

Group News



*** September 2012 ***

Part of the URC Northern Synod – www.urb-northern-synod.org.uk

www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk

Ministers

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From the Manse

Dear Friends,

We have been reminded with Meg's recent announcement and statement, that nothing ever quite works out as we expect. We had been planning for changes to the stipendiary ministry quota within the Mission Partnership to start affecting us in two and a half years' time with the retirement of Colin Offor from the three churches to the north of the river. That change will still take place, however, before that, it is in fact Meg, from our own Group who has felt called to move on in her ministry to pastures new further north in the Synod. Although this will hit us very hard now, as Meg herself has reflected on in her statement to the churches of our Group, this will allow for the opening up of possibilities for ministry sharing when Colin does then leave and for the right person to be called to the churches of the whole Mission Partnership. But the news still does come hard to our four churches, leaving much readjustment and requiring, even more so than previously, the rise of lay leadership within all our churches to allow for ministerial shortage. But we can and we will cope with these changes, for when has God not helped us previously to change and to adapt and even, to grow as a result of challenging times? Remember former times when our Group had even more ministry? We made the adaptations then, and we will do the same now!

And doesn't this also mirror our experiences in life? For life, as we all full well know, often has its challenges and changes, its ups and downs, which similarly often we can't predict or pre-empt, and which can happen at any time, be they health scares or redundancies or losses. The question is always *how* we respond to those difficult changes, for when we are more ready or able to roll with the changes then we find that the ride is not as bumpy as we thought, and we are able cope and stay afloat after all.

Having just got back from my holidays I think it is a bit like the turbulence that you sometimes experience on an aeroplane, bumping around at 39,000 feet! Quite often, even though it can be bumpy and sometimes a bit scary, you often have the pleasure of seeing the blue sky shining above you no matter how challenging the weather might be below. Only when the weather gets really bad does the blue sky disappear to be replaced by grey clouds, and the announcements over the tannoy command

even the cabin crew to their seats. But before long, the blue skies overhead return, because the pilot has managed to fly around the worst of the storms. Because of our faith, we can look to God to bring us back to the shining blue skies even in the storms of life, because God, our pilot, manages to steer us away from the worst of the storms and provide for our needs. So when it comes to doing some blue sky thinking, about the situation in which we now find ourselves entering over the next couple of months or our own personal situations, we know that, for us, with God, no matter how challenging things feel for us, faith means finding the shining blue sky that exists above even the fiercest of storms. We will always have the blue sky to cling on to as we trust in God to bring us out of the other side in to calm skies once more. And we, like the fellow passengers on an aeroplane are not alone. We will experience these challenges together. We have been grouped together in our churches together for a reason.

God bless! Rev Catey Morrison

Synod Prayers

September Sunderland & South Tyneside

2nd September

St Paul & St John's, South Shields; St Margaret's, South Shields; St Andrew's, Hebburn; Rev Ann Jackson

9 September

Stockton Road, Sunderland; Boldon; St Bede, Sunderland; Roker; Rev Dr David Whiting

16 September

Grindon; Helen Stephenson (CRCW)

23 September

North East Christian Churches Together (NECCT) and local CT Groups

30 September

Rt Rev Seamus Cunningham, Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle; Rt Rev Mark Bryant, Bishop of Jarrow

News from the Persecuted Church

Two young children from a mainly Christian ethnic group in Burma (Myanmar) were mercilessly gunned down by the Burmese military on 5th May as they were playing in a river. The five-and seven-year-olds, from the Kachin people, were startled by a bomb blast, and as they tried to run to safety, the soldiers opened fire on them. This was only the latest cruel atrocity in the army's campaign against the Kachin, which has displaced around 75,000 people. Soldiers have attacked villages, razed houses and destroyed churches; they have also raped women and tortured prisoners. Pray that the Lord will comfort the bereaved families of the children and bring relief to His oppressed people (Isaiah 61: 1-3).

From the Barnabus Fund Prayer diary

Pray for the courageous Cuban 'Ladies in White', who have faced beatings, arrests and harassment in order to attend religious services and also pray for prisoners of conscience and other victims of injustice.

