



KINGDOM WORD MISSIONS

A MISSION REPORT

The Mission to Bamburgh & Exeter

Northumberland and the West Country

14 – 28 February 2026

By Ekaba Bisong & Chidera Bisong

February 2026

*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock,
and the door will be opened to you.*

MATTHEW 7:7

*Go your way into the village opposite you ... And if anyone asks
you, “Why are you loosing it?” thus you shall say to him,
“Because the Lord has need of it.”*

LUKE 19:30–31

Summary of the Mission

FROM 14 to 28 February 2026 we, Ekaba Bisong of Calgary and Chidera Bisong of Winnipeg, travelled to Northumberland in the north of England, and afterwards to Exeter in the south-west, on a mission of the gospel under Kingdom Word Missions. We went in answer to an invitation given six months earlier, in August 2025, when a burst tyre on the road to Bamburgh Castle brought us to the door of Budle Hall and to its master, Ralph, who asked us to come back, because, he said, the churches had failed his community and it needed to hear what we had to say.

On the way, in the air over the Atlantic, the Lord gave us a word for Northumberland: that the Holy Spirit had already been stirring the hearts of men and women there; that we were to be bold to **RAKE IN THE HARVEST**, not shying away from speaking and asking; that who we were and how we had prepared did not matter; and that we were to say to the people that the Master demands to ride donkeys in Bamburgh and Northumberland: “**THE MASTER HAS NEED OF YOU.**”

On our first Sunday the pastors of the Pentecostal church at Wooler did not receive us, and the established churches of the district kept their doors closed. But that evening Ralph gathered the gentry and aristocracy of Northumberland in his drawing room, and we gave them an account of the gospel. From that meeting a couple of Bamburgh, Andrea and Derek, came forward and asked for a church of His purpose to be planted in their village. Through them we were joined within days to believers of the Northumbria Community on Holy Island, the ancient Lindisfarne, and to others across the county. On Wednesday 18 February the first gathering of the church at Bamburgh met in Andrea and Derek’s home; on Saturday 21 February, at Carol’s farmhouse near St Cuthbert’s Cave, it was confirmed; and the brethren agreed to go on meeting after we had gone.

Over twelve days in Northumberland we preached, taught, prayed, laid hands on the sick, and answered hard questions: from guests at Budle Hall about religious violence, other faiths, and the language of the church; from John, a lifelong Anglican churchwarden, about the new birth; from Charles, Ralph’s father, aged ninety-one, about prayer for the dead and his own peace with God; and from an evening among the aristocrats of Bamburgh about good Buddhists, the Church of England, and the English class system. Polly confessed Christ and received prayer for healing; she and John have since decided to marry. We walked the land where Aidan and Oswald and Cuthbert walked: Holy Island, Bamburgh Castle, St Cuthbert’s Cave, and Hulne Priory. Maria of Andalusia, through whom God opened the door into Spain, came from Spain to be with us.

We met resistance, from the established church, from sceptical guests, and at times from the honest caution of the brethren themselves, and we record it all. We also record the weariness of the land and its people, which the brethren told us needs above all an anointing of love.

From Northumberland we drove the length of England to Exeter, where we strengthened James and the Fellowship of Christ Church, planted in August 2025, and on 28 February we flew home.

This account is written as a plain record of what was done and said, so that all who read it may give glory to God, pray for the work in Northumberland, and give themselves to the Great Commission until Christ returns.

Kingdom Word Missions was formerly Canada Interior Mission.

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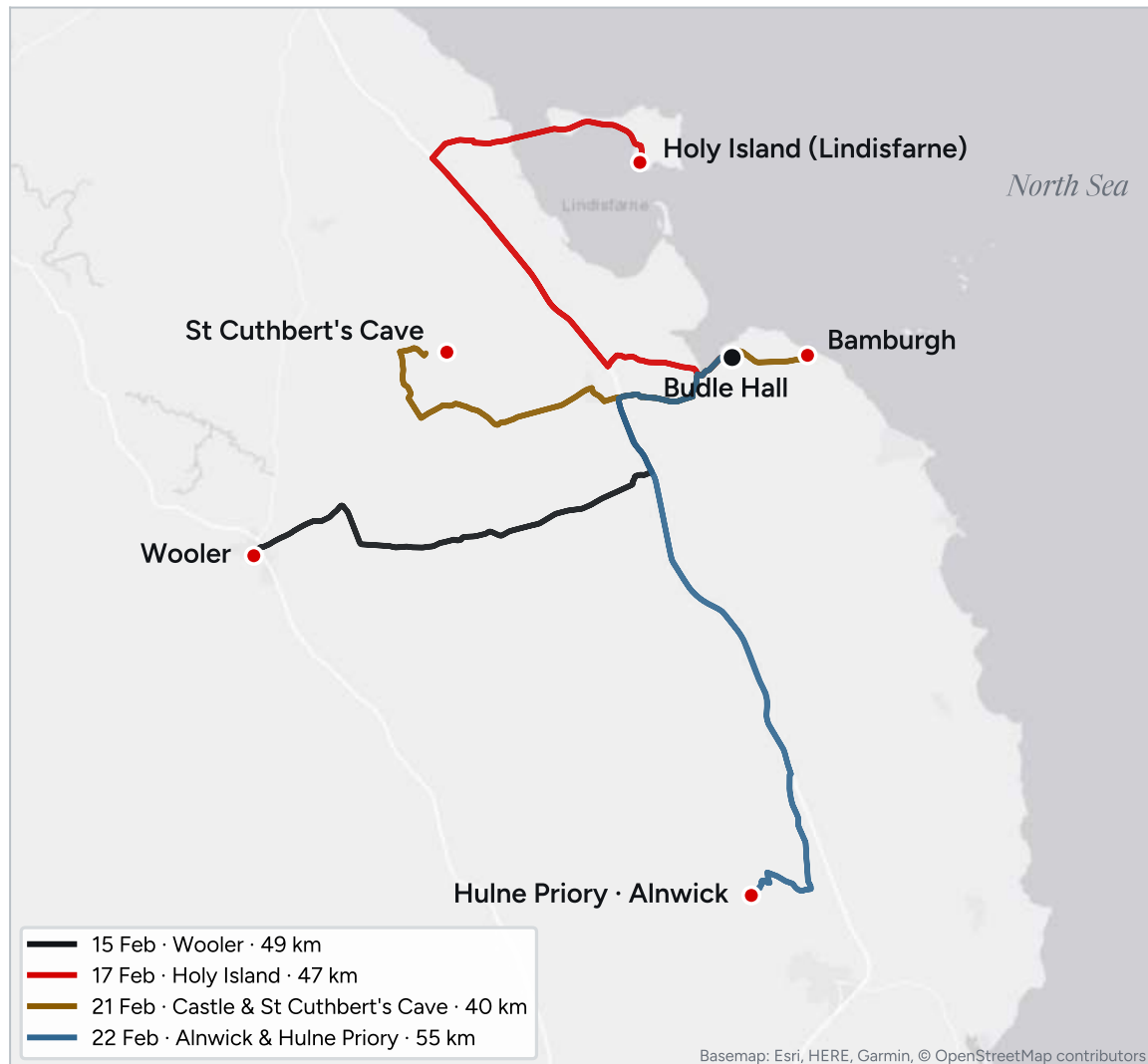
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The Journey



Friday 13 – Saturday 14 February 2026. Ekaba flew from Calgary and Chidera from Winnipeg to London Heathrow, and both returned the same way on 28 February. Lines show the great-circle distance, not the actual flight paths.



North Northumberland, 14–27 February 2026. Budle Hall was our base. Coloured lines show the road journeys made on the days we travelled out from it; distances are for the round trip. Locations are taken from the GPS data in the photographs taken on each day.

PART I

How the Door Opened

AUGUST 2025

A Burst Tyre on the Road to Bamburgh

THIS mission did not begin in February. It began six months earlier, on the evening of 19 August 2025, on a country road in north Northumberland, with a tyre that struck a kerb and burst.

We were then at the end of our first missionary journey through Europe and the British Isles. From Plymouth, where the Lord had given us a small company of men who took hold of the call and named themselves the Fellowship of Christ Church, we had driven north to Glasgow and on to Edinburgh. At Edinburgh the Lord laid it on our hearts to turn south again, back over the border into England, to see a castle we had heard of on the Northumberland coast. It was Bamburgh Castle. We thought we were going to look at a building.

About nine minutes from the castle the tyre struck the kerb and burst, and we were left at the roadside with a car we could not drive far. There was a bed and breakfast about five minutes away. We telephoned and were told that they had no room, but that we were welcome to wait on the grounds. We nursed the car along the lane and arrived at the house.

The man of the house received us and offered us a place to sit outside. It was cold, and we asked whether we might come in. He agreed and took us indoors. Once inside, the Lord put it in our hearts to tell him plainly who we were: missionaries, in his country for the gospel. He gave us his ear, and we began to minister the word of God to him. The word came with power. He went out to bring us tea and biscuits, and as he went he called to a young woman who worked in the house, a Spaniard from Andalusia named Maria. She had been in the Lord for some time and had been seeking to go deeper into God. She came to us gladly, and we had a sweet time of fellowship with her. Her heart was caught, and she asked to stay in contact with us. Through her the Lord afterwards opened to us the door into Spain, to the house church at Baza and Caniles, which we visited in November 2025 and have reported elsewhere.

The car was still broken down that evening, and the family asked us to join them at dinner. At the table we broke out in worship, and there was a second and deeper ministration. Their hearts were cut. The master of the house said to us, "The churches have failed us. They are more interested in maintaining the church building than the souls." He told us that what he had heard from us carried light and life, and that the community needed to hear it, and that he would open the community to us. We prayed together. When the prayer was finished he stood up at the table and said that he could not receive the blessing unless he gave us a room for the night. So the house that had no room found a room for us, and we slept there.

In the morning, at breakfast, he came to us and formally invited us to return to Bamburgh. The community and the communities around it, he said, would be open to hear us, and again he said that the churches had failed them. We learned that he was a man of standing in that country, a pillar of the community. His name is Ralph, and the house is Budle Hall, which stands above Budle Bay a mile or two west of Bamburgh.

We thanked him and told him we would come back with the gospel of the kingdom, and we left believing that light and life would visit that place. The car was towed to Newcastle Airport, we were given another, and we went on to Manchester.

What had looked like an accident was the hand of God. The mission of February 2026 is the answer to that invitation.



Bamburgh, Monday 16 February 2026. Six months after the burst tyre, back among the people of Bamburgh.

Where the Gospel First Came to the English North

BAMBURGH is a small village on the North Sea coast of Northumberland, the northernmost county of England. Above it, on a great outcrop of dark whinstone, stands Bamburgh Castle. Six miles to the north-west, reached across the sands by a causeway that the tide covers twice a day, lies Lindisfarne, which has been called Holy Island for nearly a thousand years. Inland the country rises through farmland and moor to the Cheviot Hills and the Scottish border. It is quiet country now. It was not always so. The ground we walked on in February was the ground on which the gospel was first planted among the northern English, and the story of how it was planted bears so directly on our own mission that we set it down here.

The royal city of Bebb

Bamburgh was a fortress of the Britons before the English came. In the sixth century the Angle chieftain Ida took it and made it the seat of the kingdom of Bernicia. His grandson Æthelfrith gave it to his queen, Bebb, and it took her name: *Bebbanburh*, Bebb's stronghold, from which comes Bamburgh. For the next two centuries it was the royal city of the kings of Northumbria, a kingdom that at its height reached from the Humber to the Forth.

Oswald and Aidan

When Æthelfrith was killed in battle in 616, his sons fled north into exile among the Irish of Dál Riata, and there, at the monastery of Iona, the young prince Oswald was taught the faith and baptised. In 634 he came home to claim his father's kingdom. Before the battle at Heavenfield, near Hexham, he set up a wooden cross with his own hands, held it while his men filled in the earth around it, and called his army to kneel and pray to the true and living God for victory. He won the battle and took the throne at Bamburgh.

Oswald's first desire as king was that his people should hear the gospel. He sent to Iona for a bishop. The first man sent, whom later tradition names Cormac, was a hard and severe man. He preached for a while without success and went back to Iona complaining that the English were stubborn and barbarous and would not be taught. As the elders of Iona considered his report, another monk, Aidan, spoke up. Perhaps, he said, the brother had been harder on unlearned hearers than he ought to have been, and had not first given them, as the apostle says, the milk of simpler teaching until they were able to receive the meat. The elders agreed that the man who had said this was the man to send. In 635 Aidan came to Northumbria.

Oswald gave him the island of Lindisfarne for his see, within sight of the royal city. Aidan did not yet speak English well, and Bede records that the king himself, who had learned the Irish tongue in his exile,

stood beside the bishop as he preached and put his words into English for the nobles and the thanes. So the gospel came to the north of England: a bishop preaching and a king interpreting.

Aidan went everywhere on foot, so that he could stop and speak with anyone he met, rich or poor, and ask whether they believed. What the rich gave him he gave away to the poor. King Oswine once gave him a fine horse for the rivers and rough roads, and Aidan soon gave it, harness and all, to a beggar who asked him for alms. He would not flatter the powerful, and when he ate at the king's table he left early to read and pray. Bede tells how one Easter, as Oswald sat at dinner with Aidan, a servant came in to say that a crowd of the poor were in the streets begging. The king had the food taken from his own table and carried out to them, and had the silver dish it was served on broken up and shared among them. Aidan took the king's right hand and said, "May this hand never perish."

Oswald was killed in battle against the pagan king Penda in 642. Aidan laboured on for nine more years. He died at Bamburgh on 31 August 651, leaning against a wooden buttress of the church there, and the parish church of Bamburgh, St Aidan's, stands on that spot.

Cuthbert

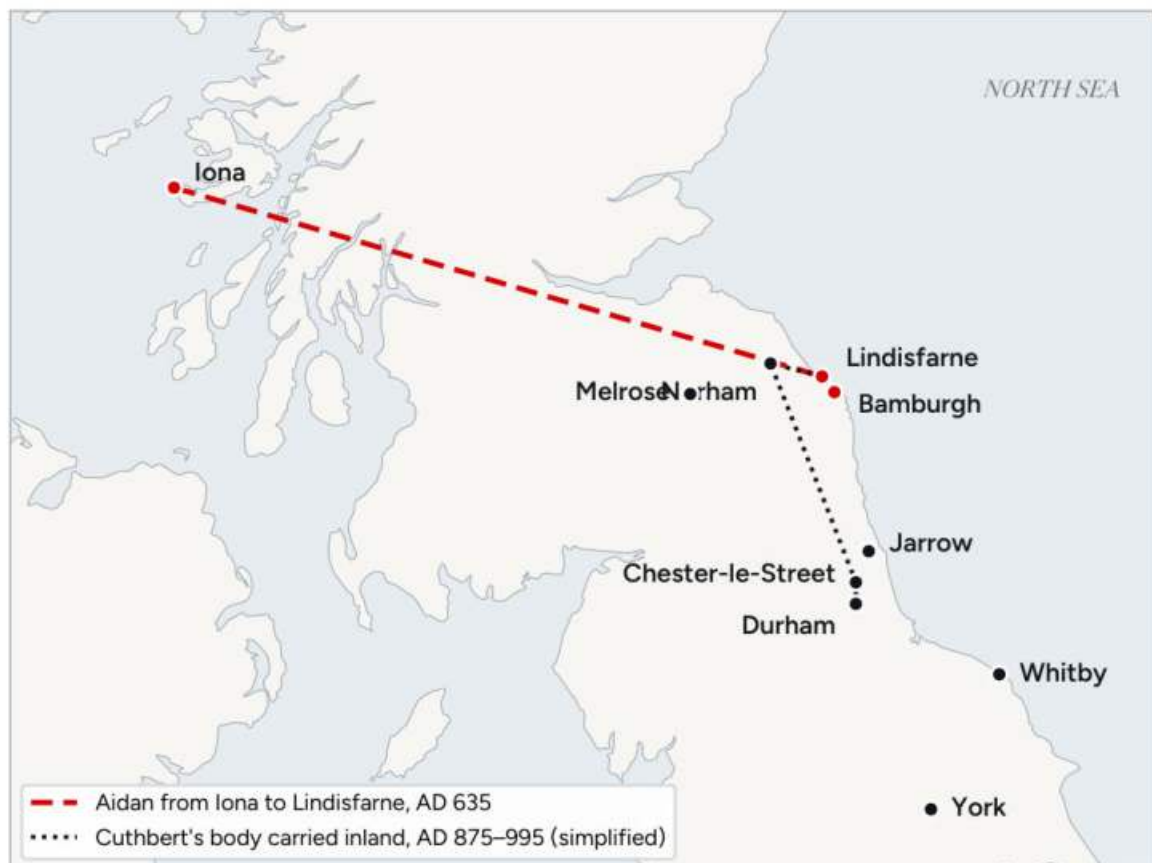
On the night Aidan died, a young shepherd keeping watch in the Lammermuir hills saw a stream of light in the dark sky, and angels carrying a soul up to heaven. When he learned in the morning that Aidan had died, he left his sheep and went to the monastery at Melrose. His name was Cuthbert. He became prior of Melrose and afterwards of Lindisfarne, and he was known throughout the north for his preaching in the remote hill villages, his gift of healing, his gentleness, and his long nights of prayer, some of them standing in the cold sea. For some years he lived as a hermit on Inner Farne, a bare island off Bamburgh. In 685 he was made bishop of Lindisfarne, and he died on Inner Farne in 687.

About the year 715, in his honour, a monk of Lindisfarne named Eadfrith wrote and painted the Lindisfarne Gospels, one of the great treasures of the Christian world. In 793 the Vikings fell on Lindisfarne, killing monks and plundering the church, and the raid shook the whole of Christian Europe. In 875, fearing another attack, the community left the island, carrying Cuthbert's body with them in its coffin, together with the Gospels. For seven years they wandered through the north. Local tradition holds that on that journey they rested his body in a sandstone cave on the moor above Holburn, which is known to this day as St Cuthbert's Cave. The community settled at Chester-le-Street in 883, and in 995 they brought Cuthbert's body to Durham, where it lies in the cathedral.

The land in 2026

We came into this country, then, not as the first bearers of the gospel but as labourers entering into the labour of others, as the Lord said to His disciples at the well in Samaria. The names of Aidan and Cuthbert are everywhere in Northumberland, on churches, on schools, on the pilgrims' way across the sands. Yet the burden laid on us, and the testimony of the people themselves, was that the fire that burned in that land has burned low. The churches, as Ralph had told us in August, had failed many of them. The land remembers Aidan, but where is the Lord God of Aidan?

This was the land to which the Lord sent us back in February 2026, and on the way there He told us what He was about to do.



The Northumbria of Oswald, Aidan and Cuthbert. Aidan came from Iona to Lindisfarne in 635. In 875 the Lindisfarne community carried Cuthbert's body inland, coming at last to Durham in 995. The route shown is simplified.

The Word of the Lord for Northumberland

WHILE we were in the air on our way to England, each on his own flight, Ekaba from Calgary and Chidera from Winnipeg, we were writing to one another over the aircraft's wireless connection. As we wrote, the word of the Lord came to us concerning Northumberland. We wrote it down as we received it, and we set it down here exactly as it was written. It governed everything we did in the fortnight that followed, and the reader will see it fulfilled day by day in the account that follows.

WORD OF THE LORD FOR NORTHUMBERLAND · FEBRUARY 13TH 2026

The ministration we receiving is that we are going in to reap the Work of the Holy Spirit that has already been going on in Northumberland for some time now among the hearts of men and women. There has already been a stirring before the Lord led us there. We must be bold to *rake* in the Harvest. And not to shy away from speaking and asking. The Word of the Lord is to "RAKE IN THE HARVEST."

MATTHEW 7:7-8

⁷ Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

The Lord sent us there because the Appointed Time has come. We are going to fulfill the Ministry of the Holy Spirit *at* the Appointed Time.

We are to arm ourselves with this understanding. Who we are, our preparation and what we are does not matter at this point. THE GOD OF THE HARVEST is here and is in full control to do His work. He only asks us to be present and to *speak* and *ask*. And we must say to the people The Master demands to ride Donkeys in Bamburgh and Northumberland.

We *must* demand it and say to them that "THE MASTER HAS NEED OF YOU."

The word has three parts, and it is worth drawing them out plainly, because the whole mission turned on them.

First, the harvest was already ripe. The Holy Spirit had been at work in Northumberland before we came, stirring the hearts of men and women. We were not sent to plough or to sow but to reap, and to reap boldly. As our Lord said at the well of Samaria, "I sent you to reap that for which you have not laboured; others have laboured, and you have entered into their labours."

Second, our part was to speak and to ask. Who we were, how well we had prepared, what we were in ourselves: none of it mattered at that point. The God of the harvest was present and in full control of His work, and He asked only that we be there, and that we open our mouths and ask. This is the promise of Matthew 7: the one who asks receives, and to the one who knocks the door is opened. We were not to shy away from asking people directly to give themselves to the Lord and to His work.

Third, the Lord gave us the words to say. When Jesus came near to Jerusalem He sent two disciples into the village opposite, where they would find a colt tied, on which no one had ever sat. "Loose it and bring it here," He said. "And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing it?' thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of it.'" The owners let the colt go, and the Lord rode into the city upon it. So we were to say to the people of Bamburgh and Northumberland: the Master has need of you. He means to ride into this land again, and He will ride in on men and women who are loosed from whatever has held them and brought to Him. We were not to suggest this timidly. We were to demand it in His name.

We went down into Northumberland with this word in our hands.

PART II

Day by Day in
Northumberland

FRIDAY 13 – SATURDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2026

From Calgary and Winnipeg to Budle Hall

Calgary and Winnipeg · London Heathrow · King's Cross · Newcastle · Budle Hall

WE set out from our homes in Canada on Friday 13 February, Ekaba from Calgary and Chidera from Winnipeg, each on an overnight flight to London. It was in the air, as we wrote to one another across the Atlantic, that the word of the Lord for Northumberland came to us.

We landed at London Heathrow on Saturday 14 February and took the train across London to King's Cross, and from there the train north up the east coast to Newcastle. At Newcastle we took a taxi to Newcastle Airport, where we collected a hire car, and from there we drove north into Northumberland in the dark. At half past seven in the evening we were sitting in the car at the airport, tired from a day and a night of travelling, but glad and expectant.



Newcastle Airport, 7.30 pm on Saturday 14 February. The hire car is collected, and the last hour of the journey north lies ahead.

It was a long day: two flights across the ocean, a train across London, three hours on the train north, a taxi, and an hour's drive at night on unfamiliar roads. We record it because it is part of the cost of the work. But the Lord kept us, and that night we arrived at Budle Hall.

Ralph and his wife Celia and their family received us with open arms. It was a joy to see them again, six months after the evening in August when a burst tyre brought us to their door. The house that had had no room for us then had been made ready for us now. Ralph had been preparing for our return, and he told us

that on the following evening he had invited a large company of his friends and neighbours from across the county to Budle Hall to hear us.



The route through Britain. Outward on 14 February by rail from London to Newcastle and by car to Bamburgh; south on 27 February by road from Bamburgh to Exeter, and on 28 February from Exeter to Heathrow. Road routes are drawn from OpenStreetMap routing and are approximate.

The Gathering at Budle Hall

The Pentecostal church at Wooler · Budle Hall

Wooler

ON the morning of the Lord's day Ralph took us to the Pentecostal church at Wooler, a market town at the edge of the Cheviot Hills, about half an hour inland from Budle Hall. With us came his son Keith and their cousin Jamie. Ralph had hoped, and had expected, that the pastors of the church would receive us, give us the right hand of fellowship, and perhaps allow us a few minutes to speak of our mission and of why we had come to Northumberland. They did not. We were not recognised, and no opportunity was given to us to share. Ralph was disappointed. For Keith and Jamie, as far as we understood, it was the first time they had ever sat in a church service.

We worshipped with the congregation, spoke with the pastors afterwards, and greeted the people, and then returned to Budle Hall. We record this plainly, as the first door that did not open to us in Northumberland. It was not the last. The next day Andrea would speak to Ralph of "the reaction you got from the establishment", and Ralph himself would say that he had been shocked and surprised to see doors slammed against us. But the Lord had another door prepared for that evening.



The Pentecostal church at Wooler, Sunday morning, 15 February. Left: Ralph, Chidera, Keith and Jamie. Right: Ekaba (front) with Ralph, Chidera, Keith and Jamie.

The company at Budle Hall

For weeks Ralph had been preparing an evening at Budle Hall. He had invited friends and neighbours from across the county, and most of them were of the gentry of Northumberland, some of them from its aristocratic families, men and women of rank and standing in the county. We had not anticipated the size of the company, nor that so many of the great and the good of Northumberland would come. They filled the drawing room, standing among the sofas and along the walls. Among them were Ralph's brother-in-law Andy, who was staying the night, and three Ukrainians, Sergei, Oksana and Valentina, who had fled the war: from the Donetsk region to Mariupol, from Mariupol to Bucha, and from Bucha at last to Northumberland. And among them, too, were Andrea and Derek, with their adopted son and daughter Robert and Chrissy.

As the guests were arriving, Andrea was already telling her story to those who stood near her, how her father, dying of a brain tumour when she was thirty-one and without any faith of her own, had told her he was not afraid, because he knew where he was going, and whose last words to her were, "God is love". She told how she and Derek, turned upside down by that, had come to the Lord, and how God had then called them, specifically, to adopt Chrissy and Robert when the children were two and four. Both have congenital myotonic dystrophy, and the doctors' prognosis had not been good. "However, you see that at thirty we're doing great," she said. There had been torrid times since, of illness, and of months in intensive care with Robert. "But we have never, ever regretted a single day of it. Day by day, utterly amazing. We could not have done it by ourselves."



