

Group News



*** 2019 * October * 2019 ***

The monthly magazine for:

Guisborough URC

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

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Pastoral Letter

Assess yourselves to check that you are living in the faith. Test yourselves to make sure. Do you not realise that Jesus Christ is in you? Assuming, of course that your faith is not a sham.’ 2 Corinthians 13 v.5

The very mention of the two words ‘taking stock’ is enough to send a shiver down the spines of anyone who has ever been involved in stocktaking. I remember having it to do at school on a yearly basis, and the very mention of those words conjures up visions of panic and frantic activity; hours of counting and recounting, scouring the stock cupboards and checking manically through computer records, wondering how it was possible that so much seemed to have gone missing. And it must be so much worse for those businesses that are in the retail sector. For any business though, taking stock is essential, not only in checking against theft but also in assessing how well and in what areas the firm is succeeding.

That is a principle that we do well to apply to ourselves as Christians, as the words of Paul to the Corinthians powerfully remind us. It is something that ministers are expected to do regularly, and even lay preachers have a stock taking exercise that is very valuable to undertake. ‘Examine yourselves’ says Paul ‘and see whether you are living in the faith’. In other words, we should stop and take stock; make time for a long hard look at our lives, do some serious soul searching. It’s easy just to muddle along, assuming that everything is automatically ticking over as it should be. We shouldn’t imagine that once we’ve taken up Christian discipleship we can leave it to take care of itself. Nothing could be further from the truth. It’s all too easy to get lost along the way, - to take a false step here or there, or travel down a wrong path somewhere along the way, until instead of making progress we find ourselves slipping backwards, unsure of where we’re going and why.

How far have we honoured those vows we once made. How far have we lived up to our Christian commitments? How far have we achieved those things we once set out to accomplish in our Christian lives?

Maybe it's time to stop and take stock. We may not like what we find, but at least we will know where we stand, and with God's help have the chance to do something about it.

Blessings

Jan

Synod Prayers

6 October: Homeless Sunday

United Church of Christ New York Conference, and Conference Minister Revd David Gaewski

13 October: Freedom Sunday

The work of Mission Committee and Convenor, Revd Dr Grant Wilson

20 October:

Berwick URC; Crookham URC; Revd Mary Taylor; Wooler URC

27 October:

West End URC; Jesmond URC; Robert Stewart Memorial URC, Newcastle

Money Matters

By now all the Churches in the Synod will know how much they are being asked to pay to the Ministry & Mission Fund for 2020. Most churches will have had an increase of about 10%, despite falling membership rolls and the number of vacancies. Three Churches appealed against the amount.

The system used in Northern Synod is to aim to pay for all the Ministers we have in post and all the vacancies which have been declared since any one of them could be filled during 2020. (That includes **our** vacancy) Allowance is made for any retirements which are expected to take place during the year. In addition to this there is a further amount required to pay for Church House staff and the Moderators.

The total for 2020, of around £800,000, is then divided up by reference to reported number of members in each Church, as on the Return made in January 2019.

There are some obvious unfairnesses in the system, even though it was agreed with Church Treasurers in 2013. Each Synod has its own method for deciding how much to pay and how to divide it up. (£19m was raised in 2018 and sent to Church House).

For the figures for our Churches for next year are:

	2020	2019	
Guisborough	8131	7392	
Redcar	6696	6696	see note below
St Andrews	16949	15840	

(Redcar appealed against the increase: the M&M Sub Committee considered the information provided and agreed that the amount should remain the same.)

The Trust Chair, Rev David Grosch Miller is setting up a Group to look at the whole issue of M&M and would welcome anyone with an interest in changing the way of working.

You will not be surprised to know that I am standing down after nearly 20 years, to make way for others who I am sure will have new, different and better ideas for dealing with this whole matter!

Jane Tomlin

White Privilege: A Point of View

By Alan Yates

This article maps out the journey taken by a White boy who did not come from a privileged background. In some ways, this journey started in my childhood, but in other ways it started when I took part in the Council for World Mission's (CWM) programme to identify the Legacies of Slavery (LoS). At the time I was invited to join the LoS hearings I was Moderator of our General Assembly. The invitation to take part in the hearings came because of my role, but I took part because of my understanding of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (through Churches Together in England's Set All Free Project in 2007 to mark the bi-centenary of the abolition of

the Slave Trade Act), and also modern-day slavery as emphasised by the project Stop the Traffik which was launched in 2006.

The first LoS hearing was in London in November 2017 and it was both enlightening and traumatic in equal measures! Despite the name 'on the tin' I thought the focus of the deliberation would mainly be about modern-day slavery, as the Transatlantic Slave Trade is well and truly a thing of the past, history, right? Wrong! The focus was the legacies. Now, when I hear the word legacy I think of it as positive: a loved church member leaves a legacy to fund mission in the church, or the Bevan government leaves a legacy of the National Health Service. However, the legacies of slavery are anything but positive.