From the Christian Solidarity Worldwide Prayer diary

Modern

Any culture which is terrified - as ours is - of silence and aloneness is one in which the sense of human reality, human truth, is being eroded.

Rowan Williams present Archbishop of Canterbury

Thanks from Rosa

Rosa thanks all the members of our churches for their welcome and support and for all the gifts she will take back home.

She will write something for *Group News* every month so that she can keep in touch with you all. So please look out for her message to you in the October edition.

Meg's Reflects on Rosa's Visit...

and the Future for East Cleveland Group

Yesterday was hard. Watching Rosa walking away by herself at Newcastle Airport was hard. She had very mixed emotions because she was so looking forward to seeing her family again but there were tears as she didn't want to leave new friends. And, of course, she endeared herself to us and we will all miss her. And, on top of that, she had to negotiate transfers on her own through Heathrow and also Johannesburg and that can be very daunting for those of us who have English as our first language but imagine Rosa, whose English has improved while she has been here, and her fears. I told her that God would go with her and made sure she had my phone number! God can use phones, too, if needs be!

Elsewhere you will read Rosa's own reflections which she read for the Synod World Church Group and also at our farewell party for her at Marton. And, of course, you can discover more on the web by

visiting our synod website, the address of which is on the front of Group News, by following the link *From Xai Xai to Tees-side* where you will find pictures as well as accounts of activities and links also to Rosa's Greetings, Sermon and Reflections. For me it has been a very humbling experience as well as a privilege. In our visits to each other I cannot tell whether it was Rosa or me who had the biggest culture chock. Rosa kept talking about how I had suffered when I was with them in Xai Xai and eventually I think she understood that I didn't suffer but rather coped with their life style.

For both of us the real essence of the exchange has been that of relationships and people and the knowledge of God's love in it all. It certainly has made our family in the East Cleveland Group seem much larger as we have embraced not only Rosa but her family, too. Our knowledge of the world wide Christian family has increased and is

now heartfelt through our relationship with Rosa and her family and church members. For me, my own return home from Xai Xai was also tinged with emotions as I left my 'granddaughters' and new family but now all of our lives have been enriched by Rosa's visit here.

This has set me thinking about my own imminent move, which I now must turn my thoughts to in all sort of ways. It will be hard, too, as over the last nine years plus I have come to know you so well. I will go with mixed emotions and yet, the relationships don't end, the friendships can continue over the distance. Rosa, as you will see from elsewhere in this edition, will communicate with you still as she sends messages to Roger for Group News and she and I will continue the friendship over the miles. I am sure that Rosa has grown through this experience as I did last year and that it is perhaps the harder times within those experiences that will have the greatest impact on our lives and ministries. And I know that some of you anticipate hard times ahead within the East Cleveland Group since there will not be a replacement for me.

However I trust that God will help you all to grow through this experience. I already sense willingness in many of you to learn and to take on more responsibility and I am sure that God will strengthen and guide you even though you may feel vulnerable and weak. Feeling that way is in many ways far better than feeling confident in your own strength for then you may feel inclined to by-pass God and leave him out of the equation. As I said to Rosa as she had to move on by herself at Newcastle Airport that God would go with her I say the same to you; God will go with you... and he will lead and guide and strengthen you for the tasks ahead.

But he (God's Spirit) said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses For when I am weak, then I am strong". 2 Corinthians, 12: 9-10

Meg

Messages from Rosa

The following are transcripts from the three talks Rosa gave during the course of her stay with us.

An Introduction

Greetings,

My name is Rosa. I am 33 years old. I am married to Americo and we have 4 beautiful daughters. I work as a pastor in IPM, the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique. I am here to develop the friendship between your church and ours. I bring you greetings from IPM, especially from Bethlehema and Bethel in Xai Xai.

Last year your minister, Meg, was in my parish in Mozambique. She saw the difference in life style that exists between your country and ours. I am here in response to your invitation to develop the partnership between our churches.

