

Group News



** 2015 * February * 2015 **

Part of the URC Northern Synod – www.urc-northernsynod.org.uk

www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk

Minister

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Dear Friends,

I realise that most of you will now have heard the sad news about the decision to close our church at Lingdale, but for those of you reading this for the first time, my apologies that you have had to heard of it this way.

The situation is that the members of the eldership and congregation have battled on valiantly for years now amidst severe financial pressures and a falling membership. However, they have still continued to doggedly persevere in serving the community and over the last couple of years alone have attempted to serve the community through setting up a Book Group, a Craft and Conversation group, Community Cafe with Foodbank distribution point, and eighteen months ago also made the commitment to start a Boys' Brigade Unit in the village for boys and girls aged 5 to 18. All this in addition to the usual activities including festive services held with the children at the village school, harvest suppers and quizzes, memories days celebrating the history of the village, to name but a few.

However, it has become very clear that there is not a lot of interest in the village for such activities anymore and the number of those attending most events has remained small or dwindled. The only exception to this has been the Boys Brigade which involves nearly a third of the school children at Lingdale Primary School and has been a weekly noisy and chaotic delight. However, despite the obvious enthusiasm of the children coming along, it was stated from the outset when the decision to trial the Boys Brigade in the village was announced, that the long term future of the Boys Brigade would rely on volunteers coming forward from within the village to help on rota. Despite numerous attempts at rousing interest and many promises of help, the Boys Brigade has not succeeded in attracting any lasting volunteers over the last eighteen months to assist John as Captain in leading the children. It is for this reason that the Boys Brigade has also had to close. It has been especially sad to turn away children these last couple of Wednesday evenings

when they have just kept on turning up hopefully, however good practice rules simply have to be abided by.

But of course, the main reason that the church is now forced to close its doors for the final time is the lack of worshippers, for without a worshipping community at its heart the church is nothing more than an underused community centre. Our numbers attending worship have continued to dwindle over the last five years due to the deaths of church members in old age, and despite a few new members that have really made a difference and have also played their part in enthusiastically attempting to reignite the church in the community and build community within and beyond the church, apathy, it could be said, has won over. As the congregation is now no more than a very small handful of people, barely more than the eldership of the church, and as money has now finally run out, the coffers now being bare, the congregation now feels that they are left with no other option.

The closure of the church is something which has been on the mind of the eldership for a long while now, and in all the previous meetings the agendas were about how can we avoid this, what else can we do to inspire community spirit and faith in the village? The end loomed, there and none of us were ready to face it, and it didn't feel right to. However, at our meeting just before Christmas, it all felt so different. The meeting was called just six days before Christmas on a Friday evening, as it was felt that there were things we needed now to acknowledge, and we needed to have the meeting there and then. Now I don't want to say the meeting was easy, as it wasn't, and tears were shed, but to reach the end, although sad, was also a relief. To have reached it knowing that we had not been forced; we had been allowed to keep on trying for as long as we did, gave us a sense of having tried our hardest, tried everything we could think of, everything God seemed to show us to do. And now we knew we had reached the final curtain fall, an era of over a hundred years of worship and community activity is ending, and on 5th April, Easter Sunday, we would love you all to join us in celebrating the life which our little chapel in Lingdale has

brought to the village and to our Group. And Easter is the right day for this to happen, the day when we celebrate life rising out of death, as if by letting our church die that day we give it to God, for it is only God who knows what life will rise as a result in the village as God continues to move in the lives and hearts of believers.

God show us daily how we are to follow you!

Rev Catey Morrison

For Our Prayers

Synod Prayer Diary

1st February - Trinity LEP, Bedlington; Rev Heegon Moon; Christ Church LEP, North Broomhill; Rev Lynda Coulthard.

8th February - Spring Retreat at Ampleforth Abbey this week; Children's & Youth Work Group; Convenor Sandy Ogilvie

15th February - Lent - West End; Jesmond; Robert Stewart Memorial, Newcastle; Rev Meg Robb; Church-Related Community Work Minister Ms Ann Honey

22nd February - Fairtrade Fortnight; PCM (Church in Mozambique): The four Presbyterian Societies: Men's, Women's, Youth, and Activists (young marrieds) - their leaders and executive members, and the work of the Societies in each parish; Diocese of Newcastle as it seeks a new bishop; Assistant Bishop Rt Rev Frank White.



*Did you think to
Pray?*

Group Prayer Pointers

1st February - Pray for all who are already finding that their hopes and dreams for this New Year are already being thwarted. We pray for those who have not had the strength and resilience to keep to their resolutions or personal aspirations, and those who now find themselves coping with news that has put their lives or the lives of loved ones on a rocky footing.

