

Group News



** October * 2016 * October **

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

www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk

Dear friends,

It is always a pleasure to piece the magazine together and enjoy an early insight into the lives of the churches in the group. This is the time of year when we see our churches celebrate harvest and give thanks to God for his generosity in providing for us. The harvest produce brought into our churches gives a focus for celebration and thanksgiving. We have the chance to thank our Lord for His abundant bounty.

In previous generations our church congregations would have been far more familiar than us with the changing seasons and their absolute dependence on the local lands for food and nourishment. In our increasingly industrialised and global economy we are now much less aware of our dependence on the harvest and have come to regard our food as a product of the local supermarket rather than the nearby farmer's field.

It is very easy to take the harvest goods for granted now that we are largely divorced from the real hard work of food production. In history the harvest thanksgiving was not just a way of saying thank you for the food coming to

our tables but a real time of thankfulness at an individual level that the hard work that had gone into the growing and harvesting of the crop had been rewarded. The church celebrated the rewards of the labour expended by the people. For a subsistence farming community there is a very real link between the effort put in through ploughing, weeding, tending and harvesting; and the ultimate prize of the harvest produce. We all need to remember that although the harvest is the reward, it can only be obtained when we put in the effort to produce the crop. In these historic farming communities all would have contributed to the production of food and the bringing in of the harvest. They would then all have been rewarded with a share of the harvest.

The Jesus messages around harvest make frequent reference to ensuring the weaker members of society are able to receive food and live. We can take note of the advice to leave the edges of the field so the poor can benefit by harvesting the residual crop. There is still a requirement for effort by the poor to achieve their harvest. This idea of enabling

others to receive, as opposed to direct giving, is a common theme in Jesus' teaching.

As our society has developed over the last hundred years we have increasingly seen responsibilities for care and well being move from individuals, families and local communities to local and national governments. This transition has also seen a growing expectation that as individuals we have a right to receive what we perceive to be our due. In most cases our right to receive (the harvest) is associated with reciprocal obligations, sometimes real and sometimes moral.

In my own work as a doctor I can be asked to act as a gate keeper to sickness benefits by certifying people unfit for work. For the most part it is a simple factual transaction. Just occasionally it becomes very frustrating when people attend expecting a sick note and seem to be totally oblivious to the associated obligations. These moral duties potentially include cooperation with treatment and a prompt return to work once fit. Tensions are most common when patients perceive sick leave as a route to early retirement, an extra holiday or convenient for child care.

Our relations in the church and with God are similar with both rewards and obligations. For example, the gospel message is of forgiveness without limit for those who repent, but the granting forgiveness requires penitence. The receipt of God's gifts is from His bounty and is not a right to be received at our request.

In this harvest season let us give thanks for God's bounty in enabling us to use our energies to produce our harvest gifts. For those of us who are not involved in working the land we can give thanks for what we have achieved by the use of our time, our talents and our monies. We can also give thanks for what we have received as a result of the time, talents and money of others and consider if we have truly met the associated obligations, Did we give thanks? Did we use the gifts wisely? Did we return the favour when the tables were turned.

Let us give thanks for all that we have received and be thankful for the fruits of our labours, for all that we have achieved in the use of our time, talents and monies. Be truly thankful.

Roger Wheeler (Elder)

For Our Prayers

'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25, 37-41)

God of all, where are your children?

Let us see God's children, who are far from home,
adrift in an open, overcrowded boat,
with no compass, no crew, no safety.

God of all, why is there crying?

Let us hear the cries of refugees and respond with love
to those whose escape from danger
leads only to a journey into danger.

God of all, who is praying?

Let us pray for the young lives being lost,
for the families who are broken apart,
asking for comfort and for justice.

God of all, who is answering?

Let us see that You are in the boat,
alongside the members of your family.
May we, who bear your name,
answer with compassion for you.

Amen`

Taken from Christian Aid

Commitment For Life:

It's that time of year again when we give thanks for the harvest and celebrate God's continuing goodness to us.

With that in mind, I'd like to remind us all that not all people are as fortunate as we are. Commitment For Life started out as the URC response to the government's failure to live up to its promise of 1% of GDP given to overseas aid. Originally called 'The 1% Appeal', the church asked its members to commit to giving 1% of their take home pay to one of 4 projects around the world. Linthorpe church signed up to support the people of Bangladesh in their on-going struggles against harvests ruined and homes lost through horrendous flooding. When Linthorpe finally closed its doors and the members moved (mostly) to Marton and Nunthorpe URC, it was suggested that the church sign up to what had become Commitment For Life, a change from the original title. The members agreed, and have generously continued to support the communities in Bangladesh.