The drawing room at Budle Hall, early in the evening of Sunday 15 February.

Worship

When the room had filled, Ekaba asked leave to begin with a few songs. “We don’t know how Ralph had planned this,” he said. “What you see is what you get. We have no airs. We are, practically, slaves of Jesus. We just love to flow as the Holy Spirit moves.” We sang *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God*, and *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning*. Then Ekaba prayed:

Heavenly Father, we thank You and give You all the praise and honour. It is impossible to put these things together except by the providence of God. We forget about ourselves and gather in Your presence, for we are nowhere else but in the presence of a King. We are the priests of God. We are the temple and the altar. You have chosen to dwell in man, as Your word says: Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. The former things have passed away. Behold, I make all things new.

Ralph’s introduction

Then Ralph stood to introduce us. We give his words as he spoke them:

Can I just say how very grateful I am that you’ve come up here to meet Chidera and Ekaba. You had no clue other than my say-so that these two guys are of very high worth in my opinion, and not everyone goes with my opinion. But they have taken it upon themselves not just to reintroduce proper Christianity to Northumberland, but have actually been all around the world giving their brand of Christianity. Keith and I have attempted to put our most irritating and provoking questions to them, and as you can imagine that is not a nothing statement, and they know how to bat them straight back, because my puny sarcasm is not going against their God. They’ve got God on their side. So I’ll let them speak and explain themselves.

This isn’t a hard sell. And one thing I would say is that they’re not fundraising here at all. What they do is they earn their money, and then they spend it trying to bring something that they think is important to us, which is something to be very grateful for. They’ll be here for the next two weeks. If any of you like what you hear, and you had four friends who were interested and were prepared to invite them to lunch, or take them out to Cuthbert’s Cave or something like that for a couple of hours, and let them speak, I think even those of you who know what you think about religion will be absolutely delighted by what you hear, if my experience is anything to go by.

The account we gave

Ekaba spoke first. What follows is his address in full, lightly edited so that it reads cleanly on the page.

Thank you so much, Ralph. We are very grateful for this opportunity, and very grateful to be here.

There are some things that happen in life that simply cannot be made up. There is no way that my brother Chidera and I could have put together a meeting like this, even if we had tried, perhaps in London or some other great city. We all love England, but in Bamburgh, a village in Northumberland? The odds were against us. This meeting can only be because of the providence of God. From eternity past, before I was born and before anyone here was born, God knew that there would be such an encounter at this point in time.

We are not creatures of chance, the outcome of an equation, of a material soup in which certain things happened to come together. If we were, this meeting would have no meaning. We are creatures of a God who *is*. That God *is* means that He is alive, that He is involved, that His hand is woven through all the fabric of our lives. He is not the God of the agnostic, a God who perhaps exists but is

too far withdrawn, gone on vacation, too busy doing other divine things in some other sphere, and not involved in the affairs of men. We have a God who is directly involved. That God has appeared to me, and has appeared quite personally to my brother, as He is appearing all over the world to all sorts of people.

He appeared in person at a particular time in history, and revealed Himself to twelve apostles, and they testified of Him: “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” They were willing to die for what they had seen and heard and touched. They felt the love that the Father has bestowed and unveiled in the person of Jesus Christ. This same God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to us, and it compels us to go all around the world to share the fragrance and the beauty of God.

He heals the brokenness of the human condition: the curse that comes from a life that is without God, a life that has chosen its own way, in a world where man has made himself the measure. So many people live with misery as a fact of life. Brokenness has become the order of the day. There is so much dysfunction. It is the loss that comes when man is disconnected from his Maker. Was it Friedrich Nietzsche who asked, after he had announced the death of God, “Whither are we moving? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing?” It is the loss of the point of reference, the loss of every frame of reference. There is no fidelity, no integrity, no love, no meaning, nothing like forgiveness, outside of the God who is and who has revealed Himself.

John 3:16 is probably the most quoted verse in the world. But for us it has leapt out of the narrative of Scripture and become objective reality, in the same way as the events of our lives, which you simply cannot make up. How on earth could I make up the story of Andrea? When we see love become an objective reality, it can only be by the love of God, and not merely a narrative, something you read in a book but never really connect with, that has never become real life to you.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” That giving was not cheap. It did not cost nothing. It came with a great sense of loss and a great deal of pain and suffering. He gave His only Son, “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Someone may look at it from a human point of view and see only weakness: God gave His Son, and the Son could not even keep Himself from death. But the giving of His Son came from the immense love that God has for us. He would not leave us in the brokenness that man chose in the transgression of Adam. As it is written, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”

The Son is not the purveyor of condemnation. He is not the one who picks and chooses who will make it to heaven and who will be damned in the fires of hell. The condemnation is already here. We are seeing it in the framework of *homo mensura*, man as the measure of all things. This is the outcome of the worship of man, where man worships himself: the loss of meaning and the loss of absolutes. That is the condemnation. The lake of fire is only the final end of a continuing story of depravity, a steady decline from Eden to the lake of fire. But God came into the world to save man from the disease of sin, so that the end of man should not be the lake of fire, but to reign with Him as sons.

Just imagine the King of England strolling into this room and saying, “Ekaba, I want to adopt you, to reign with me as my son,” so that the next in line to the throne will not be William but Ekaba. I might pass out and wake up and say, “Am I dreaming? Can somebody pinch me?” But that is what the Bible says: we are to reign with Him as sons. No longer rebels, but sons, taking possession of the promise, which is why Christ is not ashamed to call us brothers. In the church, that is reflected as a family of sons. The Bible says that He is making us a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, and that is reflected on earth as the church, the body of Christ, the church of the living God. We are joint heirs with Christ. So there is no hierarchy in which some are more privileged than others,

or some have the exclusive right to hear from God more than anyone else. Having received the love of the Father, which is what it means to be born again, we are inducted into the priesthood, where we are partakers of sonship with Jesus Christ.

In a nutshell, this is the message we bring. Let me say it again. First, the love of the Father. It is what rescues us from death, from the clutches of Satan and of the demons who seek to destroy the beauty that God created in the beginning. Second, why are we rescued? So that we may reign with Christ as sons and daughters of the living God. That is the eternal life of John 3:16. It is not some ethereal existence forever in a place called heaven, but an engagement: to reign with God as sons.

With that understanding, how then shall we live? We have to open ourselves to receive the love of the Father, and the recovery from sin. There are several parts to that sin.

The first is the sin of our evil ways, our evil thoughts and our evil actions.

The second, and I suppose it is part of the first, is the idea that in the sophistry of our intellect, or the grandeur of our civilisation, we no longer have need of God. Was it Laplace who said, "I had no need of that hypothesis", as though, because our intelligence could account for the stable motion of the solar system, there were no longer any need for the God hypothesis? I would like to say to Laplace: we do not hold a hypothesis of God. This is objective reality. You can think about the universe, but you did not stabilise it. It had been there for thousands of years before Laplace. There must be a God, or else you fall into what I would call a degenerate loop, in which everything that gives meaning loses its meaning. We do not have to pretend that God exists, as Kant would have it, in order to preserve a meaningful ethics. God exists. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And if God exists, and there was a beginning, and Jesus is objective reality, not mythology, and we know more about Jesus as a fact of history than we know about Socrates or Plato, then it behoves man to tremble at these things, to know that we are dealing with matters of life and death, and to receive the provision of life in Jesus Christ that has come to us without price.

The third is to be delivered from the sin of religious Christianity and cultural Christianity. When we preach on the streets, people say to us, "I'm not a religious person." I say, "That makes two of us. I have no religion." I don't even know what I am supposed to be: Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian? Jesus came to die to deliver us from our sins and to make us sons and daughters of the living God, and that is exactly who we are. The Bible says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." God is not a Christian. He does not know Episcopalian, Baptist, Methodist. The Lord knows those who are His. They are the unnamed of the earth. They may be the scum of the earth, those of whom the world was not worthy, living in the catacombs; the despised of the earth, not the great men of this world. But God knows those who belong to Him, because God sees the heart. God does not look at our liturgical processions. He does not respect the order and the structures that we bring, which in many ways have structured the Holy Spirit out of the change He is working in the hearts of men.

So He is bringing us back to the basics. True worshippers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The worship of God is not in the things we see, or in the buildings we erect, and we have erected grand buildings for the splendour and glory of God. The worship of God is in the hearts of men. We are the worship. We are the altar. We are the temple. As it is written in Revelation, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God," and the Lamb is in the midst of that city. That city is the church of the living God, and there shall be no more death. We are the temple of God. We are the worship of God. We are Bethel, the house of God.

So there must be a deliverance from religious Christianity, and from all the forms that have distorted and taken people away from seeing the beauty of the provision of Christ, into fighting imaginary wars and getting lost in all sorts of confusion. Many people have been turned away to pursue Satan in his fullness because of the contradictions they have experienced in religious Christianity. Some no longer see Christ at all, or they see Him as punitive, or even as the problem of the world. A great deal of that, I suppose, is due to religious Christianity, which has turned people aside. So there must be a return to true worship.

When Ralph introduced us, very kindly and very sweetly and from a sincere heart, he spoke of “our brand of Christianity”. Well, perhaps our brand of Christianity is brandless. We have no brand. Our brand is to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to see the transformation that comes to a heart that has turned back to God: no longer lusting, but saved by His grace, enjoying the beauty of God in reading His word and in prayer, in community, in serving one another, loving one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, and above all, which is the first commandment, loving God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind.

It is quite difficult to leave a family of two, soon to be three. My wife is due to deliver in June. Even now we have an eighteen-month-old and an eight-month-old at home, and she is alone with them, though surrounded by brothers and sisters in Christ. It is quite difficult to take a nine-hour flight from Calgary to London. But this message compels us. This is what we live for. My brother Chidera left a family of three boys, the eldest four and the youngest just turned one, with his wife, all the way from Winnipeg, because this message compels us. We have encountered the Lord Jesus. We have no other agenda and no other objective. We reject the mercantilism of Christianity, what I call Christopreneurship, the Christian industrial complex. This is real life. This is a matter of life and death.

We are in a spiritual war against the forces of darkness. We are committed to obey our King, to rescue as many as we possibly can from the hordes of demons. Even as the agents of darkness are working to fill the place with darkness, we are committed to this: that the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

And we shall gather like this. That will be our joy. Not in the way we are gathered now, which is temporal, but some day, some time, we will all gather in the presence of our God in heaven. There shall be no more curse, no more death, no more crying. “Around the throne of God in heaven thousands of children stand; children whose sins are all forgiven, a holy, happy band.” That is where I will be, where my family will be, where all of us who are the family of God will be, for ever and ever. And this is why we submit ourselves to you, as slaves of God.

Thank you very much.

Chidera’s address

Then Ekaba handed over to Chidera. What follows is his address, lightly edited so that it reads cleanly on the page.

Good evening, everyone. It is very exciting to be among you at this time. We have come a long way for this, and it was never in our plan to be in Northumberland. I personally had never heard of it until last August. We had a burden in our hearts, and the burden was to spread what we call the gospel of the kingdom. There is something called the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus spoke about. Jesus said that this gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world, and then the end will come.

That burden has led each of us. We live in the same country, Canada, but Canada is a very big country: between my brother and me is a thirteen-hour drive, or about two hours by air. Where he is, God has led him to spread this gospel, and it has led to the springing up of a powerful Christian community, one that worships God in spirit and in truth. Those are the two terms I want to put before you: the gospel of the kingdom, and worshipping God in spirit and in truth. God has also led me, in the twelve years that I have sojourned in Canada, to be very active in spreading this. And as the burden kept burning in our hearts, we began to take it to other nations.

So in August we had a campaign through Europe, and when we came to Britain we did some things in England and then went up to Glasgow. We were driving from Glasgow to Edinburgh, and I had a thought: there is a castle somewhere called Bamburgh Castle, something I had seen in a film. I said, let's go and check that out. So we took a diversion, and on the way some things happened, and we had a flat tyre, and one thing led to another, and that was how we came into contact with this place. Why am I saying this? Because our being here today is absolutely divine. It is by the orchestration of God, and it is a confirmation in our hearts that God has a plan and a purpose for the people of this community.

God will shine His light powerfully throughout the nation of England. God has been shining His light in England, of course. England has been a nation instrumental in spreading Christianity across the world. But there has been a falling away over the years; we can call it a time of darkness. And God is at this time restoring things to their proper standard, and we believe that Northumberland is going to be a centre point of that in the nation. So I encourage you to see yourselves as so much more, because God is no respecter of persons. He is not interested in your background or your pedigree. He is looking for all who will willingly give themselves to Him for the establishment of His kingdom.

What is the gospel of the kingdom? It is a message calling men to the awareness that there is a kingdom of Jesus Christ that has already begun to be established on the earth, and calling them into it. I cannot say this of all the churches in the world; that would be a careless statement. But in most Christian gatherings around the world, what is being set up is the kingdom of man. My brother spoke of it when he spoke of the Christian industrial complex. The church is no longer about God, about Jesus Christ, but about man: how many people you can gather, maintaining the buildings, getting the offerings and the tithes, and if you give your tithes God will bless you. Men are becoming lords over men, and it is no longer about Christ.

But the standard is to teach people Christ, because when you arm them with Jesus Christ you have given them power. You have given them a tool with which to discover their God-given purpose. Each and every one of us here has a God-given purpose on the earth, and that is what sets us as human beings above all the other creatures of God. If you are driving and come across a dead chicken on the road, you might say, oh, a dead chicken, and swerve round it and drive on; poor chicken, if you care about chickens. But there is no way you can drive past a dead human being and say, that's just a dead human being, and go on. That doesn't happen. That shows the value of a human being. Each one of you was carefully thought of by God. Nobody here is an afterthought. In the beginning He said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: a being who will carry Our personality and have dominion. You were carefully thought of and intricately made by God.

That is the gospel of the kingdom: the awareness that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is right here on the earth. Let me read from Isaiah 2: *Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.* The mountain of the Lord's house is, first of all, the people of God who worship Him in spirit and in truth; that is the true church of God. And you see from that verse that

there are other mountains. Mountains speak of dominance and prominence; when you drive through mountains, they stand out and draw your attention. And we have the same thing playing out today. We have the mountain of the economy, the religious mountain, the mountain of law and politics, the mountains of sport and entertainment. Many things fight for our attention, and that is what Satan wants. All Satan puts forth is distraction, distraction from a life committed to knowing your Maker for yourself.

That is what the gospel of the kingdom teaches: that nothing in the world is worth being short-changed for. You must know Jesus Christ for yourself. You must learn Him for yourself, because that is power. What most churches do is give you hand-me-downs. You come every week and you get your fifty pounds, figuratively speaking, and you spend it and come back for more. But the gospel of the kingdom gives you the ability to set up a stream for yourself, so that you don't need to come down every week for fifty pounds of hand-me-downs, because you have a source of constant supply. That is what Jesus said: whoever believes in Me, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. That is what the knowledge of Christ for yourself does. But the knowledge of Christ these days has been short-changed, and taught after the ways of men, as Matthew 15 says. So we are encouraging ourselves to set up a community where we can learn the ways of God. The gospel of the kingdom is about Christ, and Christ alone.

Many mountains fight for our attention. People are immersed in the pursuit of wealth. And wealth is very good, don't get me wrong. Money is fantastic. It is because of money that we are able to travel all the way here; it came from somewhere. I am a data engineer by profession; I work and I earn, and all these things are good and legitimate. But there is something more pre-eminent, and that is the mountain of the Lord's house. That is why Jesus said, What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, if he masters all these other mountains, and loses his own soul? The mountain of the Lord's house is the kingdom of Jesus Christ that has already begun to be set up on the earth, and it will go on being set up until it dissolves all the other mountains and reigns over all. My brother spoke of our reigning with Jesus Christ on the earth. That starts now. It is not too late. All nations shall flow to it. People will still be involved in all these other legitimate things that are necessary for life on this earth, but they will be fully involved in the mountain of the Lord's house.

And verse 3, and I will stop here: *Many people shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* When they do that, they will be taught the ways of God. We have all heard of the children of Israel in the wilderness, led by a man called Moses. The Psalm says that God made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. They knew only His acts. They knew God as the one who would heal me, who would solve my financial problem, who would save me and give me a good job, and then all was well. That is why they kept going back to their evil ways, over and over. But Moses knew something more. He knew the ways of the Lord: His customs, His character, His manner. It is more intimate to know a person's ways. Moses understood the love of the Lord, the things God desires, and God's plans and intentions for him and for all humanity. When we give ourselves to be active participants in the building of this kingdom, we will come to know the ways of God. How fantastic it is to know the ways of the God who is King, to understand Him, and to have an intimate relationship with Him.

The mountain of the Lord's house is being set up in this day, and it is going to be set up by men. God is building a body in the earth today. It is not of clay or wood; God is not going to be found in a building. It is a spiritual body, to the glory of God, and each of us has to find his place in that body. Everyone has a part. There is no vestigial organ. Science has begun to discover the use of the

appendix, which we once thought was useless; there is no such thing. Every part of the body has a use, and everyone here has a place in the house of God. That is the kind of church God is looking for. He is not looking for methods and standard procedures, where there is the priest, and there are the people who just sit in church every week. God is looking for something organic, with everyone coming to contribute, caught up in the worship of God.

God is looking for people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. That simply means that the Holy Spirit is the conductor of worship. We do not come to worship God on our own terms, saying, this is how we worship. When we come, we learn the protocols of worship, and those protocols are nothing more than being led by the Holy Spirit. We come; we have songs; we have a time for the word of God from the Bible.

And most importantly, the mountain of the Lord's house starts with you, with each one of us, in our homes. It is not only a reality when we gather like this, but in our homes, where everyone is pressing on and everyone is encouraged to get more into the knowledge of God. That is the key. That is the deliverance of the nation, and the restoration of this land. If you want to see us take this land back for Jesus Christ, if you want to see us take back our children, understand this: the kingdom of darkness is not joking. They are coming for your children. They are coming for your grandchildren. It is madness out there. But once the people decide to take their time and say, we are getting back to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, we are going to take this land back; and from here the light of this kingdom will shine to the whole world. That is what we have come here to encourage ourselves in, and there is a great deal more we can say and expand on over the coming days.

If anyone here is not a Christian, and, you know what, I don't even like using that word, if anyone here is not born again, because that is the main thing, the main deal; if anyone here has not come to know Jesus Christ for themselves, as their personal Lord and Saviour, and submitted their life to Him and said, Recreate me, make me new, change my heart, and cause me to begin to love You, it is not too late. You can still be part of this mountain. You can still be part of this kingdom-building experience. It is not too late. You can experience it for yourself. And the light of God and the glory of God will take over our lives individually, and when we come together it will take over this entire place. This is the day of restoration, of salvation, of deliverance and joy, and they will return in their fullness, because the people have turned to the Lord and begun to know the true thing, which is Jesus.



Chidera addresses the gathering, 6.49 and 6.51 pm.

When Chidera finished, Ralph's father Charles rose to speak. Charles is a respected leader in the community and one of the gentry of the county; his own father was Captain Joe Baker-Cresswell of the Royal Navy, who in May 1941, in command of HMS *Bulldog*, captured an Enigma cipher machine and its code-books from the German submarine U-110. When the meeting was being arranged, he said, the Anglican Communion and the other conventional churches had been approached, "and, in a manner of speaking,

they ran like rabbits. They were not going to communicate in such a way. They didn't understand what we were talking about. And that was quite an interesting beginning to this whole adventure." He added, "I don't say it's a criticism of our conventional, so-called Christian religion, but it's just a commentary on the amazing things that we've heard in the last hour. I thank you both very much." He said that the churches had wasted a resource. He was not saying no to anything, he added; there were many ways to perfection, and each of us had to find his own, and perhaps some were discovering one that night.

Questions

When Chidera had finished, we opened the floor, and the questions came, honest and searching.

THE DEGENERATE LOOP

"Thank you, Dad," said Ralph, and he asked the first question himself. "I hope I'm not the only person who feels personally attacked by being called the degenerate loop," he said, to laughter. "Do you see that the degenerate loop is part of all structured faith, whether it be Christian or Islam or whatever? Any time you start getting a structure, do you see that loop starting?"

"Not quite," Ekaba answered. "The degeneracy is what the Bible describes: light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light."

There is no other worldview, no other faith in any part of the world, that has this element: your God coming for you. It was an English poet, Francis Thompson, who wrote of the Hound of Heaven, pursuing you down the highways and the byways. In all the religions of the world you bring your own goodness to God and work out your own way: by the giving of alms, as in one of the other great faiths; by the journey of pilgrimage; by weighing your good deeds against your bad, where everyone is judge of his own moral fabric. Men have many ways of trying to crawl their way to their deity, whether to attain nirvana, or to come into a paradise with seventy virgins, which might not be very interesting for most. That is the degeneracy: man trying to find God with what he has constructed.

But in the gospel, in the revelation of God through Jesus Christ, He comes to you. He fills your heart with His loving-kindness. You find your peace in the shadow of His wings; you are satisfied with the abundance of His house, and you drink from the river of His pleasures. He searches for you. He comes for you. As the hymn says, "Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God; He, to rescue me from danger, interposed His precious blood." That is why we sing "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me." In every other religious worldview you save yourself. But He saves a wretch like me. He comes for me. "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart rolled away." I was like the man beaten and left by the side of the road, bleeding and dying, and He came to me, and poured in oil and wine, and said, come with Me to a place of rest. He is the rest. The degeneracy is to refuse the God who comes for you to save you, and to take up gods for whom you must do everything to come into their presence, only to find at the end of that road a lake of fire.

WERE YOU ALWAYS CHRISTIANS?

Someone asked whether we had always been Christians, or had had to be born again and make a journey of our own. Ekaba answered first.

I was born into a Christian home. My father and mother are Christians, ministers of the gospel, and I was surrounded by Christianity. I went to a boys' school in southern Nigeria called Hope Waddell Training Institution, founded by the Scottish mission in 1895. Mary Slessor was associated with it. It was a mission school, and I was a Christian there; I was the chapel preacher. But the wickedness was still there. At Hope Waddell I got involved in all sorts of foolishness: fighting, coarse jesting. There was nothing a boy could do that we did

not do. And it was there that I was exposed to the vice that more and more young people are exposed to today. Pornography wrecked my life, a disease of the soul.

So being born into a Christian home did not save me. But this God, the Hound of Heaven, hunted me down, and delivered me from hypocrisy, where my father and my brothers and my friends saw me as a good Christian child, but I knew the darkness I was in. I knew my own thoughts. I knew that I was far from what they had taught me to be, until God appeared to me and revealed Himself to me, and I came to the place of repentance. Even now, that is how God helps me: I live in a state of continual repentance, looking to God, who has become my help. He is the one who is helping me to be like Him. Otherwise I simply cannot help myself.

There must be, for everybody, an encounter with Jesus Christ. It must be real, and it must be personal. That is why we disavow religious Christianity and cultural Christianity, which honours God with the lips while the heart is far from Him. The Lord said that at the end many will say to Him, we did this and that in Your name, we gave alms to the church, our money built the cathedrals, we financed missions around the world; and He will say to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me.” The Lord knows those who are His. So my call to myself tonight, standing on the thread of God’s mercy, is to return to God, to circumcise the foreskin of my heart, and to find Him in prayer and in the word, humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may lift us up in due time.

Chidera answered that for him the answer was both: he was born into a Christian family, but came to a point of accountability where he had to make a personal decision to follow Jesus and know Him for himself. “Being born into a Christian heritage is good, but it is not enough to save anyone.” He had been at the same school as Ekaba, and he spoke directly to the young people in the room:

I was born in a Christian home, but I was into a lot of madness. Take this from a young man to the young people: you think you have time. You don’t have as much time as you think. It catches up with you. That boys’ school was absolute madness; you don’t want to know the things we did. But at home our parents looked at us as good kids. Those things look cool; they look like the trending thing. But that life does not pay. When you get to know Jesus early, it sets your life right. Imagine knowing exactly what your God-given purpose on the earth is; you have a head start over everything. And for those who have lived longer, it is never too late. God is a God of restoration. The devil is so much against the young people; that is what he does in any society. He makes the young people crazy, and that is how a society dies out. This church in Northumberland is going to be built by the young, the middle-aged and the old.

CAN WE BE FRIENDS?

A young man named Charlie then spoke, frankly. “I don’t actually believe in this at all. I decided that when I was about thirteen. I thought, I don’t get this. But I do have a very strong moral compass, and I think I’m a good person, and I have good views. I think lots of other people do too. What I worry about is that it’s a dogma. I’m sitting outside of your one. Does that make me evil, or a sinner? Or what am I? Because I’m not coming in, I’m afraid. I’m not interested. So, in your view, can you and I be friends?”

Ekaba answered the last question first. “That is far the easiest. Can you and I be friends? We already are, absolutely, and we can’t wait to come to you tomorrow. We hope you have the best coffee available.” Of all the religious people Jesus could have sat with, he said, He ate with the tax collectors and sinners, and they accused Him of being a sinner because of the company He kept. “Charlie, you are just the kind of person Christ wants to have a meal with. Those who are well have no need of a physician. He came to seek and to save the lost.”

We make choices, but we cannot choose the consequences. Some other religions, especially one that we share a country with, will not even give you the choice. Christ does, and that is the liberty and the freedom of being here. To your other question, whether you are evil or a sinner: in no sense can we say that to you. You are what you are, and everyone is what they are, and the outcome of each life will be the playing out of what they have

accepted. But here is what Christ brings you: if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. You do not stay just as you are. You can receive the help of God to become what He, the designer of man, meant you to be. He offers it quite freely. That is why they despised Him as a weak God, a suffering Messiah, and mocked Him: if You are the Son of God, come down from the cross. He stayed there for you. He has come to help. But there is, at the end, a day when God will judge the living and the dead. It is only in this life, while we are breathing, that we can receive His free gift, and whoever receives it will not see death, but will come under the provision of Jesus Christ. He does not put a gun to your head. But at the end of the road even the wicked will say to God, You have judged us rightly, because He is faithful and without injustice. If a man is brave enough to face God for himself, let him do so. I do not have that kind of bravery. That is why my heart beats for all of God's children, that they may know the provision of grace and be rescued from the clutches of Satan.

