

Group News



** 2015 * September * 2015 **

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

www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk

Minister

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Dear Friends,

I have been asked to write in this 'Group News' because we have some difficult and sad news to share. Catey and John's marriage has ended and in consequence Catey is taking some time off, although I appreciate she still intends to go to Iona and take a baptism on 30th August. From then on, the plan will be for her to take one service in each church during September and October but will not be expected to do much else.

This is a time of real pain for the whole Morrison family but also, for Catey, it is sprinkled with some relief that after months of unhappiness, a difficult decision has finally been made. I am sure that you will all hold the family in your thoughts and prayers and give them all the support that they need.

In her last pastoral letter for the Group News, Catey wrote fully about a booklet produced recently by the URC called 'What is the Spirit saying to the churches' and reminded you that so much around us is changing that we in the church also have to change in order to be a credible institution in today's secular society. Our numbers are declining rapidly but we want to be able to 'keep going'. We want to grow but aren't sure how. We want to spread the gospel and 'do mission' in the community but our reduced numbers and increased age profile make this seem an impossible task. Also, our ministers are getting stretched too thinly as we expect them to cover wider and wider areas of expertise and geography.

Northern Synod had its own 'Thinking Day' in February along the same lines as the booklet because we are aware that in the NE we will have to reduce the number of ministers we have from 20 to 15 within the next 5 years. It was a stimulating and positive day and Synod Executive has since written to every church asking them to respond with their ideas for new ways of using a limited number of ministers with creativity and realism. We suggested you use a church meeting to discuss these issues and then share them with the Synod.

When I came to speak with the Elders after Catey's news to discuss ways of managing, we decided that we must use this 'crisis' as an 'opportunity'. Perhaps such a crisis could be a very real opportunity to think of new and different ways to help the minister cover your 3 churches? Perhaps there are ways she could lead you other than in those that are familiar? Perhaps you could change some of your ways of 'being church' to something far more radical? To think in such a way will not only be of value to your group of churches, it could also form the basis of your response to the request from Synod Executive.

I am praying that Catey will be able to resume her ministry amongst you before too long and that she and the children will all learn to be a happy and supportive family together. I am praying that John will find new meaning and purpose as he begins a different way of life. I am praying that the East Cleveland Group of Churches will continue to love and support each other, will not be overwhelmed by shock but rather be surprised into using this time as one of opportunity for change and development. I hope you will join me in those prayers – for Christ's sake.

May God bless you all

Lis Mullen

(Moderator, Northern Synod)

FAF Club

The next scheduled meeting of the FAF club is on 20th September from 6.30pm to 8.30pm at the manse.

Please could those intending to attend contact Catey shortly before the meeting to confirm arrangements.

For Our Prayers

Synod Prayer Diary

Group Prayer Pointers

6th September:

- Northern Synod Trust; Con-
venor Revd James Breslin;
- Cromer Avenue, Gateshead;
Denewell Avenue, Gateshead;
Winlaton LEP;
- Revd Elaine Brown; Revd
Gordon Brown

13th September:

- Racial Justice
- St James's, Newcastle; St An-
drew's, Kenton;
- Revd James Breslin

20th September:

- Redcar; Lingdale; Guisbor-
ough; St Andrew's, Nun-
thorpe & Marton;
- Revd Catey Morrison

27th September:

- PCM: Lay training through-
out the Church, including
foundation evening classes
for lay people offered through
the Theological School at
Khovo;
- Northern Baptist Regional
Minister Revd John Claydon

6th September:

- Pray for our minister Catey
and her family; that they may
know our Lord's presence
and guidance through the
coming weeks and months.

13th September:

- Pray for the work of Relate
and relationship counsellors;
the work of My Sister's Place
in supporting women; as well
as individuals and organisa-
tions that support women,
men and children through dif-
ficult family times.

20th September:

- Pray for our neighbour
churches in Stockton and in
Hartlepool as they plan for
their future following the re-
tirement of Rev Colin Offer.

27th September:

- Pray for members of our own
group of churches. Remember
those who are providing lead-
ership at the present time.

What is the Spirit Saying to the Churches? The Future of the United Reformed Church

This study guide, about the future of the church, has emerged out of three years of discussion in the United Reformed Church's faith and order committee and Mission Council. Its purpose is to ask each to think and pray about the matters that are raised and to seek the guidance of the Spirit to discover what we are doing here, where we are going and to try to discern where the Spirit is leading us to hear God's voice in our world today.

When the URC was formed in 1972 by the coming together of the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church of England, later joined by the Churches of Christ, it was done so as a first stage in the uniting of all churches in Britain. This has not happened so far but I think we have reached a stage where we need to make real progress along this route to being one in Christ.

I therefore favour action to join with the Anglican and Methodist churches and others to form the Uniting Churches of/in Great Britain – as one option listed in the study guide. This change in structure will not in itself solve the problem of declining commitment of Christ – but will give us a stronger and wider ranging organisation – which is more likely to tackle the problems of faith, in the modern world, in a more effective way.

A change in structure, whilst giving us a wider and greater range of recourses, needs a change of attitude and a different world view if we are to take forward the message of the Gospel in a successful way. Without a radical change of approach and of attitude, then such a move will be no more than managing further decline – and failing in our mission for Christ in the world.

