

# Being With Jesmond



Jesmond  
UNITED REFORMED  
CHURCH

**cultivating belonging in this place**



*A budget with a vision  
for Jesmond United Reformed Church*

**2024**

# Introduction

Jesmond URC has been given a vision of 'being with' the Jesmond community, using Jesus' life as a model of approach for developing a ministry that starts with 'belonging' by being with people, sharing in their stories, and discovering what we want to do together in this community. We believe that there is almost nothing we should be doing in Jesmond that is not alongside other community partners, whether secular, ecumenical, and interfaith. Our role in this is to expand belonging to everyone in our midst, as Jesus did, and offer dynamic worship to continue our Christian calling to foster belonging.



## The future we imagine participating in includes:

- The church becoming more of a communal hub and community centre
- Technology becoming more important in how we connect with one another
- That an authentic church will be synonymous with care for creation
- People will want healthy face-to-face relationships to counterbalance technology overload
- Varied forms of music, with joyful congregational singing, is a thing of the *future*, and we will invest in new forms of music that include a varied congregation in age, race, and socioeconomic class
- Worship will display a blend of various cultures coming together
- Being able to share in each other's stories will help us understand how God's story is at work amongst us, and will drive our discipleship together

How we participate in being with Jesmond is guided by five values prayerfully identified in our 2022 'Futures Literacy Lab':

- **Community:** a deep sense of our connection to one another, and a sense that community is at the heart of the Christian life.
- **Contemplation:** equipping people to develop the inner capacity to quiet our 'monkey minds' and sit in silence, creating space for deep reflection necessary for personal growth.
- **Creativity:** Thomas Aquinas said the nearest thing to contemplation is play. We are developing the creative capacity of our church to be a place where people can creatively explore their gifts in life-giving and life-affirming purposes.
- **Care:** we are growing into a place where those seeking to follow Jesus can live out our interdependence and sharing the joy and pain caused by injustices, whether ecological, economic, social, racial, gender, or generational.
- **Celebration:** recognising that pain and anxiety that infect so many lives, we find ways to celebrate Jesus, Justice, and Joy in all our acts of service, fellowship, and discipleship.

Our vision leads us to find ways to connect with those who live in the immediate area of Brandling Park, particularly:

- People living in South Jesmond, our immediate neighbourhood, and especially young professionals and families moving into the area
- Students, of whom represent over 60% of Jesmond's population
- People living in nearby sheltered accommodation
- Anyone seeking to engage with a 'just and generous' Christianity in Newcastle upon Tyne

Whilst we are continuing to maintain and invest our traditional relationships with members as well, we recognise that even people we have known for years may be unknown to us. Through practicing ways of being with people, we can improve our discipleship in providing care, prayer, and presence as we continue to be the church for one another.

The entirety of the [Futures Literacy Lab can be read here.](#)

## The Future

We are positioned well for the future: our facilities are relatively recently refurbished, we have strong relationships with music programmes throughout the city, and our recent invitations to outreach activities, such as Christmas Eve, the Big Questions Café, and a Repair Café, have not only been well-received, but have encouraged robust participation from community partners who are not normally part of a church. We are in the process of becoming an Eco-Church and a member church of Tyne & Wear Citizens. We are discerning how to be a Real Living Wage certified employer.

Financially, we approach the present moment with healthy reserves and a good plan for continuing income. We have allocated our building assets in ways that both support our church's vision and provides strong income for ministry. The sanctuary has become a celebrated music venue. The hall is sought-after for community events. The former manse, Haldane House, provides essential income to funding our ministries. Even another church, the Newcastle Unitarian Church, has found a Sunday home in the Cuthbert Room, with the stated hope of not just being a tenant, but a ministry partner in relating to our community.





# How we are using our resources to live into the vision we have been given

To continue to connect with people around our vision, we are investing in:

- **A Church-Related Community Worker** as a shared ministry with St James's United Reformed Church, to address loneliness and isolation in city centre communities of students, service-sector employees, elderly people, and young professionals moving into the city centre communities. *This position was approved by the Accreditation Sub-Committee pending approval by Northern Synod's Pastoral Committee. This approval came with stated Northern Synod support.*



- We have set aside £6,560 each year for the next five years (£3,280 for 2024) for expenses and project costs associated with this ministry, for a total investment of £32,800 over five years.

