

Group News



** May * 2016 * May **

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

www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk

Minister

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Dear Friends,

How do you imagine you would have reacted to the events of the ascension, Jesus' final farewell, and the aftermath, that we will be celebrating on the 5th of this month? On reflection we can consider that much of Jesus' life was frequently misunderstood by the disciples and those gathered around him throughout his life and ministry. Many occasions were confusing or perplexing, challenging norms and cultural perspectives and attitudes of the day. But sometimes Jesus' actions provoked amazement and wonder, bewilderment even, because what he did seemed to go beyond what was natural in the world, breaking the bounds of all that was understood to be possible within nature and the natural order of all things.

And this is one such event. Ascension day, the day Jesus left his disciples. The day he spoke to them for one final time before disappearing from their sight, leaving them confused and staring into the sky. Leaving them at a loss of what to do next. How would we have reacted if that had been us?

As humans we work better with certainty, with things that have a clear end, a final conclusion. For example, to not have closure only adds to a person's grief when a relative is only presumed dead, or the body can not be found. To finally receive closure in these circumstances, despite being really difficult to deal with and be confronted with in one sense, does allow us to attempt to begin the difficult task of some level of moving on.

Here the disciples are left staring into the sky. Once again they genuinely don't understand what has happened. They appear undecided as to whether this really is the last time they will see Jesus, and so they don't want to move or leave the scene - just in case! And we know what that feels like - "let's just wait and see a little longer?!" And so it is up to angels to push them to leave and make a move back towards Jerusalem. They provide reassurance to the disciples that Jesus will one day return in the same manner as they

have just witnessed his departure. Although we now realise that this too caused misunderstanding amongst the early believers. “Shall we just wait in Jerusalem and pray, waiting for Jesus to come again?” The early church seemed permanently on tenterhooks waiting for Jesus to come again, never anticipating that we, two thousand years later, would still be waiting for that day when Jesus would return.

But the closure did come to the disciples, although not really closure as it might normally be imagined. The closure comes in the form that Jesus had promised, but once again had not been understood. It is amazing that as we read the stories of the Bible we can see all the answers and explanations are there for the taking, but to the disciples and those who gathered around Jesus listening with baited breath, there seemed much to be confused about. Hindsight is so helpful to us who come two thousand years later! Conclusion, we can see, did come in the form of the helper who was given to the early christians to provide comfort and vision for the early church. But had they imagined the helper coming in the form of the breath of God being breathed on them while the building they were gathered in was shaken and what looked like tongues of fire touched their shoulders?

Again and again the explanations and the answers are there, but seem impossible to accept before the point of outright revelation to believers. But once revealed the impossible to understand becomes understandable, and that which seemed beyond possibility is freely available to all. Something indeed to be owned and celebrated this month by us all, and shared just as freely!

With all blessings and revelations of Christ at work in you all!

Revd. Catey Morrison

Easter Afternoon Tea

Thanks to everyone who came up to the manse for afternoon tea on Saturday 2nd April. As well as being a lovely occasion of fellowship and sharing together, £20 was raised for the Air Ambulance. Cateyx

Synod Prayers

Synod asks our prayers for:

For the Synod Churches in Mid Northumberland and all those who minister in them

(Ministers: Joan Grindrod-Helmn, Alison Mills, Edward Butlin)

For all those involved in the appointment of a new Northern Synod Moderator

For the ministry of the Synod Mission Committee meeting this month

For the ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique

For the ministry of our ecumenical partners throughout the region

For those who minister to others through their work in the health service

Prayer

*As disciples of the Christ who calls us all to ministry
with the words 'follow me'
we pray for those whose ministry takes them to uncomfortable
places
we pray that they may know
that they are called and held by God
we pray for ourselves
that individually and collectively
our ministries may reflect the light of Christ*

Prayer Pointers

Sunday 1st May - We pray for refugees still flooding out of Syria and across into neighbouring countries of Lebanon and Israel, as well as across Europe, desperate for a life for their loved ones without persecution or danger.

Sunday 8th May - We pray for all who are searching for a job amongst the many who find themselves unemployed in our region, and those who are searching for new work as they find themselves stuck in a job which is mentally and emotionally discouraging.

Sunday 15th May - We pray for those who are needing to seek a new home due to eviction, the breakdown of their relationship or because they can't afford the rent increase, and those searching to move on from life in a hostel or bed and breakfast.

Sunday 22nd May - We pray with thanks for those coming to the end of aggressive treatment for cancer, and for those who have just got the news that they need to begin treatment and are struggling to cope amidst their personal grief at their loss of health.

Sunday 29th May - We pray for the offshore workers of whom there are so many in our region, and their families as they cope with a life made up of different phases. We pray for balance in relationships within families facing time apart on a regular basis.

