



# SUNDAY 8 MARCH 2026

## DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

**The Parishes of:** Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington  
Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

### ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent (A) - John 4: 5-42

Start a conversation and you don't know where it will end up. Friendships, marriages, journeys, songs, books, films, poems and life-changing events started with a few words – a question, a greeting that became an invitation, an intro to a new world.

Being noticed and making contact creates something new, whether sharing agreement or difference, teaching or being taught. It moves things on and spawns other conversations and outcomes. Looking back, it's fair to ask sometimes if there's such a thing as coincidence, being in the right place at the right time, or was life intended to unfold this way as a gift from on high?

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well and asks for a drink of water. It's the start of a conversation. The consequences were extensive and life-giving to some unexpected strangers. Jesus shares our humanity. He's also a rule-breaker when convention limits his contact and overrides the dignity that characterises his relationships. A Jewish man starting up a conversation with a lone Samaritan woman upset inherited taboos, but he doesn't let it stand in his way. He's also in need. He's thirsty and has no bucket to reach the water in the well.

The woman's suspicions soften as Jesus' manner triggers her curiosity. She also thirsts, but not for water. The conversation surfaces her failed relationships, being let down five times with recurring hurt and an unenviable reputation. Coming to the well during the midday heat to return carrying a heavy pot of water suggests she's opting for a time to avoid meeting those who sit in judgement. The Lord doesn't criticise but brings the living water of God's love and acceptance. She sees Jesus as a prophet before he reveals himself as the Messiah.

She now has a new mission – sharing her discovery of Jesus with the people of the city. She's persuasive enough for crowds to come to see Jesus for themselves, leading to his spending two days with them. They'll testify to their own experience of the Messiah following the woman's witness. Her own curiosity and spiritual thirst led to many folks meeting the Lord, bringing their own issues and the skeletons in their cupboards, as they absorbed Jesus' teaching and came to know they were accepted and forgiven.

This Gospel episode began with a conversation. Through the neediness of an ostracised woman at a well, through her honesty, her courage and her excitement, many others, equally needy and curious, came to know the Lord. Shyness and secrecy on our part only fools ourselves if we decline the risk of a conversation with the Lord. Jesus' words are encouraging and challenging, 'If you only knew what God is offering'. We can get stuck, become defensive and shrink from engagement. It's said we speak internally to ourselves at about 600 words a minute. Intentionally, let Jesus in on the chat because he knows it all anyway. When our thirst meets his, the door opens on a future we can't even imagine.



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

### ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

#### Pope Francis on human trafficking

We cannot ignore the fact that in cities human trafficking, the narcotics trade, the abuse and exploitation of minors, the abandonment of the elderly and infirm, and various forms of corruption and criminal activity take place. At the same time, what could be significant places of encounter and solidarity often become places of isolation and mutual distrust. Houses and neighbourhoods are more often built to isolate and protect than to connect and integrate. The proclamation of the Gospel will be a basis for restoring the dignity of human life in these contexts, for Jesus desires to pour out an abundance of life upon our cities (*cf. John 10:10*). The unified and complete sense of human life that the Gospel proposes is the best remedy for the ills of our cities, even though we have to realise that a uniform and rigid program of evangelisation is not suited to this complex reality. But to live our human life to the fullest and to meet every challenge as a leaven of Gospel witness in every culture and in every city will make us better Christians and bear fruit in our cities.

*The Joy of the Gospel—para 75*