

Group News



** 2018 * February * 2018 **

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

www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk

Dear Friends,

I am writing this on a snowy day in January when spring, Lent and Easter seem a long way off – but my diary says they are just around the corner!

My diary also tells me that Easter Day falls on April 1st – traditionally - ‘All Fools day’ or ‘April Fool’s day’. There seems no reason in the past why the tradition of a Fools day grew up, although a day of pranks and hoaxes are known all over the world.

I mention this because Paul opens his first letter to the Corinthians by talking about wisdom – but the cross being foolish in terms of earthly wisdom – but to those who believe ‘God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom’ ! Cor 1 v 25. Paul also refers to himself as a ‘fool for Christ’.

The Easter story with the empty tomb and the belief in Resurrection can sound foolish and beyond human logic – even beyond human experience. Many cannot take the Christian faith seriously because they cannot reconcile themselves to believe, or even acknowledge such a mystery. We can be dismissed as ‘crazy’, ‘superstitious’ or ‘fabricators of lies’. None of that sits comfortably with us, yet we have to acknowledge that this day, central to our faith, causes us to think long, and hard and deep too. Yet we also acknowledge that many millions of people all over the world – from past generations and now - have lived in the influence of a first century Jew who died on a cross but whose immediate followers believed had been resurrected by God and that belief changed them and goes on changing us too. Whatever you make of it, that power of transformation has been present and goes on being present, and inspires so many. We know in our innermost being that that is not a foolish notion but one which inspires us day in day out in our lives and living. We too can be seen as fools for Christ.

However, I am also reminded of the role of the ‘court fool’ or the ‘court jester’. The foolish individual who was there to make the monarch laugh, with jokes and jests, with tricks and pranks, but

who was also the only one who could tell the monarch the truth without their position being jeopardised as with other court officials. Perhaps that is why some cannot take what we say – because by telling the story of Jesus, birth, life, cross and resurrection they are shown powerlessness, vulnerability, self-giving but above all unconditional love, not the usual ways to rise in earthly terms. The faith we proclaim is counter-cultural and as such is a challenge to the usual way of looking at things. By dismissing it all as foolishness many feel they can dismiss God and in so doing create their own vision of how the world should be. Unfortunately, that vision so often leads to injustice, intolerance, hatred and violence – so we are left with a question which is the wisest way to live – and indeed which is the most foolish.

Yours in Christ's Service

Hilary

A Day for Refreshment, Relaxation and Reflection
Saturday, 3rd March 2018
10am to 4pm.
at 'The Sanctuary'.

Located in a quiet road just minutes from Darlington Town Centre.

The cost is £10 to include a delicious home cooked lunch.

For more information or to book, please ring or email Norma: 01642 481423 or 07528 828822; norma.johnson@talk21.com

Synod Prayers

4th February:

Christ Church LEP (Methodist/URC), North Broomhill;
Revd Linda Coulthard (Methodist)

Synod Mission Enabler, Revd Jane Rowell

11th February:

Spring Synod Retreat at Shepherds Dene from 13th – 15th

Trinity LEP (Methodist/URC), Ashington; St Andrew's & St Mark's LEP (Methodist/URC), Newbiggin-by-the-Sea; Revd Marie Attwood (Methodist)

For Lent which begins this week as we prepare for Easter

18th February:

Waddington Street URC, Durham; St Andrew's Dawson Street, Crook LEP (Methodist/URC); Revd Ray Anglesea; Revd Christopher Humble (Methodist)

25th February:

PCM, the four Presbyterian Societies: Men's, Women's, Youth and Activists Group (*young marrieds*) and for our own fund raising for PCM;

Fair Trade Fortnight: 26th Feb- 11th March;

The Anglican Bishop of Newcastle Diocese, the Rt Revd Christine Hardman

Women's World Day of Prayer, Friday, 2nd March when the theme is 'All God's Creation is Very Good' and material has been prepared by women of Suriname who focus on creation and our responsibility to care and look after it.

Guisborough

Last year the November Guisfolk service was devoted to introducing the new United Reformed Church initiative of *‘Walking the Way.’* On this occasion all of the fellowship were invited to be directly involved in learning and responding to a close focus on life-long Christian discipleship and mission.