Crossfire Youth Camp

If you know of anyone else in school year 7 and above who would like to attend the Crossfire Youth Camp at Barnes Close, near Birmingham, from 27th May-to 30th May (cost £30 plus donation towards fuel costs), please speak to Catey for more information and a form asap! Lifts are available.

Christian Aid Week

15th to 21st May 2016

Morsheda is a young mother of four living in Bangladesh. She has no land, few assets and no savings.

For Morsheda's family living on low-lying islands in the Brahmaputra River, floods are a terrifying part of everyday life. Morsheda can't even count on having a safe place to call home: the single-room, corrugated-iron house she shares with her children has been flooded four times.

'I feel very scared of the river. When I look at it I keep thinking "it is coming".'

Dangers all around

One year, her humble house filled up to her knees with floodwater. To stay dry, and keep away from the dangerous snakes that now swam through her home she raised her bed up on bricks. But during the night she was woken by a loud splash. In the pitch black, her baby son had fallen into the inky water. He could have drowned in moments.

Race against time

In a bad year, huge waves crashed against her house, giving her less than an hour to uproot her home and scramble to safety. Racing against time, she gathered her terrified children together and hastily made a raft from a banana tree.

At any moment, it could have tipped and plunged them into the swirling waters, but it was their only hope. She put her youngest daughter in a cooking pot and clung to it as it floated in the current.

'My children were so scared. My sister was holding them very

tightly and we were panicking because my neighbour's child was washed away.'

The floods are coming

Morsheda and her children live a precarious life. They know that the floods will come again, and soon. But we can lift our neighbours like Morsheda to safety.

Just £250 is enough for a Christian Aid Home Safety Package. It could flood-proof Morsheda's home, raising it eight foot on an earth plinth, so that she has a safe place to rebuild, keep livestock and grow crops. It could also buy a goat, seeds and a wormery to help produce compost – all of which will give her a long-term income and a solid foundation for a new life.

'If I could raise my house then I would feel much safer living here with my children.'

Answer God's call to end poverty; put the kettle on

Morsheda is our neighbour. And there's no better way to start loving our global neighbours than by getting friends, colleagues and next door neighbours together and serving them breakfast. The money you raise could help change Morsheda's life.

Just £250 is enough to flood-proof Morsheda's home, raising it eight foot on an earth plinth so that she has a safe place to rebuild. It could also buy a goat, seeds and a wormery to produce compost, giving her a long-term income.

So bring your community together and get cracking. It's really easy to host a Big Brekkie, and whether you're hosting one at work, at home or with your church, the Christian Aid pack has everything you need.

Further details available from www.caweek.org.

Spring Synod

It was worth going to the Spring Synod if only to see the incredible transformation of the Victorian Gothic of Jesmond Church. Such a change requires imagination and driven by the vision of what can be done, funding can be found! A comfortable very large, fully carpeted Sanctuary with red upholstered chairs complement the renovated stained glass and the magnificent Willis organ. Glass panels filling in the arches of the pillars are used to create smaller meeting rooms and the surrounding garden is a delight. This is one of Meg's three churches, where she is supported and valued.

The Moderator chose the Theology of Money as the theme and we were addressed by Revd Dr Kevin Snyman who took us right back to the days of the Romans, explaining how the creation of Empire leads to waste and scarcity such as in the times when Jesus lived. Those who issue money ('Who's head is on this coin? Asked Jesus before saying 'Render unto Caesar...') will always end up richer than those who merely use it as a means of exchange. Jesus did his best to subvert the system, he said, and went on to explain the parable of the talents as an example of exploitation by a cruel master. Money itself shifts wealth from poor to rich and has done ever since it was created.

There was insufficient time to grasp and digest much of what Dr Snyman said. Nevertheless Synod was reminded that it needs to be far wider in its thinking than it has been, especially when we are facing a situation where we will have only 15 Stipendiary Ministers by 2020. It is now six years since anyone offered themselves for Ministry training in this Synod. Yet again, paid Lay Leaders were hinted at but the idea was not developed here. The Synod Executive and Trust brought a resolution to encourage us to '...use the financial assets in such a way as to mutually encourage the development of mission and service' which included the building up of the laity and developing new patterns of ministry. (This sounds more hopeful but how radical dare we be?)

Financially, the Synod is well off. The Training budget for 2015 was again under spent and as a result of not appointing the staff we had hoped, the surplus on general fund Income and Expenditure was £74000 for 2015. However, in terms of people, we are poor - and congregations are becoming smaller. There has not been anyone willing to look at the vacancy in Stockton, Hartlepool and Billingham as there is a resistance among Ministers to moving north.