The LoS hearings identified three main legacies;

- 1) Racism; the overt and covert denigration of Black people simply because of their colour.
- 2) Deprivation; the disproportionate poverty experienced by Black peoples; and
- 3) White Privilege; the overt and covert privileges and benefits given to, and assumed by, White people simply because of their colour.

The legacy I want to focus on is White Privilege. Not because it is more important than the others but because it is less well understood. When I first was accosted by this term in the LoS Hearing in November 2017 I assumed it didn't apply to me. I was not brought up in a privileged family, quite the opposite. Being brought up on a council estate in a family where both parents needed to work to survive (usual today, but it wasn't then), I knew who the privileged people were, and I wasn't one of them! And yet I was wrong, because everyone in the UK today (and possibly the other nations who exploited the trade in enslaved humans) benefits today from the structural economic advantages gained through centuries of investment stemming from the enslavement of Black people.

However, White Privilege goes deeper than this. In a piece he wrote for Mission Committee the Revd John Campbell, the hymn writer and minister of our predominantly Black church in Tottenham said:

'Whiteness', as a crucial category defining who could be enslaved and who couldn't, was invented. And to it were added a whole host of other real or imagined traits that were used to help explain 'White superiority', as if it were an objective fact, and argue for the social benefits of enforced servitude for those with darker skins, even whilst enslavement was deemed unthinkable for a 'White' person.

This structural bias towards White people which covers everything from centuries of improved economic development in Western Europe through to increased job application rejection rates for foreign-sounding applicants in well-known. Attempts

are made to correct his bias such as financial aid as well as removing names from job applications, so implied race is not revealed for the initial sift (as practised by the URC). But these actions do not really address the issue; honestly, they are window dressing. As John Campbell again reflects:

The classic study by Ruth Frankenberg of racial attitudes amongst educated White women in the USA (chiefly California) in the late 20th Century explores how this works. Most of the women she interviewed would strongly resist the old claims of White superiority. They accepted that people were people, that skin colour was not a real issue. Often, they would claim that they ‘did not see colour’. On the surface, that sounded much fairer, as if the old racisms necessitated by slave power had at last died out. But Frankenberg identified problems including, and most importantly, the deep danger of a presumed ‘post-racial’ approach that says it ‘does not see colour’ – ‘colour’ blindness is power-blindness. It allows White privilege to keep its privileges by pretending that the remaining power imbalances generated between the declared ‘White’ and the declared ‘Black’ do not exist and so any difficulties faced by Black people in our new post-racial society must be of their own making. This attitude allows White people to tell Black people that when it comes to slavery, its legacies and contemporary racism, they (the Black people) simply need to ‘get over it’. ‘Racial’ inequalities thus persist unchallenged and, in this way, can be blamed on the very victims of those inequalities.

So, you’ve heard about my journey of discovery about the legacies of slavery. I guess you might want to know where it will end. I don’t know. But what I do know is that this is a journey that we should encourage others to take and in doing so we can start to identify how we can make changes to policies, processes and culture so that we can start to dismantle White privilege in the URC. Are you up for the journey?

Alan Yates is Convenor of Education and Learning Committee and Immediate Past Moderator of General Assembly (Article Reprinted from Northern Synod ‘Footsteps’)

Guisborough

“But we always do it like that” will be the last words of the dying Church or so it was suggested in a sermon I heard recently. Alternatively the last words may be “but we don’t do it like that”. The phrase, and the idea, really struck a chord with me. It started me wondering why we always, or nearly always, view any change as a negative rather than a positive.

For the past year a few of us have been meeting every couple of months to work our way through *Holy Habits* by Andrew Roberts. He looks at the role of ten habits as seen in Acts 2 and re-imagines them for personal and community life today.

I found the process both comforting and challenging. Comforting because I have more of the habits than I thought I had and challenging because Andrew Roberts asks us to look at new ways to develop the ten habits, new ways that just might lead to new disciples.

The suggestions are not just for individuals but for Churches too and I think it is here that we really struggle. We all bemoan the fact that our congregations are getting smaller and older but we seem reluctant to make any changes. Just because we like services a certain way, on a certain day, at a certain time, doesn't mean that is right for others.

The Gospel reading recently was Luke 13:10-17, the story of Jesus healing the woman bent double. Jesus saw the woman's need and did something about it, a need that the rest of the congregation must have seen too but that they chose to ignore. All they saw was that Jesus had done something that wasn't how they normally did things – he broke the tradition of not working on the Sabbath.

We all take comfort from the familiar, be that phrases, formats or places, but what comfort is there if eventually there is no-one else to share them with? I'll be the first to admit that I don't like being taken out of my comfort zone but I usually find that if I am pushed I find that what I was dreading wasn't that bad after all, and most of the time I get something positive out of it and sometimes even like it!