Mozambique is one of the countries in southern Africa and is still developing. The country is characterised by enlarged families. More people in Mozambique than in England go to church each Sunday to worship God. Mozambicans are hospitable, cheerful and supportive of each other. We like to sing and dance a lot and enjoy our conviviality.

We ask you to pray for us because we know our country has gas and oil reserves and we know that these resources are the root causes of some of the wars in our world. And Mozambicans know how dangerous war can be as we lived for 16 years killing each other.

Whilst we have so many good things in life my parents have experienced some of the bad. Our country suffers from absolute poverty, the consequences of HIV, human trafficking, malaria and alcoholism. These bad things can devastate the lives of believers and this can make pastoral work difficult. We pastors don't have the resources we need for we often have to walk long distances to work and our wages are very poor. So the church has many great challenges to face. The IPM is concentrated in the south of our country and one of our challenges is to evangelise the whole land.

If God were to ask our pastors as Jesus asked the blind man in Mark, chapter 10, verses 46-51: 'What do you want me to do for you?' we would answer:

We want our own personal cars to

facilitate our daily journeys to work. We would answer also:

We want miracles to prevent the spread of HIV and to help people to understand that it is dangerous to take risks.

Finally I invite you to visit our country and to see the very best and beautiful beaches alongside the Indian Ocean.

A Sermon for Sunday

Text: Psalm 133

'How good it is when siblings live together'

The psalms formed the devotional hymns of the Hebrew people. The psalms are prayers and praise inspired by the Holy Spirit, expressing the deepest emotions of our souls as we relate to God and to each other. They speak of love, trust, adoration and the freedom to choose as well as of fear, affliction and humiliation. They show how we long for healing and for liberation. The author of Psalm 133 is among those who cared for the unity of the people of God and who wanted to see the communion of the people of Israel in his time.

The psalmist speaks of the need for unity among the Israelites although this was not the history of the people of Israel. In the past there had been many tribal conflicts and for

many years the land had been divided with 10 tribes forming Israel and 2 forming Judah.

When the psalmist cried out: 'Oh, how good and pleasant it is for siblings to live together in unity' the psalmist doesn't ground this unity in the natural kindness of the people. No! It has to do with worship and with unity with God. This psalm is one of the psalms of ascent sung as pilgrims ascended up to the Temple in Jerusalem. This they did at the three Jewish festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Harvest or the Feast of the Tabernacles.

To explain the importance of unity between siblings the psalmist uses 3 illustrations.

In the first place he compares unity and communion with Aaron who was the first High Priest. Aaron, as a priest, was the people's representative before God in worship in the Temple. And the Temple was where people from Israel and from Judah came to worship God. And so together, those from Israel and those from Judah, were united in their worship and as they offered sacrifices to God through a priest. They may have been divided politically but in their worship they were as one.

In the second place he compares the unity of siblings with the oil poured on to Aaron as a priest. Oil was

used by the priests in the Temple and it symbolises the Holy Spirit. Oil sanctifies the priests and the people of God; it makes them holy. Love, between brothers and sisters, is holy, sacred and precious. And when siblings come together to worship God then God accepts their worship. Without love between siblings then worship is not acceptable to God.

For the psalmist the unity of God's people is seen as something beautiful and pleasant. The psalmist values unity because it is an effective weapon against the enemy, against evil. Unity was a guarantee that the enemies of God and his people would not be victorious. We are all challenged to be united through the love and work of Jesus Christ. We are all challenged to focus on worshipping and serving him and to do so together. But when we have disunity amongst us we hinder the work of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit. When we come to worship with resentment in our hearts or we hurt each other we renounce the work of Jesus Christ.

In the third place the psalmist compares the unity of siblings with Mount Hermon which was an important mountain in the north of Israel. It was always topped with snow and it still is the source of the Jordan River. In a land which is often hot and dry Hermon was a

great blessing as from there flowed water. Hermon watered the land which became fertile and fruitful and brought life to God's people.

