niscu West Cumbria

Working with schools and churches

AUTUMN PRAYER LETTER 2025

Welcome to our Autumn Prayer Letter

Enjoy reading about NISCU activities with many continuing links with schools and some exciting new ones!

A little early perhaps but we wish all our supporters a happy and peaceful Christmas.

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" John 8:12



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



Hello from Lesley

Firstly, let me just say a huge thank you to everyone who receives this prayer letter and/or the weekly Stand in the Gap weekly prayer bulletin that details our activities for the week. (If you don't receive Stand in the Gap and would like to, please see how at the end of my article). Your support is invaluable to all that we do and it makes a huge difference to know that our work is being prayed for. And God is surely answering those prayers!

Good news – to be thankful for in schools:
Last term I mentioned that two schools - **Holme St Cuthbert's** and **Bassenthwaite** that were going through leadership changes over the summer and I was waiting to hear if they would still like NISCU involvement. I'm delighted to say that they are still happy to have me come in half-termly and weekly respectively. Please pray for work there and blessing for the new managements as they settle in.

After a long wait, prayer and perseverance – I've started a Christian Union in **Keswick School**, in collaboration with Angus Wightman (pastor of King's Church, Keswick), Steve Weston (Youth and Families Pastor at St Aiden's Bridekirk) and Cat Kinghan (Derwent Network Youth Church leader). We would really like to see the CU used to support, equip and encourage the Christian young people to grow in their faith and also to be a safe space for anyone who would like to explore the Christian faith perhaps for the first time. 15 young people came along to the first meeting which was hugely encouraging. Please pray for the CU that God would use it to bless and encourage the young people and also that it would be a positive witness in the school for Jesus.

The Ark lunch club at **St Bridget's School Brigham** has been blessed with 24 reception and infants' children coming along each Thursday lunchtime this term. Please pray that as well as having fun and hearing Bible stories that seeds of the gospel will be being planted in each child.

Please give thanks that Collective Worship and assemblies are continuing to be well received in **Bridekirk, Braithwaite, All Saints, Dean, Crosscanonby, St Herbert's, Allonby, Flimby, Richmond Hill** and **Oughterside**. Please pray that the Holy Spirit would inspire the plans made and the words that are spoken in these schools, and that the Gospel would be heard by both the children and adults.

Also give thanks for the **Cockermouth School** and **Keswick School** lunchtime games clubs – a safe space where relationships are being built with the young people. Please pray that they feel they can talk to the leaders if they need to.

Finance:
Give thanks for a much appreciated grant over the next 3 years from the Stobart Newlands charitable trust and a bequest from a faithful supporter of NISCU.

Bad news – something to pray about
As mentioned in our yearly AGM and prayer bulletins, NISCU West Cumbria is still in a precarious financial situation. Even with the donations detailed above, the current finances mean that the difficult decision was made to cut my weekly hours from 32 to 28, meaning a real time reduction of just over half a day. This has meant that afterschool clubs in two different schools have now stopped. The bottom line is that to maintain my own and Laura's hours in schools we need a fairly substantial uplift in regular giving. We are also looking at applying for funding from charities that support Christian schools' work. Please pray that regular giving would increase and the grant applications that will be submitted going forward will be successful.

Would you like to receive **"Stand in the Gap",** an emailed weekly prayer diary with items to pray about day by day? If so contact Laura with your email at laura.smith@niscu.org.uk



Hello everyone from Laura!

The Autumn term is well underway now and things have got off to a great start. I am delighted to share that I am now in **Netherhall School, Maryport**, twice a week. On Mondays I go in with Helen Faulds and the **Listening Service**. This is a real privilege, to sit and listen to teenagers one to one and let them have your undivided attention and a safe space to share whatever is on their minds. Unlike other organisations, we can (silently) *pray* for these teenagers whilst we are there and invite Jesus in to soften hearts and open minds. I also go in on Thursdays to run '**Rooted'** with 8 Year 7 girls. It is a Scripture Union 10-week programme looking at issues such as identity, self-worth, influences, social media & friendships. There is always a faith element and a chance to explore what they think God has to say.

I am also doing 2 sessions of '**Rooted'** at **Jericho Primary School**, **Whitehaven**. I thoroughly enjoy these mentoring type sessions as it is wonderful just to see these young people for who they are, without all the external pressures. I am praying that the Lord will be glorified in it as the school staff look on and see lives transformed, not by me but by Jesus Christ. *Please pray* that the profile of NISCU will be raised up as an organisation that has real impact.

