

Group News



** April * 2017 * April **

Part of the URC Northern Synod – www.urch-northern-synod.org.uk

www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk

Dear All,

It is a few months since I wrote to you to introduce myself as your Synod Pastoral Friend – indeed it was as we approached Christmas and now we are beginning to focus our minds on the central celebration of our faith in the events of Good Friday and Easter Day.

In between these two celebratory events in the Church I have met many of you at the Group Advent service and then some Redcar people at the Covenant Service in the town. I have continued to meet with the Elders and discussing with them the future shape of ministry. You will hear much more about that from your own Elders in due course as Synod seeks ‘A Way Forward’ enabling Churches to be people of faith in each locality – and Synod is willing to put all sorts of resources into this – which is very welcome news! But that is enough of an update for now.

What I would like us to reflect on are those events which give our faith its foundation. From death to life, from despair to hope, from shattered lives to renewed spirit, from sadness to joy.

It is hard to walk with the disciples through the last days of Je-

sus’s human existence because we know the outcome, but sometimes I think we perhaps need to put ourselves in their shoes as they walk into Jerusalem with the crowds all shouting out ‘Hosanna’, as they daily visit the Temple and laugh at Jesus’s ability to always get the better of the various Jewish hierarchy in their attempts to trick him, but their growing unease as they realise that this is stoking up trouble. Sitting with them as they enjoy the Passover meal and listen to Jesus as he breaks the bread and pours out the wine. Their failure to stay awake in the garden and the abrupt awakening when the guards come to arrest Jesus. Their cowardice in the face of this trauma and their far-off witness to the crucifixion of the one who they had said they would follow to the ends of the earth. Their bewilderment when the women come back to say they have found the tomb empty. The slow dawning of all that Jesus was and said and did and the reality of his presence with them as they began to tell others about all they had witnessed and became people of courage and hope and joy and expectation of all that God in Christ had done for the world. People transformed by the love of God

and empowered to witness to the saviour of all humanity.

For it is as we walk with the disciples through this time that we begin to glimpse something of that transformation for ourselves – as we recognise all our doubts and fears, our failings and timidity and yet somehow begin to grasp the ongoing presence of the resurrected Christ in our own lives – and how that can transform us. How it inspires us to dare to hope, turns sadness to joy, our feeble-

ness to courage as we too seek to witness to the love of God in our lives and in the life of the world.

As we prepare to walk through those last days of Jesus's life again may we let the transforming love of God touch us once again so that we might be ready to respond to all that God is calling us as individuals and Churches to in the coming months.

Yours in Christ's service

Hilary

Synod Prayers

- 2rd April: St Andrew's URC, Blackhill; Bethel URC, Chester-le-Street; Christ Church URC, Stanley;
Revd Elaine & Revd Gordon Brown as they retire this month
- 9th April: Our worship and activities during Holy Week and for our Easter Celebrations
- 16th April: St Mark's URC, Amble; Revd Alison Mills
The work of Children & Youth Work Group and for its convenor, Mr Sandy Ogilvie and Synod Children's Work Advisor, Mrs Hannah Middleton
- 23rd April: PCM, ministers in training at Ricatla Ecumenical Seminary
RC Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, Rt Revd Seamus Cunningham
- 30th April: Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner, Mrs Barbara Allen, and our resource of lay preachers across our synod.

Synod News

We made an early start and it was good to be there with plenty of time for coffee and assorted scones and lots of greeting friends, especially Meg who sent her love to everyone. West End URC, where the Refugee Service (WERS) is based, is a bright, well cared for Church and was full to capacity with the 100+ Synod Members and visitors.

The theme of the day was 'Reaching out to others' and the ordinary business of a Synod day was sprinkled with good new stories to inspire us.

One way we were encouraged to do that was by hearing from the Synod Treasurer of the value and importance of Credit Unions in helping responsible saving and borrowing. Any Church wishing to invest in a Corporate Bond with their local CU can apply to the Synod Trust to have their investment doubled, (up to £5000 max). Our nearest Credit Union seems to be in Thornaby.