- **Community ministries.**

- **Big Questions Café.** We continue to engage with people around 'Big Questions' in the years going forward. This activity has increased our relationships with our neighbours, and even led to the creation of the Repair Café. We incur a net loss of £3,150pa for this ministry, but recognise that the relationships we receive in exchange are well worth the investment.



- **Repair Café.** This ministry boasts participation from dozens of people outside the church as we not only repair stuff, but communal fabric through relationships forged during the café. Start-up costs are covered by a Synod grant, and we will assess future costs going forward with our partners.



- **A Pioneer Children, Youth, & Families Worker**, funded by Northern Synod, to work with children, youth, and families at Jesmond, West End, and St Andrew's churches, identifying and developing relevant ministries that connect people in disparate communities in the city. This person could help

organise the team that takes on Messy Church and other outreach activities. *This position is being actively advertised.*

- We have committed to putting aside £600pa for the next three years (£450 for 2024), for a total investment of £1,650.
- **Youth Opportunity Scheme employees**, to coordinate activities and promotional material.
  - We have set aside £500 per year to provide additional training at Seedbeds and Tyne & Wear Citizens for people employed in this scheme, in addition to supporting what Synod is already offering.

- **Justice ministries,**

- by being an active part of Tyne & Wear Citizens, paying £700pa in dues and encouraging our leaders to attend their training activities in community leadership and engagement. Being part of Citizens could expand our relationships with several organisations throughout the city centre, raising our profile whilst providing opportunities for members and adherents to participate directly with broad-based organising efforts.
- Participating in the formation of an ecumenical Inclusive Church network with St James's URC, Jesmond Methodist Church, St George's Church, Jesmond, Newcastle Unitarian Church, and Newcastle Cathedral, which seeks to welcome people from a variety of backgrounds and identities, including LGBTQ+ people, and people from different socio-economic, ability, and cultural backgrounds.



- **Becoming an eco-church.**

- An authentic church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must take our obligation to creation seriously. We have joined the Business Energy Savings Team (BEST) programme through the North of Tyne Combined Authority to conduct an audit, identify where energy efficiency improvements can be made, and identify grants for which we can apply. We have allocated £5,000pa for the next three years to support this effort (for a total of £15,000), which could include formally becoming an A Rocha Eco Church.



- **The '1888 Project',** in concert with St George's, Jesmond, to:

- Promote the industrial heritage of Jesmond, linked by both churches being built in 1888;
- Repair and restore the historic organs of both churches;



- Provide a heritage trail linking the churches and other areas of industrial importance to Newcastle

- In addition to seeking Heritage Lottery Funding and gifts from the congregation and community, we are directly investing £12,500pa for the next two years, for a total of £25,000, 10% of the total toward the £250,000 total we are

seeking for Jesmond URC as part of this joint effort.

- **Providing a space for contemplation** by supporting and participating in pastorate-level retreats to Holy Island and Iona, and finding ways to support Quiet Days in the pastorate.



The Community Garden at Haldane House is a continuing ministry of this church as a quiet space in an urban centre.

- **Investing in our buildings:**

- Last year a five-year property condition review (called a ‘Quinquennial Report’) of Haldane House found areas in need of significant investment to keep it structurally sound, safe, and able to continue to function in ways that support our ministry. We have engaged



the excellent property management skills of Graham Hatt to help us navigate this work. In 2024, we are allocating £50,000 toward urgent repairs to Haldane House, followed by £30,000 in 2025 and £20,000 in 2026, for a total of £100,000 over three years. We are additionally funding refurbishment to the kitchen and bathroom of Haldane House, costing about £20,000 over two years.

