

Working with schools and churches

## AUTUMN PRAYER LETTER 2023

Welcome to our Autumn Prayer Letter. For both Lesley and the Primary Puppets' teams the main focus is on the Christmas story. We hope you enjoy reading about the various activities Niscu is involved in and wish all our supporters a very **Happy Christmas**.



*There were some shepherds ... who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, but the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Saviour was born – Christ the Lord!" (Luke 2 v 8-11 GNB).*

### Northern Inter Schools Christian Union

NISCU West Cumbria is part of the Northern Inter-Schools Christian Union.  
Charity No: 1135880. Company No. 7203313

### STOP PRESS!!!

**An invitation to join us in praying for the work of Niscu.**

Sunday 26 November 2023 at St Andrew's Church, 65A Meadow Road,  
Mirehouse, Whitehaven, CA28 8ER between 6-7 pm

### *Hello from Lesley*



This academic year started with re-establishing links and contacts with schools that I worked with before the summer holidays and also trying to establish new school contacts and opportunities. **Tom Vyner-Brooks** has also joined the team as our intern and is helping myself with some activities and also taking over from me and extending the work done with Alison Riley in Whitehaven Academy and Ignite youth.

Things have very quickly got busy this term, and in addition to the **regular collective worships** (Braithwaite, Bassenthwaite, St Herbert's) and **clubs** (Paddle School (Tom helping too)) and Cockermouth School continuing from last year, I am also now going in regularly to do **assemblies/collective worship** in Holm St Cuthbert's, Bridekirk Dovenby, Flimby and Dean primary schools and also as part of a team with Matt Richards (Curate, Aspatria) and Stephen Pye planning and delivering **assemblies** fortnightly to Oughterside Foundation School and Richmond Hill Primary

(Aspatria). In most of these schools, I will be tackling a broad range of topics which link the school values to the Christian faith, while in Dean I am looking at the peace of God in troubled situations through the characters of the Christmas story, and with Matt and Stephen, we are focusing on sharing the stories of some of the well-known Saints with the children.

I have re-started a historically popular **lunch-time club (The Ark)** in St Bridget's primary (Brigham) for infants. This club has run faithfully for years until staffing issues and Covid took its toll, so it is exciting to be part of the team bringing it back to life. We currently have 20 infants attending on Thursday lunchtimes to hear Bible stories, sing songs, play games and do crafts, which is great fun – especially the action songs! We are currently exploring the Christmas story using a knitted nativity set which I set up and each week, we are exploring the Christmas story through the eyes of a different character.

At the end of last term, I was asked by St Herbert's School in Keswick to lead their **RE day Collective Worship** and also set up a series of **prayer spaces** (with the help of Tom and other volunteers) where the children could think and pray around the theme of **Wisdom**. In worship the children were challenged to work out how to eat as much chocolate cake as they liked using a spoon, with the one rule being that they couldn't bend their arms at all! Thankfully wisdom was plentiful and they worked out that if they worked together by feeding one another, the cake could be eaten! In the prayer spaces they build mountains out of pebbles thinking about people they wanted to help, prayed for people they loved by adding a pipe-cleaner person to a prayer wall, got rid of anxious feelings by untying knots and drew or wrote about things that they were fed up about and wanted to forget, then threw them into a wastepaper basket. On the back of this, I've started a series of Messy-church type **after school club** in St Herbert's, named "**Journey to Advent**" this half term and then this will be followed up with "**Journey to Easter**" next spring. Again, I'll be looking at the Christmas story from the different characters' points of view.

Due to working with some of the feeder primary schools for Keswick School, I contacted the school before the summer to suggest a **lunchtime drop-in/games club** for the Year 7 & 8s, and with the help of Tom, this started just before the October break. It was slow start – with no-one turning up for the first week, but through word of mouth, we are now getting 8-10 young people coming in each Friday lunchtime.

Excitingly Sarah King has started a **CU at Cockermouth School**, so we are able to encourage the young people (20-30 each week) that come to our **QM/games club drop-in** (helped by Joelle Raby (Youth and family worker from King's Church, Cockermouth)) to go along to that and also to the youth clubs run by King's Church and Christ Church in Cockermouth.

As you will see from their input to this prayer letter, the **puppet teams** are performing "Follow the Star" as their Christmas show this year. It's an all singing, all dancing extravaganza, which means I have great fun helping out when needed. It seems that dancing fluffy birds are my puppeteering forte!