The moral and meaning of this psalm is also for us today. When we come together in unity and in true adoration of God, then God orders his blessing. God will dwell in the midst of our worship by the Holy Spirit. But when we stay at home because we are too lazy to come to worship we do not receive God's blessing. As in the times of the psalmist love and unity can knock down the barriers we often create today. God created us all in his image. We are all made in his image, whoever we are and wherever we live. As brothers and sisters, as God's one family, we may inhabit different parts of the world but we can all be united in worshipping the one true God. God gives us the grace as we develop our wills and emotions to live together in harmony. We know as Christians that Jesus conquered all fear and disunity on the cross. Instead he gives us the grace to develop friendship and love. We may have difficulty in communicating because we speak different languages but love can overcome even this. Because of love, your minister, Meg, came to live for three weeks coping with our transport system and our life style but she overcame any difficulties because God was

with her. And she gained the love of my four daughters who see her as their grand-mother. I hope this friendship between our churches will continue forever. I would like you all to come and visit me in Xai Xai and may God bless us forever for it is good when siblings live together in unity. So let us continue to live together in unity.

Amen

A Thought for Tea

Good afternoon. Firstly, I must tell you that I felt blessed by God because of my friendship with Pastor Meg which began at a distance through our Churches. I felt and I feel blessed because IPM has pastors who speak the English language better than I do and who have more years work experience than I do and who are aged approximately the same as Meg, but out of them all I was chosen. This election reminds me of King David being chosen as is portrayed in the bible. I believe that God has a purpose for everything that happens in our lives. And I think God has a purpose for this friendship of the two churches and two pastors which I do not understand yet, but maybe Meg has already discovered what it is.

For those who have been to Mozambique and to my house, especially Meg, and have seen the con-

ditions in which I live, imagine how I feel in England living in a good house and enjoying good transport along with everything else that do not have at home. I have enjoyed my visit to England. It has been very educational and Meg is a teacher. Since Meg had a funeral the first day I was here I have learned about funerals and the crematorium and how people are remembered in a garden. Meg also visits the sick and on three occasions I saw people in hospital and on others visited them in their homes. We have been to prayer meetings in church and in peoples' homes. Meg takes care of those in her pastorate and she visits her dad and takes care of me and feeds me. She is also very patient because she is always careful to speak English slowly and has helped me to understand and pronounce English.

The fellowship I have had with church members and Meg's colleagues has been good. It started with a reception at Redcar when it felt as if we already had known each other for a long time. I felt the warmth of their welcome which was of God and for me and for Mozambique. The people of Meg's churches have graced us with their goodness by setting up internet connection in my house. This has meant that I have been able to e-mail my family daily. Imagine how Meg lived for three weeks without

the internet in 2011. Unlike me, she had three weeks of coping with the poverty in which I live. I have had three weeks here and I liked what I saw in your churches and I have enjoyed the beautiful places I have visited and I am glad to hear that people like my sermon and that it is on your synod website. I liked that together we walked for part of the Synod Pilgrimage and enjoyed my visits to Hartlepool, Newcastle, Durham, Holy Island and Beamish Museum. I look forward to going to Citizens Advice Bureau tomorrow and to the Steel Works on Friday.

And my daughters miss your Meg. My eldest daughter, Elizabeth, has a new friend, Eleanor. Eleanor is the grand-daughter of one of Meg's church members and is the same age as Elizabeth. I told Eleanor that Elizabeth is 12 but Elizabeth reminded me that she is now thirteen!!! The girls communicate using e-mail and have the opportunity

to develop and good friendship in this way. And I hope, too, that we can develop our friendship. You are part of us and we are part of you.

Finally I would like to thank all the members and pastors in the Northern Synod of the URC for everything they have done for me and for my future and for my family and for IPM I give special thanks to Rowena, John and Hillian and Meg for all they have done for me. I thank, too, those who care for the roses and the gardens as I enjoy the flowers.

Congratulations also to you all for the medals that Britain has won at the Olympic Games.

May God bless the Northern Synod of the URC and IPM in our friendship and I pray that it will grow. I hope you will come and visit me in my home and in my parish in Mozambique.