This was only the start of good news about money - Synod agreed with proposals to make grants for Church building, Manses and Mission projects much more generous and easier to apply for. There are

also new rules for the use of proceeds of sold properties, and for Manse Funds, whose use has long been shrouded in complexity. This is all very welcome and I was moved to speak to thank those who had come to the conclusion that the Synod is not an 'investment society' for it's own enrichment and had at last sought to shift the log jam. Churches can now be more imaginative and bold in their ideas for Mission!. The capital invested, however, does provide two thirds of the money used to run the Synod, the balance coming from the £30ph levy on church members, so it cannot all be given away!. The resolutions were passed unanimously.

We heard about "The Welcome Directory", a list of churches prepared to help ex-prisoners who have found or renewed their faith while inside. The churches receive support and training and the directory acts as a resource for prison chaplains to direct prisoners ready for release to where they will be welcomed. Many prisoners struggle on release and having a ready made community of worshippers to help them can make a big difference. This does not include sex offenders who have their own scheme "Circles of Support."

This brings us on to Safeguarding

children and vulnerable adults. Our group safeguarding policy has been produced at last. We are receiving advice about training and we have the support of Geraldine Sands at Synod level to guide us as we struggle to get to grips with this important issue.

We also heard about a water filtration pump operated by hand that was being manufactured for charities through a joint project between a church and the Rotary Club. A simple idea that was making an enormous difference in countries affected by war or poor water quality.

The 3-church LEP at Oxclose, Washington which was set up in 1970, has sadly come to an end as the members have voted to become a Church of England parish. The secretary thanked everyone for all the, financial and other support which they had received for many years and said that it had been a very difficult decision for everyone. (Those involved with LEPs will know of the immense difficulties of trying to combine three different Church systems and the hours of meetings and paperwork involved) The positive note is that there is still a Church there and we wish them well.

The Way Forward, the strategy for doing things differently to take

account of the greatly reduced number of Stipendiary Ministers available, will involve the setting up of new groups of Churches. Most pressing is the need for Lay Training and much more involvement of lay people in running their church and worship. There really is no longer any such label as a 'fringe member' If the Church is to continue its work and witness, the implementation of this policy will become essential. We each filled in a wish list of what we felt was needed to make our Church flourish. Synod are keen to provide both the training and the funding to enable our churches to fulfil their potential. (More will become apparent at the Meeting on 29th March)

The Moderator of the Youth Assembly, Dan Morrell gave an inspiring plea for the under 25's - about a third of the URC - associated with our Churches. Many don't find our way of doing things in churches exciting at all, and yet they are involved in so much outside the walls of Church, bringing energy and enthusiasm to what they do. They take a passionate interest in major world issues, Brexit, Trident, Climate change etc. and God's place in all this.. Dan quoted the hymn 'For everyone here, a place at the table, for everyone here, clean water and

bread" Are young people welcome in your Church? he asked.

Hannah Middleton who is the Children's Work Advisor urged us all to make at least one link with a Group in our Community. We were introduced to one of her links by the Head of Hazelwood Primary School in Wideopen, where children get a full and rounded education involving lots of music, which came across as a very happy place to be. He thanked the URC for their regular involvement with the school.

We heard from Carla Grosch-Miller and James Breslin about some Feasts and Festivals coming up in 2017 to be celebrated at the October Northern Synod.

The first is to celebrate female ministry. The first ordination of a woman minister in the Congregational Church was 100 years ago. Her name was Constance Coltman (nee Todd). She is a symbol of the way our churches are reformed and reforming, the revelation of the Holy Spirit continues and now female ministry in our denomination is nothing special or unusual. Something to celebrate indeed.