"Well," said Charlie, "we're going to have a lot to talk about."

RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

Another guest asked whether we were troubled by the reality of religious conflict, in history and in the world today. The answer came from the Gospels.

It is interesting the way Jesus handled religious conflict. He handled it the way we ought to handle it. When they came to arrest Him, Peter, in his religious zeal, drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, Malchus. And at the very moment His greatest suffering was about to begin, Jesus took the ear and did His last work of healing. He healed the ear of His accuser, His enemy. And He said to Peter, put your sword away; all who take the sword will perish by the sword. God does not need the help of men to fight for Him. It is a weak god who instigates men to go and kill in his name, and says, if anybody does not believe, kill him, or put him under a special tax. But the God of heaven says, let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream. In the day of the Lord men will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance and holiness. "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end." So religious conflict is resolved when men come to an encounter with Jesus Christ. If we die, as many of our brothers have died before us, blessed are you when men persecute you. And it is He who says, pray for your enemies, do good to those who spitefully use you. Religious conflict is the instigation of devils, to confuse and destroy the sons of men.

A guest pressed further: were we not Christians only because we had been born into Christian families? If we had been born into Islam, would we not be preaching Islam? Should the answer not be tolerance of all religions? At this the guests fell to debating among themselves. One asked which conflicts Christians had started in recent times; another suggested the war in Iraq, since the Americans are Christian; another answered that we came from a country where Christians were being massacred by Muslims every day, by the tens of thousands; one said that Islam was a very bloodthirsty religion but that present-day Christianity could not be accused of that, "if anything, it's too weak"; another raised Northern Ireland. One of the company then asked who the three great totalitarian monsters of the twentieth century had been, and what they had in common, and answered his own question: Hitler was a pagan, and Mao and Stalin were atheists. "If you're a totalitarian leader, the idea that there's nothing above you is not going to help your state of mind."

A WORD ABOUT LANGUAGE

Then a woman named Helen raised a question of language. "You've both taught really eloquently," she said. "But bearing in mind that women are actually fifty-one per cent of the population, there has been no mention of women. Especially when you talk about the young, there is a necessity to change our use of language. Have you thought about that in your approach?"

Chidera thanked her for raising it. Perhaps, he said, we had not spoken of it because in Christ the distinction does not exist: there is neither male nor female, and we are all sons of God, with equal standing before Him. But he acknowledged that it was a real concern, and that it grew out of the long misrepresentation of Christianity, so that it was necessary now to speak of it plainly. When the Sadducees asked Jesus whose wife the woman would be in the resurrection, who had been married to seven brothers in turn, Jesus answered that in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God. “There is no such thing as a male human spirit and a female human spirit. God said, Let Us make man in Our image, and He created them male and female, and blessed them. Christ is our peace, who has broken down the middle wall of separation and made of the two one new man.”

Ekaba then spoke to it, as he said, from a sociological perspective.

I have a daughter of eight months, and a wife, and a sister, and a mother, and wonderful female friends who have touched my life. But I want to say this. The gospel and Jesus Christ are what have brought the greatest honour and freedom to women in history, and we have to be very open about this. The world has been very hostile to women. Where in the world, though nowhere is perfect, are women most free? It is where the fabric of the culture has been most shaped by the light of the gospel. Go to northern Nigeria; my goodness, it is horrid to be a woman in northern Nigeria. If I were a woman and could choose where to be born, before any other consideration I would say, make sure I am born in the West, where the cultural fabric has been shaped by a Christian worldview. People think it is the excellence of their own philosophy and their own enlightenment. But you should have seen the West before Paul brought the gospel. You would not have wanted to be a woman in pagan Rome or pagan Greece. The gospel is the pedestal on which we stand to say, equal rights for women, and I will sign that on the dotted line. But the same people want to take away the plank they are standing on. We are all standing on the foundation of Christ, which says we are all equal in the sight of God, all sons and daughters of the Most High God.

“Maybe make that a caveat at the beginning,” Helen answered. “It’s much more encouraging.” We thanked her for the feedback. (The next morning, when Andrea raised the matter again, Ekaba told her that he had taken it to heart.)

Chidera returned to the question of how Christians should handle conflict, and read from 2 Timothy 2: *A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.* He spoke candidly of the harm that has been done in Christ’s name. In Canada, he said, many of the indigenous peoples hate the name of Jesus because of what was done to them in His name: the abuse of children in the residential schools, and the unmarked graves of children found in recent years. In Nigeria too, where we were born, many say that Christianity is the white man’s religion, because of the history of slavery and empire. “It is an ignorant statement. The faith came out of the Middle East. It is not a white man’s or a black man’s religion. There is a great deal of misrepresentation in history. We must get back to the Bible. The standard is in the Bible, not in what any man or woman has done over the years in the name of Christ.”

IS THAT ALL YOU ARE DOING?

The last question was simple. “Is that all that you two gentlemen are doing, having this conversation?”

“Yes, in a sense,” Ekaba said. “As we said at the beginning, we are slaves of Jesus Christ.” He knew the word could stir strong feeling. “But man is already a slave to his own proclivities. The real question is not whether you serve, but who your master is. If your master is the devil, it is what it is. If your master is yourself, that is perhaps even worse. My master is Jesus Christ.” We work for our living, he said; he himself

is an artificial intelligence engineer and machine learning scientist, with a background in geography and environmental studies. “But we like to say that that is our part-time job. What we live for is to persuade men to see, in the love of Christ, the beauty, the fragrance and the freedom that comes from knowing Him. This world is passing away, and we are in the end times. If there is any hostility, it is not personal. If I came into a room and said, I have come from Canada to share hugs, everybody would hug me. But if we bring Jesus, it is, get out of here. They do not hate me. They hate Him.”

Chidera added that our desire was that out of that room a community would be built around Christ. “I use the word community, but I might as well use the word church. We are not here to plant a church that we control, where somebody collects the offerings and sends them to headquarters in Canada.” He told them of Plymouth, where in August 2025, led there by the Lord to a city we had never seen, a church had been planted, which now, full of Englishmen, ran itself as the Holy Spirit led them, and had since moved to Exeter. “When you set up a church, you have set up an embassy, a place that radiates the presence of God and combats the works of darkness. We need a true church in Northumberland. Not a church gathered around a man or a woman, around a male vicar or a female vicar; God does not care about that. A church gathered around the eternal Vicar, Jesus Christ, who is the head of the body.” We were not being reimbursed for anything, he said, and no mission in Canada was sponsoring us; we had brought our jobs with us, and worked on our laptops in the evenings.

Andrea and Derek

When the formal part of the evening ended, the company broke up into conversation over soup and drinks. It was then that Andrea and Derek came to us. They said that they were no longer young, but that they wished to respond to the call we had set before the room: to see a church of His purpose planted in Bamburgh, a kingdom church centred on Jesus Christ, for the restoring of the flame and the power and the anointing of Christ in that community. We agreed to meet with them the next morning.



Conversation continues after the gathering at Budle Hall.

Late in the evening

Many of the guests stayed on late into the evening, and the conversations went on. One guest argued that, even setting aside whether it is true, there are good reasons of mental health and moral conduct for being a Christian, “second-order reasons”, which might in time lead a person to the first-order reason. Another spoke of the Ukrainians who had been among the guests: the man had managed twenty thousand hectares

of farmland in Ukraine and now, content, mowed the grass on a caravan site near Amble. Someone remarked that church attendance among the young in Britain was said to be rising.

When one of us said that we were already in a war, a spiritual war in which the devils were not on vacation, but were destroying the adults and the elderly and going after the children, and that the institutional church in itself had become a habitation of devils, a guest pushed back: "That's strong. Devils is strong. I would say incompetence and non-believers." We answered that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood; everything is powered from the realm of the spirit, and where the Spirit of God is no longer the power, there is no vacuum and no third way. Chidera told them that before this very journey devils had come to threaten him and make him afraid. "The Christian life is not a playground. It is a battleground." He told them how much he loved England, and how he had applied to Oxford and Cambridge five or six times, and loved Ralph and Celia dearly; but that if he were carried away by any of it, he would not see the spiritual contest that was going on.

One of us asked a young man, who had spoken of his new girlfriend, whether he himself feared God. He said he did. Did he worship Him? Read the Bible and pray? "Not so much," he said. "I go to church." The talk turned to Islam and to the nation. We said that secularism is a nice dress and lipstick put on the pig of atheism and agnosticism, and that one must distinguish the substance of a faith from its form: a wicked man who calls himself a Christian is a corruption of the form, but those who are most faithful to the Qur'an are faithful to its substance. We said that Britain had two choices: to choose God, or to be overrun by Islam; and that much of the English common law is itself a fruit of the law of God. One of the guests spoke with deep feeling of the grooming gangs, and of the police officers, social workers, council officers and doctors who failed to protect the girls, and said that he believed much of that failure was due to the disappearance of Christianity: "If they had been properly Christian, I don't think they could have tolerated what was happening." Cultural and religious Christianity, we answered, is like a *séance*, an apparition that leads people away from a real encounter with Jesus Christ. "The secular is the waiting room to the profane. Either you are holy or you are not. By their fruits you will know them."

As he left, one of the guests said, "Now I'm starting to understand the hostility of the Church of England towards you guys. Even before they knew anything about it, on some level they knew that you were a deadly threat to them." Another thanked us, as he went out into the night, "for the threshing day".

The next morning, Ralph received a message from Matthew, an engineer who had been among the guests: "Thank you for such a thought-provoking and, dare I say it, challenging evening last night."

MONDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2026

A Church of His Purpose

Budle Hall, and the home of Andrea and Derek in Bamburgh village

ON Monday morning we had breakfast with Ralph and his family at Budle Hall and ministered to them at the table. Then, at half past ten, Ralph drove us into Bamburgh to the home of Andrea and Derek, the couple who had come to us at the end of the gathering the night before. Also present were their adopted son and daughter, Robert and Chrissy, and David, a younger member of their family. Ralph stayed with us throughout, at our insistence, for reasons that will become plain.

A divine visitation

Andrea began by telling us about the Christian heritage of the county, how the faith had come to Northumberland from Iona with the monks, and about the Northumbria Community, a dispersed fellowship in the Celtic tradition with a strong base in the county, whose mother house, Nether Springs, had moved from Hetton Hall to Felton. She told us of a man on Holy Island named Andy, and his wife Anna, who belonged to that community. She had been on the telephone to Anna that very morning, arranging for us to meet them. Andy, she warned us with a smile, was a big bear of a man with a great deal of hair who liked to dance, and he had lately been in Ghana at a dance festival. Some people kept their distance from him because they found him strange.

Then she told us why she and Derek had responded as they did. Their daily reading, the devotional they read alongside the Bible, had said on Sunday that they would have a divine visitation that day. "That was yesterday," she said, "and we met you two, and we thought, okay Lord, we're listening. We'll pin our ears back and we'll listen."

When Ralph had first contacted them about the gathering, she said, they had thought their part would be to bring along a few people who did not know the Lord, so that they might have a different experience. But as she listened to us on Sunday evening another thought had grown in her. Perhaps their function was to link us into what already existed in Northumberland. "It's patchy," she said. "It's certainly not mainstream. But then neither are you. I mean, to me you're mainstream. You come and you talk about the truth, and the truth is very straightforward and simple. But to many it's frightening." And that, she said to Ralph, was why we had met the reaction we had met from the establishment. "It's really sad. How can the church be frightened of Jesus? But actually they are, because when you commit yourself to Jesus your life can get turned upside down, and things are never the same again. You talked about the mountains. Well, I'm afraid the church is one of those mountains." It was not racism, she was clear. It was fear.

She told us she wanted her youngest son to meet us, and that two others in the village, Angie and Alec, wished to come and meet us too. One door had already closed that morning. There was a meeting the following day where she had thought we would be welcomed, and she had asked the Lord to shut the door

if it was not of Him, and He had shut it, very firmly. “I’ve learned to accept that sometimes God says no, not that one. But He opens wide another.” Anna on Holy Island, she said, was excited beyond measure.

A word about language

Andrea raised one matter with great care. At the gathering on Sunday a friend of hers, Helen, had questioned the way we had spoken about women. Helen was, in Andrea’s words, straight down the line, and would tell it as it is. Andrea’s counsel was that in England many women feel overlooked, and that the enemy is clever at diverting people onto sidetracks. For her own part she speaks of every believer as a *child of God*, so that no one is left behind while they are taking offence. “Once someone is offended you’ve lost them, haven’t you? They’re not listening to you properly anymore.”

Ekaba received the counsel openly. He said that he believed he had answered Helen sincerely, and that he had already told her he had taken her feedback. “We don’t want to win an argument,” he said. “We want to win a person.” From then on he would be conscious of something he would not naturally be conscious of, because the message had to go out and not be turned aside.

The word from the plane

Ekaba then told Andrea and Derek plainly why we were there. What she had said to him the night before, he said, was an answer to prayer. Many people around the world had been praying for this journey. He had held himself composed when she spoke, but in his spirit he had been shouting. He took out his phone and read them the word of the Lord that we had received on the plane, the word set down at the beginning of this account, down to its last line: “We must demand it and say to the people, the Master has need of you.”

He told them that when we planned Sunday’s meeting none of us had known what would be said. There was no script. We knew only that it was in the heart of God to have *a church of His purpose* planted in Bamburgh. He described the kind of church he meant:

A church where the misfits, the scum of the earth, those who are in the caves and in the occult, who are looking to have a real encounter with Jesus, can come and worship the Father in spirit and in truth, away from the forms. The Scripture says, Come out of her, My people. Babylon speaks of the religious system of the world, where people come to see the bride of Christ but have been turned aside to see the harlot. It is prophetic symbolism, but the word of the Spirit is, I will judge Babylon. So My people who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice, come out of her. The Lord is demanding fidelity to the Holy Spirit. He is demanding holiness and righteousness.

The church is not the building, not the institutions, not the ordinations, not the pomp and pageantry, not the liturgy and the homilies and the readings. It is in spirit and in truth. While we are gathered here, you are the church. Worship is not the things you say when you gather. Worship is who you are. We are the temple. We are the altar.

Just imagine: ten, fifteen, twenty people here, saying, let us pray. Ralph begins to pray, and people are praying. Some are crying, some are on their knees, just getting into God and reading the Bible. Lives are being transformed. People are saying, I have been living in sin for thirty-five years, and they are set free. Real deliverance is taking place. That is a church of His purpose.

He was careful to say what we were not. We were not come to be bishops over them. We ourselves are members and servants of local churches: Ekaba of the church in Calgary, which prayed for him and had released him to come, and Chidera of the church in Winnipeg. “I am not the pastor,” Ekaba said. “I serve with them. I am only here because they pray for me and they say, brother, you can go.” We were there for two weeks. We could preach and teach and pray every day if they wished, and we would return to encourage

them. But a spark was not enough; it had to become an enduring fire, and a church in Bamburgh had to be carried by men and women of Bamburgh. “The Master says, I demand to ride on donkeys. There have to be leaders. Men and women who will say, Lord Jesus, if this is how You want to use us, put the burden on our backs.”

Then he turned to Ralph. What Ralph had done in opening his house and gathering the county to hear us, he said, no man could do unless the Holy Spirit was leading him. “He may not like it, but he is playing a leadership role. That is a donkey that the Master is riding on.” So he laid the matter before the three of them, Andrea, Derek and Ralph: “This is what the Lord is looking for. Can we make it happen?”

The fear of the Lord

Chidera took up the word. At this time, he said, the Lord is looking for people who fear Him. Ralph answered honestly that this was a hard concept for him, and that he was struggling with it. Andrea said she understood, because for the first thirty years of her life she had not given God a thought, and she knew how the word *fear* sounds to someone who does not know the Lord. She herself preferred the word *awe*.

Chidera opened the Scriptures to them. Of the Lord Jesus Himself it is written that in the days of His flesh He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and it means, simply, putting God first. He read from Matthew 15 the words of the Lord against those who honour God with their lips while their hearts are far from Him, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. “That is what brother Ekaba was describing about the system of Babylon, the religious mountain. That is why we hear all these terms, the evangelical, the Baptist, the Catholic. These are mountains, institutions of men that give no room for the move and the flow of the Holy Spirit.”

He pointed them to Malachi: “To you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.” The healing of this land, he said, will come from the faithful worship of those who truly fear Him. He spoke of John the Baptist, a man whose ministry everyone acknowledged, who when his disciples complained that the people were going after Jesus answered, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” “That is the fear of God. The Baptists need to decrease and let Jesus increase. The evangelicals need to decrease and let Jesus increase. The vicars need to decrease and let Jesus increase. And we individually need to do the same.” He spoke of the book of remembrance in Malachi 3, written before the Lord for those who feared Him and spoke often one to another, and said that such a book was open over this land. In many gatherings the Spirit of the Lord is no longer present because men have pushed Him out, and the Holy Spirit, unlike a demon, will not force Himself on anyone. That was why the Lord warned the church at Ephesus that He would remove its lampstand. “What is happening here is not normal,” Chidera told Andrea. “You are key players in this. Now is not the time to be humble. Put away that humility for now and go full out, because a lampstand needs to start in this place.”

Prayer

Andrea prayed. She thanked the Lord that this was no chance occurrence, and she prayed for Ralph, that he would let go of the fears that inevitably come with all this: “He must be wondering what he has got himself into here. And yet You, Lord, You put his finger on that email to contact us, You and no one else.” Then Chidera led us in worship with the song *Let this temple be filled with Your glory, and let the earth be filled with Your praise*, and prayed over the land and over everyone in the room:

You have begun to do a work here in this land, and as You have told us, You are gathering all who are rejected in this land, everyone who is in debt. You are gathering a glorious army to Yourself. The time of salvation, the time of restoration, the time of deliverance, the time of healing has come for this land. You have chosen us, not that we are better than our neighbours, but by an election of grace, to arise and do Your will. Therefore we receive grace, and we receive strength.

Andrea's story

When we had prayed, Andrea told us how she had come to the Lord. Her father was a sportsman and a man of truth whom she loved dearly. In his fifties he began to behave unlike himself, and she fought with the doctors until they scanned him and found an inoperable brain tumour. They had little time left. He asked her to arrange a weekend away for the family, and she found a log cabin on the edge of the Lake District. On the Friday night, out of nowhere, he said, "I want to go to church on Sunday." She had never heard him say such a thing. On an empty noticeboard in the site's reception there was one small card: *Millom Baptist Church welcomes you. Services at 10.30 and 6.* Derek drove them there, though he told her it would be hypocritical for him to go in, because he did not believe in that stuff. Neither did she, but her father wanted to go.

The pastor preached on the prodigal son, and then called for a time of open prayer. She had never heard anyone pray aloud. Her father opened his mouth and said, "Lord, that's me. I'm that prodigal son," and for ten minutes or more poured out his story. He had known the Lord as a young man and had wandered away in the army. Afterwards the pastor drew the two of them aside. He had prepared a different sermon two months before, he said, but as he walked through the church door that morning the Lord had said to him, *Not today. Preach the prodigal son.* "I didn't know the Lord spoke to people," Andrea told us. "That was my first encounter with how the Lord worked." Her father returned to the Lord and died on 30 November that year. His last words to her were, "God is love."

She told us too of Robert's healings in hospital: a failed line that restored itself while she prayed at his bedside, and a stoma that healed itself so that the surgeons said they had never seen such a thing. Derek, she said, was always there as her witness, dead straight and steady, so that no one could write her off. So when Ralph's email had come to her out of the blue, it had the Lord's hallmark all over it, and her part was simply to say yes.

Who will teach them?

Ekaba answered that we too had to hold all this loosely, one day at a time. Everywhere we go people ask how the church will be managed, who will preach and teach when we have gone back to Canada. His answer was that the church is God's, and that He said, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Do you suppose I know the word of God more than God, whose word it is? He will raise up a man who came to faith yesterday and put His words in that man's mouth. When the apostles opened their mouths to speak, the people marvelled: these are uneducated men, and they speak with such authority. God has chosen the foolish things of this world to put to shame the wise, and the weak things to put to shame the mighty. The Holy Spirit who planned this morning, who planned yesterday, is not going on vacation in the next thirty minutes. The word He gave us is: be present, speak and ask, and get out of the way. And He is going to do something in this land to His glory.

At Andrea's request the word from the plane was read again, for those who had not been in the room. Ralph, hearing that he had become one of the donkeys, took it in good humour.

Paradox

Andrea showed us a painting on her wall of Jacob wrestling with God, set in the main street of Bamburgh, the heavenly side painted with red grass. That, she said, was how she often felt. Ralph then spoke, with some hesitation, as a man who said he was not at that time religious. “I see through a glass darkly, and you see things more clearly,” he said. What he had discerned in fifty-six years, through what he called his own separate-from-everything mentality, was that there is paradox woven into the fabric of the universe, a kind of playfulness in it, and a delight in frustrating plans that have been over-planned. “That’s all I’ve got. That’s what I can see through my darkness.”

The talk turned to the church in the village. Ralph said he had been shocked and surprised to see doors slammed against us, but that he now understood: the people in charge sensed a threat, just as those who held religion in Jerusalem were threatened by Jesus at the first Easter. Andrea and Derek told us that when the vicar had first come to the parish they had gone to her door to welcome her and offer friendship, and had invited her to everything since, but it had never been taken up. Over the years they had held house groups in their home and had people come from Christon Bank, Seahouses and Alnwick, but never anyone from the parish church. The curate, Paul, they said, was gifted and allowed the Spirit of God room to work, but was bound by the system he had bought into. Of the parish church itself Andrea said, “It’s more like a museum. It’s just waiting.” She planned to take us to see it after the meeting.

They told us also of a friend in Sierra Leone, James, a slight, gentle-voiced man who takes street children off the streets and puts them through school, 649 of them that year, in constant danger from a corrupt police. And they told us of the gatherings they attend each year across the denominations, because they had always believed it was all about unity. Andrea’s own verse, from the beginning of her walk, is Mary’s answer to the angel: “Behold the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.”



Bamburgh village, midday on Monday 16 February, after the meeting at Andrea and Derek’s home.

Evening at Budle Hall

That evening at Budle Hall, round the table with Ralph's family, a hard question was put to us: how could the God of the Old Testament, who commanded the destruction of whole peoples, be good? How could such violence be justified?

We answered it first as a question, and then, as we put it, pastorally, to answer the person and not only the question. The wrath of God against sin is constant, he said; He told Israel that if they defiled the land, the land would spit them out. The difference now is Jesus Christ, who took the wrath upon Himself, so that when God's judgment comes it sees the blood. It can seem as though God has changed and is not as hard as He used to be, but He is the same God, and we are now under the covering of Christ. Then he turned the question round:

This question is only possible to be asked because of Jesus Christ. You are standing on the pillar of Christ to say, this is violence. That enhanced moral fabric is because of Christ. Imagine Jesus never came. In the West we say violence against women. In some communities that have not had the influence of Christ, it is just everyday life, and a woman would not understand you if you told her she was a victim of abuse. You cannot stand on a platform to make a truth claim and take the platform away at the same time. You are asking a biblical question, and the strength of that question is the word of God itself. That is Christ manifested already in your heart. So perhaps it is time not only to have the sense of Him, but to know Christ Himself, and bow at His feet and say, Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me, a sinner.

When one of the company spoke of the oldest body ever found, a man from about 3000 BC who fell out of a glacier in the Alps with an arrowhead in his back, we pointed out that even the word *murder* carries the moral weight it does because God said, "You shall not kill."

We added that God has always hated violence and oppression. He used David as an instrument of His judgment on the nations, but when David wished to build God's house, God told him he could not, because he had shed so much blood. One of us told them that he had seen with his own eyes a man stripped, beaten and burned alive, and that it had never left him. The law of Moses allowed an eye for an eye because of the hardness of men's hearts, but Jesus said, "Turn the other cheek. Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you." It is these words, that have softened the conscience of mankind over the centuries, so that a king of England can no longer say of a man, "Take off his head."

Ralph then prepared us for the next day's visit to Holy Island. He told us of the Lindisfarne Gospels, written on vellum made from the skins of hundreds of calves, and said that he had himself helped the archaeologists who recently found the place on the island where those calves were reared. He told of the monks' labour through cold winters without light, and of the Vikings who fell on the island. "We have an expression," he said, "that there are certain places which can be described as *thin*. That is, a place where God and man have come close together, and they are still affected by the closeness of that association." Iona was one, he said, and Lindisfarne was another, where the Holy Spirit is close.

He also read us a message he had received that day from Matthew, one of Sunday's guests, an engineer: "Thank you for such a thought-provoking and, dare I say it, challenging evening last night. I had to do a runner early because I had too many thoughts to run through prior to any further stimulus. Forgive me, I had not really considered the actual distinction between mysticism, faith and structured faith in such a stark manner." Matthew offered to host us for lunch or a day out the following week.

TUESDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2026

Holy Island

Lindisfarne · the home of Andrea and Derek

ON Tuesday we crossed the causeway to Holy Island. Andrea had spent the Monday on the telephone, ringing, as she said, “numbers that God had given us through prayer”. One door had closed completely. Another, on Holy Island, had opened wide. Andy and Anna, whom Andrea had described to us, belong to the Northumbria Community, a dispersed fellowship of prayer in the Celtic tradition whose members live by a common rule of availability and vulnerability, and they had gathered others of their fellowship on the island to meet us.

The morning office

We joined them first for their morning office in the tradition of the Community. It opened with a call and response:

MORNING PRAYER

Who is it that you seek? We seek the Lord our God.

