

FAN THE FLAME



CME NEWSLETTER

Welcome to your new CME newsletter where each quarter we'll provide you with details of upcoming courses, book recommendations, a wellbeing update, handy contacts and much more. Our hope is that it will help 'fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands' (2 Tim. 1:6) and flourish in the role to which you have been called.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Meet the events coordinator.
- Recommendations for reading on the Gospel of Matthew.
- Wellbeing from Canon Neil Kelley.
- Feedback on a sabbatical.
- Spring dates for your diary, both inside and outside the diocese.

HANDY CONTACT - CLAIRE BEATTIE

Having joined the Diocese following a welcomed career change, I'm now enjoying a more meaningful and rewarding role with the Growing Leaders team. I live in Padiham with my husband, and son who's in his final year at university, and a crazy Beagle called Lucky! I worship at St Leonard's, Padiham, where I lead the choir and play the flute, and I am an avid reader of crime fiction including Henning Mankell, Anne Cleeves, and the greatest of them all, Agatha Christie! I am currently streamlining the grant application process to make it quicker, simpler and more accessible to all. Working alongside Mike, I'll be available by email or phone to answer any questions regarding grant eligibility and allocation. I'm looking forward to meeting you all!

Website: www.blackburn.anglican.org/training-grants

CME Officer: mike.print@blackburn.anglican.org

Events Coordinator: claire.beattie@blackburn.anglican.org

THE REVD CANON MARK SOADY - SABBATICAL REFLECTION



Fr Mark is the Rector of Rufford & Tarleton and the Secretary to the Committee of Anglican Religious Communities in England. He reflects upon his recent sabbatical below.

‘A visit early in my life I made to the ruined Cistercian Monastery at Talley was undertaken by me on foot. I remember as a 15 year old , during the three day walk, having my first ever cold water shave outdoors . Being a pilgrim involves making such sacrifices, and through those sacrifices one gets closer to God. Within the first week of my Sabbatical - and 50 years on from the time I walked there - I revisited that ruined monastery. I think it is true to say the Cistercians way is much more basic than the Benedictine way I try to live my life now, so was that visit calling me back to a simpler way of life? This is a theme which pervaded my month-long journey.

Peregrinatio, leaving one's homeland and wandering for the love of God, is what almost all the early Celtic Saints did, among them those whose graves / Holy sites I visited: Columba, Aidan; and you could argue even in death Cuthbert wandered as his body was moved around for 7 years before resting at Chester-le street and settling at Durham Cathedral.

A key part of this removing of oneself from ones homeland is to separate oneself from family and friends, so as to get more reliant on and thus closer to God. These early Celtic Saints believed that taking themselves away from their possessions and familiar surroundings enabled them to appreciate better all God's blessings, and thus grow in faith. This way of life also demonstrates to the outside world our faith, but showing we are dependant on nothing and no one, but God. I think there is much that we in our possession obsessed generation can learn from these earliest followers of Christ in these lands.’ - Fr Mark

”

My sabbatical gave me the space I needed to re-focus for the autumn of my active Parochial Ministry. I found that it as a result of stepping out from the regular routine and round of ministry that I was able to both see where my parish was and what God was calling of me to do.

**THE REVD CANON NEIL KELLEY
ASSISTANT ARCHDEACON (CLERGY WELLBEING)**



When I started my role, I soon realised that most of our conversations about clergy wellbeing start in the wrong place! So often we talk about how many days or hours we work, whether we read emails on rest days or holidays and so on. These are not unimportant questions to ask!

However, the starting point for our wellbeing in ministry must be giving priority to Sabbath. Sabbath rest will look different for each of us, depending on our ministry context and/or domestic situation. However, God created the Sabbath because He wanted us to experience rest. Rest was as important a part of creation as what preceded it. In his book 'Working from a place of rest' the writer Tony Horsfall asks the following

- What might a Sabbath way of life look like for you? What objections to Sabbath do you find in your own heart? What difficulties might you encounter as you seek to incorporate this discipline?
- What might spur you on to establish it as a helpful routine? What part does leisure play in your life? What resistance to it do you find within yourself?

And in the book 'The Busy Christian's Guide to Busyness' Tim Chester says "Do we rest to work or work to rest?" The answer is neither. With the Bible's God-centred ethic we work for the glory of God and we rest for the glory of God.

We are hugely blessed to be in a Diocese with so many resources to help our wellbeing and to help our ministry flourish. Perhaps as we begin a new liturgical year our New Year's Resolution might be to make Sabbath rest more of a priority in our busy schedules.

St. Augustine wrote: "Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you". This year may we find opportunities to rest in the Lord so that we can be renewed in His service.

