

Group News



** May * 2015 * May **

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

www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk

Minister

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Dear Friends,

Does anyone find themselves still reflecting on the events of Easter a few weeks ago, and the enormity of its impact on us, I wonder? For there is a lot for us to reflect on and try to understand and make sense of from that first Easter time. Martin Niemoller, a German Lutheran pastor, said: 'Easter is not a part of the old accustomed divine order, of the ordered world in which we live, but it is an absolutely new, unexpected act of the living God, which interrupts and runs counter to the uniform rise and fall of the world's rhythm.' Hence, here we have the beginning of something new because of what Jesus did that at Easter.

Alexander Schmemmann, a Russian theologian, wants us to look beyond what Jesus did and what God did, and instead look to examine ourselves at this Easter time. 'Each year Lent and Easter are, once again, the rediscovery and the recovery of what we were made through our own baptismal death and resurrection.'

But whether personal examination of our lives or looking to discover the depths of this new thing which God did through Jesus, we have to remember that the story of Jesus does not, and did not, conclude at Easter. Easter is an important highlight in Jesus' earthly life, but it is his life beyond Easter, his ministry within his resurrection life, which is the actual pinnacle of Jesus' life. Easter was the gateway through which Jesus needed to go to give proof to his Father's promises, but his post resurrection appearances, life and ministry, is the laying down of the faith and calling to a lifestyle which we are to follow should we too have faith to do so. This is the important part of the story, for this is when his story becomes our story of faith lived out within the promise of eternal life.

And it is eternal life through the resurrection promises, which is for all, not just for us and for our churches here. It becomes for the

whole world through Jesus' ascension which takes Jesus out of a geographical context and places him in eternity. Harvey Cox, a North American theologian, commented that 'The early church's belief in the Ascension can be read as its refusal to allow its Lord to be localised or spatially restricted. The Ascension in its simplest terms means that Jesus is mobile. He is not a baal [locally worshipped god], but the Lord of all history.'

And in the same way as Jesus is now for the whole world, he is now for all time. 'The Ascension is a festival of the future of the world. The flesh is redeemed and glorified, for the Lord has risen for ever.' (Karl Rahner, German Roman Catholic theologian)

But the post resurrection events take things one step further. Jesus is now alive and ready to share his love and grace with anyone in time and space who turns to him and acknowledges him. However, that is not enough. God plan's always were that we would continue where Jesus left off, ministering to a world in need. In the post Easter events, we find ourselves commissioned alongside Jesus' disciples and being equipped for the mission that Jesus has given us. At Pentecost the sequence of events which began at Easter find their cumulation. This is what Jesus set out to do, bless us with his Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, and send us on our way to live out our resurrection lives, sharing our faith with others on the way. 'The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the coming of the missionary Spirit.' (Roland Allen, British Anglican Missionary)

We are all commissioned to go in his name, not because of the resurrection, but because its was God's desire through the resurrection and beyond. Jesus was sentenced to death at Easter, and we are sentenced to follow him and take our part in the mission to bring God's love and mercy and grace to the people of the world.

I saw some Syrian Christians standing firm in their faith on TV the other night in the remnants of a war torn Christian town. A young Christian girl spoke out confidently in faith saying that they were going to stay in Syria and continue to show the love of Christ. "As long as we can keep on loving, then we will stay here", she said. Will we be a brave in our post resurrection mission to our community?

God bless! Rev Catey Morrison

FAF Club

FAF Club will next meet on Sunday 17th April from 6.30-8.30pm at the Manse. Please ring Catey for more information or for a lift. There is also opportunity for FAF Club members go down to the Midlands to attend Crossfire Christian Youth Camp May 22nd-25th. Please speak to Catey about a booking form if you haven't already got one.

Group Safeguarding Officer still needed

The Group is seeking a Safeguarding Officer to act as a link person to pass on disclosure of abuse of any kind made by a child or vulnerable adult in any one of our churches. Having this position held within the Group saves each of our churches from needing to have their own Safeguarding Officer. However, this still means that we do need a volunteer from one of the churches! Please consider if you are able to do this role for which training will be available, but which is largely one of passing on information given to us by Sunday School teacher, elder, or other, to the correct agencies all of which will be outlined in information provided to the Safeguarding Officer. Catey will also stand as a second Officer, to make it easier to make the necessary decisions, whilst maintaining necessary confidentiality between the two Safeguarding Officers. Please speak to Catey or an elder if you are thinking this is a role you could take on.

“A final word from Lingdale...

The Elders and Members of Lingdale would like to say how grateful they are for the concern, encouragement and prayers of everyone over the past few months. While we know we have made the right decision it has still been a very hard one and it is comforting to know we have so many supporters as we all move on into the next stage of our faith journey.