As the accompanying guide literature says: “... *Walking the Way* seeks to deepen our understanding of what being a Christian disciple really means – how we can live as disciples when we are in church and perhaps, more importantly, when we are not.” It must be not without significance that the term *‘Walking the Way’* is derived from the original name adopted by the first followers of our Lord Jesus, namely: *Followers of the Way*. At that time this new faith group suffered great persecution, was considered dangerous, reviled and routinely insulted. The greatest of such insults was when it was said, “What way, there is no way. *You’re just Christians!* The name stuck so even today, two thousand years later, when the church has lost so much authority and respect, to be called a Christian, as opposed the description of *churchgoer*, still remains the perfect accolade.

Various people took part in the service but it was for Donna Moore to raise the main issue at stake: *What does it mean to be a disciple?* The question was taken forward by further questions and ideas taken from various biblical references, which members of the congregation answered and offered

Rohingya Appeal

Our retiring collections over two Christmas services and our last coffee morning on 21st December raised £140.20 for the Christian Aid Rohingya Appeal.

up their own ideas. The children took part by being asked if they had the knowledge and were able to point *the way* to various local towns and villages – with this theme leading onto how Jesus showed his disciples the way

Guisborough Calendar

The Lent Groups are starting from 21st February on a Wednesday evening from 7-9pm, in the Methodist Church Hall; starting with a frugal meal and will be led by the different churches over the 5 weeks.

The theme is from Mark's Gospel which is the lectionary for this year.

Weekly

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

to find God. It was worth noting that, according to the Scripture Union research, 95% of children in the UK do not have any connection with a church or Sunday school. So, in recognition that, the ten children present and representing that faithful 5%, they were give a round of applause by the adults in the congregation.

However, this new initiative has to face the problem of the real world of 21st century faith. It follows on from earlier worthy projects. From 2009 until 2011 we had Vision 4Life. For three years there was a focus on re-engaging with the Bible, prayer and evangelism with the purpose of bringing a transformation to the churches of the URC. It ended with two significant gatherings to learn about evangelism. Then there was Vision 2020 and the Ten Statements of Mission and Purpose. The Guisborough Church chose to consider three: spirituality and prayer, identity and evangelism. In addition to all of this was the ill-fated All Inclusive Church – where the simple message was that we welcome anyone

into our fellowships. *We are not non inclusive!* Somehow I get the feeling that these initiatives, although still officially ongoing, seem to have the flavour of ‘been there, done it, got the T-shirt. So how do we approach *Walking the Way*, which has a lot to offer in developing faith and strengthening our spirituality. How can we bring it into to the real world that we inhabit?

Making and seeing something work is the most important moment in the design process of in the way ideas become something real. How does it happen, or could happen for *Walking the Way*? A quote from the Guardian columnist the Rev Giles Frazer of St Mary’s Newington, South London and former canon chancellor of St Paul’s Cathedral. Under the title of *Loose Canon* he once wrote how: ‘*people will not be drawn to the church and faith by metaphysics but by community. By being part of a family and valued, then from this experience faith will naturally emerge.*’

In the book *Holly Habits*, on which much of this project is based, Andrew Roberts talks about the value of Christian communities. They are described as *Sacramental Grace-full Community*. He goes on to say how in the early day of the *Fresh Expressions* movement (where the church goes to people where *they are* rather than expect them to come to the church.) he looked at how newly formed Christian communities were making and nurturing disciples of Jesus. Early *Fresh Expressions* fellowships were seeking to creating communities where belonging come before believing. Within such communities the power of a rich spiritual life of prayer and worship help to bring about a deep sense of God’s presence and strength for good.

Surely, this is a good starting point, for us all, as we explore the meaning of discipleship? Together in fellowship we can encourage and support each other in this ‘*way*’ to strengthen our faith. We can develop a means by which we find it easy and natural to talk with each other about how we came to Jesus and what it means to use in our lives. Together we can have greater strength, as being all different parts of the body of Christ. As St Paul says in 1 Corinthians

12: 27: *All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it.* Reminding ourselves of this must give us great encouragement in our quest to become his better disciples. With this in mind we can move forward in confidence in our faith and how it can work for the Lord in our communities.