Email: Canon Neil Kelley:
neil.kelley@blackburn.anglican.org

Visit the Diocesan website for more:
www.blackburn.anglican.org/clergy-wellbeing

LENT DEVOTIONAL 2026: 'GOD'S STORY – YOUR STORY'



Our new Lent Devotion is imminent. Jeremy Duff, Principal of St Padarn's, has shared his wisdom with the authors and has written the Preface which you can find below.

The time of Jesus is ancient history. Jerusalem is a long way away. Can it really be true that what happened over there, back then, has anything to do with me? This Lent we trace the story. On Ash Wednesday, we start the book of Acts, with Jesus' initial followers waiting. Waiting for God. Dependent. Is the Jesus story now over? Life, death, resurrection. A wonderful moment in history? No, this moment, over there, back then, was just a start.

Together, we will read the story of those first decades of the Church. How God led His people and transformed them from a small, fragile group of just one race and nationality into a great movement, including many races and nationalities, the rich and poor, young and old, those with disabilities and folks from the establishment. A community full of the presence of God, constantly surprised by God's overflowing kindness and mercy.

On Easter Day as we celebrate Jesus' resurrection, Acts will reach its climax. The end of the story? No way. You might as well ask if Jesus' resurrection is the end of the story. Acts ends with the good news about Jesus being preached boldly and unhindered in Rome – in what for them was the centre of the world.

The boundaries and barriers had been broken. God had brought the Christian story from the margins to the centre, and from there it will go to the ends of the earth, even to Lancashire! It is a great story.

Day by day, we will read about real people in all their variety, grasping God's love for them, and being transformed. We will notice how God is at work, His Spirit always seeming to be one step ahead, leading the way. We will see opposition and hardship and people stay loyal to Jesus. But it is more than that. This is not just a great story. It is our story. If you read this on a bus in Preston or on your sofa in Blackpool, you are reading the beginning of a story which has become your story. Volume 3247 of Acts would be about you. For nothing has changed. The good news of Jesus is still spreading. The boundaries and barriers are still being broken. People in all their variety are still turning to Jesus, receiving the Spirit, and joining the Christian community.

It also holds up a mirror. Acts can open our eyes to see how God might be at work here. Now. If God encouraged, challenged and worked through them, maybe God is doing the same in us today? If only we would notice, take courage and step up.

Charles Wesley's great hymn '*and can it be?*' declares "*'Tis mercy all, immense and free; For, O my God, it found out me.*" The great story starts in Acts. It has found out you – it is now your story – but what of our neighbours?

My prayer is that, as you read Acts this Lent, you will rejoice that God's story is your story, and step out with His Spirit so that it becomes their story too.

For an electronic devotion download our 'Fruitful' App. or click [here](#).



Diocesan Lent Course - as with previous years this Lent we will be taking the same theme as the Lent Devotionals (and as the Diocesan Conference) the **Book of Acts**. Bishop Philip will lead us through some of the themes of this amazing story of the early Church and the spreading of the Faith through the Apostles by the Holy Spirit. For more click [here](#)!

Blackburn Cathedral

Loads of great events taking place at our cathedral in our centenary year. Click here for more: [Events Guide](#)

Emmanuel College Pop-Up Theology - Spring Module: Doctrine of God: Gazing at God in Worship: Who is God –and how does knowing him change everything? Join online for eight Monday evenings of exploring the wonder of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. No qualifications needed—just a heart hungry to go deeper. This module will help you answer tough questions about God’s existence, understand the beauty of the Trinity, and grow in worship that shapes daily life. Be drawn into a bigger vision of God—and be changed by it! Book here: [Doctrine of God](#). For more info click [here](#).

Enjoying The Psalms - Saturday 31st January, 9am coffee. 9.30am start. 12.45pm finish. On this free Saturday morning bible teaching workshop Matt Searles will help us navigate around the book of Psalms to find food for our souls and fuel for our worship. **Registration:** For planning purposes, please let us know if you and/or a group from your church plan to attend this free workshop in Poulton Community Hall, Vicarage Road, Poulton, FY6 7BE. Email: davidpgascoigne@gmail.com

Courses by external providers:

College of Preachers

www.collegeofpreachers.co.uk/events

St George’s House

www.stgeorghouse.org

CPAS

[Area/Rural Dean Training](#)

[Leading Well: Online Course](#)

Pusey House

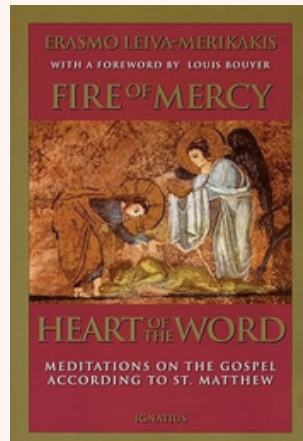
[Confession: The Church’s Gift to the World](#)

Alpha

[Leaders Conference 2026](#)

New Wine

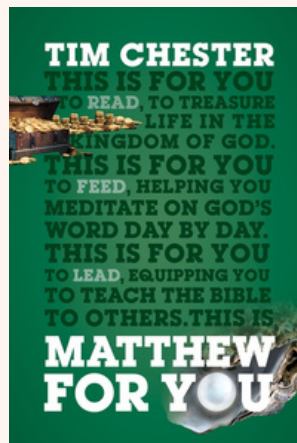
[Leaders Conference 2026](#)



The CME Officer, The Revd Mike Print writes: From Advent Sunday the lectionary of the Church is taking us through the Gospel of Matthew. So this time our recommendations focus on two books which will help you with your sermon prep. One oldie but goodie; one just out. One simple and short and one which covers four volumes!