Do you seek Him with all your heart? Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek Him with all your soul? Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek Him with all your mind? Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek Him with all your strength? Amen. Christ, have mercy.

Psalm 63 was read, *O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water*, and from Luke 9 the account of the apostles returning to Jesus and withdrawing with Him to Bethsaida. The meditation for the day, from Horatius Bonar, asked why there is so little anxiety to find time to pray, and answered: “It is in the desert that the dew falls freshest and the air is purest. So with the soul. It is when none but God is nigh ... It is when coming out fresh from communion with God that we go forth to do His work successfully.” A word of George MacDonald followed: “What God may hereafter require of you, you must not give yourself the least trouble about. Everything He gives you to do, you must do as well as ever you can. That is the best possible preparation for what He may want you to do next.”

The day, Andy told us, was the feast of two saints. One was Finan of Lindisfarne, an Irish monk of Iona, Aidan’s successor as bishop, who built the first church on the site of the priory and in whose day the gospel spread southward through England. The other was John Hyde, “Praying Hyde”, the American missionary to India who died in 1912, whose chief work was intercession, who would pray half the night, and of whom a woman once said, “I do not remember that he ever talked about prayer. He prayed.” When he was examined near the end of his life, his heart was found to have been displaced from the left side of his

chest to the right. They prayed for the world's wars and famines, for persecuted believers, and for a sister of the Community near the end of her life who could no longer sleep in a bed. One of them gave thanks for the new people the Lord was gathering, and welcomed us to the family. We sang *Come, Lord Jesus, come*, and the ancient prayer of St Patrick, *Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me*, and the office ended with the blessing: *May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you, wherever He may send you. May He guide you through the wilderness, protect you through the storm. May He bring you home rejoicing.*

It was a beautiful and ordered office. It was also, as Chidera would later say to Andrea, still and structured; and what came after it was something else.



Holy Island, Tuesday 17 February. The gathering begins.

The two beginnings

When the office was done, the company drew their chairs into a circle. Andrea opened with prayer, that the Lord would close their ears to their own counsel, let His fear be upon them, and make them attentive to His nudging, “and speak out what we need to speak out, and shut up if we’re going to just be talking for the sake of it”. Then she told them her part of the story: a few weeks before, she had received a most unusual email from Ralph, whom she knew only in passing, telling her that two missionaries were coming, that the established church had not opened its doors to them, and asking whether she would be willing to organise something for them. “And my way with the Lord is to say yes. So I said yes.”

Ekaba told them ours. “Today is nothing short of a miracle. Up until forty-eight hours ago I did not know what or who Holy Island was.” He told them of the burden that had come two years before to take the gospel into Europe and Britain; of the month in August 2025 when, knowing no one and with no agenda, we flew into Amsterdam and went through the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Austria, Switzerland and Italy, preaching in the streets and seeing people give their lives to Christ; of the church planted in Plymouth; of the detour from Glasgow toward a castle whose name he could barely pronounce, the burst tyre, the bed and breakfast with no room, the Spanish woman Maria whose

encounter with God that very morning our coming had fulfilled, and the man who said, “You guys are quite convincing. I’m not there yet. But I think my community needs this.” Then he read them the word of the Lord from the plane.

What the Lord has been putting in our hearts is for there to be a lampstand here, signifying the presence of God and the revival of the light and life of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in this region, that will stir up a revival and a burning light through England and through Europe. Many are suffering from the misrepresentation of Christ. Others are suffering from the wickedness of Satan, propagated through the sophistry of science and philosophy, which has created a chasm in the soul, so that for many misery is a fact of life. But for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. It is time for a revival of the Holy Spirit that will drive the spirits that confuse and distort the hearts of men out of all their hiding places: the hiding places of culture, of religion, of secularism, whatever coat they wear, even when they masquerade as angels of light.

As the singing had gone on that morning, he said, the word he had heard in his spirit was from Joel 2: *I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.* “On Sunday we were speaking to the world. The message now, I believe, is that we are speaking to the church. And the church must shake herself from the dust. Awake, awake, O Zion; loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.” The Lord was raising up again the tabernacle of David that had fallen, he said, which is nothing other than the church of the living God in the last days, the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband.

The donkey and her colt

Chidera took up the word about the donkeys. When Jesus sent His disciples for the donkey, it was tied, and it had to be loosed, and the reason given was, “The Lord has need of it.” It was loosed for service. “What does that remind us of? The deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Moses said to Pharaoh, Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” And Matthew tells us that the disciples brought not one animal but two, a donkey and her colt. “When you see a mother and her child, what comes to mind? Love, yes. But I am going at vulnerability. So the vessels that Jesus is looking for are not people of reputation or strength. They are simply people who are available for service. That is what Jesus wants in Northumberland. He is not looking for your qualifications.”

He spoke of Babylon as one of the mountains that have taken over the earth: the mountain of religion, where the church has become an empire and a business of man. “But the vicar of the church is Jesus Christ, the head of the body, who in all things must have the pre-eminence.” God no longer dwells in houses made with hands, he said; He showed it by allowing Babylon to destroy His own temple. “If we are meeting in a cave, that’s fine. If we are meeting under a tree, that’s fine, as long as the body of Christ, the individual temples, are gathered together.” And he was careful to say how we had come. “We are not coming with a higher light, to say, you of the lower light, listen. The word that came is that there is a work of the Holy Spirit that has already been going on. We are coming to join hands with the labourers who have laboured in this land, probably since long before I was born, men and women who have given their lives to the work. And in the wisdom of God we come at this time to say: beloved brethren, how do you reason these things?” The Holy Spirit, he said, is the conductor of our worship, as a conductor leads an orchestra; He teaches us how to worship the Father.

What the island said back

Then the brethren of the island answered, and what they said moved us deeply.

Andy told us that much of what we had said was what God had already been making vivid to them, sometimes in different language but with the same resonance. “Here is not a random place, and Bamburgh is very much not a random place. It is a key place in God’s purposes, just as Jerusalem was.” When God moves again in a place where He has moved before, he said, the old anointing on the place comes alive; it has never entirely gone. This island was known as the cradle of Christianity, the place from which the gospel went out, and it is still a sending place. And Bamburgh’s gift, in its day, was to be a banquet for the poor, from which came the beginnings of lifeboats and lighthouses, and of the stand against slavery. Then he read to us from their own writings, a poem about the monks who came north from Evesham in the eleventh century to reawaken the old anointings of Northumbria:

FROM THE NORTHUMBRIA COMMUNITY

*Three of us left from Evesham, footsore but joyful,
a dream in our hearts and a task for our day:
to awake old anointings, get help, make a start.
Old wells uncovered, not just random digging ...
And a donkey. Don’t forget the donkey.
Donkeys can kneel in the presence of an angel,
can carry the Master’s mother, or the Lord Himself.
Work to be done, you’ll always need a donkey,
to pull and carry, and, if truth be known, to stand and pray.
It’s step by step, and slow, and very steady.
The Lord has need of me. That’s what I say.*

“So when you come and talk to us about God using a donkey,” he said, “we have people queuing up to say, Can I be a donkey? You’re not talking to random people when you talk about the donkey. You’re talking our language.”

Anna added something that astonished us. Some fifteen years before, she and Andy had laid their hands on the rock on which Bamburgh Castle is built and prayed that there would be revival in the region, and that it would once again be known as the cradle of Christianity. Later, a company of Christians from Denmark had come and stood on the beach below the castle and asked forgiveness for what the Vikings had done to this land, and asked the Lord to remove the curse from it. “You two may be an answer to that prayer,” she said. “The Lord does not forget.”

Carol spoke from the depths of her heart. People in the land were tired, she said. There was great social and economic hardship, much sickness, and the healthy were carrying a heavy load. Wells had not been opened for a long time. “I hear what you’re carrying, and I want that for our land. I want that for our people, for my family, my village, the town, the coast, the Cheviots, the farms in the hills where families are struggling. So whatever it is you want to give us, give it to us. Release it today. We haven’t got a physical war like the Middle East, but we have the battle in our homes. It is damn hard.” She told us of her youngest son, the only one of her children she carried after she had come to believe, who had been filled with the Spirit from the womb, and who now said of the faith, “What a load of crap.” “That breaks my heart. All of the kids that I know are like that.”

Andrea said that she did not believe God was calling them out of what they were already in, but that His work would be done together, and that the fire in their hearts must be allowed to burn out of control. “We’re an unlikely bunch, perhaps. But so were those disciples in the beginning.”

One of the brethren then offered a caution, which we record as he gave it. Those who do not immediately resonate with what we say, he said, are not necessarily against us; and though the structures are not the way forward, there may be people within the structures who are carriers of what God is doing. “As soon as you start saying *church*, the word has lots and lots of baggage. Talk to most people in the street and say the word church, and they say, I don’t want to know. They’re not against God, but to them church is an irrelevance. As soon as you start saying, we need to set up a true church, people think, oh God, not another church. But when you say, we want to bring people to God, we want to teach people to worship, everybody’s with you. It’s just language.”

Chidera answered from Malachi: *To you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings, and Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before Him.* As Jesus is lifted up, he said, He will draw all men to Himself, and there will be healing for the children, for marriages, for souls. He believed that when God touches a place His Spirit remains attached to it, and it was evident that God’s feet had touched this land. Those who fear Him must gather and speak often to one another, in whatever form, week by week. And the fight must not only be defensive. “We are going to go outside. We are going to go to the young people and say, have you heard? Serving Jesus is cool. We don’t mind coming here twice a year to go out on the streets and speak to young people like us.”

Ekaba said that he heard in his spirit that the Lord was making *dynamic fire* available. “Do not say in your hearts, how shall these things be? Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord. The hands that laid the foundation of this house shall also finish it. The word of the Lord is: rake in the harvest.” And he read from Revelation 22 of the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and the tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. “Healing will be taking place here: of the nation, of hearts, of brokenness.”

Impartation and sending

Then one of the brethren asked for two things. “First, we need an impartation from you. Whether we understand it or you understand it, something needs to happen, that we receive from you what you have been sent to carry. Second, this island is a sending place. People come here at the beginning of a new work that God is calling them to, and we would be failing in our responsibility to you if we did not pray for you from this place, that God would send you on your way in the anointing of this place.” Whatever else happened that day, he said, those two things must happen. Ekaba answered that the pressure in his spirit was for all of us to meet daily while we remained in Northumberland, for the word and for prayer, and that as those meetings went on, men and women and families would begin to be added.

We rose to worship. We sang *You alone deserve all the glory*, and *Yeshua Messiah, we bow before Your throne*, and *The Lord is the light of the city*. Then we prayed over the company, with the laying on of hands.

Let this land be filled with the glory of the Lord. Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power. Let the authority of the Lord come upon this place. Every individual, receive holy fire, in the name of Jesus. Let everyone who has been in weakness arise in strength. Let all who have been under oppression and bondage be delivered. The day of salvation has come. We mark this day. We gather, and we agree, that this day is a turning point in this land. Every demon that has troubled this land, that has troubled its inhabitants, the young and the old alike, we cast out in the name of Jesus. Let sickness flee from this land. Let oppression flee. Let every

form of depression and addiction be broken. One shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight. This is the day that the Lord has made.

For a time we prayed together in the Spirit, and then we ministered to the brethren one by one. As we prayed over them, one of us said:

The Lord has directed your steps and brought you here. God will perfect all that concerns you. We say we are donkeys, and we have come: donkeys that fear Your name, given to the service of God. Here we are; send us; use us for Your purpose. Let Your healing streams fall upon us. In the name of Jesus we consecrate ourselves to the service of God, to be willing vessels, to take this land for the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone shall arise in strength. Everyone shall take their place in the body of Christ, and we march on.



Ministering to the brethren on Holy Island, 11.39 am.

Then, a little before noon, one of the sisters sang a song of the island:

SONG

*Here I stand, looking out to the sea,
where a thousand souls have prayed,
and a thousand lives were laid on the sand ...
Here I stand, looking out to sea,
and I say a prayer that the wild goose will come to me.*

The wild goose is the ancient Celtic sign of the Holy Spirit.



Holy Island. Left: the circle of the brethren, 10.51 am. Right: after the prayer of impartation, 11.48 am.

The hill

As we were preparing to leave, the word of the Lord came to Andy to take us all out into the cold and up the hill above the village. We went, not knowing why, and it was cold. On the hilltop, as we prayed together, the Holy Spirit came on one of the sisters, who began to prophesy, with words of wisdom; and among the words that came there was this, that the work would be “in the ones and the twos”: the one who is called apart to pray and hear God alone, and the two, one of whom chases a thousand and two ten thousand. The brethren spoke of it again the next day. As Chidera said to Andrea the following week, there was a stark difference between the office of the early morning and what happened after it, “when we began to sing, and everyone rose in worship, and Andy and Anna lifted up their hands. You saw how the Holy Spirit moved.”

The tower of refuge

We came back across the causeway ahead of the tide, and in the afternoon met at Andrea’s house with others she had invited: Ian and Deborah from Whittingham, south of Wooler, and a man named Matt, who, Andrea told us, had come to the county to plant a church. Andrea asked us again to tell how we had come to be there, and Ekaba told the story once more and read the word from the plane.

He spoke to them as to believers. There had been labour in the land already, he said, prayer and intercession and ministry, and we were only like those who come in at the eleventh hour. But the powers of darkness that had held the land in a stranglehold, masquerading as sophistry, scholastic philosophy and secularism, had driven the children of God into their bedrooms. “We have privatised the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. A privatised faith becomes a dead faith. And there is no vacuum in power: when the sons of God retreat, the devils flood in. But the church has never been a defensive church. The church of the living God has always been an offensive church, out there.”

Chidera spoke of Abraham, called out of his country to look for a city with foundations whose builder and maker is God, at a time when every man was building cities and naming them after himself. “These people will always be unusual people. They will always be a minority, and because of that there is a strong tendency for them to feel that what they are doing is not right.” Yet Abraham had no holier-than-thou attitude to those around him, and through him all the families of the earth were blessed. So Jesus, finding an established religious system that had put God to one side, went to ordinary men, fishermen, and through them the whole world was reached. “I cannot say that of every church; that would be an ignorant statement. But the majority of churches have taken Jesus Christ to the side, and it is all about man.” This did not mean disorder, he said, because the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of order: the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

One of them told us of two prophecies they had heard on the radio from people who had had near-death experiences, one of whom said she had seen all the people of the world, some wholly surrounded by grey shadows, some with a few, some with none and standing in light; the shadows were demons, and in 2026 something big would happen that would make everyone decide which side they were on. “The trouble is,” someone said, “people don’t know that they’re full of demons.” Ekaba answered from Revelation 17, of the harlot who sits on many waters, which are peoples, and spoke of Philip, who went down to Samaria without writing to Jerusalem for a licence or a budget, and the Spirit fell there. “There is no bench-warmer. There is no lay member of the church. There is nobody who has less of the Holy Spirit.” He laughed at the questions with which churches divide themselves: “I don’t suppose that a man will come before God and the angel will ask, are you a five-point or a four-point Calvinist? Do you believe in immersion or sprinkling?

Congregational polity or elder-led polity? What a joke the church has become. May the Lord rescue His body in Bamburgh.”

Andrea gave thanks for the gospel we had brought, “unadorned as it is, with the Lord Jesus right in the middle of it all”, and said that they were willing, “very willing to be those donkeys, set free and loose because the Master needs them”. She marvelled that only thirty-six hours had passed since Sunday evening. “Fruitful, turbulent, many, many words, a stirring-up time.” That morning, she said, she and Derek had offered their house to the company on the island as God’s house, for anyone to meet in; it was not a church building, it had no spire, and they had always believed the Lord gave it to them for His use.

Ian and Deborah told us that for some years they had gathered mature believers who had been Christians for thirty, forty, fifty years and had nowhere to go, fifteen or twenty of them, meeting from house to house and in village halls, because so many people would not go anywhere near a church, “with the clock tower and the pews and the cold”, because of bad memories. Ian said that in talking to people about Christ he often found a tiny spark from when they were fifteen, fifty years before, which could be fanned into a flame. “There’s a harvest there to be had. People are sick of false church, false politics, empty promises. They want what is true and authentic and real.”

Ian and Deborah live in a medieval tower, built in the late 1200s as a watchtower against the border raiders, four storeys high with walls eight feet thick, to which the villagers would run when the horn sounded, pulling the ladders up after them. It was once called the Lord’s Tower, and Ian had put a small blue sign on the street outside describing it as a tower of refuge, with a verse at the bottom. A few days before, a neighbour walking his dog had stopped him. He had looked up the verse, Proverbs 18:10, and read it: *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.* “And he said, I’m not righteous, so I can’t run into your tower.” We prayed that righteousness would overtake the land, and that every man would say to his neighbour, “Come, let us go up to the house of God,” to the tower of refuge, to Christ; and we sang together, *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it, and they are saved*, while Robert played his electric piano.

By the end of the afternoon we were both tired and had caught colds in the unfamiliar climate. Andrea drove us back to Budle Hall, and arranged with Andy and Anna, who were bound by the tides, to come to her house the next morning, so that we might pray together again.

WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2026

The Church at Bamburgh Is Planted

The home of Andrea and Derek, Bamburgh · from 10.45 in the morning

ON Wednesday morning the first gathering of the church at Bamburgh met in the sitting room of Andrea and Derek's house. Andy and Anna came over from Holy Island, watching the tide, which would close the causeway at ten past one. Carol came from her farm inland. With Andrea and Derek and their household, and the two of us, we were a small company. It was, as we understood it then and understand it now, the birth of the church in that place.

The swimmer

Before anything else, Andrea told us what had happened to her that morning. Three times a week she and Chrissy go swimming, and the length of their swim is set by the time it takes Chrissy to do forty lengths. That morning, swimming hard as she always does, Andrea had felt it was easy, as though she were being carried. She had a strong sense that the Lord was saying that we were in the flow of the Spirit, and that if we moved with the current, though it would not be easy, we would make progress. She was not only hearing the words, she said; she was experiencing them in her body. In the same time as always she swam four more lengths than she had ever swum before. "As I say, I do that three times a week, and that experience has never happened before. So that was clearly for us today."

In the day of His power

We began with worship. We sang *The cloud of glory is moving, let us move with the cloud*, and Andrea prayed that we would follow where the Lord led, and would not try to break ground on our own. Then Ekaba asked leave to sing a song that had come to him as Andrea spoke: *Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power. They shall not be afraid, for the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea*. We sang it over and over.

Chidera then opened the word. This is the day of His power, he said, the day of the Holy Spirit, when God walks on the earth by His Spirit. The disciples were hiding from the authorities until the Spirit fell on them at Pentecost; then Peter stood up with the eleven and three thousand were added to the church in a day. He read Psalm 110: *The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand ... Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness*. Your people shall be willing: that means there will be no struggle, no burden, but people will freely give themselves to the service of God, with an uncommon grace and ease to do what by nature they could not do.

He called what had happened to Andrea in the pool *symbolic prophecy*, the Lord speaking through a physical occurrence, as when Saul tore Samuel's robe and Samuel said, "The Lord has torn the kingdom

of Israel from you today,” or when Agabus bound his own hands and feet with Paul’s belt. The Lord had spoken through water. “Water is fluid. The Lord is not looking for people who are rigid. He called Israel a stiff-necked people. He is looking for people who can bend, who are like water, who can flow according to the will of the Holy Spirit.” As Jesus said, the wind blows where it wishes, and so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. And wherever the river of Ezekiel’s vision flows, there is life: “As we conduct ourselves in this manner, wherever we go, there will be streams of healing to this land.”

Living stones

The strength of such a church, he said, is drawn from our private places. When Solomon’s temple was built, every stone was cut and dressed in the quarry, so that no hammer, chisel or iron tool was heard at the building site; the stones were brought and laid one on another. Peter says that we are living stones, being built up a spiritual house. “That means there is going to be an uncommon grace in the place of our personal devotion to God. In our own houses we will be people given to the word of God and to prayer, so that when we come together like this in fellowship it will be powerful.” He guessed that Andrea must have woken that morning praying. “Imagine Andrea starts the day like that, praying, and Sister Carol starts her day praying, and Andy praying, and then you come together like this. The power of God will flow, in worship, in the word, in prophecy. God will begin to give words that will determine the destiny and the order of things in this land. This is the engine room.”

War for Bamburgh

“I would say,” Chidera went on, “we have to declare an official war against Bamburgh, war against Northumberland.” Someone in the room asked gently whether he meant war *for* Bamburgh. He accepted the correction gladly, and explained what he had meant. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age. “Those are not abstract terms. Those are beings. Every region on the earth has a prince, a principality, that is trying to claim authority. They are inspiring young people to be anti-God, to say, forget about Jesus Christ.” We would wage that war, he said, by our worship and devotion, as we keep this altar regularly and open ourselves to flow as the Holy Spirit leads.

God’s order, not man’s

He was careful to balance this. Flowing with the Spirit does not mean disorder. He read from Proverbs 6: *Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.* The ant has no overseer, and yet there is no disorder. “We are not saying no structure. We are saying no man’s structure, because we are looking for God’s structure.” It is good to come with a plan. Andy might come prepared to bring the word; Anna might come to sing. (“Anna,” he broke off, “when you were singing I was distracted. It is like the voice of an angel. I need to abduct you to Canada.”) But if, in the flow of worship, the Lord drops something else, the one who has prepared must be agile enough to follow. He showed Carol the notes he had prepared for that morning: he had used not one of the scriptures written on them, because the word had gone another way out of the worship. Too many churches, he said, if Jesus Himself appeared in the middle of the service, would thank Him, ask Him to take a seat, and go back to the programme.

The song *The cloud of glory is moving* is taken from the wilderness, he reminded us. Israel followed the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Wherever the cloud rested they set up the tabernacle, with every tribe in its place around it, and that was a great labour. Sometimes the cloud stayed for months; sometimes it lifted after a single day, just as everything had been set up. But when the cloud moved, they packed up and followed, and Moses said, “Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered.” One of the brethren added a word here: the order is already within us, he said, and because we are connected to the Spirit we do not need kings and queens; the order simply needs to be released by the flow of the Spirit.

Chidera spoke next of prayer, taking the Lord’s Prayer as the template: *Hallowed be Your name*, first worship; *Your kingdom come*, first the kingdom, before any request for daily bread. He spoke of Isaiah’s “Here am I, send me”, and of the word *apostle*, a Gentile word, used of the envoys of Rome sent out to establish the rule of an empire. So Christ sends His people as sent ones to establish His kingdom. And he reminded us of what had happened the day before on Holy Island, when as we prayed the word of the Lord had come to Andy to take all of us out into the cold and up the hill, and as we prayed on the hilltop the Holy Spirit had moved on one of the company, who began to prophesy.

He ended with the hope of the believer. Being born again is the beginning of a journey, not its end. As a newborn baby desires milk, so we grow toward the full stature of Christ, and the fullness of that stature is marked by immortality and life, the divine life which the Father has in Himself and has given to the Son. “These are not words I have made up. Every single thing I have said is found in the Bible.” Therefore, as it is written in Hebrews 10, let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some.

What the Spirit said to the others

Then the floor was opened, and the others spoke.

One of the brethren said that the heritage of Northumberland is not the heritage of large structures and great numbers but the solitary way of the hermit and the desert. He recalled a word that had come on the hilltop the day before, that the work “can be in the ones and in the twos”: the one, called apart to pray and to hear God alone; the two, of whom it is written that one shall chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight. Effectiveness does not come from being big, he said, but from each being fluid enough to be where God is directing. And he said, with some surprise, that it had been easy to understand everything we had said. “I was expecting to come here today and really struggle to understand what you guys were saying. It makes me wonder why it has taken me so long. I thought I was a smart guy. It’s so clear.” Perhaps, he suggested, the people of Northumberland had been given a head start, because they already knew in their bones that the dusty structures were not serving them.

Another told of a day, years before, when a small team had been sent to join a twenty-four-hour vigil of praise in South Wales, with a dance that the Lord had laid on their heart to teach. When they arrived the room was full of fixed pews, and there seemed to be no room to move. They were told, “Just pretend they’re not there.” When they taught the dance, every place anyone needed to step turned out to be clear. “I think we look at structures like that. We see the shape of the structure and it gets in the way, so that we can’t see what God is doing. If God is doing it, He steps over structures. He doesn’t even bother knocking them down. He just ignores them and does what He’s going to do.” If we set out to demolish them, that too distracts us from what God is doing. The same speaker described a picture on the cover of a book of dances: Jesus appears over the coffee table in a room where a group is holding hands and singing, is content for a while, then grows restless, looking out at the people passing in the street, and at last wanders out to them while the group sings on. “If God begins to move and go and do something else, it’s more important that we go with Him, because if we don’t, He’ll go anyway.”

The talk turned to Bamburgh Castle, which can be seen from the windows. “That castle is a sign of man’s power,” one said. “If you live in this area you cannot not know that power. They own the castle and most of the land for a long way round, and their influence is huge.” Yet the same place had once been a place of righteousness, when Oswald gave his feast and his silver dish to the poor at the gate; and centuries later a churchman named John Sharp had turned the castle into a place of charity for the poor. “The same anointing flows, and he just steps into it. It’s completely different from having to swim upstream. I look at that and I say, what is holding it back at the moment? What is trying to stop it being everything it was called to be?”