The name may have changed but the basic idea has not and folk are asked to commit to giving 1% of their take-home earnings/pension(or indeed what they can afford) towards this project. Each church can choose which of the 4 projects they wish to support, and regular info and updates are sent to the contact person. Posters and letters are available, so please check the notice boards.

Thank you for your continuing generosity, and please remember that Gift Aiding a donation makes it so much more useful, with no cost to ourselves.

Jan Harper

Guisborough

This month Guisborough Church will be visited by the Synod representative, Rev. John Paul, who will be speaking to members about our responses to the three questions asked of us as part of the ongoing Local Mission and Ministry Review process. These issues are: *in your church what goes well; what goes not so well; and ideas and hopes for the future?* The Rev Paul holds the post of Synod Officer for Mission and Evangelism and so is well qualified to encourage people work carefully through this process of honest, self-examination to a point where we are able realistically project forward our hopes for the future.

Never the less, this is something difficult to do – a challenge for us all but one we must face and do so with confidence. Self-examination is always difficult – something to avoid until we come point where the reality of a situation faces us – which is where we find ourselves now, as a group of churches.

In her last pastoral letter Liz Mullen, our former Synod Moderator, made a number of observations that should point us in the right direction. In the summary below I think it is possible to see the essential issues we need to consider during the review, viz:

Every congregation will need to gather together to pray on a more regular basis to discern God's will about the way forward for them.

Every congregation might ask themselves whether joining in partnership with another church is a possibility. It is extremely hard to consider leaving your building – How much is your building helping you or holding you back from being part of God's kingdom?

We are going to have to embrace the URC belief in the 'priesthood of all believers.' Each congregation must ask: 'what exactly do we

Guisborough Calendar

Sun 9 th October	6.15pm	Churches Together Harvest Service at St Nicholas,
Thu 12 th October	7.00pm	Group Elders' Meeting

Weekly

Thursdays	9.30am – 11.30am	Market Day Coffee Morning
Thursdays	11.30am	Quiet Time – prayers and reflections with Ken, Margaret, Madge, Maureen and others.

need a minister for? What is it that they have always done in the past that we could do for ourselves?

In looking for encouragement to face up to the difficulty presented by these important focal points for the LMMR process I found myself drawn to an unusual source – the cartoon character - Homer Simpson. Rumour has it that that he was voted, by some members of the US public, as being the greatest American of all time. You may believe this or not, but a number of his quotations are well remembered by his fans as offering wise advice for living the good life, such as:

“If something is hard to do, then it is not worth doing” Our Lord, Jesus said that being his disciple would be difficult so that we would have to put God before family and friends – which raises the question for us: is it worth it? Or put another way when we claim to have faith in Jesus: do we believe what we believe?

Two other of Homer's homilies are: *“You tried your best but failed miserably. The lesson is, never try.”* or *“If at first you don't succeed – give up.”* The prophet Jeremiah didn't give up. He spent a lifetime warning the people of Israel about the consequences of

falling away for God. Success seem to elude him, but his love for his people drove him on even when they were exiled in Babylon – and then much later he was vindicated when they were eventually returned to Jerusalem.

And then there is a fourth pearl of wisdom from Homer: “*Son, if you really want something in this life you will have to work hard for it. Now shut up! They are about to announce the Super Lottery numbers. I feel lucky – could win a million bucks*” This all sounds like that character from Charles Dickens novel, David Copperfield, a Mr Micawber – the man who is always waiting for something to turn up. So, in our present difficulties, as a group of churches, are we waiting for something to turn up?

Good, wise advice would you think? Or perhaps, if we were reflect on Jeremiah’s lifetime of pain and suffering as he preached God’s word, or Jesus’ starkly, difficult requirements to be his disciple then, perhaps, we should first ask ourselves the question: what is the most difficult thing I have ever done? Such an experience, as we can bring back to mind, may show that we have more strength and resilience than we have customarily imagined.

In thinking of our own experience, and then making a comparison with those of Jeremiah and the requirements, of our Lord, on what it means to be a disciple – so how do our efforts and actions stack up against those of Jeremiah and our Lord Jesus? It seems like such an impossible task for us: ordinary people. And yet Jeremiah started out as an ordinary person – making excuses to avoid responding to the call of God. “I can’t speak well and I am too young,” were his first thoughts but he went on to do great things for God and the people of Israel.

