

Reflections from Keld - Easter 2026



The beautiful village of Keld nestling in the rolling hills of Swaledale, at the halfway point of the coast-to-coast walk, offered a warm and blessed welcome to us as we arrived for the “Minister in Residence” week on Holy Saturday and settled into the Manse.

We awoke early on Sunday morning to find we were not only welcoming the risen Christ but were in for a day of “four seasons.” The weather saw the tail end of Storm Dave that had rattled every window of the Manse on Saturday evening, with sun, wind, rain and snow the order of Easter day.

Faithfully we tied little bags containing a knitted cross and an Easter message of blessing from Keld URC to the railings of the Manse in the hope that they would not be torn away, by the prevailing wind, and they were not.

A visit to Low Row URC to lead worship was a time of real blessing, as the snow came down heavily, followed by brilliant sunshine across the windswept hills, it felt as if God’s real presence was with us, in all its vibrancy.

We could not have received a warmer welcome from the 14 members of the congregation as we worshipped the risen Christ

and shared a time of fellowship with tea and coffee at the conclusion of the service.

Having left some knitted crosses and Easter chicks containing a small Easter egg for people to take, we took our leave and headed back to Keld for an afternoon service in the chapel.

A small congregation made up of just four of us and a field mouse, who paused at the lectern for a little while, before scuttling away – a different experience again, yet something connected and God's presence was with us, as we gave thanks for Christ's resurrection, and the birth of new hope, that could be heard in the bleating of new born lambs, in the field down the hill from the chapel.

Easter Monday – saw a tremendous improvement in the weather, many conversations with the coast-to-coast walkers as they passed the Manse on their way to the next stage of their walk. Greetings cards and crosses were taken from the fence, and Easter eggs warmly received and eaten with a degree of relish, by the children.

Many conversations took place with faith links, either to churches currently attended or recollections of church life with past relatives. There were connections with the Anglican Church, Moravian church and much interest in the the life and work of the chapel here in Keld.

Reflecting on the week, much of my ministry has been about casual encounter, kindness and valuing humanity for what it brings and shares within God's creation.

On Wednesday afternoon I was privileged to spend some time with a group of volunteers meeting in the community orchard at the side of the Chapel. They were celebrating their contribution to

providing tea and cakes throughout the winter in the public hall. Donations received that have helped enable the upkeep of the building and has provided much needed support and camaraderie to a village throughout the winter months.

Much of what happens in the Keld community, relies on the goodwill and support of volunteers, from overseeing the work of the Heritage Centre and upkeep and maintenance of the Manse, to enable it to be let as a B&B to help fund the heritage work.

Throughout my week's stay I offered morning and evening prayer at 9am and 6pm in the Chapel. I was joined on one occasion by one of the coast-to-coast walkers, who was finding the walk a challenge, and wanted time to share a little of his story and have space to talk.

Morning and evening prayer has sustained and deepened my sense of God's presence with me. Despite being in the Chapel on my own for most of the prayer sessions, I took some pre recorded music and sang along to it. I rang the Chapel bell to signify a time of prayer, yet although I often stood in the Chapel alone, I was never alone. God was close at hand. I felt I was being a witness to Christ in the present and honouring the saints that have lived as the community of Keld, throughout the generations and currently. Perhaps for the present generation heritage matters more than faith and worship, yet God still speaks through this community of love and togetherness. Here relationships are strong and deeply connected

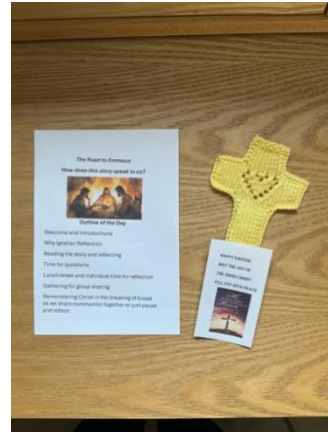
The challenge to those who farm in this Dale, at great cost to themselves, both financially and emotionally, is evident. I was privileged to be invited to visit a local farmer's lambing sheds and talk about the challenge of farming here over the past 50 years.

Hardship and long hours have been met with courage and fortitude, qualities that are to be commended in these present days. Whilst I believe God is present and speaks into these situations, I am not sure that a spiritual connection is made easily for some people. It may be that like all of us, we do at times take our local contexts for granted and like the disciples on the Emmaus Road, fail to notice what is around them or who has joined their journey. A gentle presence however, to be alongside the situation was a real privilege.

This reflection could be read as a soft and sentimental look at the life of a village that on the face of it has changed little over the centuries. Yet it has changed. The tenacity of this community to remain relevant and to honour their heritage is fiercely defended and is to be admired, to do this they have had to change but maybe not always recognised to what extent.

I led a Reflection Workshop on the Thursday of my week's stay. We reflected on the Emmaus Road story, which perhaps links to our own Emmaus Roads walked locally and by the coast to coast and Pennine walkers. For each individual journey there is an individual story to tell. Being available for those casual conversations with people making their "Emmaus Road" journeys, I pray the casual connections I made, have helped people at least to reflect perhaps on their own journeys.

For me, the privilege has been those casual encounters, when a little story has been shared, a burden lifted slightly and people move on to the next stage of their journey just a little "lighter of load." Whether they see this as "of God," I entrust to him, but I have certainly been enriched and blessed by the experience.



Alleluia Alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord, who continues to transform and reshape us to be ever more like him. Amen



A few pointers from my visit:

- The weather will always play a part in how available you can be to people. We were blessed with good weather and conversations from the manse garden was definitely at the centre of my outreach.
- Easter crosses and an Easter message from the chapel made good connections and were “ice breakers” to longer and deeper conversations for some.
- Take the opportunity to recognise the different pace of life in the village, get out for casual conversations. Have coffee in the Keld Green Café and if you can, a couple of meals at Keld Lodge, this supports the local hospitality industry and enables conversations with others.

- Visit the camp site to share time with those camping and eating in the campsite café. Although I understand this is the last season for the campsite café as this is closing.

Casual conversations can open many doors, and it was a one-off comment that enabled me to meet with the volunteers who had kept the winter café going in the public hall.

Take the time to let your soul be fed. The peace and tranquility of the chapel enabled me to find the nearness of God. To pray for the community the walkers and the beauty of God's creation all around me brought a deep sense of spiritual connectedness.

Soak into the context in which you are set for the week, slow the pace and by doing so your heart will be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit – then you discover once more the peace and comfort of Christ.

Thank you so much for this opportunity. Whilst I was there to minister, as so often happens, I found myself being ministered too by others. What a blessing.

Nigel Adkinson (Revd)

April 2026