The question on ethical investments came up again . We decided long ago not to hold shares in companies manufacturing alcoholic drink but we were again assured that the holding in Diageo shares was very small. There followed much pointless discussion, going in a circular direction, most of which we had heard in October 2015. It was finally proposed from the floor that the shares be sold forthwith. The motion was carried. .What a relief!

The Moderator called us to consider various thoughts about the way forward -

- What are we here for?
- What are we doing?
- Can congregations look after themselves?
- Does each one of us need to change?
- How can the Spirit enable us to use our gifts for the kingdom?

It was in fact Lis's last Synod as our Moderator. She arrived in 2013 to find a group of people who had been hurt and felt let down by the circumstances in which the previous Moderator, Rowena had been asked to leave. We were unhappy and looking for answers. Lis brought calm, peace and firm leadership in a gentle and caring way. She is retiring in July back to her beloved Windermere and her family.

Synod next meets on 8th October at St George's Hartlepool. I wonder who will be in the Chair?

Jane Tomlin

Guisborough

As I write this I am sitting in a hospital waiting room while they sort out a minor problem for D. Usually it's the other way round on account of me being rather accident prone. Anyway today I'm the one me who has the opportunity to reflect on the vagaries of life and fortune.

I was thinking how lucky we are. Many once life threatening conditions can be cured or at least managed long term. I have successfully lived with Diabetes for over 50 years. Throughout all this time my Insulin and my specialist medical care has been provided free by the NHS. In most parts of the world good medical care is either unavailable, or comes at a price which many people cannot afford. In the countries like the USA for medical care is financed most families by their employer. So if

you are made redundant you have a serious problem. If the local steel works shuts down, suddenly an awful lot of people have a serious problem.

We can now travel and see different parts of the world and see how other people live, eat dress look and it doesn't matter where in the world we are, God is always there and even if we can't find a church there is always somewhere to pray. We have been fortunate to see so many places from hot to cold. This year we plan to visit Spitzbergen via the coast of Norway. I remember last time we went to Norway, to Tromso in the far north. At midnight we went to a concert in the big Cathedral at the top of the hill. It was almost daylight at midnight and I remember the church windows behind the altar looked abso-

	Vestry	Communion	Door	Flowers
1st May	B Ward		D Cross	M Sollett
8th May	R Tunnicliffe		M Houston	H Burrows
15th May	D Moore	J Reynolds	D Beattie	V Beattie
22nd May	J Basham		D Houston	H Tucker
29th May	J Reynolds		P Etwell	D Collins

lutely wonderful. God was so obvious

With Easter being so early this year we still haven't caught up with what month it is. On Good Friday instead of having the usual parade through the town, a considerable number of Church folk gathered round the Market Cross to join in with a very telling service – telling in words and drama; with passers by looking on in puzzlement. And on some faces delight which was good to see.

On market days there is a lady who stands outside Morrison's supermarket selling 'The Big Issue'. You don't need to buy a copy to know what today the really big issue today is the ever increasing flood of refugees arriving from, well just about everywhere. Well meaning people urge us to recognise our Chris-

tian duty to help. But there are so many, and some seem to believe that everyone who doesn't share their vision of God should be exterminated, scary! No wonder folk are worried and confused. And extremists see this as an opportunity to be exploited. So what can a good citizen do?

Similar problems have happened in the past. Maybe we can learn something from them. In January 1942 David then aged three was in Singapore. His Dad was a government civil engineer in the Public Works Department. Then a Japanese fleet arrived and rapidly demonstrated how woefully the unprepared the Western Democracies were. Fortunately for David the Director of Public Works ordered all the women and children evacuated to Australia. Four weeks later

Guisborough Calendar

Weekly

Thursdays 10.00am – 11.30am	Market Day Coffee Morning
Thursdays 11.30am	Quiet Time – prayers and reflections with Catey, Ken and others.

the Allied Forces surrendered. It was to be four and a half years before the British flag flew over the island again. Those of us who were lucky enough to be sent to Australia were taken in and treated kindly. I suppose the fact that the number of refugees was small made it possible. But either way the Houston Family are eternally grateful to the Aus-

D's uncle Allan was involved with another flood of refugees in the early 1960s, these ones from China pouring into Hong Kong at the rate of several thousand a day. As Director of Public Works Uncle Alan had a front row seat as the drama unfolded. The first problem was to find out why. The obvious answer was a communist plot to take over the country. But the refugees said they had come 'to eat fat pork'. Mao's Great Leap Forward had failed, the population was starving. They had simply come in search of food. Historians later claimed 45 million died. The HK government decided their own survival depended on stopping the flow of people.