8th February - Pray for all who are living lives out in the cold, be they the homeless in our society or refugees in countries like Syria and Iraq. We pray for resources to reach those most in need, and for our hearts to be stirred to respond and help those who are struggling as we are able.

15th February - As we enter this time of Lent once again, we pray that people both inside and outside our churches will be interested to come along and learning from the Bible in preparation for the events of Holy Week and Easter, God's plan of salvation for the world.

22nd February- We pray for trade justice and tax justice this Fair-trade Fortnight, so that all people around the world get fair wages for their days work, and all who have plenty rightfully pay their taxes, including multi-national companies who currently think they can evade paying taxes to poor, voiceless countries.



Traidcraft

Those of you who supported the Shop in Dundas Arcade, Middlesbrough before Christmas will be delighted to hear that Jenny Medhurst sold £31,300 worth of fairly traded goods in 31 days of trading. She felt that many new people this year were asking about Fair Trade and were impressed with the stock she had on sale. Thank you to anyone who was able to buy their presents there. The need has never been greater.

I have now finally added up everything and taken stock and as a result I have been able to make a donation of £200 to St. Andrews as a share of the profit on the Stall which has been so well supported here. I am still supplying coffee, tea and sugar to the Church and am willing to order specific items - where they are sold singly. There will be a new catalogue out in February which I am sure you will enjoy seeing.

Jane Tomlin

Vision Day - Saturday 9th May

I would like to invite you all now to put in your diaries this date for a Vision Day to be led for us and for churches in the South of the Synod by Linda Rayner. Linda has already led a day further north in the Synod, providing inspiration and ideas on reaching out and inviting people in to our churches, and of making the most of opportunities that are out there within our communities and churches. Prepare for this to be an inspiring day with plenty of ideas for you to take back to your churches. Come ready with a notebook! More information about this day will be given out in due course.

Catey Morrison

Man Applies Nature – for Good and for Bad

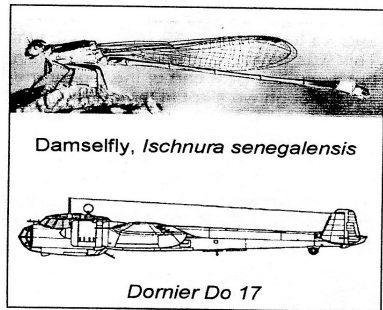
A picture of a damselfly is found on the September page of the Bible Society calendar with the quotation for the month reading:

“In His hand is every creature and the breath of all mankind.” (Job 12 v10)

This damselfly has black stripes on a luminous turquoise body. It is a smaller more delicate form of the dragonfly. In summer both these insects emerge after their underwater life in lakes or slow flowing rivers. Then in their final airborne lives they feed on small flying insects. (There was one in our garden this year). With four wings they are masters of the air being more manoeuvrable than helicopters.

Some years ago whilst on holiday in Suffolk we saw many of them close to the watermill seen in Constable’s popular painting *The Hay Wain*.

Referring to my title, the profile of a WW2 German bomber is very similar to that of a damselfly although the inset does not have or need a vertical tail fin. The plane, a Domier Do 17, was known in Britain as the “flying pencil”.



The evolution of aircraft and of cars over a century is of course due to human experience and ingenuity. So does the evolution of all life point to God working in and through it?

Sadly humans are the only species to build weapons of war to destroy their fellow creatures. Yet we built the beautiful supersonic Concorde which was ahead of its time but was certainly not ‘green’ as far as global warming is concerned.

John Crowther

Lingdale

A message from the Elders at Lingdale

We have been struggling with reduced finances and decreasing attendances for a number of years. Our membership has fallen to only four, with the average attendance at services being four to six people, although sometimes it is less. The regular activities and special events are attended by only a small, albeit dedicated, number of people. Our income has dropped to such an extent that we can no longer meet our commitments. A decision had to be made and, it was with great sadness that the meeting of the 19th December decided that the Church in Lingdale could no longer continue.

All activities have stopped as of the 6th January, although services will continue on a roughly fortnightly basis (dates are on the church notice board) until Easter Day when our final service will be held at 5.30pm as a celebration of the life of the church over the years.

We hope all those who have supported the Church over the years from the village and from across the East Cleveland Group will be able to join us to celebrate our final special Easter Service together.

Flower Rota

The flowers for the remaining services will be provided by Mr Tony Waller, in memory of his wife Beryl and her sister Joy Scarth, both of whom played such a large part in the life of Church over the years.