We follow Jesus as Lord, Jesus who was, and is, the ultimate breaker of traditions. Wasn't part of the success of the early Church the fact that they were so radically different? Those habits in Acts 2 that are the basis of *Holy Habits* were a completely different way of living out faith, a departure from

Guisborough Calendar

Weekly

Thursdays 9.30am – 11.30am Market Day Coffee Morning

Thursdays 11.30am Quiet Time in Church. Prayers and reflections with Maureen, Madge, Ken and others. Details on church notice board

what had gone before. Imagine the Christianity if those early followers had carried on in the traditions of the past rather than forging those new habits. Would it have been an obscure Jewish sect rather than the global Church it is today?

In a recent edition of the newsletter from the Mission to Seafarers The Reverend Canon Andrew Wright talks about how easily we become struck with ways of doing things that have become 'hallowed' over time. That it is understandable that we become deeply attached to them. He goes on to say that our comfort in the familiar can lead us to closing our minds to alternatives or failing to explore new possibilities.

He refers to John 21 where the stranger on the beach, later revealed to be the risen Jesus, suggests that the fishermen try casting their nets on the other side. When they do they are rewarded with more fish than they have ever seen.

Lots of the things we do, and have always done, work well but in this age of social media we need to acknowledge that some of our traditions are as incomprehensible to those outside the Church as Facebook or Snapchat are to a lot of us.

At this time of change, as we look for a new Minister, we need to be open to new ideas and ways of doing things, to see change as a positive not a negative; to listen out for the advice of the stranger on the beach and hopefully we too will see a catch larger than we have seen before.

Susan Griffiths

	Vestry	Communion	Door	Flowers
6th October	R Tunncliffe	P Etwell	The children	Mary Sollett
13th October	J Reynolds		B Ward	Mary Robson
20th October	J Basham		D Beattie	Vera Beattie
27th October	D Moore		J Basham	Dorothy Collins
3rd November	M Houston		M Ward	Jenny Reynolds

St Andrew's

Harvest Festival

Our Harvest Festival will be held on Sunday 13th October. This year our harvest gifts will be for Middlesbrough Food Bank who will be grateful for any non-perishable foodstuffs.

Shoe Box Appeal

We are starting to organise the Shoe Box Appeal and still need empty shoe boxes. Should anyone require a leaflet regarding this Appeal please see Shona or Joan.

Annual Bazaar

Our Annual Bazaar is on Saturday 16th November at 11.30am. Stalls to include brick-a-brac, cake, raffle, tombola etc. plus teas, coffees and homemade soups to be served. We are calling on our friends to help us with this, hopefully, busy event. The outcome to boost our church funds.

Diary Date

Christmas Social is to be held on Wednesday 18th December at 7.30pm. Coffee and mince pies. Raffle.
Donations for Christian Aid.

Coffee for Charity

18th August	Middlesbrough Food Bank	£18.10
1st September	Shoe Box Appeal	£23.00
8th September	Boys's Brigade	£18.50
15th September	British Heart Foundation	£15.00

St Andrew's Calendar

Weekly/Monthly

Boy's Brigade

Details available from church elders.

Redcar

Fundraising for Prostate Cancer Research

Terry and I would like to thank everyone so much for the support we received at our 'Tea and Cake' on the 24th August. Our event was so blessed with good weather, lovely company and very kind and generous donations. We raised £1200!! Totally amazing so THANK YOU!!X

Elaine Robinson

Scone Coffee Morning

Once again, thanks again to everyone who baked, served and helped at the scone coffee morning on Saturday 31st August. We raised the magnificent sum of £281 with donations. Once again we were supported by our friends from other Redcar churches.

Pop In

In August we had a visit from Tilly and Harvey to our Thursday Morning Pop In. They gave it five stars.

Thank you Tilly and Harvey, please come again.

Cath Milburn

Duty Rota

	Vestry	Door
6 th October	Elaine	Brenda
13 th October	June	Brian
20 th October	Catherine	Brian
27 th October	Elaine	Brian

Redcar Calendar

Weekly

Thursday

9.30am Prayers

10.00-11.30 Pop in Centre

Preachers

Marion	Guisborough	Redcar
10.00am	10.00am	11.00am
6-Oct Jan Harper	Guis Folk Communion	K & M Harris
13-Oct Donna Moore Parade, Harvest	Bill Middlemiss	Norma Johnson Harvest
20-Oct Jane Rowell Communion	Ken Harris	Brian Stephenson
27-Oct Margaret Harris	Jane Rowell	Ken Harris
3-Nov Jan Harper	Norma Johnson	Jane Rowell Communion

Material for the November Magazine to church editors by Sunday 13th
October please

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