Carol then shared what she was passing through. She lives alone on a farm. Her foster daughter was preparing to leave, and so was her one neighbour, and her son had just moved his business away, so that by the end of the month she would be alone there. She had been asking God what she was supposed to do, whether to stay or to move, and had no answer. That morning, walking the dog in the field, she had looked back at the house and felt she could not leave the land abandoned, because God had not told her to go. She had come to believe that God was clearing things out, the people and with them their characters and beliefs and behaviours, and that she must wait until the clearing was finished before the new thing could come. “I wonder if that’s where we are.” She told us that she kept thinking of Aidan dying against the beam of the church at Bamburgh. As she understood it, King Oswy had treacherously killed his kinsman Oswine, and Aidan had died soon after, fasting in sorrow within sight of the royal city; Oswy had never shown godly sorrow for the blood that was shed. “Something needs to be cleared out before whatever the new thing is. But this is an extraordinary place. It has been a battlefield for amazing things, and it’s a powerhouse. There is contesting, but I feel the contesting is coming from outside, because the fear of the enemy is that this place will be everything it has been in the past.” We do not say the enemy has control, she said; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him.

Andrea’s confirmation

Andrea said her heart cried out in agreement. The things that had happened over three days, she said, do not happen in the flesh; God was moving it, and she sensed a call to be bold, reverently fearing the Lord but unafraid of what man might think or do. She described a bubbling in her spirit, a hunger to be filled more and led more, and a desire to be emptied of agendas “which maybe we don’t even know we’ve got”.

Then she told us, with great honesty, something she had not told us before. She was used to being rational, she said. The night before, she and Derek had sat on the very sofa on which we were sitting, and had brought everything they had seen and heard to God. “Okay Lord, is this for real? Is this You? Is there anything that is not sitting right?” She had asked for the gift of discerning of spirits. At the end of that time she had the most profound sense of peace, and a confirmation that she could be confident, not in herself, but in what the Lord was doing, and could stand firm and tall and bold for Him. When Ralph had asked her earlier in the week whether she thought everything was all right, she had used the word *sound*. “I said, they’re sound.” She pointed also to the Lord’s word about the man of peace: when you go into a town, find the son of peace, and if he receives you, stay there. That, she said, was Ralph. The invitation had not come through any official channel, but through a man wide open to whatever might happen, and that reassured her that it was of God.

Finally she told us about donkeys, which, she said, we could have had no way of knowing had been part of her life since childhood. As a girl on the beach at Blackpool she had loved to ride the donkeys, which walked in a long line along the sand. One day her donkey turned out of the line and walked straight into the sea with her on its back, and her father came charging down the beach to rescue her. The night before this

meeting she had dreamed of donkeys, lined up on Bamburgh beach, “ready and willing, waiting for work”. That morning Derek had told her he felt he should paint something, and she had said at once that he should paint the donkeys on Bamburgh beach. “I might give them human faces,” said Derek.

Persevering

Chidera then brought the practical question before them. We were in Northumberland only until the following week. How should we meet in the days that remained, and how would the fire be kept burning after we had gone? He read Acts 2:42: *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.* “They persevered, because there will be many things. We have lives, we have commitments. But we have to persevere, because consistency is everything.” He proposed that they meet at least once a week.

Ekaba gave an encouragement from our own history. When he and his wife set out to plant a church in Calgary, he said, they rented a theatre downtown that seated two hundred, for eighteen hundred and fifty dollars a month, and met there every week, the two of them alone. He would put on a tie and preach his heart out, and his wife would operate the camera and take notes; anyone watching the recordings would have thought there were five thousand people there. Then they would go for lunch and go home. They put a small sign outside the theatre. After some weeks a couple called and joined them, and as he preached, tears ran down their faces: this is where God wants us to be. Then another came, and another. When the landlady grew upset at their presence and put them out, he opened his basement to them, and God increased them there. Later, a man who had been a pastor in Brazil joined them and pressed Ekaba for an hour to be ordained as pastor; he refused. “A pastor is an office of the Spirit. I take that seriously. But it is not something to make you more important than a brother. If I want a title, I will go and get a degree.” That man left. But others in the church, when they heard of it, said to him, laughing, “Even if you want to be the pastor, we will throw you out.” “That,” Ekaba said, “is the spirit of the church.” Now, he told them, he was in Bamburgh and not in Calgary, and the church in Calgary was moving on without him; a message had just come saying that three new people would be in church on Sunday. “Paul plants, Apollos waters, God gives the increase. All we need is to be consistent with the Lord. Even if it is just you and your wife. It only takes two, and that is the church of the living God.”

Andrea said that the Lord was making a people of praise, and that the word was *people*. Many of them, she said, had a streak of individualism, because following the Lord sets you apart, but they needed one another, and others would be added to the nucleus that had responded without knowing exactly what they were responding to. She and Derek would go on worshipping at the Baptist church at Alnwick; what God was doing here did not threaten or demolish the places where they worshipped, but it was powerful. She suggested that one of the first things they do together was go and pray with Carol on her farm.

One of the brethren counselled caution. They were committed to one another already, he said, and Andrea’s call had been like a starting pistol; but they must not assume they knew what the race was, nor create “a thing we have to do” that would become just another thing. “It is a clearing and a waiting.” Chidera agreed, and added that God loves appointed times: “Consecrate yourselves, and be ready for the third day.” The simplest step was to set an appointed time. The brethren raised the practical difficulty: those living on Holy Island are governed by the tides, which close the causeway at a different hour each day. It was agreed that for the days we remained they would arrange each meeting as they went, and that by the end of our stay the longer pattern would be clearer. And a first appointment was proposed: that we should all go together to St Cuthbert’s Cave, which lies on Carol’s patch of the county, on a day when Carol was free.

We left Andrea's house full of joy. One of the company, going out of the door, said, "God's donkey has delivered the payload."

THURSDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2026

Love for the Land, and the Aristocrats of Bamburgh

The home of Andrea and Derek, Bamburgh, from 10.53 in the morning · an evening among the aristocrats of Bamburgh

ON Thursday morning we gathered again at Andrea and Derek's house, with Andy and Anna, who had crossed from the island ahead of the tide, and others of the household. Carol was not able to come, but she had spoken with Andy and Anna at length the evening before, and sent a message. Andrea had hung a new painting, of living water, because we had spoken so much of living water the day before. Robert had asked what our names meant. *Chidera*, Chidera told him, means "what God has written cannot be changed". They were in the middle of preparing a local arts festival on the theme of harvest, Andrea said, and all their songs were harvest songs; it was funny that we had come with a word about the harvest.

Andrea prayed that the Lord would "be in the chair", and give them ears to hear, and make them willing to be His slaves, His donkeys. We sang *We come into Your temple, we enter Your tabernacle, we just want to be with You, God*, and *Let this temple be filled with Your glory*. Andy prayed that the Lord would close their ears to their own counsel, and added, "We often give the enemy credit for lots of things he doesn't have. He's not all-knowing. When we're hearing from God about strategy, the last thing we want to do is give the enemy all our plans." We sang *I've got a river of life flowing out of me* and *Spring up, O well, within my soul*, and prayed together in the Spirit, and one of us prayed from Psalm 20, *May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble; may the name of the God of Jacob defend you; may He send you help from the sanctuary*, and from Psalm 84, *How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts*.

What the island brought back

Andrea invited Anna to bring what she had not had time to bring the day before. Anna told us, with great honesty, how the Wednesday had been for her.

When we left yesterday it felt abrupt, but it was time to go because of the tide. We got home and phoned Carol, and she needed to unpack where she was at, and we unpacked where we were at. And I felt, in terms of me, I'm sitting here going, I know I'm open. But then occasionally I'm going, hmm, and then I'm going, whip yourself for being resistant. What we're trying to do is just hear from God and discern what is happening. I was watching, and thinking, oh no, we're going to follow the same pattern here, an expectation that it will be what has happened in other places. And then you guys started talking about not following the pattern of what God has done in other places. We come with something prepared, and as soon as God moves we put down what we prepared, and the danger is that as soon as He has finished we go back to what we prepared. Every time I had a question, I noticed that you were changing as you went. You were being what Andrea talked

about: flexible, fluid, able to go with what God was saying. Every time I thought, there's a red flag, the red flag changed, and it was fine. And who am I to be critical? I'm not being critical; I was just watching. But every time, I was reassured.

Carol, she said, had kept saying on the telephone, "We've had power, we've had glory. We need love. This land needs an anointing of love." Carol felt that in her own circumstances she was embodying what the land itself was feeling. For fifteen or sixteen years she had fostered troubled teenagers, giving and giving and giving, to young people who had no capacity to give anything back; she was divorced and alone, and her last foster child was about to leave. "And she says it feels like, from where we are in Northumberland, we've been a place that gives out and gives out, and there's not much coming back." People come on pilgrimage from all over the world to draw from the springs of this land, Anna said, and yet the life of many who live here, even those God has planted here, is dry and hard. "Not that God isn't present. God is present. But it's hard. And what we need is just to be loved, and what the land needs is just to be loved."

She had been reading a book, *Angels on Assignment*, and a word from it had struck them about their own families: give them to God, and then leave them with God. "Don't you go talking at them, doing God at them and preaching at them, because they've heard all of that. What they need is for you to be consistent and to love, and leave it to God. You can serve them, love them, welcome them, do hospitality." Torrential rain on hard ground, she said, simply runs off; acts of love and service soften the ground. "What did Aidan do? He walked the streets. He met the people. He wasn't on a high horse. Whoever he met, he listened to them. He heard their story. And because he really listened, they asked him questions, and he answered them. Like you guys. The same thing." She told us that when their own team had once been sent to Gibraltar, eager to share the Celtic ways that everyone else always asked them about, they found that much of what they usually brought was not what was needed there; God did something else, and five initiatives of intercession were set up that continue to this day.

So what we began to feel coming from Carol was this: we need you here. If God has brought you here, and all the signs are that He has, we must not waste this opportunity. But what we need is your power and your authority to detonate in us how to love this land: how to love the young people and the isolated people and folk all over Northumberland who are sick of hearing the things they think they've already heard and rejected.

Two scriptures had come strongly to them, she said: Isaiah 58, *Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness ... to share your bread with the hungry*, and Proverbs 31, *Open your mouth for the speechless ... plead the cause of the poor and needy*. And their sister Rachel, who could not be with them, had sent her love and a word: that our being there was from God and so timely, and that it needed to be stewarded.

Then Anna played us a voice message Carol had sent that morning from her chair, where she had been praying for Bamburgh:

I just kept thinking, clear the way. Clear the way. Make the mountains level and the crooked ways straight. It's generally my scripture, the John the Baptist thing, but when I went to Isaiah 40 there's so much in it: the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord. And right at the beginning: Comfort, comfort My people; speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her that her warfare is ended. And I just thought, can you imagine, no more fighting, no more warring? It feels like confirmation that it's not what God's asking of us, to get out there and fight. It's about clearing the way, making the way. And later on, God is going to come to Zion, and we've got to say to the cities, Behold your God. Here comes the Lord with a strong hand ... He will feed His flock like a shepherd. I love Isaiah 40. There you go, that's my contribution.

Carol also wished, Anna said, that we would have time simply to be together: "Tell me about your wife, tell me about your kids, what do you do when you're at home?" So they proposed that on Saturday, when

the tide would shut them off the island for five hours, we should all go to Carol's house with food, and that any who wished could go up to St Cuthbert's Cave. Ekaba told them that he was fasting, but would gladly take coffee. Anna told him that the Celtic monks of the desert would break their fast to share food with a guest, and take it up again when the guest had gone. "The gathering is more important," said Ekaba.

Andrea's testimony

Andrea then told us that God was directing her to give the next part, and she told us, more fully than before, the story of how she came to God.

When her father died with the words "God is love", she could not ask him what he meant, as she had asked him about everything all her life, because he never spoke again. So she set out to find this God who is love, knowing that the best of herself had always been when she thought and spoke and acted out of love. She went, as one would, to the churches. She searched in West Yorkshire, and when they moved to Northumberland she searched in the churches around Bamburgh and Seahouses. "And I didn't find it. I didn't find this God for whom I was seeking. Somehow I knew that love and joy were not divisible: not the joy of jumping around and partying, but the joy that comes from within. And I didn't find it. Neither did I find warmth, or any curiosity about why I, the stranger, was in their midst."

Then a couple in Seahouses said to her, "There's a welcome on the mat. Come and see us." She went at once, because her search was urgent. There, not in a church but in their home, the man, Bill, opened the Bible to her. All she knew of it was David and Goliath. He told her to read the Bible through as a story, over and over, until it became familiar, and only then to dig in, and that advice had served her so well that she had passed it on to Ralph that week. Later Bill sent her to the Baptist church at Alnwick, saying, "This pastor is sound," and she and Derek had been there ever since, through difficulties and splits and hard times, "because underlying it all has been this love".

She told us how, when God called them to adopt Chrissy and Robert, and then David, "everybody and his dog told us not to do it. You're mad. You're crackers." David came with terrible baggage and had great struggles, and when she cried to the Lord, He said to her, "Love him, and love him some more." She used to go out onto the dunes and shout at the Lord, "Where's my equipping?" She and Derek had prayed separately about what to call him, and God said to each of them, "Call him David. He will be a man after My own heart. He has giants to kill."

And then she told us something she had not told anyone at the gatherings before.

The day Derek and I went to that church, you have to know that we were not married. We were living together. I see that differently now. But that's how it was, and the people in that church knew it, and they never, ever preached at us or judged us or made us feel we shouldn't be there in that state of sinfulness. Had they done it, we would have gone out of that church so fast that they would have lost any opportunity. Instead they loved us, and they gentled us, and they preached to us because we were there and we could hear, and we understood that we had to address it. Not because somebody told us, not even because we read it in the word, but because God showed us, in such love. We were married yesterday, thirty-one years ago, and we were baptised today, on the same weekend, the eighteenth and nineteenth of February. And to celebrate our wedding we walked with our friends along the beach from Seahouses to Bamburgh. Gordon, our pastor, that beautiful, gentle, humble man of God, never said to us beforehand that we should. But afterwards he joked, I'm really glad, Andrea and Derek, that you did it that way round: married on the Saturday, and then baptised.

"I could never bombard somebody with the gospel," she said, "without it being underpinned always by love, because that's the way into men's and women's hearts. You can batter it if you want, but they won't listen." She had been leaning forward all week, she said, drinking in the word as it was broken open, and she

saw no conflict between the explosive power of God and His love. Chrissy said simply that every morning that week she had felt God enrich them, day after day, through His Spirit, through the worship, and through what was said.

A fusion

Anna then spoke of strategy. God had brought us strategically to Bamburgh, a place we had never heard of, at the very time He was speaking to them about the land and its people needing to be loved. They had been reading of St Baldred, the hermit of the Bass Rock, and two things in his story had struck them. When God sends the stranger to you, you open your door and do acts of welcome and service. And Baldred would look at a person, even a difficult person, with an unflinching, unconditional gaze, so that without a word they knew they were seen and not judged. “I took one look at you and I thought, I love this man,” she said to one of us. “We made an eye-to-eye connection straight away.” Yet she told us, too, that at night she had lain awake hearing voices of accusation: “Who are you to talk about love?”

So my strategy is, God is saying we need to love like we have never loved before. We need to love this land. Rachel’s word was steward: the steward of the castle, the stewarding of what God has done in this place, which has never gone. All we are doing is unblocking the well, taking the brambles out of the way. Bamburgh is still a key place, from which there was endless innovation in looking after people who were shipwrecked, people who were poor, people in slavery, generation after generation. We need you to come to us, and there to be a fusion between the love and the power and the availability that you have, and our vulnerability and our need to love this land more. You are one thing and we are one thing, and God will bless each of us. But when the two come together, something is going to happen: a nuclear fusion. One can chase a thousand, but two can put ten thousand to flight. We want to get the most out of you; we want to suck dry whatever God has put in you. But we need it to be focused on what we are already called to do. Am I saying that right?

“A thousand per cent,” came the answer.

He giveth more grace

After we had sung *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us*, Ekaba responded to all that had been said. The great word, he said, was love: *He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love*. He recited Annie Johnson Flint’s hymn:

ANNIE JOHNSON FLINT

*He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater;
He sendeth more strength when the labours increase.
To added affliction He addeth His mercy;
to multiplied trials, His multiplied peace ...
When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
when our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
when we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
our Father’s full giving is only begun.*

“The challenge in the spirit has been exhaustion: they take, and take, and take again. But the response of the Spirit is, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.” The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies are new every morning. “But can we receive?” The word of the Lord he was receiving, he said, was from the house, for the house: *clear out*.

Clear out the house. That is the hindrance to receiving. If we have become one with our struggle, one with the old ways, one with the dryness, so that it has become an identity: I know I'm dry, I want something new, but this is who I am. There is a oneness with the brokenness and the insufficiency and the hardship. But the Lord has come to pour living water on the parched ground. There must be a clearing out. That is the message that comes before the message of the kingdom: make way, prepare the way of the Lord. That was the ministry of John the Baptist, to take away the debris and the stumbling blocks.

He read from Malachi 4: *But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.* "So the excitement of your spirit is in order," he told Andrea. "As a matter of fact, the challenge you have is that you are not excited enough. You shall go out and leap like calves from the stall. This is the prophetic word for Bamburgh." And he read on: *Remember the Law of Moses, My servant.* The word of the Lord, he said, is not harsh; *the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul*, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. "When the word of the Lord goes out of a land, dryness sets in, and many things flood in, because there is no vacuum, and they bring drought and contention and arguments: what is the place of women in ministry, should women cover their heads? If we want to know which side is right, can we all stay on our knees for thirty days, five hours a day, and say, Lord Jesus, have mercy, purify my heart, let Your kingdom come?"

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. "Perhaps," Ekaba said, "and I say this out on a limb, in need of God's mercy, the burst tyre on the way to see your castle, on the way to Edinburgh on another mission, was the Lord bringing us here for the ministry of Elijah, the ministry of clearing out." He pointed out that when Elijah called for fire from heaven, the first thing he did was soak the altar with water, again and again. "There is a wetness on the altar that brings holy fire from heaven: tears, a brokenness before God. That is when the love for the land begins to find expression." One of the brethren answered that brokenness is where people are, and that God is bringing many to vulnerability and exhaustion and the end of their own resources, so that they break open and He can come in; and that the tears are the watering of the altar.

Cannera and Senan

When Ekaba spoke of a lampstand burning in Bamburgh, Anna broke in with a story from their own tradition. Cannera, a hermit woman of Bantry Bay in Ireland, saw in a vision the map of Ireland with fires burning on it like candles, and one burning like a pillar of fire. She set out toward it, and it led her to the monastery of Senan on Scatterry Island. Senan told her that women were not allowed there and she should go elsewhere; she answered him from the Scriptures that Christ had died for women as much as for men, and that God had called her there. She asked only for a place to lie down and communion from his hand, and he gave it to her, and she died there on the shore. Senan, Anna said, was famous for two things: for fighting a monster, and for being told off by a woman because his vision was too small. And she told us that when Aidan came to this land, the first thing he did with any money he was given was to buy slaves their freedom; then he set up a school, and raised up women in the work of God. The song they sing for Oswald each year is from Micah: *He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?* "And God brings you singing us the song of Oswald," she said. "It's all resonating." Ekaba said he had known none of this, and received it as a confirmation.

He drew it together. *He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers:* that, he said, was the love the land needs. The banner of love is over the banqueting house of the Lord, not the house of religion or of custom, but the house of the Lord where the weary find rest. "Joy

to the world, joy to Bamburgh, the Lord is come. Let Bamburgh receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room. Clear out the debris, so that this place can become Bethel, with a ladder between heaven and Bamburgh, and angels ascending and descending. He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found. Aidan need not lie on the beam any more. He can rest in peace. The blessing is here, because Jesus hung on the cross.”

Anna answered him directly. “Jesus had already hung on the cross, and Aidan knew that. He knew that. But he needed to speak out against an injustice that was being done by the one who ruled from the castle at that moment.” Ekaba accepted this, and said that one of the burdens lifted at Calvary is the cry for justice, for God is a God of faithfulness and without injustice. He said that he perceived certain ancestral holdouts in Bamburgh, things that must be let go as part of the clearing out. “We’re getting there now,” said Anna. “We’re getting to strategy now.”

Before we parted they fixed the arrangements for Saturday at Carol’s, around the tide, which would close at about half past two.

The evening: among the aristocrats of Bamburgh

That evening Ekaba went to dine at the home of Ralph’s brother John, among a company of the aristocracy and gentry of the district: John and his guests, among them Dominic, a landowner and farmer who, with John and their friend Walter, a baronet, sits on the board of the College Valley estate in the Cheviots; Katie, who teaches religious education to children of seven and eight; and Sophie. Chidera was delayed by work and came later in the evening with Ralph and his son Keith. Ekaba was unwell that night, with a sore throat and fever, and he was fasting; he took nothing but coffee and, at his hosts’ insistence, honey and lemon. “Man shall not live by bread alone,” he told them, “so I am quite happy to be in your presence and just enjoy the evening together.” We record this evening at length, because it was a true ministry to people of rank, and because they spoke to us with a candour we shall not forget.

THE LEAST RECEPTIVE COUNTRY

The conversation began with artificial intelligence, on which Ekaba was asked his view as one who works in the field. He said that he was pessimistic, not because of the technology, which is amoral, but because of the human heart: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? So long as man makes himself the measure, misery is his natural outcome.” Nothing would stop that train, he said, except men repenting and turning to God. “Like Abraham, I am looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. So: worship God, take care of your family, and be committed to loving people. And that heart of love is shown in its full scope in sharing the love of Jesus with people.”

They asked what had brought us to Bamburgh, and Ekaba told them, and told them of the streets of Amsterdam and Kraków and the other cities where we had preached. Which country had been the least receptive? “The UK.” They were not surprised. “You see, in the UK we don’t like evangelism,” one said. “It’s frightening. We like to go to church, sit quietly, and be told how to think.” The warmest, Ekaba said, had been Poland.

Dominic told Ekaba that he loved Christ, but could never stand up and speak of Him in public. “I could do it in front of eighty thousand, but not in front of people I don’t know who don’t want to listen.” He was going to be a farmer, he said, and let his light shine: “If they see my truck outside church, they might think, he’s not so bad. That’s my little bit of evangelism. Lazy, but that’s my little bit.” He said he had worried before meeting us that there would be condemnation. Ekaba answered gently that Christ asks us not to be ashamed of Him, as He told Moses He would give him the words; and that the goal is the day when, as

Isaiah says, all nations will flow to the mountain of the house of the Lord, and no one will need to say to his neighbour, “Know the Lord,” for all shall know Him.

“I AM A SINNER”

Dominic was the most candid man we met in Northumberland. “I am tempted,” he said. “I’m covetous and I’m lustful. I am a Christian, but I’m naughty as well, and I can’t square that circle.” He read the *Our Daily Bread* notes every day, he said, and was reading J. C. Ryle on Luke. For many years he had ignored Jesus and spoken only to God, thinking Jesus was not God, “and that was naughty, and I’ve stopped doing that now”. His wife, he said, was a Christian he hoped, but they had never got it together about it; yet she had seen a change in him, and told him he was calmer. Ekaba told him, “I love Dominic, because his candour brings him closer to the gates of heaven,” and answered his fears with the promise: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” “I do believe that,” said Dominic. “Then I will see you at the table,” said Ekaba. “I hope so,” Dominic answered. “I’ll be the one at the very back.” “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,” Ekaba told him. “If any man calls on God, God will answer him.”

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

They asked Ekaba what he thought of the Church of England. “It’s a nest of vipers, isn’t it?” Dominic offered. “And so is the Catholic Church.” Ekaba declined to be drawn into denominations. “When the curtain of this life is drawn, none of us will be asked, were you Roman Catholic, or Church of England? Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.” Christ is not only Saviour but Lord, he said, and His lordship must mean something; that was why he had introduced himself to Bamburgh as a slave of Jesus Christ. “God is not a Christian. God is God.”

Dominic said that he still went to the Church of England, though he was very disillusioned with it; that he had been brought up with cathedral worship and found the standing up and shouting of the evangelicals difficult; that he was tired of women priests; and that it had been evangelical friends in the south who, after thirty years of going to church, had led him to read the Bible, which he had now read through twice. Ekaba told them that control thrives on ignorance, which was why in the Middle Ages the Bible was kept from the people, and that there is a great deal of gold and glory to be had in the merchandise of religion. Asked whether that was the root of the Church of England’s trouble today, he said, “It’s worse.” But he would not dwell on it: “My job is for all men to see the beauty and the fragrance that is in Jesus Christ. Christ is most lovely, but people don’t see it, because of the misrepresentation.” He said he did not know whether he was evangelical or anything else: “I am just a slave of Christ.” There was nothing wrong with a cathedral, he added; if one were opened for the true worship of God, we would gladly take it, and see the fire of God burning in it.

One of the company remarked that the parish church in Bamburgh had a congregation of about twelve people, all over eighty.

THE GOOD BUDDHIST

The hardest questions came from Katie and Sophie. What if someone lived a genuinely good life without believing in Jesus? What of a good Buddhist? Would they be shut out of heaven?

On what basis does a man decide what the good life is? If I make myself the measure, then by definition it becomes subjective, because another man may have a different measure. For there to be a moral law that is absolute, there must be a moral lawgiver higher than I. But here are some objective pillars concerning the

nature of God. God is just: He will never do anything that is unjust. God is all-knowing: He needs no lawyers to bring Him exculpatory evidence or explain the context. And God is good. There is general revelation: God speaks through nature and through the conscience, so that no one is without excuse, even one born in a cave. And there is special revelation, the privilege of hearing and reading His word, which you have received tonight. So I say two things. For those who have never heard, leave them in the hands of the One who is big enough to handle the hypotheticals: we are not good, but He is; we are not just, but He is; we do not have all the facts, but He does. But you who have heard, do not harden your hearts. You will be judged by the grace you have received. Knowing Jesus is like holding a cheat card. So don't envy the Buddhist; send the evangelists you find quirky to those places.