Thank you to all who have provided flowers over the years.



Guisborough

Looking back over the hustle and bustle of 2014, I hope that everyone learned something new of the wonderful story of the birth of Our Lord. It is a story I never tire of. We have heard so much in the media of schools choosing not to tell the religious story, but secularising their playlets. What a shame they are not brave enough to tell their pupils the real story. Even those who are not Christian are entitled to know what the rest of us believe.

We at Guisborough we do try to teach our children the true meaning of the Nativity as we understand it. And it seems to get through.

When the Minister asks the children what they have been learning in Sunday School, they answer very openly and deeply. They don't hold back.

They all attend very regularly so the teachers who are with them week in week out must be getting the right story across to them. Well done teachers and thank you.

At this point I found myself floundering looking for something worth saying.

Then Paris happened. Three gunmen walked calmly into a newspaper office, murdered twelve people, and then departed with shouts of **Allahu Akbar!** God is Great!

Back in the mid seventies we lived in Malaysia. were three main communities Malay, Chinese and Indian. They spoke different languages and had different religions. The Government was a managed coalition of the three main parties. It required a lot of forbearance on everyone's part, but it did work - of the time.

But following an election which they almost won, Chinese gangs paraded through the Malay Quarter shouting insults. Next they

Guisborough Calendar

Tue 17th February 2.30pm Service at Belmont Care Home

Weekly

Thursdays 9.30am – 11.30am Market Day Coffee Morning

Thursdays 11.30am Quiet Time – prayers and reflections with Catey, Ken, Norma and others.

went to the Malaysia Hotel and shot all the Malays inside – including the Garrison Commander. At that point the Government lost control of the army. In the next fortnight many people lost their lives. The spikes on the railings on the bridges across the river were decorated with severed heads.

When things eventually calmed down, the leaders of a deeply traumatised Nation had to try to ensure that nothing like this happened again. Someone said *'It was just awful, and I thought we were a civilised country'*.

The Powers -That-Be adopted two main strategies

1] A harsh crack down on everything likely to inflame communal tensions. involved a suspension of many civil rights and was tolerated only because the alternatives were obviously so awful. Anyone with ambitions to imitate Ian Paisley ended up in Jail. Foreigners were deported, often within 24 hours. No right of appeal!

	Vestry	Communion Door		Flowers
1 st February	J Basham	M Houston	M Ward	J Basham
8 th February	B Ward		D Beattie	D Collins
15 th February	M Burrows		R Tunnicliffe	C Robertson
22 nd February	P Etwell		D Cross	D Moore
1 st March	D Beattie	D Houston	J Basham	D Cross

2] Strong measures to promote good social relations between the different communities. Everybody was urged to invite their friends and neighbours into their houses and particularly to their festivals. As you can imagine this resulted in a very long party season; August to February in our time. It helped that people were very tolerant with regards food and drink. If you had a party it was usual to provide an open table with a wide choice. As long as everyone could find something acceptable, nobody took offence if others chose differently.

Education was to be a unifying force. Starting with the 1970 intake all local children were taught only in the Malay language. was a very ambitious plan. Think how many textbooks had to be written and then kept up to date. Beside this the spelling was rationalised and whole new vocabularies devised.

I thought the whole enterprise would get bogged down and fail. But it did not. Not long ago a local friend said she used to think of herself as Chinese living in Malaysia. But now she thinks of herself as Malaysian of Chinese ancestry.

There were some wobbles. The TV people made a series of cartoons based on a Malay folk hero – the mouse deer. As smallest creature in the jungle he had to outsmart the bigger animals. This involved playing tricks on them. But the Imams could not approve of lying even as a survival strategy. The cartoons were never transmitted.

Some people thought with the rise of New Malay, English would fade away. But Business insisted a good command of English was a huge advantage in the modern world. The peasants saw it that way too. They wanted their children to have fluent English. Otherwise they would remain forever as simple farmers. did not fade away.

Others hoped the eternally overachieving Chinese would find themselves disadvantaged in a new language. But it turned out that they excelled in that too!

Malaysia has long been known for religious toleration. In recent years the Malays have become rather more touchy. Bacon has disappeared from hotel menus. But Kuala Lumpur City now puts up Christmas decorations. So the picture is mixed.

My own Church, St Andrews Presbyterian has not just survived; it is bulging at the seams, mainly with local people. The same is true of other mainstream Christian denominations.