### **Lesley's Prayer Points:**

- It's great to be involved in so many activities in lots of schools, but that also means that I don't have as much time to prepare. Pray that I would have lots of inspiration and to be able to turn this quickly into material I can present or use in schools.

- Pray that the Word would take root in the hearts of the children, young people and staff that hear it.
- Pray that in the two Secondary Schools (Cockermouth and Keswick), relationships would be built and faith conversations would begin.
- Pray that relationships with schools would develop further and there would be opportunities for lessons and prayer spaces to take place.

#### Contact the Team

NISCU Office: Christ Church Rooms, South Street, Cockermouth, CA13 9RU

[www.niscu.org.uk](http://www.niscu.org.uk)

Lesley: [lesley.mclaughlin@niscu.org.uk](mailto:lesley.mclaughlin@niscu.org.uk) 077 72494894

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### Hello from Primary Puppets

#### FOLLOW THE STAR!

Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls!  
We are delighted to introduce 'Follow the Star'!

*Tyrone*, our dashing TV host, presents four fantastic songs that guide us on the most AMAZING, INCREDIBLE journey ever!

Joined by his two furry companions, *Clyde and Camille*, we are led, as each song unfolds, in wonderment of that very first Christmas!

#### 'We've Got News for You'!

A fast lively song...children Carol singers singing their hearts out!

*"Glory glory, Oh What a story.... We've got news for you!!!!"*

Their excitement and joy spills out into town and neighbourhood!

*"A baby born in a stable in Bethlehem with no doctor or midwife.*

*An astronomical light, lights up the night skies!"*

#### 'Wise Men Looked up and followed the Star.'

Another fast-moving, lively song, involving a rich variety of puppets – from three Wise Men responding to a fast-moving star; plus, *Tyrone* the camel and *Herod* all in the rear theatre; and our solo singer with a chorus of birds in the front theatre.

The soloist begins like this: *"The story's there to read in Matthew chapter two. The Magi came to see the new King of the Jews. They sought the Christ child who was born for me and you..."*

The song describes the Magi's journey from the east to Bethlehem, and the final verse ends like this:

*"Wise men looked up and followed the star, Frankincense and myrrh and gold; they brought to the King who was foretold; this Jesus they got to behold; Was born to bring us into His fold..."*

Before the next song, the children are led into a time of reflection where they are encouraged to think about Jesus at Christmas in all the fun and festivities, and to remember that Jesus is at the heart of Christmas.

### **'My Gift is Me.'**

Although we have used this song before, it remains a favourite with our teams, as it is a gentle and beautiful song, sung as a duet by a grandfather puppet and a granddaughter puppet.

After the very lively songs, this song brings down the tempo. Through its very clear wording and thought-provoking message, this song is very powerful! It explains what gift we can each give to Jesus:

*"Me, my gift is me, all I am, all I'll ever be. I'm not ashamed for the world to see, that it's me, my gift is me."*

### **'We Three Camels.'**

Adventure with *Tyrone, Clyde and Camille* as they describe the long journey, carrying the most precious gifts.

And We Three Puppet Team Leaders, each with our unique gifts, working together to serve Him in this wonderful ministry.

We humbly lay our gifts before Him! To Him be the Glory!

May our world know His Peace This Christmas!

***Angie, Julie and Maggie***

### **Primary Puppets' Prayer Diary**

Sun 19 Nov: Allerdale PPT – 'Follow the Star' at URC Church for Cocker-mouth Christmas Lights' Switch-on.

Wed 22 Nov: Allerdale PPT assembly at Brigham

Fri 24 Nov: Workington & Copeland PPTs at Beckstone Primary

Wed 29 Nov: Allerdale PPT at Bridekirk Dovenby School  
(2 assemblies)

Fri 1 Dec: Workington & Copeland PPTs at St Michael's Infants and Victoria Infants

Sat 2 Dec: Workington & Copeland PPTs at St John's Church, Hensingham with 'Christmas Unwrapped'.

Wed 6 Dec: Allerdale PPT assembly at St Michael's School Bothel

Fri 8 Dec: Workington & Copeland PPTs at Westfield Primary

Sun 10 Dec: Julie & Angie & JAM club at Emmanuel Church, Moor Row's Christmas Celebration

Wed 13 Dec: Allerdale PPT Assembly at Braithwaite School

Fri 15 Dec: Workington & Copeland PPTs at Kirkland Academy

### **Primary Puppet Team Leaders**

#### **Allerdale Team**

Maggie Cowles, 12 Harrot Hill, Cocker-mouth, CA13 0BL Tel: 01900 824466

#### **Copeland Team**

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

#### **Workington Team**

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