Rosa

Guisborough

As I start this, my contribution to the September Group News, it is 2 days after the excitement of 'Gold Medal Saturday' at the Olympic park. Although never being a player of any sport, I have been informed and entertained through the extensive coverage on TV and was dazzled by the spectacle of the opening ceremony. Since

the Jubilee events in June, there have been many other highlights shining in an otherwise very grey wet summer.

In my garden the roses have been battered by rain and high winds, the potatoes have spent most of their growing time in wet soil while the apple and plum trees have little fruit presumably because there were few insects at blossom time. However the hostas, hydrangeas, blackcurrants and parsnips are looking great! Just some of the highs and lows which have alternated across the past 8 – 10 weeks.

We gardeners are vulnerable to the vagaries of the British climate each season of the year but our challenges are as nothing compared to those of farmers and growers in this country and elsewhere whose livelihoods depend on their ability to sow or harvest successfully to pay the bills.

As a church, we are also preparing to be challenged. As Meg moves on to her new calling in Newcastle it's inevitable that we should feel her loss. In her statement she encourages us get on with setting up a team to work with ministers past and present. Now is the time for elders' training and for each member to think positively about how they can put their talents to use.

The Guisborough Elders are planning to ask the congregation to consider these 2 questions before our September Church Meeting in an attempt to highlight the need for new thinking and to make good use of the forthcoming elders' training sessions.

- 1. What do you consider to be the role of the eldership?*
- 2. How do you think worship will look with limited professional leadership?*

I hope for a lively meeting, offering practical ideas for working together through the new season ahead. As Meg suggests, we must continue to pray for her, for Catey and for ourselves to fulfil God's potential for his Church.

Joyce Basham

Guisborough Calendar

Weekly

Thursdays 10.00am – 11.45am Market Day Coffee Morning
Thursdays 11.30am Quiet Time – prayers and reflections with Catey, Meg, Ken, Norma and others.

Redcar

Pop-In

The Pop-In celebrated its' 19th Birthday in July which was marked with a party and cake! Many people enjoyed listening to our Singing Group who gave a short recital. Thank you to those who help each Thursday and to the singers.

An Evening with Rosa

It was lovely so many people came to welcome Rosa and produce such a wonderful supper, just a shame the game of Beetle was so short! We hope Rosa has good memories of her visit to our area and no doubt is now pleased to be reunited with her family. Thank you all who helped make the evening such a happy one.

Coffee Morning

**Saturday 13th October
10-12noon**

Organised by Catherine Milburn
in aid of Teesside Hospice

The children also be taking part in a sponsored bike ride on that day for the same cause.

Harvest Service

with parade

Sunday 23rd September

Donations for the Food Bank.

Redcar Calendar

Tue	4 th Sep	1.00pm	Craft and Chatter
Wed	12 th Sep	2.00pm	Welcome at Win's
Wed	19 th Sep	1.30pm	Elders meeting
Sun	23 rd Sep		Parade and Harvest Festival
		6.00pm	Redcar CT United Christian Aid Service at St. Peter's
Sun	30 th Sep		Short Christmas event meeting after the service

Weekly

Thursday	9.30am	Prayers
	10.00-11.30am	Pop-in Centre

Churches Together Service

Sunday 23rd September
6.00pm

Christian Aid Tax Campaign

with Judith Sadler from the Newcastle Christian Aid Office.

Following this, the Tax Bus will be calling in at Redcar at St. Peter's Church from 6pm on Monday 8th October.

Lingdale

Harvest

Our harvest weekend will begin on Friday 28th September with a Pie & Pea Supper and quiz starting at 7pm. Please let Susan know your choice of pie (pork or mince) as soon as possible on 01287 654093.

The harvest service will be at 5.30pm on Sunday 30th.

We suggest a £3 donation for the cost of the food, which will go towards the window fund (we have nearly raised all we need just a bit more is needed) and £1 for the quiz for Christian Aid. This year instead of fresh produce for the harvest service we are asking for tinned and dried goods (as per the attached list) for the food bank that has been set up in Redcar to help those in need in Redcar and East Cleveland.

