Sat 9 Workington PPT at Emmanuel Church, Moor Row "Easter Crafts" (10 - 12 am)
- w/b Tue 19 Easter lessons
- Wed 20 Allerdale PPT at St Herbert's Primary, Keswick

#### Contact the Team

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## Introducing .....



I'm **David Cheeseman** and I'm excited to be joining the NISCU West Cumbria team.

I moved up to Cumbria from Bristol just before Christmas. We moved because my wife, Jen, got a new job with Barnardo's, she's a Play Therapist. In a matter of months, we had to find a new home, new schools for our two girls Macy (12) and Maya (10)

and I needed a job.

### **What did God have in mind, I wondered?**

How would I find a job that uses my experience working in schools, opens the door for me to move into Christian ministry and wraps around caring for my children?

**Here's the testimony.** I had barely mentioned my need for work, at King's Church Cockermouth, when the minister's wife connected me with a possible opening, which led in a wonderful, convoluted route to Ruth's door and Ruth got in touch with me. I literally didn't have to look; God just pointed the way! I come with a wide variety of experience. I'm a seasoned teacher having worked for years with secondary aged children with physical and mental health difficulties. I have a good deal of mission experience working predominantly with Christian Schools in India. I love building relationships with young people, being creative in different ways to engage them and sharing my love for Jesus with them.

I love the outdoors; my wife says I'm part dolphin. I'd equally be happy up a mountain, on a rock face or on the water. I love cooking and creating dishes from around the world. I also enjoy writing and I'm currently writing a book about the year I lived in India, with my family.

It's still very early days to know exactly what my role will look like, but I'll probably be working with a secondary school focus, although I'm very comfortable working with primary too. I really want to listen and hear what the NISCU team and volunteers have to say and be led by God as the role unfolds.

**Please do pray for me and my family** as we continue to land and put down roots, build friendships, settle into a new church and look for a home to buy. Please pray that the secondary schools will start to feel more comfortable to have visitors after COVID and the doors will open for us to come back in. Please pray for me that I will settle into my new role. My greatest desire is to serve God, to show young people who Jesus is through who I am, what I say and how I act.

I really look forward to meeting you all and hearing about your experiences working and volunteering for NISCU.

**Dave**

## An update from Nathan Walkingshaw, our NISCU intern

### **What have I been doing?**

I've been going into Whitehaven Academy with Rev Alison Riley to run a **lunch time craft club** and we've been getting a good number of people. Please pray that hearts would be open to the 'Thought of the Day' and that said thoughts from the Bible would be gospel centred and compassionate. I've also been going into West Lakes Academy with Alison for a **break time club**. It is very short and the aim is to be a presence weekly so that further opportunities to do lessons and a longer club arise. Also that the students know that there are people from the church who care about them. So please pray for further opportunities for the gospel to spread through our work in the school.

I've started a **bible study outside of school** with two lads from Workington Academy and we're going through 1 Timothy. The aim is Personal discipleship and growth in all involved! Pray that we would seek the truth and be moulded by the Holy Spirit to become more like Jesus as we look at him.

Recently, I did **Listening Services training** with NISCU in order that I might be a better listener in schools to the students that I interact with and also in day-to-day life. It was helpful to have the time to reflect on why listening is important and what makes a good listener, and have a simple tool to listen well. And I would recommend it to anyone who is vaguely interested.

(See Ruth's article about Listening Service).

### **What's in the future?**

I'm planning on starting an evangelistic **table tennis club** at St John's Hensingham before the end of March. Pray for godly leaders to help me and for young people to come. And that the gospel would be clearly heard and felt through loving words of truth and actions. Bit of a table tennis theme seemingly. I'm planning on starting a **table**



**tennis club** in Whitehaven Academy. Just waiting for them to settle in to their new building, and if possible, in Workington Academy too. So, prayer for good communication between myself and the schools would be appreciated.

Easter is fast approaching and therefore **puppet assemblies** in primary schools, exciting! Hopefully I'll be able to join in the fun with some of the teams!

**Nathan**