Our special thanks to Catey for guiding and supporting us all the way and to John for his unstinting help.

Thank you all.”

Blowing Your Cover Course

The Blowing Your Cover course is now restarting, with two more sessions to take place with the church services in April/May and June. The rest of the course will then take place in the September onwards. This evangelism course is a wonderful opportunity to learn about sharing our stories of faith and all that God means to us.

Fresh Expressions Vision Day

Come along to St. Andrew's, Marton, on the 9th of May, for fresh inspiration on how to be the church in new ways. We know the old ways do not now work, so what else can we do to bring members of our communities into our churches? Or might that be not what we are being called to do? What are the options for going out into the community to where the people in need already are? But how does that make a church? Come with your questions, and come with an open mind to rethink what it means to be the church. The day, 9.30am-4pm, is free, and drinks will be available throughout the day, but please bring a packed lunch.

For Our Prayers

Northern Synod Prayer Diary

- 3rd May General Election this week –All who play a part in leading worship; Lay Preaching Commissioner Mrs Barbara Allen
- 10th May Ascension this week – Christian Aid Week – Christian Aid North East;
Synod visit to Iona this week
- 17th May Grindon; Roker; St Bede; Stockton Road, Sunderland; Boldon; Revd Dr David Whiting, Church-Related Community Work Minister Mrs Helen Stephenson
- 24th May Pentecost – Vocations – Those exploring vocations, student ministers, Training for Learning & Serving students; Synod TLS Coordinator Mrs Chris Eddowes
- 31st May Trinity – Trinity LEP, Gosforth; Ministry Team: Mr Andrew Clark; Revd John Paul; Revd Eden Fletcher; Pastoral & Community Worker Ms Mary Bellshaw; PCM (Church in Mozambique): The churches of the Limpopo presbyteries in and around Gaza Province – together with Maputo the heartland of the church

Christian Aid Week

Group Prayer Pointers

- 3rd May Pray for our local candidates in the Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland Constituency and the Redcar Constituency that they stand with integrity, openness and honesty. We pray with thanks for their willingness to stand where we would not dare stand.
- 10th May Pray for those who are facing the stress of the beginning of exam time, with students at schools, colleges and universities in our area attempting to get the grades they need to successfully move on to the next stage of their lives.
- 17th May Pray for all those struggling within our individual church with ill-health, pain, grief and loss. Show us how to support this in need around us.
- 24th May Pray this Pentecost for the Holy Spirit to come and bless us with peace and love and strength, and help us to express our grateful thanks for all that God means to us day by day in our lives.
- 31st May Pray for families in their stresses and strains, love and joy. Pray for the strengthening of relationship within families; for parents to be good role models for their children; and for families to have enough time together in this busy world to be a solid, stable unit within which the children can grow.

10th -16th May 2015

Spring Synod at St Columba's North Shields

The Synod has a family feel about it' we were assured by our Moderator, Rev Lis Mullen 'and like all families, things have changed, and will change and do not stay the same'

These thoughts were the subject of her closing worship but the truth of it was evident throughout the day. Since we meet only twice a year we have to take note of coming changes: Rev Colin Offor from Stockton retires at the end of May and will leave the area. Our Synod and Trust Treasurer is leaving in the Summer after six years of heavy work and we urgently need a replacement. We noted the closure of Chatton Church and commended its two members to Belford URC and of course agreed the closure of Lingdale. Rev Charles Cranfield based in Durham and a great scholar and writer has died at the age of 99.

I was delighted to see Bible Study as an agenda item with Lawrence Moore (Director of the Windermere Centre) there to lead it. His theme was Mission, Communication and Transformation. His angle was conversation. He used John 3.16 as the anchor text and spoke inspiringly of why we find

it difficult to talk about our faith, why we don't easily converse, even within the Church family. Jesus himself is the direct communication of God with us. God engages us in conversation through Jesus and does not tell us what to think. Even after what happened to his Son, God forgives us and goes on forgiving. We are not here to tell people - but we are here to converse with them. He quoted the former Bishop of Durham 'God is as he is in Jesus. Therefore there is hope'

There is always the Business to be done and this time it was done in a more thoughtful way than in October. Reports have been written and Synod needs to acknowledge the work of the Committees and feel that there is time to ask relevant questions. The Finance report was very clearly laid out. There was an underspend of £99k on a Budget of £336k due to salaried appointments not having been made and to a lack of take up of the Training Budget by Ministers and lay people. The 2014 deficit was therefore only £2720 instead of the £119k. (The message is that there are funds to help with all sorts of training - TLS, Charity courses, computer courses, Win-

dermere courses etc.)

