

# January 2025 News

14 Carlington Walk, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE13 9AN.  
John.stephenson@renewne.org.uk Lena.stephenson@renewne.org.uk

*reNEw NE is a community of people supporting mission with children, young people and families to grow lifelong disciples of Jesus.*

At the start of 2025 it seems appropriate to reflect on what has taken place since Easter and to update you with plans for the future. We feel that God is leading us into a new chapter which is both exciting, challenging and a bit scary. In our last newsletter we indicated that we would like to raise funds to employ Lena to work part-time for the charity. We have only been partly successful in that, so we have enough to employ Lena only for about 2 days a month. Our vision is to expand our staff team beyond us in the next few years to employ more people going forwards. Pray that we have wisdom about how to do that.

We begin by looking back at what has taken place in the last 8 months

## Summer Holidays



We were again very aware of God's presence at our two weeks at Scoughall (pronounced 'Skol') in late August. Our three events had over 90 participants and 30 volunteers taking part. We felt particularly blessed by God to have an amazing display of the Northern Lights at reNEw2. It was very encouraging to have a number of children and young people returning and most of those attending the family weekend

had also attended in 2023. We already have opened bookings Scoughall for summer 2025 with the same programme of events. It's exciting that only two weeks in we already have over 20 bookings. We would like to grow our family weekend and have new enquiries - but to do so we will need to recruit more team members.

For the first time this year we ran a young leaders weekend for those aged 15+ before the summer programme. Based in Berwick, those attending joined a pilgrimage to Holy island and supported the churches as they delivered a community event for Sea Sunday. This is an event we plan to repeat and grow this summer.

## Lifepath

Around 500 children from schools in Northumberland visited Brinkburn Priory for a day to explore the life of St Cuthbert and consider the place that God might have in their own lifepath. We are partners in this event and Lena is one of the core planning team. We want to recruit even more volunteers to take part in what is a great opportunity to share the good news in an appropriate way in an educational setting, Let us know if you want to join the volunteer team – even just for a day.



## Sanctuary



We continue to meet weekly online with a monthly face to face gathering on either Saturday or Sunday evening. We read the Bible together, share thoughts, pray for one another and sing some worship songs. We also pray for one another through an online prayer space where people can post requests. Although numbers are small we would like this to be a place where members of the reNEw NE community get support. This is open to anyone so please get in touch if you want to join the group – you don't have to be able to come every week.

We are grateful to St Hilda's trust for a small grant to allow us to develop some of our current relationships with children, young people and families to help them to grow in faith throughout the year.

There are three main areas we are seeking to develop going forward, alongside our existing programme.

### 1. Connected – maintaining and developing existing relationships

Helping those who attend our summer holidays to grow in faith during the year is a key part of growing lifelong disciples. We plan to do this in two main ways:

- Family Resource Packs – we have already sent a pack to families for half term in October and resources to use in Advent and will do this during Spring and at Easter.
- Community Days – we aim to gather children, young people and families around once every 3 months to do activities together and offer opportunities to connect with God and each other. We are likely to do different activities or events for different ages.

### 2. Equip – a training programme for young people

We have always had a strong commitment to developing young people as leaders and this year we are running a pilot project before launching a fuller programme from September 2025. The idea is that young people would be employed by the charity for 5-10 hours a week alongside their studies at school or college. They will work on our events and have regular training and practical placements with our local church partners. Our model for this is not academic but instead more as an apprentice – learning on the job.

One of the faithful young leaders, William Hoy is helping us pilot the scheme this year. We asked him to introduce himself so he writes:



*'After volunteering with RENEW for a couple of years, and before that attending the summer holidays as a camper, I am both delighted and excited to start my journey with RENEW. So far, I've helped in running a few events with local churches - including a Light Garden, and nursery and pre-school visits to a local church.*

*Over the next year I'll be helping to plan, as well as taking part in lots of regional events. This includes a period of Youth Work with Beyond Youth (a Newcastle Diocese project), gaining skills with both detached youth work, and schools work. Behind the scenes, I'll also be working on upgrading our website, and streamlining our systems to make administration a whole load easier.*

*I look forward to the year ahead; developing my skills, helping young people grow in faith, and helping out other local charities and churches.'*

### 3. Keeping it together

Supporting those who are working with children, young people and families is a key dimension of enabling mission since many churches in the NE have few present in their Sunday congregations. They often feel undervalued and under resourced and this causes stress. We would like to develop a structured programme to support their wellbeing through monthly online gatherings with mental health professionals and termly retreats. It would also serve to equip them to deal with the mental health issues faced by children and young people. We would host these and facilitate these events.

These are all connected with our 3 major emphases:

**Experiencing Community**

**Encountering Jesus**

**Enabling Mission**

....and finally

Thanks to all who support the work of reNEw NE – whether in prayer, in volunteering or in finance. Please hold us in your thoughts and prayers in the coming months. Do get in touch if you have any questions or feel you can help us or we can help you in any way.

John & Lena Stephenson – January 2025