Katie asked whether, if that were so, we were serving our children rightly by teaching all religions as equal. "The short answer is no," said Ekaba. The rejection of Christ, he said, was not an intellectual problem but a moral one: men loved darkness rather than light. When Christ was pushed out of the schools, secularism took His place, "a shape-shifter, a mask for atheism and agnosticism", with its notion that all opinions are equally valid, which every logician and scientist knows to be absurd. "Christ says, I am the truth. Put Me through the objective inquisition of truth, and I will pass." There is no other worldview, he said, in which God comes for you; that is Francis Thompson's Hound of Heaven. Theology was once the queen of the sciences; without the law of God at its centre, a person may be learned but not educated. When Sophie said that there were Buddhists more tolerant than many Christians, Ekaba agreed that there are Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists far kinder than many Christians, who would stop for him dying in the street when Christians walked by. "But that is not the point. The question is not about people. It is, what is the truth? If there is a God in heaven, and life after death, then there is such a thing as truth, and it behoves every man to find it. Pilate asked, What is truth? and did not wait for the answer." Truth claims must stand in the dock and face scrutiny, he said; nobody shouts "respect" to protect Christ from examination. "Hammer away, ye hostile hands; your hammers break, God's anvil stands."

The company debated among themselves whether modern Britain owes its freedoms to Christianity or to the Enlightenment and a temperate climate. One of them said that Northumberland had once been a land of "big blokes with clubs hitting little blokes and nicking their cattle", until Aidan and the others persuaded thugs like Oswald that there was a better way, and that the campaign against slavery had come in part from the Reverend Sharp of Bamburgh, who stood behind Wilberforce. Views on Islam were expressed at the table in very strong terms, one guest calling Muslims "fundamentally evil". Ekaba answered from the sociological side, as he had done at Budle Hall: that the moral fabric by which the West judges the oppression of women is itself a Christian fabric, which those who have moved away from Christ still stand on without knowing it.

"QUITE COMMON"

When Ekaba invited them to come and join the company gathering at Andrea and Derek's house, to pray and open the word, Dominic stopped him. "Hang fire. Just hang fire. Because in this country we have a very, very rigid, nice class system, and at our peril we stray in and out. And Derek and Andrea sound to me like they're quite common." One of the others said that she had served with Andrea on a school board twenty years before, and had found her "really annoying", though she added that they were very good and kind people.

We record this plainly, because it is the truth of the land, and because it is the very wall that the gospel breaks down. "I do like you a lot, Dominic," Ekaba said. "And here is what I'll say. This is the beauty of Christ, especially in the community: when we come to Him, we come to Him as brothers and sisters." He pressed the open invitation on all of them. Why must a Christian come together with others, and not only

seek God in his bedroom? “Because it is the body of Christ. He came to call a people for His name. If I stay alone in my room for five years, I might think I have grown very tolerant and very patient, until I meet Dominic. Five minutes with him and you find out how much anger is in you. Being Dominic’s friend for twenty years would make me more like Christ: more long-suffering, more patient, more loving.” The table laughed. “Christ at the centre,” he said. “Not you. Not man. You cannot enter Buckingham Palace with your own protocols; before you reach the gates you are told how to approach the King.”

CHIDERA

Later Chidera arrived with Ralph and Keith, and joined the conversation. Katie told him that she had believed as a child in an all-powerful, slightly frightening God, “a little bit of magic”, and that her faith had now “pretty much” gone; she believed in community, and in finding a good way to live. “We all need a bit of help,” she said, “especially as we grow older.” Chidera answered that the illusion of this world is that we do not need help, or need only a little, later.

When God made the trees He said, let the earth bring forth; and the fish, let the waters bring forth. But when He made man, He looked into Himself and said, Let Us make man in Our image. So man cannot find his destiny except in God. We never know that we are slaves until we try to stop doing something we hate. Jesus told the Jews they were in bondage, and they said, We are Abraham’s children and have never been in bondage to anyone. But whoever commits sin is the slave of sin. Can you just decide to stop an addiction? That is where you find out. Changing your nature is impossible. It is like asking that dog to have the reasoning and the speech of a man. We are beasts wearing jeans and T-shirts, and the nicest person is only the most cultured beast. But that is what the power of Christ does: it changes our vile nature into a partaker of the divine nature. What magic is greater than that?

I can demonstrate it to you. I am speaking to you now quite fluently. But I have a very bad stutter. I stammer terribly. The moment I open my mouth to speak about Jesus Christ, the stutter disappears. Let us change the topic and talk about food, or about Bamburgh, and I will begin to stammer in the most ridiculous way. I am an evident miracle of that.

Ralph bore witness to it. Keith, he said, had remarked on the way over on the power and fluency with which Chidera spoke, with no notes and no hesitation. “It’s hard to push that away,” Ralph said. Someone asked him, “Are you getting closer, Ralph?” “No,” he said, “because I’ve got quite a lot of sinning I’d planned to do.” “It’s not quite as far away as you think it is, Ralph,” came the reply.

Chidera explained that faith is not jumping off a cliff because you have decided you will not die, but jumping because God has said, Jump. He explained the authority given to those who receive Christ, to become sons of God, with an illustration at his hosts’ expense: “I cannot just declare myself a son of the Cresswells and take the inheritance and turn you all out of this house. Charles would have to adopt me. That is authority.” And he put a challenge to them: “Receive Him, and give yourself to obey His word as He helps you, and I dare you: you will see measurable changes, not a phantom in your mind or a placebo, but every single day.” Ekaba reminded them of the miracle of waking each morning, which none of us chooses. “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. One day the eye will close and not open, and then this decision can never be made.” Chidera read from Ecclesiastes 9: *For him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.* John told them that he had once given the kiss of life to a man who died at a party.

One of the men at the table then spoke honestly of what held him back. “I really like being autonomous,” he said. “In fact I violently defend my autonomy. I’ve built my whole identity around it, and I’m not ready to let that go. But if I ever did, you guys are a major part of that. I think we’ve been brought up in a culture that so values autonomy, and yet it has clearly come to the end of some sort of line.” Chidera asked him

gently what autonomy he had to protect, if he was in truth a slave to his own whims and desires. He read the words of Jesus about the stone that the builders rejected: *Whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.* “It is better to fall on the stone now and be broken than for it to fall on you.” And from 1 Corinthians 7: *He who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave.* “So maybe that slave language is not so offensive after all,” he said. “To be Christ’s slave is to be free.”

Ekaba closed with the invitation of Jesus: *Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* “This is the gospel,” he said, “for all men,” and then, catching Katie’s eye, corrected himself with a smile: “I gave a promise on Sunday to be sensitive, and I took that feedback to heart. For all men and women. Better still, all women and men. And I mean that from my heart.” What do we give up, he asked them, compared with what Christ gave up? He left His throne in glory and emptied Himself; He was scourged with a whip that tore His flesh, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross, and He did not pass out on the road to Calvary, because there was more punishment to bear, and He bore it for us. “What am I really giving up for Him? I came into this world empty. The exchange is not equal. It is an unfair deal, from the side of Jesus. But He gave it up.”

As we left, Dominic said to Ekaba, “I won’t forget you.” Ralph told us that a neighbour, Matthew, had arranged for some friends to take us to Roughting Linn, a waterfall and ancient carved rock in the hills; “this idea of the power of place goes with these saints,” Ralph said, “and you’re just going to have to integrate it.” Ekaba told Dominic that he wished he could take him back to Calgary and have dinner with him every night.

FRIDAY 20 – SATURDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2026

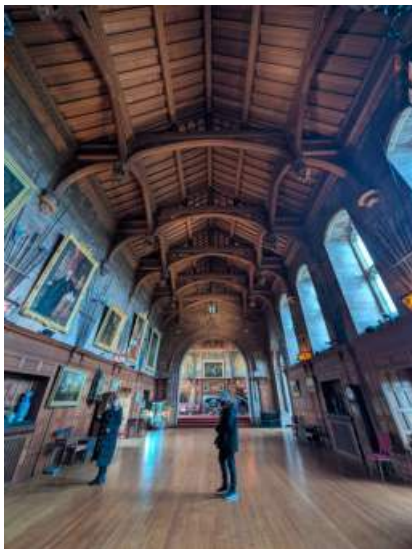
The Castle, the Cave, and the Altar

Bamburgh Castle · St Cuthbert's Cave · Carol's house

OF Friday 20 February we have no record of any meeting. It was a quieter day between the gatherings of the week and those of the weekend.

Bamburgh Castle

On Saturday morning we went up to Bamburgh Castle, as part of walking through the land and understanding it and its people. The castle stands on the same rock on which Ida's fortress stood and from which Oswald ruled. What stands there now is mostly the work of later centuries: the Norman keep, the walls that in 1464 became the first in England to be breached by artillery, and the great restoration made by the industrialist Lord Armstrong at the end of the nineteenth century. We walked through the King's Hall, with its great hammer-beam roof of teak, and through the drawing rooms, the armoury and the dungeon, and from the battlements looked down on Bamburgh village and out over the fields toward the Cheviot Hills.



Bamburgh Castle, Saturday 21 February. Left: the King's Hall. Right: the drawing room.

In the eighteenth century the castle, then fallen into ruin, passed into the hands of the trustees of Lord Crewe's charity, and under the Sharp family, churchmen of Durham, it was turned to the service of the poor. The brethren had told us of this on the Wednesday and would speak of it again that evening: how the castle came to hold a free school, a surgery and dispensary, a granary from which corn was sold cheap in hard years, and a watch over the coast, with signals in fog and help for shipwrecked sailors. The same family

gave England Granville Sharp, one of the first campaigners against the slave trade. To the brethren this was a sign: that the place from which Oswald sent his dinner and his silver dish out to the poor had once again, a thousand years later, become a place of mercy, when a steward came who took up the gift of the place.



Bamburgh village from the castle walls, with the Cheviot Hills beyond.

St Cuthbert's Cave

In the afternoon we went with the brethren to St Cuthbert's Cave, which lies on the moor above Holburn, in the part of the county where Carol lives. It had been proposed at the Wednesday gathering that we should go there together. Maria of Andalusia, through whom the Lord had opened the door into Spain the previous August, had come over from Spain with a friend to see us, and they came with us.

The cave is a great overhang of sandstone among the pines, where tradition says the monks of Lindisfarne rested with the body of Cuthbert in 875 as they fled from the Vikings. We walked up to it along the forest track, and afterwards climbed onto the open moor above, from which the whole country lies spread out toward the Cheviots.

Together again

That evening we gathered at Carol's house: Andrea and Derek with Chrissy, Andy and Anna, Carol, and others of the brethren. Ekaba began with a song that the Lord had put in his heart:

SONG

*We are together again, just praising the Lord.
Something new has already happened;
something better is in store.*



St Cuthbert's Cave, Saturday afternoon. Left: the brethren approaching the cave. Right: Ekaba with Maria of Andalusia on the moor above.



The moor above St Cuthbert's Cave, looking west toward the Cheviot Hills, 4 pm on Saturday 21 February.

Chidera gave thanks for the way the Lord had led us. "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Two weeks ago none of us saw this coming. So it is clear that the Lord is doing a new thing." Then he spoke of the call of God and the response to it. It is one thing to recognise a call and another to enter into it, he said, and the response always requires faith. "Faith is an action that is predicated on God's command. Faith is not self-will. If I jump off a cliff because I want to, that is not faith. If I jump off a cliff because God said jump, that is faith." We now knew ourselves to be the Lord's donkeys, he said, a prophetic figure of service; but it remained for each to make himself available, and that availability was an act of faith. "Once that act of faith is made, what follows is a torrent of grace. It may look daunting, but once you move on the basis of His command there will be grace, there will be direction, and there will be wisdom." We had found through the week, he said, that what we brought was already witnessing in the hearts of the people; God had been speaking the same things to them.

He read from Luke 5 the parables of the new patch on the old garment and the new wine in the old wineskins, and illustrated them from his own clothes. “I have had these joggers for five years. Andrea says we need to go to Cuthbert’s Cave before it gets dark, and on the way I fall down and they tear. If I sew a brand-new patch on them, the next time they are washed the new patch shrinks and tears the old cloth.” So a new move of the Spirit cannot be fitted into an old structure. He reminded us that when Moses set out to obey God’s call, the Lord met him on the way and sought to kill him, because his son was not circumcised; he was responding to the new while holding back from the covenant, until Zipporah took a knife and circumcised the boy. And he read the last verse of the passage, *No one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, The old is better.* “May that not be our portion. We must be a people who say, now we are ready to drink the new wine, immediately.” God does not choose as man chooses, he said. Even Samuel looked on Eliab and said, Surely the Lord’s anointed is before Him; but the Lord looks on the heart. “By an election of grace, by the mercy of God, He has chosen you.” Andrea laughed, because she had first heard him say “the *messy* of God”, and said that was true as well: we are the messy of God, and here by the mercy of God.

A question from the brethren

One of the brethren answered with a question. “Can we put down our preconceived ideas?” he asked. We must not come with the expectation that God will do what He has done before, nor replicate a structure we have received, nor discard something just because it was there before. “We’ve got to hear from God what it is He is saying. Sometimes it’s the old and sometimes it’s the new and sometimes it’s the ancient.” He said that our coming had been a collision in the Spirit between what God had entrusted to them and what He had entrusted to us, and that they did not want us to go away without having made an impact. “When you’re gone we’re still here, and we want to not miss the anointing and the power of this collision. Even if tonight were the last time, we need to make sure that we are hearing together the strategy of what God wants to do.”

He recalled things the Lord had said to them before we came. There had been a word, the year before, about bags of ancient seed stored in a deep, safe place in the castle: ancient gifting and ancient provision, which God would not release until His people were ready and knew what to do with it. And a sister named Rachel had brought a word about stewarding, knowing nothing of the history of the castle’s stewards. He told again how Oswald had taken the royal city for God, and how, centuries later, the same place had become a place of banquet for the poor, with a hospital and a school and farmlands, where the first vaccinations in the district were given, where the coastguard and the lifeboats had their beginnings, and from whose stewards came the campaign for the freedom of slaves. “What was the common denominator? Somebody came in as the steward of the gift of this place, and the anointing was released again.” The prayer Rachel had brought was that they would steward this moment well. Perhaps, he said, God would not show them the next step until they were ready, and this was the step of being ready.

Andrea spoke of how, for years, her obstacle had been that she could not make sense of God. She had tried to reason her way to Him with all her learning, and there was a barrier, until one day she realised that God had taken from her the need to understand and to work everything out, and she could accept what she could not reason out. She felt that again tonight, she said. The step of faith often comes before the clarity. Her words turned into prayer. She thanked the Lord for bringing us by “a whole series of inconceivable things that can only happen in the supernatural”, and for using Ralph as the channel, “Ralph, who doesn’t even yet wholly know You, although he is definitely searching”, like Gideon, as proof that the Lord does not need an established structure, only a willing heart. “You don’t call the qualified. You qualify those You call. And Lord, You’ve called us, and here we are, in Your hands.” So far, she said, we had been taught two

things: to rake in the harvest, and to tell the Lord we were willing to be donkeys, ready to do whatever He asks, whether the least thing with no honour in it at all, or to carry the Saviour of the world, as on Palm Sunday. How, where and when were still to be heard.

She asked Anna to sing, and then for silence, to listen. Anna sang her own song:

ANNA'S SONG

*The voice of the Lord is the sound of many waters,
flowing down where nothing else can reach ...
Glory, O glory to my God, who listens and speaks.
O speak to me, Lord, I'm listening.*

Raise an altar

After the silence, Ekaba spoke the word that had come to him:

When Jacob was on his way, he laid his head on a stone to sleep, and in his dream he saw a ladder reaching to heaven, and the angels ascending and descending on it. He woke up and said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. This is the house of God. And his response, immediately on recognising that he was at the place at the appointed time, was to raise an altar. The response is to raise an altar. I just wanted to submit that to the church, to the people of God.

One of the sisters prayed, "Lord, like the child before You, always asking questions: what does it mean, here, now, today, to raise an altar?" and told us she saw many fields of turned soil, as if freshly ploughed, and felt that our hearts were being ploughed and made ready for the seed.

Ekaba then said what he believed the practical meaning to be. The Spirit had said at the beginning of the week that the cloud of glory was moving and that we were to move with the cloud. What we could hold in our hands, he said, came down to two things. The first was constancy of meeting. "That is why the tabernacle was called the tent of meeting. All the priests in the land who have been groaning and sighing can go on groaning and sighing in their sealed houses. Let them come together to the tent of meeting. The prophetic word at the beginning was that those who feared the Lord spoke often to one another, and a book of remembrance was written. It doesn't sound very exciting. It almost sounds boring just to meet. But the meeting is the first thing." The second was the elimination of fear.

Here the brother who had spoken before pressed back firmly. "We agree with that. We're used to that. We want that. Nobody's arguing with that. But to be prescribing a meeting is not what we have heard. It's what you've said all along." They were eager to meet, and would meet as often as they could, he said; but the question was what God had given us to impart to them while they were met. "Otherwise what we're taking is your agenda again."

Ekaba answered him gently but did not give ground. "Bear with me. Perhaps this is all there is. Perhaps the agenda for which God in His providence brought us to Bamburgh is to stir up the children of God to meet." They were stewards of the land, he said, pillars of Northumberland, and God had brought us to them for that reason. They had known one another for years, but had they ever come together to open the word and pray? "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Whether you call it a fellowship, a gathering, a church, or a tent of meeting, as we gather, that is the refreshing. That is where the young people will come and join. That is where those who are heavy laden will come. That is where deliverance will break into the land. Upon Mount Zion there shall be deliverance."

Andrea agreed with Ekaba, openly. "Let's put it up front: we haven't been meeting." She, Carol, Andy and Derek had all been connected for a long time and loved and respected one another, but they had not

been meeting together, perhaps from fear of putting another structure in place. “And I know it has you running for cover, Andy, this idea of another structure,” she said, because the structures they could see had not worked, since there had been no room made for God in them. She had been thinking since Sunday night about the word Ekaba had brought from Isaiah 2, and read it from *The Message*: *There’s a day coming when the mountain of God’s House will be The Mountain, solid, towering over all mountains. All nations will river toward it, people from all over set out for it. They’ll say, Come, let’s climb God’s Mountain, go to the House of the God of Jacob. He’ll show us the way He works so we can live the way we’re made.* She had seen it as a child would draw it, a triangle above all the other triangles, the other structures taking their place beneath it. “We are a disparate group of people. The thing that brings us together is Jesus. But the Lord clearly needs what we all bring, and we bring it together.” Our coming had been a catalyst, she said. The step of faith, silly as it might sound, was the arrangement itself: to say, this is what we are going to do, and to work with all their constraints. “And the word I heard in my spirit is, get ready.”

Chidera drew the evening together. The Lord gathers His people out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, he said, and makes them kings and priests to God. *Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.* Everything that had been spoken through the week, the Sun of Righteousness arising for those who fear His name, and the book of remembrance for those who speak often to one another, pointed to one plain thing: the Lord wants His people to gather together regularly, with one mind and one heart, to seek Him. “It is in this place He will show Himself.”

We record the disagreement of that evening as it happened, because it was real and it was honest, and because it was resolved in love. The very next morning, at her church in Alnwick, Andrea stood before the congregation and told them exactly what had been laid on Ekaba’s heart that Saturday night: that God’s people must meet together regularly to be in His presence, that fear must be put away, and that we must build an altar.

Polly and John

Hulne Park, Alnwick · the home of Polly

A walk through the land

ON Sunday morning we walked through the land. Ralph took us, with some of the young people, into Hulne Park at Alnwick, the great walled park of the Dukes of Northumberland, to the ruins of Hulne Priory. The priory was founded in the thirteenth century by Carmelite friars, who thought that the hill above it resembled Mount Carmel in the Holy Land; it is the earliest Carmelite house in England, and one of the best preserved. Like the priory on Holy Island and the castle at Bamburgh, it spoke to us of a land that once held the things of God at its centre. It was a clear, bright morning.



Hulne Priory, Alnwick, Sunday 22 February. Left: in the cloister garth. Right: the gatehouse.

An open door

In the afternoon Ralph took us to the home of Polly, where her partner John was also present. Ralph had telephoned a number of people on our behalf before we came, he told us, and there had been three kinds of answer. One was, “What more can you tell me about these men?” Another, in his words, was “Fuck off.” The third was simply “Yes”. “Polly and Andrea were two of the few that never even asked any questions,” he said. “It was just yes.” We had been due to meet a vicar that day as well, one of Ralph’s contacts, together with another person, but that meeting did not take place; the vicar did not come, and Ralph did not know why.



Hulne Park, Alnwick. Left: Ralph shows the way. Right: the history of Hulne Abbey, the earliest Carmelite house in England.

John asked us to tell them what we had been doing that week, and Ekaba told the story again, and set out what we believe: that we are in the end times; that Christ is God's gift to man, so that man may be free to worship Him and have eternal life; that a privatised faith is a dead faith; and that if we are ashamed of Christ in this world, He will be ashamed of us on His day. "So we have fully embraced our identity as fools for Christ."

He spoke of what it means to believe, using the three words of the Reformers. *Notitia* is knowledge of the word. *Assensus* is agreement that it is true. But even the devils believe and tremble. *Fiducia* is to put one's personal trust and confidence in what one knows, and that is saving faith, an encounter with Jesus Christ that transforms the soul. "Where there is only notitia and assensus, it gives birth to cultural Christianity, and religious Christianity is an observance. Rend your heart, and not your garments."

Why do I need to be transformed?

John answered with a question he had carried for many years, and he asked it plainly.

One of the challenges I've had in my Christian life is that on a number of occasions I've been challenged by what we would call born-again Christians, who say you must give yourself to Jesus, you must be born again, you must transform yourself. My response is that I was born into a strongly Christian family. I was christened at twelve months. I've been going to church every Sunday since before I can remember. I've never stopped believing. I've never stopped praying. I have very strong and very well worked-out beliefs. So why do I need to be transformed?

I'm particularly struck by the message of John Wesley, and I believe in what he called prevenient grace: that God forgave us all our sins before we were even conceived, so that we are born free of sin and free of guilt. That doesn't mean we have a licence to go away and sin, because we will be judged at the end of it all. But it means God gives us free will to live our lives as we want to. That's why the world is chaotic. If God hadn't given us free will, we'd be automata. I love the story of the prodigal son, and I feel a bit like the son who didn't run off and have a good time. I'm the son who stayed at home and did all the work and did all the right things. I've done the accounts for two churches, and I'm a churchwarden. And the ones who rush away have a big celebration when they come back. So, after a lifetime of service and devotion to Christ and to God, why do I need to be transformed?

Ekaba thanked him for the question, and answered that no one comes to God except the Father draws him, and that the transformation cannot come by self-will; before God, all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags. He quoted William Cowper:

WILLIAM COWPER

*No strength of nature can suffice
to serve the Lord aright;
and what she has she misapplies,
for want of clearer light.
To see the law by Christ fulfilled,
and hear His pardoning voice,
changes a slave into a child,
and duty into choice.*

Transformation is not a product of the virtue of the home you were born into. Otherwise what hope would there be for those not born into a Christian home? Wherever we are born, we give God praise; but every soul must come to the point where the knee bows before the King of kings and Lord of lords, and Jesus calls that encounter being born again. “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” We preach to people; they see the beauty of the gospel and the good sense of the life; but their heart never comes to believe. It is there, but they cannot see it. It is opaque to them. What brings a man in that state suddenly to be aware of the kingdom and of the state of his soul, and to begin to seek God with tears? That is the encounter. It is not something you chant. It is a life lived in a continual state of repentance and the fear of God, with Christ at the centre, the framework through which you see everything.

In all the religions of the world, including the religion of man, man is trying to become the best version of himself, trying to reach deity by his own power. That was Lucifer’s way: I will ascend, I will be like the Most High. But in the grace of God, Christ comes to you to make you like Him. That is being born again: not self-made, but hanging on the thread of God’s mercy. “Through the love of God our Saviour, all will be well.”

John answered that he would agree, except that in his view life is a series of encounters and transformations, a series of being born again; there had been periods when his attention was elsewhere and Christ had come back into his life, many times. It was, he said, like the continuing professional development required of accountants and doctors: God challenges us all the time.

Chidera asked him directly what he understood being born again to mean, and John said honestly that he did not really know; he had always thought of it as a revelation like Paul’s on the road to Damascus. So Chidera explained it to him from the beginning. Pointing to a portrait on the wall, he asked whether it was Polly, and when she said it was, he said that as an artist has many works but one masterpiece, so man is God’s masterpiece. Man was made spirit first, as Genesis 1 records, and then formed from the dust, as Genesis 2 records; he is spirit, soul and body. The spirit cannot be destroyed, which is why Abel’s blood still cried out from the ground after Cain had killed his body; and Jesus said that in the resurrection we shall be as the angels. “From the very day you were brought forth, there will never be a moment in time and space when you cease to exist. The only question is where.”

God said to Adam, In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. Adam ate, and did not die that day. So what was God talking about? Death is separation from God. And it is not only an event; it is a process. From the day Adam sinned he began to deteriorate. Man before the fall is like wine, which only gets better with age; man after the fall is like milk, which expires. The very day a beautiful baby is born, it begins to die. The fact that ageing exists tells us that death exists. God gave His Son to redeem man from death. But a gift not received is not yours. If I hold this out to you and you do not stretch out your hands, it is not yours.

Nobody is born a Christian. Salvation is not a group work; every individual will stand before God. There are only two men in all of history: the first Adam and the last Adam. In the first Adam comes one race; Jesus, the last Adam, began a new race, a new creation. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. What is made new is your spirit. When you receive Him, the Spirit of Christ comes into you and quickens your spirit from the

dead, by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, and it changes you from the inside out. *Born again* means *born from above*. It is the beginning of the journey. Your spirit is alive, but the rest of you still has to be changed, which is why a born-again man can still die physically. As you walk with the Lord and yield to that power, your desires, your will and your emotions begin to change. That is the transformation.