Happy New Year.

Ray Tunnicliffe.

	Vestry	Communion Door	Flowers
4th Feb	R Tunnicliffe	P Etwell	D Houston (see noticeboard)
11th Feb	B Ward		M Houston
18th Feb	S Verrill		J Reynolds
25th Feb	D Moore		The children
4th March	J Reynolds	R Tunnicliffe	M Burrows

Redcar

Redcar Calendar

Weekly

Wednesday 10.30am Singing Group in the Church

Thursday 9.30am Prayers

10.00-11.30am Pop-in Centre for coffee / tea, cakes and fellowship in the Church Hall - all are welcome.

2.00pm Thursday Prayers at the home of Catherine Milburn

St Andrew's

Women's World Day of Prayer

Women's World Day of Prayer Service is to be held at Marton Methodist Church, The Grove, Marton on Friday 2nd March 2.00p.m. Refreshments served after service. All welcome.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who enjoyed the Christmas Social on 16th Dec. £26.00 was collected for Christian Aid.

Thanks to Doreen and to everyone who participated and helped.

Flower List

The Flower List for 2018 is on the church notice board. Anyone who wishes please add their name to the list. Many thanks.

Answers to Doreen's Dingbat Quiz

1. Scrambled Eggs, 2. In for(4)a penny(d). in for a pound(£), 3. Man in the Moon, 4. All Creatures Great and Small, 5. Not in my back yard!, 6. Paradise Lost!, 7. Isle of Wight (white), 8. Jiminy Cricket, 9. Quick on the uptake, 10. Make a big thing out of it, 11. Sign of the times, 12. It's an end in itself, 13. Over excited, 14. Just between us, 15. Live for today!

Doreen raised £21.00 for church funds!!

Coffee for Charity

19th Nov	Teesside Hospice	£17.00
26th Nov	Leprosy Mission	£15.50
3rd Dec	Rosemary Fund	£19.00
10th Dec.	Boys' Brigade	£28.02
24th Dec.	Rosemary Fund	£16.00
7th Jan.	Teesside Hospice	£13.00

Update from Rosemary, our partner in Uganda

Rosemary sends us her greetings by email (more reliable than air-mail)

“My chest problems have not been good recently but I continue to be thankful to God for all his blessings. It seems Rosemary was admitted to hospital in mid-December and put on a drip, but unclear why. However she managed to travel home to the village for Christmas.

“Although my final settlement from the government has still not been paid (she retired after 40 years in the nursing profession in November 2015) I did start to receive pension payments in the summer but they stopped after 3 months” she has been informed (unofficially) this is not likely to be resolved in the current financial year!

News of her nieces: Natasha having qualified has now secured work at a health centre; Maureen has just sat finals and expects results in February; Apophia studying for a BEd still needs supporting. It seems miraculous Rosemary can retain her unwavering faith “God reigns ’ - he is in control of everything!” she writes.

In January St Andrews transferred £541.60 to boost her meagre income and make life a little easier for her. This is made up of after-church coffee contributions, plus a number of individual donations and occasional fund-raising efforts. A HUGE THANK YOU to all who helped in any way to raise this sum.

Shirley Moorse

St Andrew's Calendar

Sun 11 Feb 4.00pm Churches Together Pancake Party in St Cuthberts Parish Centre

Weekly/Monthly

Boys Brigade

Details available from ministers and church elders

Preachers

	Marton 10.00am	Guisborough 10.00am	Redcar 11.00am
4-Feb	Margaret Harris	Ken Harris Communion	Donna Moore
11-Feb	Dave Elliott Parade	Norma Johnson	Ken Harris
18-Feb	Jan Harper Communion	Guis Folk	Julie Martin
25-Feb	Ken Harris	Margaret Harris	Brian Stephenson Meeting

Material for the March Magazine to church editors by Sunday
11th February please

Group Editor – R Wheeler, 2C Gypsy Lane, Nunthorpe,

Middlesbrough, TS7 0DX.

Telephone: 01642 300546.

Email: roger.wheeler5@virginmedia.com