Updates were given on Grindon which is now an established Community Project in Sunderland; on Keld which is beginning the final stage of its development as a Holiday, Retreat and Visitor centre where the Chapel is always open and regular worship takes place and on Holy Island where visitor numbers are up and there has been a good response to the 20th Birthday Appeal. Major work is going on there on the Stained Glass window and the Special Category Post of the Warden has been renewed by Church House for another five years to 2021.

The Law now requires all Churches, however small, to have a Safeguarding officer and policy and the Synod's Policy and draft ways of working were accepted as a template which could apply to all Churches. There is to be a Synod Safeguarding officer appointed in the future. It is acknowledged that churches may want to share and work together to ensure that this policy is implemented.

The debate of Same Sex Marriage was carried out with great sensitivity. Rev. Malcolm Smith who has not been at Synod for some

time contributed to the discussion on which he felt very strongly. Some interesting thoughts were put forward including the reminder that not all marriages were about procreation. Some were for reasons of mutual comfort and support when both were well past childbearing. After nearly an hour there was a secret ballot - the same question being asked about the Church as a whole, not about any individual Church, which we have already dealt with in our Church meetings. There was an overwhelming vote in favour.

After lunch Lawrence was asked to launch the new Synod Website which is said to be in very good order. He spoke about modern communications illustrated with a noisy DVD full of the most (to me)

frightening statistics about the speed and spread of news. Those of us who feel daunted by this were urged to think again as it won't go away!! We were told that e mails are now quite old hat - far too slow! He then linked up with Jeanie at Carver Church in Windermere who having bought a computer at the age of 72 still does the Church Magazine at the age of 80. She spoke to us and greeted us all and was most im-

pressive in her ability to accept help in the early days then to learn how to improve her skills and be of great use to her Church. Amazing lady!

The four TLS candidates including Susan Griffiths from Lingdale. were presented with their certificates and TLS was again given a plug by Chris Eddowes.

We were introduced to another ecumenical grouping NECAT North East Churches Acting together at present engaged on urging us to hold hustings and become involved in the Election, always trying to think of the greater good.

The Northerly Synods' Group (Scotland, North Western, Merseyside, Yorkshire and ourselves) continues the discussion on ways of working and sharing costly functions such as HR but has not

got very far yet. Our Synod Clerk, Mel is working one day a week with the Group.

The final major item is the setting up of a team to prepare the search for a new Synod Moderator. Lis will leave us in July 2016 having been with us since September 2013. A Synod profile and job description are needed. It is hoped that the post will be advertised in Reform in October this year with a view to an appointment in March 2016 to overlap with Lis until July. We have been truly blessed with Lis and have come to value her very much..

Please come to the next meeting - everyone is welcome. It is on Saturday 17th October at Denewell Avenue URC in Gateshead normally from 10.00am to 4.00pm.

Jane Tomlin, St Andrews

Guisborough

On Palm Sunday I travelled to Thornaby to lead worship at St Andrew's Mission. I have been preaching at the Mission several times a year since 1999 – and it is always such a good experi-

ence meeting up with friends and acquaintances – and to receive that special, relaxed Thornaby welcome.

My association with the Mission

goes back a long way to 1845. I was baptised into the Church of England and attended St Luke's Anglican Sunday School – where I had a rather unhappy time as one shy lad amongst some often unruly youngsters. One Sunday, as I was walked back home by my mother, we stopped by the Mission building. It was then that my occasional complaints were answered; for I was popped inside and immediately enrolled as a new pupil - and now still going there to this day.

The Mission is not a church in the official sense – being initially a Sunday School and now effectively a Preaching Station for Stockton U.R.C. It was founded in 1880 – the same year as when the former Lingdale Church began its work in the village. The Mission started out as a Sunday School, set up by the members of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, located in Tower Street, Stockton. The elders thought that there was a great need for children's Christian education in that area, which at that time was known as South Stockton, and so they rented a room above a shop in Anderson

Street and lessons began on the 18th, July. In 1892, the same year in which South Stockton was made into the Borough of Thornaby, the present building was opened in time to celebrate Pentecost.

For most of its history the Mission has been a Sunday School, with generations of children being taught about faith in Jesus by a small band of dedicated teachers. I was there as a pupil from 1945 until 1955, when I left as I had started work as an apprentice patternmaker in Head Wrightson's Steelworks. The school was led by Ann Burns, for the infants, and later David Jack for the older children. Scripture teaching was, simple straight forward - but very effective. Year after year we were entered into the local Sunday Schools Scripture Examination. The event was taken very seriously with several midweek practices. As a result of this we managed to win the prize shield for over forty years in succession – a point of great pride for all of the Mission supporters. This traditional approach to Bible knowledge gave me a solid basis for my present faith.