John said he still believed he had been born again several times. He told us of a very dark season a few years before, when he had prayed and prayed and nothing got better, and he felt abandoned by God, until he remembered the words of Margaret Fishback Powers' *Footprints in the Sand*: *When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you*. "Did I remember it, or did God push it in there? I suddenly realised that when I thought I had been abandoned by God, actually I had been carried, and I didn't even know it." Chidera answered that the dark times do not undo the new birth: "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. He did not say if; He said you will."

The Jeremy Clarkson question

John then asked what he called the Jeremy Clarkson question. After the death of a little girl of two and a half from a vicious cancer, the broadcaster had asked how anyone could believe in a God who allowed an innocent child to suffer and die. John said that he had found it hard to answer for a long time, and that his own answer now rested on prevenient grace and free will: God does not control every inch of what we do, or we would be robots; we are free actors in a world that has devils and demons and entropy in it, and innocent people will die; it is not that God killed the child. Chidera agreed that God gives grace in the time of trial, and that with every temptation He makes a way of escape; but he drew a distinction. "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness. But the world, the system in the earth, is at present under the control of powers that are not righteous." And he added that whatever God has provided in forgiveness must still be received to be activated.

John spoke too of Jordan Peterson, who had written that what is remarkable about Christianity, against every other religion, is that it gives each person a direct, individual relationship with God; of the sale of indulgences in the medieval church; of Luther, Calvin and John Knox, on whom he had once preached in a Church of Scotland pulpit; and of the doctrine of predestination, which he called "absolutely bonkers" to a modern mind, and against which Arminius and Wesley had set prevenient grace.

At this point Ralph left to cook the roast potatoes for supper, warning Polly that we would stay until two in the morning if she let us, "simply because they think this stuff is pretty important". Before he went, he said something about himself that we record exactly. "They've already unpacked a lot of what they believe, and I think, from my position, a lot of truth. Although I haven't let God into my heart in the way that you were talking about. So I've got those first two bits of knowledge, but not the last one."

Polly

Polly then asked quietly whether it would be all right to ask us to pray for her to be healed. We said that Jesus is a healer, and that we believe He heals. Ekaba explained how he held it: the word of God is the word of God, whatever the physical facts; the church is the only company of people who call themselves *believers*. "Perhaps the pain stops; perhaps it does not. But belief in Christ is not for nothing. In and of itself that is the victory." He reminded her of the three Hebrew young men who said that even if God did not deliver them from the fire, they would not bow, and of Elisabeth Elliot, who wrote that suffering is never for nothing. "We mustn't entertain any shred of doubt about the goodness, the presence and the love of God to us. Standing on the

promises of Christ my King.” “It’s a win if you believe,” Polly said, “whether or not your leg is healed. And rejoicing, because gratitude banishes bad spirits.”

She told us openly that she had been given diagnoses of multiple sclerosis, which in her was mild, and of psychosis, a form of schizophrenia, which had come on in her mid-twenties, when she heard voices and had hallucinations and racing, suspicious thoughts; she was now fifty, and it was well controlled by medication, though stress could still set her thoughts racing. “I believe I’m healed. I speak that out and stand on it. I know God has healed me. I’m struggling a bit believing that, because I’m away from this type of outlook. But I’m going back to that type of church soon.” She told us she spoke in tongues, that her heart faith was stronger than her head faith, and that she loved to read the Bible and found great peace in it, though her rational mind struggled to make it all fit. She told us of going out on Northumberland Street in Newcastle to speak to people about the Lord, and of a raffle in Wooler for a hamper worth two hundred and fifty pounds, which she had prayed hard to win and had declared aloud that she had won; that afternoon a text came to say she had won it. “It was a really selfish prayer, but it was just really exciting.”

We told her, “We believe that this very day the matter of the mental illness will come to an end, and that you will be healed even of the condition of MS.”

Where does it come from?

John asked how we had come to know the Scriptures as we did, whether we had been to theological college, and how our call had come. Chidera said he had not; he had simply given himself to the word, reading it and hearing it every day, many times a day, and meditating on it, turning a verse over through the day, “By His stripes we are healed”, until the Holy Spirit opened it. “Taught by the Holy Spirit.”

Ekaba said that many people talk about reading the word of God, but few really read it, without any agenda. He had been born again early in life, and baptised in the Holy Spirit with the speaking in tongues in 2004 at a camp meeting. But in 2016 he had what he called a special epiphany. “It wasn’t anything dramatic, but my mind opened to that objective reality. I had known about hell, I had known about righteousness, but it was as if I had never heard it before. For days I would sit on my own and just weep about my sins. I cannot spend eternity with the demons. The sense of the tragedy of it was overwhelming. This is not a joke.” It was then that he received the mandate to bring people together into a house of true worship, in spirit and in truth.

John asked how such fellowships could work without a leader and a structure; in the Methodist church, he said, you could simply download the services. Ekaba answered that it is more liberating than difficult, because the true moderator of the assembly is Christ, and where there is no power or glory to be had, the struggle for them goes out of the window. Leadership emerges as the Spirit gives it. He gave the example of the company in Bamburgh, whom we had not known five days before: one who takes the initiative to call and arrange the meetings is exercising administrative leadership; one who begins to sing and play the guitar while others pray in the Spirit or kneel is exercising spiritual leadership. “So they become self-sustaining communities, led by the Spirit,” said John. “I can’t say it better than the way you say it,” came the answer.

John told us that he had given up alcohol for Lent. It was day five. John told us too that the hymn *And Can It Be*, by Charles Wesley, was the distillation of his whole faith, and that every time he sang it, it was a deeply religious experience. He spoke of Cuthbert, who walked the length of Northumberland stopping to preach in the villages, and of John Wesley, who rode tens of thousands of miles on horseback to preach in fields and market squares to crowds of thousands. “Too often we don’t talk about this,” he said. “We’re English; we don’t talk about that sort of thing. And certainly not in the Anglican Church.” Polly, he told us, attends an independent fellowship in Newcastle, full of singing and prayer, “not my cup of tea”.

The end of all things

John asked, half in jest, whether he should be planning for tomorrow afternoon, since we believed these were the end times. Ekaba answered that the coming of Christ was itself the signal that the end had begun, and that the coming of the Holy Spirit was the fulfilment of His promise that some standing there would see the kingdom come; but He Himself will return, as a thief in the night to those who are not watching. “Peter speaks of the scoffers who say, ever since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were. Don’t be like them.” Even unbelievers, he said, could smell that something serious was about to happen in the world. “When they say peace and safety, the stocks are looking great, the investments are working out, then sudden destruction comes.” Every night we go to sleep, and nobody decides to wake up; one morning the eyes may not open, or they may open on a world very different from the one we knew. “If God can say, Let there be light, then the rational cannot be used against God. In His presence the mountains melt like wax, and so do the mountains of our logic.”

“I’m healed,” said Polly. “I’m healed already, in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Prayer

We asked whether there was a guitar in the house, and Polly brought one, and we sang: *Let the power of the Lord come down; Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord; This mountain must be removed in Jesus’ name; Spirit, move over me.* Then we prayed, and marked John and Polly for salvation, for healing, and for divine help.

We invited Polly to make a confession of faith, and she repeated after us, phrase by phrase, from her heart:

Lord Jesus, I receive You into my life. I have worshipped You, I have trusted You, but even at this time I dedicate my life to You. I declare that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He died for me, to set me free. Jesus is the owner of my life and of my body, the giver of life and the giver of health. Jesus, come into my life. Shine Your light on me and set me free. I submit every part of my being to You. I renounce the works of darkness. I ask forgiveness for every sin I have committed; let Your blood wash me. I forgive everyone who has offended me, and I release them. I renounce every covenant I have made with darkness, knowingly or unknowingly. By the blood of Jesus I destroy every satanic altar, and I set up an altar for the worship of the Father. I am given to the service of God. Satan, you have no hold over my life.

Then we laid hands on her and prayed for her deliverance and healing, commanding every spirit of schizophrenia, psychosis and mental illness, and every spirit of affliction on her nerves, to leave her, and declaring her healed in mind and body. “This work,” Ekaba prayed, “will be a testimony that there is a God in England. The sceptics and those in the medical profession will see what God is doing, and marvel, and turn to seek Him.” We prayed the peace of God over her, and sang over her, *Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.*

For John we prayed for blessing, health and long life, for healing of every wound of the past, and a double recovery of everything he had lost. And a word came for him, which we gave him:

John, the Lord says, no labour for God is in vain. Our God sees. He is not blind. He does not forget, He does not forsake. Let that be your comfort. The Lord God Almighty sees you, and He will return the recompense. “Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come; He will come and save you. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Then John prayed for us. “Lord Jesus, thank You for bringing these wonderful messengers of Yours to this home. Bless them. Bless their travelling, bless their journey, and bless their preaching.”

Afterwards

The next day we told Andrea about John and Polly, and undertook to connect them with the company gathering in Bamburgh. After we had left, the word continued to be ministered to them, including clear counsel of the need to marry and to set their household in order in the sight of God. Word has since reached us that they have taken heed and have decided to be married. We give God thanks that the word of truth has taken root.

MONDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2026

Strengthening the Church in Bamburgh

The home of Andrea and Derek, Bamburgh

ON Monday morning we went again to the home of Andrea and Derek, and spent the whole of the late morning and the afternoon with them and their household. It was, in effect, a meeting to put the young church in Bamburgh on its feet before we left.

Sunday at Alnwick

Andrea began by telling us what had happened the day before at their own church, the Baptist church at Alnwick, twenty-five minutes down the A1, where they have worshipped for many years. The worship leader had put the names of God on the screen and invited the congregation to share which name spoke of how they had seen God move in the week. Andrea stood and said, *Almighty*, and spoke briefly of the power of God they had experienced that week, and of the miracle of our being there at all. Later in the service, having prayed through the singing, she stood again and shared with them the three things that Ekaba had said the Lord was laying on his heart when we had waited on God together at Carol's house on the Saturday: that God's people must meet together regularly and frequently to be in His presence and to speak of the things of God; that fear must be put away; and that the Lord was calling us to build Him an altar.

The congregation did not respond, which she said was not unusual in their church. But the pastor, Chris, and his wife Caroline were greatly encouraged, and said it was in line with what they themselves had been sensing. Andrea spoke with Chris for a quarter of an hour afterwards, gave him a fuller picture of the week, and told him she believed he and Caroline and their fellowship needed to be part of what God was doing. She showed him the word we had received on the plane. "I think he delighted in it," she said.

Ekaba received this with thanksgiving. "As far as I have heard," he said, "this is the first person of a more established religious order to hear and receive with goodwill. I have not heard that since we came to Bamburgh." He counselled Andrea and Derek to be firm and yet flexible, to move with the Spirit one day at a time, relaxed and yet forceful and energetic in the Spirit, fearing nothing. Some people should not be brought into a work too early, he said, or it will never have a life of its own; and when people come and go, God is choosing. He told them that Ralph had once said to him that we seemed to be against structure. "I had to tell him, no. We are not against structure. What we are against is man's structure. Every structure needs a revival, and every revival needs a structure. God is a God of order." But the builder is Christ: "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. He loves it more than I do. He died for it."

The maturity of your priesthood

We asked Andrea about the church at Alnwick: how many attend (about a hundred on a Sunday, after some twenty had recently left), how it is governed (by the congregation, which chooses and pays its pastor after hearing candidates preach, with three elders and three deacons, under the oversight of the Northern Baptist Association), and what her part is in it. She told us she had served as a deacon, that she did not fit easily into the structure, but that she was respected, and that she had covenanted with God to speak whatever He laid on her heart even when it was not comfortable. For the rest, she said, she simply sees what needs doing and does it.

Chidera then spoke to her plainly, and at length. A church in which the congregation appoints its spiritual leadership on the strength of what it likes to hear, he said, is a foundation for disaster. The church is full of all kinds of people, as a hospital is full of the sick, and that is as it should be; but the multitude cannot decide spiritual leadership. Saul was rejected because he heard the voice of the people and offered the sacrifice without waiting for Samuel, and in his zeal for the people he slew the Gibeonites, with whom Israel had a covenant from the days of Joshua. When a man's livelihood, the milk in his pantry and his children's school fees, depends on whether the people like what he preaches, there is an indirect pressure to compromise, and the people heap up for themselves teachers who tell them what their itching ears want to hear. That is why Paul worked with his own hands at his tent-making.

The full maturity of your priesthood cannot happen in that Baptist church. It cannot happen in any such system. God has a standard of operation, and that standard cannot be circumvented. When the kingdom of Israel was divided, the Levites at first went with Jeroboam. But Jeroboam set up a system of calf worship, a system whose structures no longer served the purposes of God, and he drove out the priests of the Lord and brought in his own. The Levites could not function under that system, so they came back to Judah, to the place where the right structures were. In the days of Elijah, where were the prophets of God who had not bowed the knee to Baal? They were hiding in caves. They could not function under a system of Baal worship. So however good you are, a system that is not ordered after God's order will stifle your priesthood. This little fellowship is the place where your priesthood can come into full blossom.

He was careful to say that he was not telling her to leave Alnwick, nor to go there in a spirit of condemnation. "God has called us to be a holy people, but He has not called us to be holier-than-thou. The heart of a priest is a heart that carries a burden for the people. If we have a burden for the unbelievers on the streets, how much more for the church?" Perhaps, he said, the twenty who had left were themselves part of the harvest to be raked in.

Ekaba added a word about the things that turn us from what God wants: family ties, long friendships, human sentiment. "Many people have missed God because they put their own feelings, or familiar relationships and bonds, above the clear word of God, or used them as a lens through which to interpret Scripture." He reminded them of Mr Worldly Wiseman in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, whose counsel sounds noble and virtuous. "'I can never go against my brother, who has been with me for thirty years.' It is noble, it is wise, it is virtuous, but it is not godly. And what is virtuous and not godly is not of God." He spoke of the Lord's word in Ezekiel, "I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst," and of the Shema: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength," and he told them that there had been many times he had cut a trip short so as to be in the house of God on the Lord's day. "No other throne survives," he said. "I serve only You."

Andrea answered with great honesty. She hungered, she said, for the things she did not know. She had read the Bible through thirty, forty, fifty times, and knew the stories, but the teaching that comes out of them

was another matter, and in England it was rarely given. She had been blessed at the beginning of her walk by a man named Bill, of a Brethren background, who had taught her and told her, “If we don’t understand, we take it to the Lord.” She told us she wrestled with the questions of gender and same-sex relationships among people she loved, knowing that she was not the judge, and not holier-than-thou either. She told us that her own brother, whom she had tried to speak to about the Lord, had said to her, “I couldn’t put God before my wife.” And she said that the teaching was hard, and that she could see that it would make people run; but that she had always felt she and Derek were to be among the churches without being in their leadership, and she had not understood why until she had heard it unpacked that morning.

Leadership in Bamburgh

Andrea told us that she had tried to arrange a further meeting with Andy and Anna and Carol for the Wednesday, but they were not free; they would meet at her house on the Friday afternoon, after we had gone. She told us too of Bob and Mary, a couple from Shilbottle, south of Alnwick, who serve in a rural ministry and belong to no particular church, who had rung that morning and would call in on their way back from Holy Island that afternoon. Then she asked us directly for counsel. “I am okay with it being me who is instrumental in getting us together. I sense that it won’t be easy, and we will have to be flexible, but that there is a will to do it. Are there words of wisdom that you would share that might help me, and support me, to go forward in the right way? I will listen.”

Chidera answered first. We were going home, he said, but we were not abandoning them or the work of the Lord in Bamburgh. “We are invested. We have skin in the game.” There would be times when she would feel that if she did not lead and put things together, nothing would happen, and would ask herself whether anyone had really caught the vision of a body on fire for Christ. “My encouragement is to stay in the place of your calling, and embrace fully the mantle of leadership.” To each of the churches in Revelation the Lord says, *I know your works, your labour*. He sees the labour that no one else sees. And there is a work that will be burned up in the fire and a work that will not suffer loss. “We are not trying to establish a church of Derek and Andrea, where Derek is the lead pastor and Andrea is the senior pastor, and in seven years it has a good tithe and offering income. This work is founded in Christ, established in Christ, and for the glory of God, and it will not suffer loss.” He warned them that pressure would come to compromise for the sake of numbers, and that no one who works for God is ever alone.

Ekaba added counsel on leadership. Where there are mature believers, a plurality of leadership is best, people praying and hearing from God together, especially as the gathering grows; where there are none, one may lead faithfully until others grow. For now, he counselled, there was no need to announce who the leaders were. Andrea should walk closely with Andy and Anna. Andy was precious, and very sensitive to anything that looked to him like man’s order; Anna was a strong and stabilising presence; Carol looked up to them both and would grow as she heard the word. Andrea had fire in her bones, he told her, and that force was necessary, like the thrust that carries a rocket past escape velocity; but it must be governed by wisdom and sensitivity to the Spirit.

Two things, he said, the Lord had given him for the church in Calgary that applied here too. The first was hospitality and friendship: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” What we had shared at Carol’s house on Saturday, food at the table and then the word of God, was the community of righteousness, which is the church. The second was the ministry of the word:

The word of God is lacking in the land. At best, where we find it, it is a biscuit. Just a bite. A fifteen-minute exhortation, a twenty-minute reflection on a topic. It is time to get the bread on the table. There must be people who can labour in the word, who can open the Bible and expound it for an hour, who can go through

a teaching series on the death of self, or on the tabernacle of Moses, or on the Beatitudes, and teach the people Christ. If you have been eating the king's food for six months, when you taste the peasant's bread you will know the difference. The apostles would not leave the word of God to serve tables. That was not because those who served tables were lesser men; Stephen served tables, and Stephen was a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. But the apostles gave themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. That is critical for any revival to stay alive.

Chidera added that no one should feel pressure to perform; each should share what God has given, according to the measure of grace. And he reminded them of the difference between the two meetings we had had on Holy Island. The first had been a set Celtic prayer office, structured and still. At the second, when we began to sing, everyone rose in worship, and Andy and Anna lifted up their hands. "You saw how the Holy Spirit moved. There was a stark difference." Free worship, a time for anyone to bring what the Lord had laid on their heart, prayer over what was brought, and then the ministry of the word: where those things are present, he said, anyone coming for the first time will know that there is something different in that place.

A word to Robert

Andrea told us of her burden for Robert, their adopted son. He knows the Scriptures well and speaks them to her in the night, but he had not yet found the freedom to speak when others were present. Chidera turned to him directly:

You are a first-class participant in the work of Christ, in His body. The fullness of God cannot be put into one person; it is in His body. If the Holy Spirit puts something in your heart to speak, and you keep it back, the body has been robbed of something. When you speak, it is your mouth, but the words are not yours. In these past few days you have been blessed because men and women did not keep quiet; they spoke what God gave them. Ministry is not something high and mighty. Ministry is service. It is the washing of feet. When a customer comes into your café, you cannot say, I don't feel like serving today. You say, what coffee would you like? That is ministry.

Robert keeps a small café in the house, which we were then shown. Chidera told him, too, of his own wonder at being there at all: "I was born in Nigeria. Ten years ago I moved to Canada. If anybody had told me on the first of January 2025 where I would be seated and who I would be talking to, I would never have believed it." In a church of His purpose, he said, Robert would not need to write a letter to the pastor and wait for a slot in March next year after the synod; if God gave him a word, he could speak it.

Andrea told us that when Robert first came to them Derek had made him a guitar out of cardboard, and later they had bought him a real one, which he played for us. Because his condition keeps his fingers from pressing the strings properly, the worship leaders at their church did not want him to play in case he played wrong notes; at the summer camp they attend, they give him his own microphone.

An open house

At the end Ekaba told Andrea and Derek that they were an answer to prayer. "Nothing fills me with joy like this: that there is a people in Bamburgh calling on the name of the Lord in spirit, a church of His purpose, an end-time church of the Lord Jesus Christ in Bamburgh. It will grow in spirit and grow in number as an enduring lampstand until the Lord returns. There will be revivals, restorations, healing and recovery, because there is a place where the Lord can have His way." He said that we were not far away, and he had learned that we could fly straight into Edinburgh, seventy miles up the road. Andrea told us that the house

has three storeys and many rooms, and that they had always believed the Lord gave it to them for hospitality, to be an open door; and that she had been sad over the years that it had not been used more.

That afternoon Andrea prayed over the work. She committed herself not to strive to make things happen, but to flow with what the Spirit had begun and to respond to His nudges, including those that come through Robert. She prayed for her son David, for Andy and Anna and Carol, and for Bob and Mary, who were to come that evening, that the Lord would make them His instruments “to rake in that harvest”. She asked the Lord whether the altar He had spoken of was to be physical as well as spiritual. She prayed for a friend facing surgery the following day. And she gave thanks for the ministry He had given her and Derek, for which they had laid down everything, their jobs and all, and for the fruit of it. “In places where for whatever reason they are not welcomed and celebrated,” she prayed of her household, “then they are not the right places for us, Lord.” She asked that we might leave knowing that we had done what God wanted and that it had been received and heard. Before we left she asked us to write our homes on the map on her kitchen wall, beside the names of the others the Lord had brought to that house, so that when they looked at Calgary and Winnipeg they would remember: “They were divine appointments, and You brought them to us. And for us now, Lord, they are part of our family, Your family. Not goodbye, but until next time.”

Charles

Budle Hall and the house of Ralph's father

ON Tuesday we spent the day with Ralph's family. At midday Ralph took us to sit with his father, Charles, who is ninety-one years old, a respected leader in the community and one of the gentry of the county, the son of Captain Joe Baker-Cresswell, and who had spoken at the gathering at Budle Hall on the Sunday evening. We had been praying for this meeting since we learned that we would have the opportunity to sit with him. Charles received us with great courtesy, and asked us questions as a man who has thought long about the things of God.

Does God hear our prayers?

He asked first whether we believed that our prayers are heard. "They're not always answered, of course, because God moves in a mysterious way. But there's somebody listening to our prayers. Do you believe that?"

Ekaba answered that he did, and that this is the defining difference between the God who has revealed Himself in Jesus and every other god. "I would go one step further. He is not only the God who listens to prayers. He is the God who answers prayers. In the book of Revelation we see that all our prayers are presented before God. God does not forget, and He does not forsake. We may not perceive the answer from this side of eternity, or in the way we would like, but He has answered according to the wisdom of His own counsel. There is no other would-be god, no idol, that hears and answers." Chidera added that God hears not only what we speak with our mouths but what is in the depths of the heart, for He searches the heart; and that He answers according to His will. "God did not even grant the prayer of Jesus when it was not according to His will. Jesus said, Father, if it be Your will, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done. God knows what is best for us better than we can perceive."

Praying for the departed

Then Charles asked something close to his heart. "Do you think we should pray for the souls of our departed friends and relations? I find most of my prayers are taken up with it, because I have so many dead friends and relations now, being ninety-one. Do you think the angels and the Almighty note such prayers, asking that those departed souls may rest in peace and rise in glory?"

Ekaba said that it was a very personal question, and that before answering it he wished to set before Charles the goodness of God as the shepherd of souls.

God is the Father of spirits. He is the Shepherd of our souls, and we commit our souls to Him. He is the God who sees. And this God has qualities I find most comforting. God is good, exceedingly good. God is just:

His divine justice will never fall below the standard of human justice. And God is merciful. All of these, His goodness, His justice and His mercy, have been given to us in the person of Jesus Christ. He came for the world He made, because He loved it. When Jesus died He went down and preached to the spirits in prison, announcing the liberty that had come by His death and resurrection. He triumphed over death and hell, rose from the dead, and ascended into glory. In believing in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, we are reconciled to the Father, and come to the place where there is no more crying, no more death, no more pain.

But the Scriptures take that burden away from us. They encourage us to leave those matters in the hand of a God who is big enough to do it well, and to submit our own lives to Christ, and to teach our children and everyone about the beauty and liberty of knowing Him. I have told my wife that if there is anything she can do for me, it is to work out her own salvation with fear and trembling, because when it is all over there is a hope that we will all be together again. The Bible says, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours. We do not always know who died in the Lord. Some speak with great bluster, and alone in their bedrooms open their Bibles and say, Have mercy on me. God knows. So the Lord asks us to leave those matters to Him, and for us who are still alive, to make our peace with Christ.

Small gatherings

Charles asked whether it was not easier to worship Christ in small numbers, “where two or three are gathered together in My name”, than in the large and formal congregations of the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian churches. “I often wonder whether that is what we are doing fairly wrong, and that we should be working in far smaller units.”

Chidera answered that the problem was not numbers but something deeper: that worship had been ordered in the way man devised, because there is something in man that loves control. On every continent men have enslaved their own kind. Nebuchadnezzar set up an image of himself and commanded that all bow down to it when the music sounded, and that same Babylonian spirit of control had crept into religion. But Jesus said that the hour has come when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, which means that the Holy Spirit orders worship, Christ is the head of the church, and every member contributes as the body. He spoke plainly about the Roman Catholic Church, which he said had been one of the great enemies of Christ on the earth, because from Constantine onward it was a mixture of church and state, “Christendom”, into which many pagan practices had come, so that entering many church buildings is like entering a shrine of images, though God said, You shall not make for yourself any carved image. So it is possible to worship fruitfully in large numbers or small, if the foundation is right. His own preference, he said, was for small cells: if the church in Winnipeg grew past two hundred, he would divide it and plant another.

Ekaba added that the foundation is Christ alone, and that one practical thing keeps the foundation right: to keep gold and glory out of the work.