- Haldane House building work will be the bulk of what drives us into a deficit each year for the next three years. Good stewardship has enabled us to have the resources in the Manse Fund to cover these costs without the need for grants. However, know these works are necessary to ensure that Haldane House continues to provide income we use to fund our ministry—which currently represents roughly 30% of our total operating income.
- Our church building remains in very good condition, with only minor repairs needed.

- **Music: Bringing our style of worship**, whilst still distinctly Reformed, into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by investing in superb musicians, high quality music that reflects an inclusive Christian faith, liturgies that reflect our values whilst also reflecting the more traditional character of our worship.. We believe that music provides another entry point for belonging, especially as we look to explore new music together with our neighbours.



- Putting £2,000pa aside to help invest in music workshops and new music not only for us, but our neighbours and others in the Synod, exploring such musical leaders as United Adoration ([unitedadoration.com](http://unitedadoration.com) and [About | Elise Massa \(elisemassamusic.com\)](http://About | Elise Massa (elisemassamusic.com))). Dr Alison Shiel is standing up a music team to begin exploring opportunities on our own and as part of the 1888 Project, which could include workshops to explore music and belonging, a possible choral scholarship programme,

and some of the new worship music that matches the character of our church but speaks to the experiences of people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- **Improving our ability to connect** by investing in delivering campus-wide high-speed wi-fi.
- As we become more of a venue for activities in Jesmond we know that robust wi-fi is a demand. Whilst we do not have a figure for this, we will explore quotes soon that help us understand what this might cost.
- **Areas for improvement:**



- One area elders noted in reviewing our budget is a lack of investment in intentional interfaith engagement and with Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people in our community. We challenge ourselves and our church to think more deeply about ways that we could make such engagements going forward.

- We are exploring two ideas for Haldane House Flat 51a, a one-bedroom flat. Currently it is let, but we think there's missional opportunities for it. One idea is that we offer it up as refugee housing, receiving a more modest income but aligning that investment with our goals to be present with those in need of a shelter. Another option is to use it as a flat for visiting scholars, artists, and musicians. To recoup costs and help fund that programme, it could be let out as an 'AirBnB' spot when not in use. Other ideas are welcome!

We are recommending to the church to run a possible deficit between the church and Haldane House operating funds of £66,000 in 2024. We think deficit spending could continue into 2026, with a deficit over £47,000 in 2025 and nearly £15,000 in 2026 anticipated. These are largely deficits spent on investing in our capital assets, but are also driven by significant investments in ministry.

We have been hesitant in the past to run a deficit. However, we know that our current trajectory, whilst not only affordable but which has allowed us to run a comfortable surplus for the past three years, has only enabled us to scratch the surface of what is possible in Jesmond through our ministry. Therefore, not only do we need to make some large investments in our property, but also in ministry as we seek to maintain that momentum. There are a lot of green shoots in our midst, especially in collaborative community ministry.

**We are confident God is calling us into more vibrant and vital years in the future, something well worth investing in.**

[Read the draft budget for 2024-2026.](#)

# The Nazareth Manifesto: Being With God

1. Our calling is to imitate the way God is.
2. Our clue to how to imitate God is to follow the way God is with us in Christ.
3. Our first awareness is the abundance of God and our own scarcity—together with our gratitude that we have been given so many ways to transform our scarcity into God's abundance.
4. It is a miracle of grace that God meets our scarcity through the abundance we discover in those apparently more exposed to scarcity than ourselves.
5. A community seeking regeneration has already within it most of what it needs for its own transformation.
6. We do not configure situations as problems needing solutions.
7. We cannot understand, listen to, be taught by or receive grace from people unless we inhabit their world which we see as valuable for its own sake.
8. There is no goal beyond restored relationship: reconciliation is the gospel.
9. The centre of ministry is worship (being with God); and the centre of mission is being with the disadvantaged and receiving abundance from them.
10. Being with is both the method and goal of social engagement.

*Our church is working with the Nazareth Manifesto as a way to develop our values in ministry.*

*This summary is by Richard Carter in The City is My Monastery, and is from Samuel Wells, A Nazareth Manifesto, pp 27-31*