The other great celebration is 500 years since Luther nailed the 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg. Of course the Reformation began before Luther, Ernest Dale

used to visit the Waldensians in Northern Italy, and continued after him but it was still an important event. He is not our reformer but has had a great influence on us as a denomination. The plan is for 500 trees to be planted in Wittenberg. One will not be planted in the name of the URC as, maybe, no-one could decide which committee should decide this. A suggestion has been made that we should ask for one in the name of Northern Synod and we could plant a sister tree at the new garden planned for St Cuthbert's Centre, Holy Island or perhaps the new community orchard at Keld.

It was a long day but there was so much in it that was inspiring. Our moderator David Herbert would refresh us by making us stand up, clap and sing "Glory to God" as soon as we looked as if we had glazed over. As always it was good to find out what other churches are up to and to make new friendships and renew old ones.

We meet next on 7 October at Hexham - do please consider coming if only to get a view of the wider Church. This sort of contact is so positive and restores hope in the future life of our churches at a difficult time for all Christian denominations.

Jane Tomlin & Donna Moore

Guisborough

Did you watch the recent series of “Who do you think you are?” A lot of my friends did and everyone spoke about the episode with the actress Sunetra Sarker. It was fascinating and moving especially to hear about the war for the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. I was barely aware of it at the time, as I was only 9 years old and much more upset about moving from Fife to the Tyne Valley. It did affect our family friends who came to Scotland to study and suddenly found they were unable to go home.

I was reminded of my own ancestors when the Today programme on Radio 4 had a report from Crewe on Budget Day. My grandmother and her siblings grew up in Haslington, a village not far from Crewe. It was my great aunt Nora who was a nurse and a devout Christian, I still have her Bi-

ble, hymn book and nursing badge. I like to think she would be proud of the GP and Lay Preacher I have become. Many of my male ancestors worked for the railways often at Crewe works but my great great grandfather was an engine driver in the age of steam. I have often wondered where my love of steam engines came from, now I know. I grew up in Wylam with the names of Stephenson’s Rocket, Puffing Billy and Wylam Dilly ringing in my ears. I even had a Valentine’s Day excursion to the National Railway Museum at York. I haven’t driven a steam train yet but it remains an ambition.

Ernest’s Memorial Service on the 25th February turned out to be a true celebration of his life. Around 90 people attended and there was a lot of singing, a lot of reminiscing and a lot of laughter. Two members of Guisborough

	Vestry	Communion	Door	Flowers
2nd April	J Reynolds	P Etwell	D Beattie	M Baird
9th April	J Basham		P Etwell	Hilary
Easter Day				B Ward
23th April	D Beattie		J Basham	S Verrill
30th April	M Burrows		M Ward	M Sollett

Guisborough Calendar

Sat	1 st April	8.00am	Bridge Prayer Breakfast in our church
Sun	9 th April		Gift Day
Thu	13 th April	7.00pm	Maundy Thursday, A service of meditation and sacrament with Revd Ken Harris in the Hall.

Weekly

Thursdays	9.30am – 11.30am	Market Day Coffee Morning
Thursdays	11.30am	Quiet Time in Church. Prayers and reflections with Maureen, Madge, Ken and others. Details on church notice board

Choral Society came along to sing, even though they had never known him. They said, after the service, they felt as if they did know him now, and wished they had met him in life. Thank you to everyone who came along and made it such a great occasion and to everyone who contributed to make sure it took place. He was a great musician, teacher, educator, traveller and friend and a person of great faith and Christian service.

I know you are all aware that the churches of the East Cleveland Group have just been through the process of LMMR (Local Mission and Ministry Review). This was a

chance to work out who we think we are? What do we do well, what goes not so well and what can we improve in the future? We have all received some feedback and suggestions of how to progress. By the time you read this, we will all have had our AGM when, hopefully we will have taken up some of these suggestions or

Easter Sunday Worship

We are invited to worship with our friends at St Andrews Marton at 10am On Easter Day where Revd Norma Johnson will be leading worship.

found other ways to enhance our ministry and to progress the projects we feel called to engage with. The theme of the recent Northern Synod was “Reaching out to others”

about which more is written elsewhere. It is no use hiding our light under a bucket or refusing to engage with the community outside our doors. We need to find out where we are needed and make those contacts so that we can be of use.