After leaving the school I continued to support the Mission by attending the evening services held there every week – with a whole range of different lay preachers expounding the Gospel in so many different styles of exposition. In 1963 I was invited to become the Mission Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, helping to support the teachers as part of the administrating committee. During the course of its history the Mission has been threatened with closure several times but has always survived because its ability to be financially independent. At one point it was even able to give a grant of money to help the Stockton Church, when in some financial difficulty.

In 1985, when the late Rev Gillian Bobbett became minister of the Stockton Church, there was a change of policy so that morning services and the Sunday School were held on alterna-

tive weeks. With the closure of St Aiden's U.R.C., in the late 90's, some of their members became supporters of the Mission – and continue in this role to the present time.

Sadly, with the retirement of Alf and Leila Watson, the Sunday school was no longer able to continue – but children still attend services and join in the worship. At the present time the Mission is one of only three places of worship in old Thornaby – the others being St Paul's Parish Church and the Salvation Army. There are so many people I have not named who have been kind and supportive of me during the long course of the years, so collectively, I am grateful to the Mission for giving me faith in Jesus Christ, a solid foundation in Biblical knowledge – and that feeling of loyalty to the church – so important in the long haul of the Christian life.

Ray Tunnicliffe

	Vestry	Communion	Door	Flowers
3rd May	J Basham	J Reynolds	D Cross	M Boird
10th May	R Tunnicliffe		M Houston	S Verrill
17th May	D Moore		D Beattie	K Harris
24th May	J Basham		D Houston	H Tucker
31st May	J Reynolds		P Etwell	D Beattie

Guisborough Calendar

Tue 19th May 2.30pm Belmont Care Home service

Weekly

Thursdays 9.30am – 11.30am Market Day Coffee Morning
11.30am Quiet Time – prayers and reflections with Catey, Ken, Norma and others.

Redcar

Thank you

Afternoon Tea

Thank you to all who helped and supported the Easter Coffee morning on Saturday, 4th April. It was a very successful event raising £363 for Church Funds.

Watch out for an Afternoon Tea which will take place in June. More details will follow!.....

Redcar Calendar

Tue 5th May 2.00pm Craft and Chatter Group in the Church

Weekly

Wednesday 10.45am Singing Group meet 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 reply to ' Psalm 23 – out of date and irrelevant'

Every human activity has its own vocabulary and ways of behaviour which go together. These activities may be sporting, educational or purely commercial. So if we wish to join with them we need to learn both the correct words and the movements which go with them. Sometimes these are confusing. For example the word 'eagle' may be linked with golf, ornithology or the symbolism found in a piece of church furniture.

So Psalm 23 may be difficult to understand if biblical language and its symbolism have not been considered.

This Psalm points to the nature of God and also to the thought process and lives of people living in an agricultural society two thousand years ago.

Here to end with are a few thoughts about that best known and best loved psalm.

The Lord is my Shepherd.....

David's strong faith shines through the psalm for it shows God's love for us as he cares for

us giving everything which we need.

"Pastures". Here is a link with the lesser shepherds, the pastors or ministers who lead our churches.

In the Psalm God shows us "The way" of Jesus which takes us through death and the first Christians were called "followers of the way"

The crook and rod of the Good Shepherd give the sheep care, guidance and discipline.

The picture printed with the article shows God the Good Shepherd ready to go with us up an unknown mountain.

It may be seen as the "Hill Difficulty" which Christians must climb in "a pilgrim's progress"

When he does this, his back pack of sins comes off, falling into the crevice where it is no more. The God our Father forgives us and gives us a new start as he completely forgets about them.

Anon

St Andrew's

Ladies' Fellowship

We had a lovely talk, with plenty of laughter, from Betty Brown at our meeting on the 14th April. Thank you Betty. You certainly brightened up our day and we look forward to hearing you again in the near future.

Golden Wedding

Congratulations and Best Wishes to Jack and Doreen Moodie who celebrate their Golden Wedding on the 1st of May.

Knit-'n'-Natter

Our final meeting of the session will be an Afternoon Tea at Baxter's Tea Room, Stokesley on 12th May at 1.00pm.

The next Knit-'n'-Natter will be held on Weds. May 27th 1.00-3.00p.m. All welcome.

Christian Aid Sponsored Walk

On the 9th May, 2015 Steven Etwell and I are once again doing a sponsored walk for Christian Aid. A sponsored walk form is now on the notice board and we would be grateful for anyone who can sponsor us to add their name to it. Thank you.

Grant Sutherland

Coffee for Charity

23rd March	Mobius Syndrome	£21.40
29th March	Elmridge	£15.50
5th April	Rosemary Fund	£17.50
12th April	Boys' Brigade	£16.06