I am continuing with **lunch** and **after school clubs** featuring a **Big Questions** slot at the following schools:

- Monkwray Primary School, Whitehaven
- Seascale Primary School
- Whitehaven Academy with Ian Harvie *(the Big Questions part is a new addition this year and a real answer to prayer)*
- Jericho Primary School
- Broughton Primary School

So far this term, Ian and I have had some great discussions at the lunch club within the new Big Questions section. The older Year 9/10 students have been particularly engaged with it and open to discussion about faith. It has been lovely to connect with new Year 7 students and ones who came to my lunch club at Monkwray! It is great to be a familiar face for them as they move from Year 6 to 7 and shows that building relationships does take time but it is all worth it.

In addition to lunch clubs, listening and 'Rooted' I have been involved in RE lessons at **Kells School, Whitehaven** and assemblies at **St Bridget's Primary School, Parton** and **Kells Infants**. I was asked to do 'Bible story Monday' at Kells, which was a very welcome request. The Head mentioned that children just don't know any Bible stories today, which is sad. *Please pray* that children will listen and be drawn in by the stories because they are radical and different and nothing like any story book they have read before.

I am still involved with the **Cockermouth Primary Puppets Team** every Wednesday with Maggie, Edward, John, Richard & Lesley, which I thoroughly enjoy. It is a great way of connecting with a lot of schools in the area and being able to meet senior staff. Hearing laughter from the children always brings a smile to my face and we pray that the truths from the stories we share will embed themselves in the children's hearts. We look forward to taking our new Christmas play 'Yule Tube' into schools in the run up to Christmas.

Thank you again for all of your support and prayers. *Pray* for continued inspiration to bring the Bible alive for children and to "be prepared to have an answer for the hope that I have." Blessings from *Laura*

Contact the Team
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Hello from Primary Puppets

LOOKING BACK!

We do praise God for a most encouraging half-term of assemblies on the theme of Kindness! Here are a few examples of encouragement received from schools:

"A lovely subject that was meaningful to all children from nursery to Year 6!"
"Thank you for your visit. The children loved it!"
" Our younger children said that the puppets made them happy and laugh!"

Comments from individual children:

"Great!" "Loved the puppets!" Brilliant!" Funny!" "Can it be longer?"

LOOKING FORWARD!



Here we are now, already excitedly looking forward to presenting our new Christmas assembly entitled: **'A Very Merry Yuletube Show'!** We do thank God for His envisioning for this assembly, and for the numerous people who have contributed in vital ways towards helping to bring this together: our faithful prayer supporters; scriptwriter/s; the six people who had their voices recorded plus the one who did the recordings; our prop maker etc, etc! And then there's our amazing puppeteers as well!
What a team! Thank you, Lord!

At the start of our assembly, we have a couple of good options which we are still prayerfully considering! Our Starter will then lead into the puppet play.
The main speaking characters in our puppet play are *Duggie Dempster, Mary and Joseph, Cassie a shepherd, Gerald a junior angel, Balthazar a wise man, and Bruce a camel.*

Duggie Dempster is a very lively Youtuber who has his own YouTube channel. *Dougie D* loves to get to the bottom of mysteries, and in this show, he is live streaming from the town of Bethlehem, which he says, *"has been the focus of some wild rumours and crazy stories recently!"* So – *Dougie D* wants to get to the truth! To do that, he conducts a series of interviews - with some helpful backup video footage in between!
Our puppets act out these interviews and video content.

Dougie's first interview is with *Joseph and Mary*, after the birth of their new baby, Jesus. They claim that His birth was a *"spectacular supernatural miracle"* and that *"Jesus is God's son who has come to save the world!"* When *Dougie D* sees the video content (acted out by our puppets!), he says: "*Wow, what a video! What do you think viewers – angels captured on video! That's amazing!"* Then comes our first song, called 'A Trip to Bethlehem!'

Dougie's next studio guests are *Cassie* (a shepherd) and *Gerald* (a real-life junior angel). *Cassie* tells *Dougie* that *"it was the most fantastic night of her life*", and *Gerald* claims it was *"so exciting to be involved in God's plan to save the world!"*
Drone footage (again acted out by the puppets), illustrates what happened that night when the angel *Gabriel* appeared to them, and told them that *"the long-promised Saviour has been born in Bethlehem!"* He told them where to find the baby lying in a manger.
Then comes our second song called, "Oh what a glorious night".