So the question “Who do you think you are?” is a valid one for us as individual Christians and as churches within the group. We can ask ourselves, we can ask God in prayer and we can ask our community. The answers may surprise us and challenge us but hopefully will lead us to fulfil our potential as people of great faith who live lives of Christian service.

Donna Moore.

Redcar

Easter Coffee Morning

Our Easter Coffee Morning is to be held on Saturday 1st April, from 10am until 12noon. Refreshments include tea / coffee and Hot Cross Bun. Donations please on the day for the cake stall and donations for an Easter themed Tombola (plants, bulbs, chocolate etc) would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Congratulations

Many congratulations to Rev. Norma and George Johnson and Krysia and Brian Reeves who celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversaries in March. Our love and blessings to both couples.

Thank you

Thank you to Rita who organised a very successful concert in the Church by the Shiny Row Choir and Middleton Choir. It was enjoyed by all who attended.

Redcar Calendar

Tues 4th April 2.00pm Chatter

Weekly

Wednesday 10:30am Singing Group

Thursday 9.30am Prayers

10.00-11.30am Pop-in Centre

2.00pm Thursday Payers at Catherine's – all are welcome

St Andrew's

Autism and Daisy Chain

As most of you will be aware autism is a condition where the mind of the autistic person operates in a different, apparently illogical way to the mind of others. As a result autistic folk find it hard to socialise with others often displaying disruptive behaviour which makes life very difficult for them and their families.

Several times a year the Sunday morning coffee proceeds are given to Daisy Chain. This is a local charity established in 2003 by Leslie Hansen whose son was diagnosed with autism at an early age. She was unhappy with the lack of facilities and services not only for autistic children but their families. She dreamt of a haven for children with autism, a place where they could experience something of life that would give them pleasure and was especially for them.

The charity currently helps more than 1,700 families in the Tees Valley area, supports 581 children each week and provides 599 hours of respite for families weekly.

So when your coffee donations go to Daisy Chain you are helping the

charity to continue with the incredible work it does and for that I wish to thank you most sincerely. You will see from the letters I get from Daisy Chain (displayed on the notice board) that the charity is equally grateful for your donation.

Iris Hepburn

Advance Notice

Quiz, Pie and Pea Supper is to be held on Saturday 13th May at 7.00pm. Proceeds in aid of church funds. Details to be announced later.

Ladies' Fellowship

The Ladies' Fellowship had a lovely slide show from Jimmy Anderson of a cruise up the west coast of Norway to Spitzbergen at their last meeting.

Our next meeting will be on Weds. 11th April at 1.30p.m. when Mrs Pat Anderson will be giving a talk on Nepal. All welcome.

Coffee for Charity

19th Feb	Rosemary Fund	£18.00
26th Feb	Coatham House	£20.00
5th Mar	Riding for the Disabled	£18.00
12th Mar	Boys' Brigade	£25.70

St Andrew's Calendar

Weekly/Monthly

Boys Brigade

Details available from ministers and church elders

Preachers

	Marton 10.00am	Guisborough 9.30am	Redcar 11.00am
2-Apr	M Harris	K Harris Communion	N Johnson
9-Apr	MartonWT	K & M Harris	R Roseburgh
Easter	N Johnson Communion	Guis Folk at 9am Join Marton after	J Martin Communion
23-Apr	M Locke	M Harris	D Moore
30-Apr	J Harper	N Johnson	K Harris

Material for the May Magazine to church editors by Sunday 16th
April please

Group Editor – R Wheeler, 2C Gypsy Lane, Nunthorpe,
Middlesbrough, TS7 0DX.
Telephone: 01642 300546.
Email: roger.wheeler5@virginmedia.com