David's Uncle Alan was Director of Public Works was tasked

with building a people proof fence as fast as possible. It was not a time for niceties. No environmental impact statements, no protracted commercial negotiations. No competitive tenders, no agreed budget. No human rights lawyers. The workforce was recruited from the recently arrived refugees and the PWD dictated who would do what and how much they would get paid. The Chinese, contractors were given no choice, likewise the refugees. And that was the way it was done. And so the crisis passed.

Eventually China recovered from Mao's failed experiment. Of course there were critics. The most prominent being Hepzibah Menuhin, sister of the famous violinist and a vocal human rights campaigner. Whether her interventions were justified, they did not go down well with the people on the spot trying cope with the situation. We could debate the rights and wrongs but I would offer one guiding principle. Whatever you do must actually work. If there is a famine fine words alone will not actually feed the people. (You might guess D is an Engineer.)

Today it seems to be starting all over again. Many thousands of desperate people are clamouring to get into Europe in hopes of a better life for themselves and their families. How much help is Europe in a position to provide? One final thought. When D was in Malaya Jack Ship, his opposite number in Pakistan was appalled by the poverty that surrounded him. Obviously he could not solve all the world's problems single handed. But there were things he could do. With his wife he organised a feeding clinic the local poor people. A few thousand more like him would make a real difference.

God Bless

Maureen Houston

Redcar

Jack's Diary

Yes, it's me, Jack, back alive and kicking. Ah, kicking, that reminds me of an unpleasant experience on West Dyke Road some weeks ago.

I was out walking with Alix when a firework went off, well you know what I am like, the most nervous ninny in town! I couldn't think straight, the biggest panic attack ever, I just wanted to be home, to tremble behind a chair. So I pulled to the left and to the right, very nearly got hit by a car and I was so upset and confused I just lay down and kicked my legs at which point Alix stood me up and gave me a sharp tap on my nose which did the trick and I was reasonably calm again. When we turned the corner towards home she gave me a cuddle and said sorry and when I arrived home I was given a piece of flapjack!

Well now that I have started I may as well come clean on all my wimpish escapades. One bad thunderstorm I was sitting in Coatham Church's doorway, Alix and friend Vivienne singing to

me to calm me down – not good – I don't know which was worse, the singing or the thunder! Then there were two episodes in Locke Park once when a car back-fired and I had to be carried home and I am not a small dog! Then Alix had to break up a fight between two boys, where was I? - Hiding in the bushes until it was all over!

Then there was another embarrassing incident on the beach with two friends, Beau who I quite like and Peter a retriever pup who I just put up with! Well I can't help it if he idolises me, it is the same with humans, they all love me and want to be my friend it's a cross I have to bear! But I digress – there were two other dogs involved ... and I am sorry but I am not prepared to go any further with this story, there are only a few very close friends and family who know and that is how it's going to stay!

Joyce Meyer says 'Sometimes when we go through the fire, as long as we have the Holy Spirit by our sides, we will come out of the other side not even smelling of smoke'

Don't you just Love Jesus.

Joshua ch 1 v9 – Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go'

Catherine Milburn

Redcar Calendar

Tue 3rd May 2.00pm Craft and Chatter in the Church.

Weekly

Wednesday 10:30am Singing Group in the Church

Thursday 9.30am Prayers

10.00-11.30am Pop-in Centre

2pm Thursday Prayers at the home of
Catherine Milburn

St Andrew's

Christian Aid

On the 7th May Grant Sutherland and Steven Etwell are doing their sponsored walk for Christian Aid. We would be very grateful for anyone to sponsor and support us. Thank you. Sponsor form on church notice board.

Grant Sutherland

Ladies' Fellowship

The Ladies' Fellowship had a very humorous and uplifting afternoon from Betty Brown at their last meeting. Thank you Betty.

Our next meeting on the 10th May will be our spring lunch which will end our meetings for the summer.

Coffee for Charity

20th March	Coatham House	£14.00
27th March	Leprosy Mission	£18.00
3rd April	Daisy Chain	£10.00
10th April	Boys' Brigade	£14.35

Coffee Morning

The coffee morning on 16th March raised £119.52 for church funds.

Many thanks to everyone.

St Andrew's Calendar

Sat 25th June 2.00pm Strawberry Tea tickets £3.00

Weekly/Monthly

Boys Brigade

Details available from ministers and church elders

Preachers

	Marion 10.00am	Guisborough 9.30am	Redcar 11.00am
1-May	K Harris	Guisbo Folk	J Coulthard Communion
8-May	M Locke Parade	J Coulthard	C Morrison United at URC
15-May	M Harris Communion	C Morrison Communion	J Martin
22-May	C Morrison	D Moore	N Johnson
29-May		C Eddowes	C Morrison

Material for the June Magazine to church editors by Sunday 15th
May, please

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