Finally, *Dougie* introduces us to his last guests – *Balthazar*, known as a Magi, and his camel called *Bruce*, who live many miles to the East of here. During this interview, *Balthazar* tells how he and his friends are astronomers who have studied the stars, looking for the sign of a new king they had read about in God's Book. He tells how they loaded up their camels and followed the star to find the king for themselves – the new king God had promised!
When *Dougie* asks if they did find this King, Balthazar says: *"Yes – we found the new king – the Baby Jesus. There was no doubt – we knew it as soon as we saw him – he is going to rescue the world!"*
Dougie D finishes his show, by saying:*".....That's me, Duggie D, checking out of this episode, and confirming that the wild rumours heard about Bethlehem are true – Jesus, God's son and saviour of the world was indeed born here last week! Glory to God in the highest! Goodbye!"*
Our final song is 'Best Day Ever'.

Thanking you all once again, for your faithful support in prayer! *Maggie, Julie and Angie*

Prayer Diary

Mon 3 Nov: Workington/Whitehaven PPT - Christmas assembly practice
Wed 5 Nov: Cockermouth PPT – final practice for Christmas assembly.
Mon 10 Nov: Workington/Whitehaven PPT - Christmas assembly practice
Wed 12 Nov: Cockermouth PPT – Christmas assembly at Dean School
Mon 17 Nov: Workington/Whitehaven PPT - Christmas assembly practice
Wed 19 Nov: Cockermouth PPT assembly at Bassenthwaite School
Sat 22 Nov: Cockermouth PPT practice for Cockermouth Lights Switch-on
Sun 23 Nov: Cockermouth PPT performing at the Christmas Lights Switch-on
Mon 24 Nov: Workington/Whitehaven PPT - Christmas assembly practice
Wed 26 Nov: Cockermouth PPT at St Herbert's School in Keswick. (2 assemblies)



Sat 29 Nov: Workington/Whitehaven PPT presenting 'A Very Merry Yuletide'
at St John's Church, Hensingham – Christmas Outreach event.
Wed 3 Dec: Cockermouth PPT assembly at Dearham School for 2 assemblies.
Thu 4 Dec: Workington/Whitehaven PPT at Beckstone Primary (2 assemblies)
Mon 8 Dec: Workington/Whitehaven PPT- Christmas assembly at Moor Row Primary
Wed 10 Dec: Cockermouth PPT – Christmas assembly at St Michael's Primary, Bothel
Mon 15 Dec: Workington/Whitehaven PPT – assembly at Westfield School, Workington in St Mary's Church
Wed 17 Dec: Cockermouth PPT – Christmas assembly at Crosscanonby St John's CofE
Thu 18 Dec: Workington/Whitehaven PPT – Christmas assembly at Mayfield School

Primary Puppet Team Leaders
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And finally …. A message from Listener Paul

Have you ever thought **"What can I do to change the world?"** or wondered **"Why did God give me two ears and one mouth?"** * If you have, then listen up! The **NISCU 121 Listening service** may be for you.

Increasingly research is supporting evidence that children who feel overlooked and undervalued do not develop into mature well-adjusted adults. We know it, even as adults, that our voice needs to be heard by others and that is what the 121 Listening Service does, it changes the world by listening to those who through no fault of their own are often overlooked and not given a chance to use their voice.

Now I must confess to an element of mis-selling by our CEO, Nick, as having completed the training, which is quite frankly excellent and worth doing just for your own mental health, I imagined spending time listening to angst ridden teenagers. Instead, my wife Suzanne and I spend a morning a week in a lovely Junior School listening to Year 4s and 5s talk about football, their pets, the last school trip, whatever is on their mind; anything they want to. For them it's not Listening but TTT, Time To Talk! An opportunity to share with an adult what is important in their lives; what is making them happy and what is making them sad. It's recognition and being given time to express how they feel, without judgement. It really is easy and yet so profound.

Early on a teacher admitted that she would "love to have the time to listen to every child more", effectively to be interested in them as (young) people rather than one of a class of twenty or more. Since then, we have seen shy children become more confident in expressing themselves, the over-anxious and nervous calm down and open up. We only see a few students each week but the staff clearly see a difference and value the service. It is a joy to be truly welcomed into the school, to be part of that community and to support the hardworking school teams. And it is so easy – training takes 2 days** (provided by NISCU), you need a DBS (sponsored by NISCU) and a school that needs you (found by NISCU). You might never have a safeguarding issue to raise or a teenager burst into tears but in giving primary age children Time To Talk, I have learnt that we are changing their worlds for the better.

* It's because we should listen twice as much as we speak
** Day 1 – Effective listening skills & Day 2 – Listening in a school context

Interested in becoming a listener? Want more information?
Contact Jane Callow at jane.callow@niscu.org.uk



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Would you prefer your printed prayer letter as an email copy? To change your current choice let us know by email or writing, at the above address.