FAF (Fun and Faith) Club

The first FAF (Fun and Faith) Club for young people to be held at the Lingdale manse is to be held on Sunday 16th September at 6.30pm-8.30pm.

Lingdale Prayer Pointers

Week Beginning

- 3rd September: Prayers for the school as it reopens, for all the teaching staff and pupils.
- 10th September: Prayers for the residents of Prospect Place and the more senior members of the village.
- 17th September: Prayers for all those who provide to support to the community, in the shape of the police and fire and ambulance services.
- 24th September: Ahead of the Harvest Service, prayers for the Lingdale Lifford's allotments and all allotment holders within the village as they continue to gather in a meagre harvest.

Flower Rota

2nd September – Mr T Waller
9th September – Mrs J Scott
16th September – Mrs P Green
23rd September – Mr A Thompson
30th September – Mrs H Dunstan
7th October – Mrs P Griffiths

Knit, Stitch and Natter

We are hoping to start a knit, stitch and natter group probably on a Thursday or Friday afternoon.

If you are interested please contact Catey.

United Covenant Service

Skelton Methodist Church
Sunday 9th September -
10.30am

All welcome

Community Café

Community Café will be re-opening after its summer break on Tuesday 4th September.

Book Club

It has now been agreed that the Book Club will meet on the first Tuesday of the month so the next meeting will be on 4th September when we will be discussing The Return by Victoria Hislop. New members welcome.

Northumbria in Bloom

Brian will be attending the Northumbria in Bloom Awards Ceremony on Tuesday 11th September on behalf of the church following an email to say that the church may be in line to receive a special award.

Lingdale Calendar

Weekly

Tuesday	10.00am – 11.30am	Community Café followed by
	11.30am – 12noon	Prayers for our Community
3 rd Sunday of the month	5.30pm	Family Service followed by a Youth Meeting at the Manse

St Andrew's

Churches Together Prayer Diary

Week beginning:

2 nd September	St Bernadette's RC Church
9 th September	St Andrew's URC
16 th September	Marton Methodist Church
23 rd September	St Cuthbert's C of E
30 th September	St Mary's C of E
7 th October	Nunthorpe Methodist Church

Please pray for the individual churches in our group and also for the work of Churches Together in Marton and Nunthorpe.

Coffee for Charity

17th June	British Heart Foundation	£12.50
24th June	Kirkley Lodge	£20.00
1st July	RNLI	£23.40
8th July	Xai Xai Fund	£23.00
15th July	Xai Xai Fund	£24.55
22nd July	Teesside Hospice	£22.00
29th July	Leprosy Mission	£20.00
5th August	Air Ambulance	£20.00
12th August	Rosa	£26.40

Many thanks for the donations to the above charities.

Ancient

The virtue of innocence is regarded as foolishness by the wise of this world. Anything done out of innocence they doubtless consider stupid; and whatever is approved by truth, by the worldly wise will be called folly.

Gregory the Great; Pope, Church Father (6th century)

Strawberry Tea

Although the weather was inclement on June 23rd which affected the numbers attending our Strawberry Tea we raised £234.50 for church funds.

Many thanks to everyone.

Ladies Fellowship

We start our session of the Ladies Fellowship on Wednesday 5th September at St Andrew's at 7.30pm with a pooled supper and activities.

Everyone is welcome so do come along and join us.

St Andrew's Calendar

Weekly

Wednesday	9.30am	Midweek Informal Worship & Prayers – All welcome
Sunday	After Worship	Traid Craft Stall (Last Sunday in month)
Boys Brigade		Details available from ministers and church elders

Preachers

	2-Sep	9-Sep	16-Sep	23-Sep	30-Sep
Marton	10.00am M Robb Church Meet	M Robb Parade	C Morrison Communion	L Bustard	M Robb Baptism
Guisbo	9.30am K Harris Communion	C Morrison	Guisbro Folk	M Robb	C Morrison Harvest
Redcar	11.00am K Harris Communion	C Morrison	D Moore	C Morrison Harvest Parade	tba
Lingdale	5.30pm M Robb	N Johnson Communion	C Morrison Family Serv	M Robb	C Morrison Harvest

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