But a new problem has just emerged. The Catholic Diocese had decided to publish their newsletter in Malay as well as English. They translated the word **God** as **Allah**. Many Malays were outraged. The Government ruled that only Muslims can call Him by that Name. The Catholics took the matter to the (Muslim) High Court who found against the Government. That should have been the end of the matter. But a motorcycle gang responded by riding round throwing Molotov Cocktails at Christian Churches. One Methodist church was burned down, but no Catholic Church was damaged. But then I don't suppose I could tell the difference between a Sunni and a Shia Mosque.

So Malaysians have generally managed to steer a successful course through some very perilous waters. Perhaps We in Europe might learn something from their example.

And now it's New Year and there are snow drops out in the garden. We used to call them the 'Fair Maids of February'. But the calendar seems to have become a little confused.

God Bless you all and those you love



Maureen Houston

Redcar

Fund Raising

Kryisia would like to thank Linda and everyone who helped and donated to her stalls during the last year. The latest effort raised £125.00 for church funds.

No doubt donations will be asked for future stalls this year, so anything useful will be gratefully received.

A Big THANK YOU

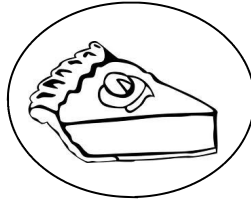
Yours in giving

Kryisia X

Soup and Dessert

Despite a very cold day a brave group endured the cold to enjoy soup and dessert on Sunday 11th January. The soups were delicious and very warming, the desserts were equally inviting!!

Thank you to all who attended and enjoyed good conversation and fellowship catching with the holiday news.



Redcar Calendar

All are welcome to join us for:

Tue 3rd February 2.00pm Craft and Chatter in the Church

Weekly

Wednesday 10.45am Singing Group meets in the Church

Thursday 9.30am Prayers

10.00-11.30am Pop-in Centre

2.00pm Prayer meeting at the home of Catherine Milburn

A Light Hearted Look Back to Christmas

Shouldn't Rudolf have a red tail as well as a red nose?

Why? In the event of an emergency stop Santa needs to know and to brake the sledge in a controlled manner. Otherwise if he has a windscreen he'll go through it and all the presents will be scattered in the snow. Two red noses then!

The Rudolf story from 75 years ago teaches patience and the truth that you can't judge by appearances. It closely resembles the 'Ugly Duckling' story. Similar stories give us an identical message.

In Footprints, God is with us helping and even carrying us through difficult periods of our lives. Yet this story is given the opposite meaning in the St Christopher legend. For St Christopher carries God in the form of the young Jesus on his back across the river.

John Crowther



St Andrew's

Knit-n-Natter

The next Knit-n-Natter will be on Wednesday 25th February from 1.00pm until 3.00pm.

All welcome

Shoe Boxes

Thank you to everyone who has donated empty shoe boxes for our 2015 Shoe Box Appeal. We now have 15 but can still do with lots more so please save any for us.

Coffee Morning

There is to be a coffee morning on Thursday 5th February at 8, Towthorpe, Nunthorpe at 10.30am.

Raffle and Bring and Buy Stall.

Tickets £2.00 available from Doreen, Sheila or Joan.

Proceeds in aid of church funds.

Ladies' Fellowship

The Ladies' Fellowship started the New Year with a games afternoon and coffee and chat.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 10th February at 1.30pm when the Rev Margaret Johnson will be giving us a talk.

All are welcome.

Coffee for Charity

30th Nov	The Rosemary Fund	£13.00
7th Dec	The Rosemary Fund	£9.50
21st Dec	Sick Children's Trust	£21.00
28th Dec	Sick Children's Trust	£5.20
4th Jan	Sick Children's Trust	£10.70
11th Jan	Brigade	£20.20

Flower List

The Flower List for 2015 has still a few slots for anyone who wishes to add their name.

St Andrew's Calendar

Weekly/Monthly

Third Wednesday	9.30am	Church Prayer Group
First Thursday	2.00pm	Home Prayer group at 31 Roseberry Mews
Last Sunday	After Worship	Traid Craft Stall
Boys Brigade		Details available from ministers and church elders

Preachers

	1-Feb	8-Feb	15-Feb	22-Feb	1-Mar
Marton	10.00am C Morrison	K&M Harris Parade	N Johnson Communion	D Elliott	C Morrison Meeting
Guisbo	9.30am D Moore Communion	C Morrison	M Johnson	B Clare	K Harris Communion
Redcar	11.00am N Johnson Parade	C Morrison	J Harper	B Stevenson	D Moore Communion
Lingdale	5.30pm	C Morrison Communion			C Morrison

Material for the February Magazine to church editors by Sunday 8th February please
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