Being a minority in an increasingly secular society the obstacles to faith can at times appear to be over whelming – but there is hope. In a recent Guardian newspaper article, by the columnist and Anglican priest Giles Frazer, the headline title is, “*The world is more religious, because the poor get God.*” The main drive of his argument is, that while early 20th, century thinkers such as: Nietzsche,

Marx and Freud thought that religion would wither and die within the following 100 years – in fact the reverse has happened – it has flourished. In 1900 there were 80 million Christians in Africa. Now there are 350 million – and with significant increases in Asia. And all of this happening when many in these areas are persecuted for their faith. Here is the good sign of hope.

In Europe numbers have declined. In answer to this problem Giles Frazer make the point that “*religion begins not with the metaphysics but with the taking part – belonging precedes believing.*” Modern society, with so many choices for activities encourages the individual rather than the group and so as a society we are, in general, no longer “joiners.”

In this problem area the URC has a special strength in the twin pillars of our constitution: *The priesthood of all believers and the fellowship of the church meeting.* Here we can come together to help each other to discern the will of God and of Christ. There is the potential of great spiritual power here. This is of course providing we use these instruments of faith, effectively and as originally intended by our forebears. And this is where the difficulties come into play: we have to face the difficulties we have honestly; we have to consider the answers realistically – and we can take risks at times. Take off to try for our hopes and dreams.

So perhaps we can get Homer Simpson to change his first piece of advice: *If something is hard to do, then it is er, er.....worth doing?*

Ray Tunnickliffe

	Vestry	Communion Door	Flowers
2nd Oct	D Beattie	B Ward	S Verrill
9th Oct	M Burrows	P Etwell	D Collins
16th Oct	D Houston	J Basham	K Harris
23rd Oct	M Houston	P Etwell	M Houston
30th Oct	R Tunnickliffe	M Ward	J Reynolds

St Andrew's

Shoe Box Appeal

Many thanks to everyone for the donations of empty shoe boxes (also thanks to Barbara at Guisborough). Now we have to fill them!!!! Please see Shona, Eleanor or Joan S to find out what is acceptable to put in them. It costs £3.00 to send each box but they are so appreciated by each child who receives them it's well worth it. We are still accepting empty shoe boxes so please don't throw them away.

Harvest Festival

The Harvest Service will take place on Sunday 9th October 10.00am which is also The Boys' Brigade Founder's Day Service to be held at St. Andrew's. Donations of tinned and dried goods, toiletries, washing powder etc. will be gratefully received.

This year the goods collected will be given to Coatham House.

Annual Bazaar

The Bazaar will be held on Saturday 19th November from 11.30am to 1.30pm. Donations would be appreciated for raffle, tombola, cake and bric a brac stalls and also helpers are required to make everything go smoothly. Proceeds are in aid of church funds.

Ladies' Fellowship

The Ladies' Fellowship met on 13th September when a shared afternoon tea was enjoyed.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 4th October from 1.30pm to 3.00pm. Speaker to be announced later.

Coffee for Charity

14th August	Daisy Chain	£20.00
21st August	Justin	£14.50
28th August	Macmillan Nurses	£18.13
4th September	Rosemary Fund	£12.50

Redcar

Advance notice

For Remembrance

Our Church Bazaar to be held on Saturday 12th November. This will be discussed in more detail no doubt at the Chatter Group on the 4th October – all are welcome. Any items for the tombola and raffle will be gratefully received, thank you!

A cascade of knitted poppies will be on display during the weekend of the 12th November. Please visit.

Redcar Calendar

Tue 4th October 2.00pm Chatter in the Church

Weekly

Thursday 9.30am Prayers

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

Wednesday 10.30am Singing Group in the Church

Thursday 2.00pm Thursday Prayers at the home of Catherine Milburn

Preachers

	Marton 10.00am	Guisborough 9.30am	Redcar 11.00am
2-Oct	M Locke	J Coulthard	Joint Service Newcomen 10.45am
9-Oct	K Harris Harvest, Parade	M Harris Communion	J Martin
16-Oct	J Harper Communion	K Harris	M Harris Churdh meeting 11.45
23-Oct	N Johnson	M Locke	J Coulthard
30-Oct	MartonWT	R Taylor	D Moore

Material for the November Magazine to church editors by Sunday
16th October please

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