FIRE OF MERCY - ERASMO LEIVA

It is easy to be intimidated by a four-volume work with each volume clocking in at 700+ pages and the price tag which comes with it, however, they are more than worth it. Leiva is a scholar, who writes like a novelist, with the heart of a disciple. Taking part of a verse of the Gospel he, as it were, pops it in his mouth drawing out the various flavours, and savouring them as one following after Jesus. His work is as beautiful as it is pastoral while always remaining faithful to the text. Jesus the Word made flesh is brought to life in a fresh way in Leiva's writing which is both meditation, prayer, and commentary. Leiva writes from a liturgical perspective, often bringing us back to what we're doing as we gather together around the written word of the Scriptures and the broken word of the Eucharist. This approach is therefore perfect for the preacher who is looking for Scriptural faithfulness and earthy wisdom which speaks to their heart as well as the hearts of those who will hear them preach.



You will need to make time in your week, for example, the reading for the 25th January (Matthew 4:12-23), covers twelve pages which is a fairly typical length, however, because of his style and the treasures which are uncovered you will look forward to this time, and the reflective prayer you will want to make space for afterwards. Leiva has produced a feast at a Michelin starred restaurant, don't miss out!

Ignatius Press, 4 vols, £25 each

MATTHEW FOR YOU - TIM CHESTER

In contrast to the previous review this is a short book which provides you with a couple of pages for each passage. This means that Chester's offering is easily read in spare 10 minutes and there are useful nuggets which give you a fresh perspective on the passage. This offering gives you both a helpful overview of the gospel, useful comments on each passage, and also a devotional feel. Indeed, reading this in advance of Advent Sunday I used it devotionally alongside a Gospel of Matthew in preparation for Year A. While this book will not be only reading in preparation for a Sunday sermon it could well be a useful first take on the passage with which to getting you thinking before you delve deeper with something more in-depth. Overall well worth a tenner.

Good Book Co., 240 pages, £9.99

GROWING NATURALLY - THE 5TH MARK OF MISSION



Dave Champness challenges us to think about how we can grow our churches through a focus on the fifth mark of mission. He writes:

‘Hopefully we’re all familiar with the five Marks of Anglican Mission and we all work hard in serving the Lord through the priorities the Church has identified. However, perhaps we feel more equipped on some of the Marks than others? How well equipped do you feel about using the 5th Mark, *‘To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation’*, to grow your church? If your answer is along the lines of ‘I’m not quite sure’, let me share some pointers.

If you’re looking for a way to introduce Creation Care to your worshipping community the **Preaching for God’s World** website has sermon notes and ideas that explore the three-year set lectionary readings for each week from the perspective of creation care.

Across the diocese we have examples of churches, both rural (Balderstone, Stalmine) and suburban (Lower Darwen St James) who are hosting forest church sessions in their churchyards – a particularly great way of using the wonder of creation to connect with families. Bruce Stanley’s book, ‘Forest Church: A Field Guide to Nature Connection for Groups and Individuals’ (2020) is a good starting place, as this video from the Diocesan Board of Education video **‘How to Start a Forest Church’**.

Six of our churches (Lancaster St Tees, Higham, Broughton, Oswaldtwistle Immanuel, Glasson and Briercliffe) engaged in the Love Your Burial Ground/Churches Count on Nature/National Cemeteries Week Events in 2025 as a great way of encouraging the community (including church schools) onto church grounds and to make initial missional connections. This year the week is from 6th to 14th June and you can find the resources **here**.

I would also like to encourage you to look at the **A Rocha UK – Caring for creation** website which provides links to **Eco Church** (did you know that over 40% of our churches are registered and 15% have an Eco Church award?) resources that give lots of practical ideas on how your worshipping community can be great stewards of the natural resources that God has provided.

If creation care is an aspect of your ministry that you’d like to explore further, there are plenty more resources available on-line. Alternatively, if you would like to be part of a pilot Creation Care learning community in our diocese, please contact me, to journey together in deepening our theological understanding as well as having a go at environmentally missional activities.’

Dave Champness, is the Net Carbon Zero Senior Project Manger for the Dioceses of Blackburn and Carlisle. You can email him: **Dave.Champness@Blackburn.Anglican.Org**,