Our sin clings to the soul of a saint like a bee to honey. If you need money, go and labour with your two hands. If you need glory, build something; go and get a degree. But Christ is not a matter for merchandise, and so many edifices have become a Christian industrial complex, a trading of souls for profit, from Tetzels “when the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs” to all the other mischiefs of the various offshoots of Roman Catholicism, whether the Anglican or all the various children of that monster. We must get back to the basics: Christ in you, the hope of glory. If a man’s school fees and the food on his table depend on the church he serves, there is a great deal of compromise for him. When he preaches in the street, can he tell whether it is the love of Christ that drives him, or the thought that more people means more tithes? When he sits before a man of renown, can he say to him, repent and turn from your sins? But if his soul is free of those things, he can speak to the high and to the low of the marvellous grace of our God. We are slaves of Jesus Christ. We do our job, get out of the way, and retire to obscurity. God alone has all the glory.

Chidera spoke of the land. Every nation that turns from the ways of God loses its land, he said. Britain had been a great force for good in the world, above all through the spreading of the gospel, but the church had turned aside to care for its buildings, the land was being lost to strange ideas, and the young were being swept into every kind of ideology, so that a young man could stand up and say he wished to become a woman, while on other continents families were raising eight children. It was the gospel of the kingdom that would bring the young back to God, and when the young come back the land is retaken. He told Charles of the small company that had begun to gather out of the meeting at Budle Hall, Andrea and Derek and others, and that we hoped to return and go into the streets to speak to the young people: "Return to God. Not to the church order, but to God." On Friday, he said, we would go on to Exeter, to another company that had been gathered the summer before.

Charles reflected that Germany had been a Christian nation, Catholic and Protestant, the land of Luther, and had gone in an unbelievably wrong direction. "So people could be led to badness. But they could be led to goodness as well. I think that's what you're trying to do, very commendably." Ekaba answered with the promise, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray ... I will hear from heaven and heal their land." He told Charles that he was still in a sort of dreamlike state at being there at all, and that he wondered whether that healing had not already begun, through the providence that had brought us to Ralph, to his brother John, to Charles, to Lindisfarne and to St Cuthbert's Cave. "This is not all an accident, our being here. It is not a roll of the dice." Charles agreed that it was not a coincidence. It had been, as he put it, a thin place, where God had appeared in history and could appear again. It often takes a remote and barren place for God's hand to appear, he said, as in the deserts of Palestine; and Northumberland, too, had been a terrible country of raiding and slaughter, and yet it was here that Aidan and Cuthbert lived and moved and had their being.

He asked about our journey on to Exeter, and we told him how on our last visit, on the way from Glasgow to Edinburgh, we had been diverted to Bamburgh. "Well," said Charles, "the angel of God injured your car to bring you into contact with Ralph."

Are you at peace with Christ?

Then Ekaba asked him directly. "I do have a question for you, Charles, and it's a direct question, if you don't mind. Are you at a state of peace with Christ?"

"Am I in a state of peace? No, not really," said Charles. "No, I'm still seeking, and very aware of one's sin throughout one's life. And one tries to balance the sinful side of one's life with hopefully the good things that one has done and been able to influence. And one just hopes that when judgment comes, the scales are slightly in favour of the good as opposed to the bad. I think that's the best that I can hope for."

Ekaba told him that we had been praying for this very moment, and asked his permission to give him a gift that was not ours to give but Christ's: the assurance of salvation, so that he might sleep that night "sure, doubly sure" of his eternal state and his peace with Christ.

The difference between Christ and every other worldview is the uncertainty in every other. You are always trying to balance the scales, your good deeds against your bad. But do you know the measure? What is the measure of goodness before a Being who is eternal and infinite? Mortals cannot play an immortal game, and the stakes are too high. This is why Christ came: to take from you the burden of weighing and not knowing, the thought at the back of the mind that haunts you: maybe I didn't do enough; what about that thing I did in the dark that no soul on earth knows? What liturgies, what chants, what canticles can take away that blight on the soul? But "Through the love of God our Saviour, all will be well. Free and changeless is His favour; all, all is well. Precious is the blood that healed us, perfect is the grace that sealed us." The blood of Jesus washes away our sins. But we must come to total surrender: to believe in your heart and confess with your mouth,

now, not tomorrow, that God raised Him from the dead, and you shall be saved. The door to paradise is not only open; it is wide open.

Chidera took up Charles's own image of the scales. "He asked, what is the measure? The answer may be frightening if we are looking at the scales. The measure is Jesus. God has appointed a day on which He will judge the world by the Man whom He has ordained. The standard is Christ. So there is really no outweighing. Anything that does not meet the standard is cut off. That is why the only way to be assured is to come inside Jesus Christ, who becomes our righteousness."

Charles answered honestly. "The terrifying thing, I hear what you say, is that of course Jesus has set such an incredibly high bar to jump over. Some would say an impossible bar. His righteousness is so huge and overpowering, how can we ever even get into the shadow of that? Who are we poor worms to get anywhere close to that? That's the difficulty for me, I think."

"Indeed," Chidera said, "it would be very difficult if the requirement were that you come to Him and are immediately as perfect as He is. But the requirement of Jesus is trust." Whenever we fall short, he said, we fall on His mercy and ask His forgiveness, and He who began a good work in us will complete it. He used Ralph as his example. "When a baby is born, nobody says to it, now become a man like Ralph by your own power. It is the father's responsibility to feed it and care for it until it grows up. And if the baby soils its nappy, you do not fling it away. We men are wicked, but we would not do that to our baby. You clean it and change it, over and over again. That is what Christ does for us. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." Ekaba ended, "Christ in you is your assurance. It is not a guess. It is an assurance."

Before we parted, someone recalled the words of Jesus, "Be of good cheer": that what seems so complicated and daunting has already been taken care of.

Charles spoke warmly of a friend he wished we could have met, Dr John Sentamu, the Ugandan former Archbishop of York, once a lawyer and a tribal chief, who had been persecuted under Idi Amin, and who now lives in retirement near Berwick, where his wife serves a parish on the Tweed. Sentamu had blessed Charles's house, every door and window, with holy water. Charles told us, with evident feeling, that in retirement Sentamu had been barred by the Bishop of Newcastle from preaching or administering Holy Communion, over an old matter from his time in Uganda, which Charles called a complete disgrace. He wished us well in Exeter, and we parted with great warmth.

We record Charles's answers as he gave them, because they are the honest answers of a man near the end of a long life, and because they are the answers of a great many in England: a man who has gone to church all his life, who prays for his dead, and who still hopes only that the scales will tip a little in his favour. We left him in the hands of the God who is good, and just, and merciful. That afternoon we spent with Ralph's family at Budle Hall.

Wednesday and Thursday

On Wednesday we had lunch with a man named Nicholas. He spoke with us about the new world of artificial intelligence and the loss of privacy that comes with it, and about Chidera's own journey: how he left Nigeria for Canada about ten years ago after trying to enter Oxford and Cambridge and universities in America, studied computer science, and now, with his father, has started a fish farm in Nigeria. When the conversation turned to our purpose, Nicholas asked whether it was proselytising. Chidera answered that the word was a religious one, and that the more accurate word was the Lord's own: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel." There is no religion to be converted into, he said, only good news to be told: the



Thomas Kitchin's eighteenth-century map of Northumberland, dedicated to Charles Bennet, Earl of Tankerville, and showing the seats of the nobility and gentry of the county. Photographed on Tuesday 24 February.

good news of salvation to the wretchedness of the human condition. Nicholas told us candidly where he stood:

I think I probably am a follower of Jesus Christ, but almost certainly not quite in the way that you are. I very much admire Jesus as a historical figure. It is our culture, and we value our culture. I'm a regular churchgoer by modern standards; I probably go once a month or so, and when I do go I enjoy it. I might be one of those people you most disapprove of, in the sense that we go to church but we are not very strong believers. We go to uphold our position. We go, I suppose, to support people we admire, because we admire some aspects of the Christian method. Not all of it, by the way. But for that reason, I'm very pleased that you're here.

He offered to direct us to a walk along the banks of the Tweed. Thursday was our last full day in Northumberland, and very early on Friday morning, 27 February, we left Budle Hall for the long drive south to Exeter.

PART III

Exeter and the Return

FRIDAY 27 – SATURDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2026

Exeter, and Home

Budle Hall · Exeter · London Heathrow · Calgary and Winnipeg

VERY early on Friday 27 February we took our leave of Budle Hall and of Ralph and Celia and their family, and set out on the long road south. From Bamburgh to Exeter is some six hundred and seventy kilometres, the whole length of England, and the drive took us most of the day.

We went to Exeter to see James and the fellowship that the Lord had given us the previous August. That company had first gathered in Plymouth, where two young men, one of them James, who had driven over from Exeter, heard the word, were cut to the heart, and took ownership of the call, naming themselves the Fellowship of Christ Church. In the months since, the fellowship had moved to Exeter, and had gone on, as we told the gathering at Budle Hall, “running by itself as the Holy Spirit leads”. We had told Ralph’s father on the Tuesday that we wished only to go back and encourage them, strengthen them, and love on them before we went home.

We spent the evening with James. We shared the word of truth with him, preached, and answered his questions, and strengthened him and the fellowship in the faith. James was preparing to be married, and we encouraged and counselled him concerning his marriage and his fiancée. We made no recording of that evening, and so we record it only briefly here; but it was a sweet time, and we left him strengthened.

On Saturday 28 February we drove from Exeter to London Heathrow, some two hundred and sixty-five kilometres, and flew home: Ekaba to Calgary, and Chidera to Winnipeg, each to his wife and children. The mission was over. We had been away fifteen days.

PART IV

The Fruit and the Call

What Remains

WE were in Northumberland for twelve days. We did not go there with a plan, and we did not leave behind an organisation. What we left behind were people, and a fire among them. We set down here, plainly, what remained when we went home.

The church at Bamburgh

A company of believers now gathers in Bamburgh to seek God together in spirit and in truth. It was born on Wednesday 18 February in the sitting room of Andrea and Derek's house, and confirmed at Carol's house on the evening of Saturday 21 February. At its heart are Andrea and Derek, with their household, Chrissy, Robert and David; Andy and Anna of Holy Island, of the Northumbria Community; and Carol, on her farm near St Cuthbert's Cave; with Rachel and others joined to them in prayer. Andrea and Derek have offered their house, which they have always believed the Lord gave them for hospitality, as a place for the church to meet. They agreed to go on meeting after we had gone, and arranged to meet on Friday 27 February, the day we left. We have not appointed any leaders over them, and have no authority over them; Christ is the head of that body. But the Lord has already raised up among them those who call the brethren together, those who lead in worship, and those who bring the word.

Around them

Others were touched and drawn near. On Holy Island, the wider company of the Northumbria Community received the word and prayed over us and sent us out from that ancient sending place, and we laid hands on them in turn. Ian and Deborah of Whittingham, who gather mature believers who have nowhere to go, and Matt, who has come to the county to plant a church, met with us and with Andrea. Bob and Mary of Shilbottle, who serve in a rural ministry, were to meet with Andrea. At Alnwick, the pastor of the Baptist church, Chris, and his wife Caroline received the report of the week with open hearts and delighted in the word from the plane: the first people of an established congregation, in all our time in Northumberland, to receive us with goodwill.

John and Polly

On Sunday 22 February John and Polly heard the gospel in their home, and Polly confessed Christ, renounced the works of darkness, and received prayer for healing in body and mind. The word of truth continued to be ministered to them after we had gone, including clear counsel on the need to marry and to set their household in order in the sight of God. Word has since reached us that they have taken heed and have decided to be married. We rejoice in this.

Those who are still seeking

Some of the fruit is not yet ripe, and we record that too, because the Lord of the harvest knows the times. Ralph, who opened his house and gathered the county to hear us, told us on our last Sunday that he had come to believe much of what we said to be true, “although I haven’t let God into my heart in the way that you were talking about. So I’ve got those first two bits of knowledge, but not the last one.” His father Charles, at ninety-one, told us honestly that he was not at peace with Christ, but still seeking. Charlie told us at Budle Hall that he did not believe and was not coming in, and yet asked whether we could be friends; we told him that we already were. Matthew went home from the gathering with, as he wrote, too many thoughts to run through. Nicholas told us over lunch that he went to church to uphold his position. We have left each of them in the hands of the God who seeks and saves the lost, and we pray for them by name.

Maria

Maria of Andalusia, through whom the Lord opened the door into Spain in August 2025, came from Spain with a friend to be with us, and walked with us to St Cuthbert’s Cave and through Hulne Park. The thread that began with a burst tyre in August now runs from Northumberland to Andalusia and back again.

Exeter

In Exeter, James and the Fellowship of Christ Church were strengthened, and James was counselled concerning his coming marriage.

Ourselves

And we ourselves came home changed. We went expecting to preach, and we did; but we were also taught, by the history of that land, by the saints of Lindisfarne, and by the brethren of Northumberland, who spoke to us of love, of listening, of the unflinching gaze of acceptance, and of clearing out the old wells rather than digging new ones. We have come home with a burden for that land that we did not have before, and we intend, God willing, to return, and to go out into the streets to the young people of Northumberland.

Rake in the Harvest

WE set out with a word received in the air. Looking back over the fortnight, we can see how exactly the Lord fulfilled it. We set the word and the fulfilment side by side.

“There has already been a stirring before the Lord led us there”

We had thought we were bringing something new to Northumberland. We found that the Lord had been there before us. Andrea and Derek’s devotional had told them on the very Sunday we met them that they would have a divine visitation that day. Anna and Andy had laid their hands on the rock of Bamburgh Castle fifteen years before and prayed for revival, and a company from Denmark had stood on the beach below and asked forgiveness for the Vikings. The brethren of the island already had a poem about donkeys, and people “queuing up to be donkeys”. Andrea had dreamed of donkeys lined up on Bamburgh beach, ready and willing. The Northumbria Community had been praying over “bags of ancient seed” in the castle, and over the stewarding of this place. Andrea and Derek were in the middle of preparing a festival on the theme of harvest. Time after time, when we spoke, the brethren said, *this is what God has already been saying to us*. The harvest was ripe before we came.

“We must be bold to rake in the harvest, and not to shy away from speaking and asking”

We asked. We asked the gentry of Northumberland in Ralph’s drawing room to receive the love of the Father. We asked Andrea and Derek and Ralph, on the Monday morning, “Can we make it happen?” We asked Charles, at ninety-one, “Are you at a state of peace with Christ?” We asked Polly to confess Christ with her mouth, and she did. We asked the brethren to gather and to keep on gathering, even when some of them pushed back. And the doors that had been closed to us by the established churches were opened by the Lord in homes, in a farmhouse, on an island, and in a Georgian drawing room.

“Who we are, our preparation and what we are does not matter at this point”

We did not plan a single meeting. Ralph gathered the first; Andrea arranged the rest by telephone, one day at a time, around the tides. We prepared notes that we did not use, because the word went another way out of the worship. We were tired, and we caught colds. None of it mattered. The God of the harvest was present, and in full control of His work.

“The Master demands to ride donkeys in Bamburgh and Northumberland”

The word about the donkeys was received in Northumberland as though it had been written for that land, because in a sense it had. Chidera taught on Holy Island that the Lord asked not for one donkey but for a donkey and her colt, a picture of vulnerability; that He seeks not the mighty but the available. Andrea prayed that she and Derek were “very willing to be those donkeys, set free and loose because the Master needs them”. Ralph laughed to find himself among them. The brethren on Holy Island consecrated themselves, as we prayed over them, as “donkeys that fear Your name, given to the service of God”.

“The Master has need of you”

This is the message we leave with the people of Northumberland, and with every reader of this account. The Master has need of you. Not of your reputation, your learning or your standing, but of you, loosed from whatever has held you, and brought to Him, that He may ride into your town and your county and your nation upon you.

Challenges and Resistance

LUKE did not hide the opposition the apostles met. He recorded the riot at Ephesus, the beating at Philippi, the mob at Thessalonica, the sneering on the Areopagus, and the sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas. We have told each obstacle of this mission on the day it happened. We gather them here in one place, so that those who pray for this work may pray with understanding, and so that no one imagines the harvest was raked in without a struggle.

Doors that did not open

- **Wooler, Sunday 15 February.** Ralph took us to the Pentecostal church at Wooler, expecting the pastors to receive us and give us opportunity to speak. They did not recognise us or give us any platform. Ralph was disappointed.
- **The established church.** Ralph wrote to Andrea before we arrived that the established church had not opened its doors to us. On the Monday Andrea spoke of “the reaction you got from the establishment”, and Ralph of his shock at seeing “doors slammed”. The brethren told us that the vicar of Bamburgh, whom they had welcomed and invited to everything for years, had never once taken up their invitations, and that the curate, though open to the Spirit, was constrained by the system. A guest at Budle Hall concluded, “Now I’m starting to understand the hostility of the Church of England towards you guys.”
- **The conventional churches.** Ralph’s father Charles told the gathering at Budle Hall that when the meeting was being arranged, the Anglican Communion and the other conventional churches were approached, “and, in a manner of speaking, they ran like rabbits”.
- **A meeting closed, Monday 16 February.** Andrea asked the Lord to shut the door on any meeting that was not of Him. One meeting at which she expected us to be welcomed closed, in her words, “very firmly”.
- **A vicar who did not come, Sunday 22 February.** A meeting arranged through Ralph with a vicar and another person did not take place. The vicar did not come, and Ralph did not know why.
- **Refusals.** When Ralph telephoned people on our behalf, some asked for more information, some said yes at once, and one answered, in Ralph’s words, “Fuck off.”

Questions and objections

We were questioned hard, and we welcomed it. At Budle Hall a guest felt “personally attacked” at being called part of “the degenerate loop”. Charlie told us plainly that he did not believe and was not coming in. Others pressed us on religious violence and on whether we were Christians only because we were born

into Christian homes. Helen challenged us, rightly, that in all we had said there had been no mention of women; we took the correction, and Andrea counselled us on it the next morning. When one of us said that the institutional church had become a habitation of devils, a guest answered, “Devils is strong.” At Budle Hall on the Monday evening we were asked how the God of the Old Testament could command such violence. Charles asked whether he should pray for the dead, and admitted that he was not at peace with Christ. John asked why a lifelong churchgoer and churchwarden should need to be born again, and put to us the question of the suffering of an innocent child.

Among the brethren

Not all the resistance came from outside. The brethren were honest with us, and we record their honesty with gratitude. Anna told us that she had watched us all week for “red flags”, and had caught herself resisting, though each time she was reassured. On Holy Island one of the brethren warned us that the word *church* carries so much baggage in England that people hear it and think, “Oh God, not another church.” At Carol’s house on the Saturday evening, when Ekaba pressed that the practical meaning of what the Lord had said was that they must meet regularly, the same brother pushed back firmly: “To be prescribing a meeting is not what we have heard. Otherwise what we’re taking is your agenda.” On the Thursday, when Ekaba said that Aidan need no longer lie on the beam, Anna answered that Aidan had known the cross well, but had been crying out against injustice. These were not quarrels. They were the honest wrestling of believers who wanted to hear God and not merely to follow men, and every one of them ended in agreement and prayer.

Weariness in the land

Carol told us that the people of Northumberland are tired: worn by hardship, sickness, and the weight of carrying others, and that their children have turned from the faith. Her own youngest son, filled with the Spirit from the womb, now says of it, “What a load of crap,” and she said it broke her heart. Carol herself, after fifteen years of fostering, was so weary that on the Wednesday she could hardly receive. Andrea and Derek have walked for thirty years through illness, intensive care and the struggles of their adopted children. Polly has lived for twenty-five years with psychosis and with multiple sclerosis. The land we came to is not a comfortable land.

Spiritual opposition

Chidera told the guests at Budle Hall that before we set out, devils came to threaten him and to make him afraid. Ekaba spoke on the Thursday of “ancestral holdouts” in Bamburgh that must be let go. The brethren spoke of the land as a battlefield, and of contesting that comes from outside because the enemy fears that the place will again be all that it once was. We do not make more of these things than the Scriptures do; but we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

The cost to our households

Ekaba left his wife alone in Calgary with an eighteen-month-old and an eight-month-old, and a third child due in June. Chidera left his wife in Winnipeg with three boys, the eldest four and the youngest just turned one. We worked at our employment in the evenings on our laptops, because no mission board sends or funds us; the journey was paid for out of our own wages. On the Tuesday we were both worn out, and had caught colds in the unfamiliar climate.

ITINERARY AND DISTANCES

The Journey at a Glance

DATE	WHERE AND WHAT	DISTANCE
Fri 13 – Sat 14 Feb	Calgary and Winnipeg to London Heathrow by air; the Word of the Lord for Northumberland received in flight. Heathrow to King's Cross, rail to Newcastle, taxi to Newcastle Airport, hire car to Budle Hall.	c. 7,000 km
Sun 15 Feb	Morning service at the Pentecostal church, Wooler; no platform given. Evening gathering of the gentry of Northumberland at Budle Hall; the gospel account; Andrea and Derek respond.	49 km
Mon 16 Feb	Breakfast with Ralph's family. With Andrea and Derek in Bamburgh: a church of His purpose; the fear of the Lord. Evening at Budle Hall: the violence of the Old Testament; Lindisfarne.	—
Tue 17 Feb	Holy Island: morning office; the gathering; the donkey and her colt; impartation and sending; the hill. Afternoon in Bamburgh with Ian, Deborah and Matt; the tower of refuge.	47 km
Wed 18 Feb	The church at Bamburgh is planted: first gathering at Andrea and Derek's house, with Andy, Anna and Carol.	—
Thu 19 Feb	Second gathering: love for the land; Andrea's testimony; "clear out the house". Evening among the aristocrats of Bamburgh.	—
Fri 20 Feb	No meeting recorded.	—
Sat 21 Feb	Bamburgh Castle. St Cuthbert's Cave with the brethren and Maria of Andalusia. Evening at Carol's house: "raise an altar".	40 km
Sun 22 Feb	A walk through Hulne Park and Hulne Priory, Alnwick. Afternoon and evening with Polly and John.	55 km
Mon 23 Feb	With Andrea and Derek: the maturity of the priesthood; leadership; the ministry of the word; a word to Robert.	—
Tue 24 Feb	With Ralph's father Charles, aged ninety-one. Afternoon with Ralph's family.	—
Wed 25 Feb	Lunch with Nicholas.	—
Thu 26 Feb	Last full day in Northumberland.	—
Fri 27 Feb	Budle Hall to Exeter by road. Evening with James and the Fellowship of Christ Church.	674 km
Sat 28 Feb	Exeter to London Heathrow by road; home to Calgary and Winnipeg by air.	266 km

Road distances within Northumberland are round trips from Budle Hall, measured along the road network. Flight distance is the approximate great-circle distance from Calgary; the flight from Winnipeg is somewhat shorter.

Prayer Points

WE ask all who read this account to labour with us in prayer for Northumberland. Pray by name, and pray without ceasing.

1. **For the church at Bamburgh.** That Andrea and Derek, Chrissy, Robert and David, Andy and Anna, Carol, Rachel and all who gather with them would persevere in meeting, in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers; that fear would be put away; that the altar would be raised and kept burning; that the Lord would add to them daily.
2. **For the ministry of the word.** That the Lord would raise up among them those who labour in the word, who can open the Scriptures and set the bread of life on the table.
3. **For love for the land.** That the anointing of love the brethren asked for would flow through them to the weary, the isolated and the young of Northumberland, and that hard ground would be softened.
4. **For the young people of Northumberland,** who have heard and rejected what they think is Christianity, that they would encounter the living Christ; and for our return to preach to them in the streets.
5. **For Ralph and Celia and their family,** who opened their house to us and to the gospel: that Ralph, who has "the first two bits of knowledge", would come to the third, and put his whole trust in Christ; and for Keith and all the household.
6. **For Charles,** at ninety-one, still seeking, that he would come into the assurance of peace with Christ.
7. **For John and Polly,** in their coming marriage; for Polly's full healing in mind and body; and that John would know that no labour for God is in vain.
8. **For Charlie, Matthew, Nicholas, Helen,** and every guest at Budle Hall, that the seed sown there would take root.
9. **For Sergei, Oksana and Valentina,** who fled the war in Ukraine, and for all refugees in the county.
10. **For the believers within the established churches of the county,** that they would be carriers of what God is doing; and for Chris and Caroline at Alnwick.
11. **For Ian and Deborah, Matt, Bob and Mary,** and every gathering of believers in north Northumberland.
12. **For James and the Fellowship of Christ Church in Exeter,** and for James in his marriage.

13. **For Maria of Andalusia**, and for the church at Baza and Caniles.
14. **For our households**, for Ekaba's wife as she prepares to give birth, and for Chidera's wife and sons, who bear the cost of our going; and for the churches in Calgary and Winnipeg.

Until He Comes

THIS account began with a burst tyre on a road in Northumberland, and it ends with a church in a sitting room in Bamburgh. Between the two lies nothing that we arranged. The Lord did it.

We have written it down for two reasons. The first is to give thanks. The God of Aidan and Oswald, of Cuthbert on his island and Finan at Lindisfarne, is still the God who comes looking for men and women. He found Andrea at her father's bedside, and Polly in her own home, and two tired missionaries at the side of a road. He is the God who answers prayer. Anna and Andy prayed on the castle rock fifteen years ago, and the answer came from Calgary and Winnipeg.

The second is to call you, the reader, into the same work. The harvest is plentiful, and the labourers are few. There are villages in Northumberland, and in every county and nation, where the wells are choked with debris and the ground is hard and the people are weary, and where the Holy Spirit has already been stirring hearts, waiting for someone to be bold enough to speak and to ask. You do not need a mission board, or a title, or a seminary degree. We have none of those things. You need to be available. You need to be willing to be a donkey.

The Lord Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." We believe that we are living in the last days. We believe that He is coming again. Until He comes, there is work to be done, and there is no better way for a man or woman to spend a life than to labour for the food that does not perish.

So we say to you what we were told to say to the people of Bamburgh and Northumberland:

The Master has need of you.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Ekaba Bisong & Chidera Bisong
Calgary and Winnipeg, September 2026