We must start this process with ourselves asking the fundamental question: do we believe what we believe? Clearly the answer must be yes, but before saying so we must examine our own life of faith – for without a firm foundation in our own minds about the impor-

tance of Christ to us – then the hope for expansion of numbers of Christians is unlikely to happen.

So through prayer and study of the Bible we need to ask the question: how has faith been beneficial in my life? Then go on to examine how and when the Holy Spirit has spoken to us – guided us in some way. We also need to think of when we have seen something of God in other people – so offering us comfort and encouragement in the faith. All of this needs to be articulated in some way – and most importantly by being able to talk about our experience of faith to others. By having the regular custom of talking about faith to other people, in the fellowship of Christ, we will therefore have the confidence to tell others and thereby bringing them to faith. This approach by individuals in the churches is **of first importance** before anything else.

Another vital issue to be faced in the modern world is “culture” that is the current life styles and attitudes and beliefs of all people within the nation. This culture is of mixed faiths but largely secular, materialistic and driven by consumerism. Into this mix Christianity forms but a small part, which is not at the centre and is often seen, in the popular view, as dull, negative and sometimes damaging.

There are some encouraging signs. Pope Francis has become a popular, respected figure by his adoption of the simple life and support for the poor and unafraid to attack the injustices created by many vested interests in society. Recently, the Anglican bishops sent out a report criticising the government’s social policy – a good voice for the relevance of Christian values. However, such positive messages are often but lone, occasional voices in amongst the many other interests and concerns of society. This being the case the mission of a new uniting church must be to engage closely with these concerns in order to bring the light of faith onto the issues that matter to all people in general. In this way, and overtime, gradually Christianity can play a greater, significant role in society and be at the fore front of modern thought and ideas.

In developing such a role the URC two jewels in the crown of reformed tradition will play an important role: the theology of the priesthood of all believers and the church meeting. Neither of these concepts have been used effectively, in my experience, but the potential is huge and will be crucial for all believers to be fully engaged in discerning the will of God, through the church meeting and taking action through the priesthood of all believers.

Should it be the decision of the church to move forward in union with others, then it will be of the greatest importance that these twin pillars of the reformed tradition be included in any new constitution.

Ray Tunnicliffe, Guisborough Church

Crisis or Opportunity?

At the end of August the Group Elder's met with Synod Moderator, Lis Mullen. The meeting was arranged to assist the Group Elder's in responding to the ending of Catey and John's marriage. Much of the discussion focused on the immediate problems of maintaining worship and ministry across the Group in Catey's absence.

Lis acknowledged that this represented a crisis for the Group. She then encouraged us to consider what opportunities for the future could be found in the crisis. Catey will need time to come to terms with the ending of her marriage. In the immediate future this will mean others will be needed to lead worship and provide pastoral care. In the longer term we will need to support Catey to meet her commitments as our minister whilst at the same time providing for the needs of her family as a single parent.

Within the East Cleveland Group our three congregations are spread over a large area. As well as meeting our pastoral needs Catey has provided significant support and guidance to our individual elder's and quarterly church meetings. For some time now the

elders have been concerned that our ways of working are failing to make best use of our minister's time which is a scarce and precious resource. Looking forward, we will need to balance our expectations with a healthy dose of reality to ensure we only ask Catey to undertake a role which is realistic, fulfilling and achievable.

The elders accepted that, in the short term, Catey should lead only one service on a Sunday. This would enable her to spend informal time with each congregation and reduce some of the pressures associated with leading two services in quick succession. Our Guisborough congregation in particular has been very tolerant of the inability of the minister to join them for coffee. In the longer term we need to address the tension that exists between how often we hear our minister preach and how many services we expect her to lead each Sunday.

As a pastorate, our group is smaller than many individual churches. With this in mind, it is reasonable to assume that a single minister can provide for our pastoral needs. Currently we are attempting to do this whilst maintaining three individual church structures and identities. From Catey's perspective this creates a duplication of meetings. For our churches there is a duplication of officers and representatives taken from an ever shrinking (and aging) membership. We need to find ways of streamlining our administration so that this aspect of being church does not consume all our energy. One solution could be to focus administration at group rather than individual church level. Joint meetings for elders and members could take responsibility for pastoral and spiritual matters, supporting our minister and providing representation into the wider church. Individual churches could retain responsibility for finance and property. Lis encourage us to consider radical solutions to the challenges we face in being the URC Church on Teesside.

We currently have a crisis; can we find opportunity from this crisis? If we change we might continue; if we continue as we are I can only foresee our demise as a denomination on Teesside.

Roger Wheeler (Elder, St Andrew's)

Guisborough

A story of an event which happened during & after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre & the Pentagon on 11 September 2001.

Our Air Canada flight was about 5 hours out of Frankfurt flying over the North Atlantic and I was in my in flight crew steward's rest seat taking my scheduled break. All of a sudden the curtains parted violently and I was told to go to the cockpit, right now, to see the captain. As soon as I got there I noticed all the flight crew looking very serious indeed. The captain handed me a printed message from Atlanta, addressed to our flight, and simply said, "All airways over the Continental US are closed, land immediately at the nearest airport."

We knew this was a serious situation and we needed to find terra firma quickly. It was decided that the nearest airport was 400 miles away, in Gander, on the island of New Foundland.

Canadian traffic control directed us to Gander and we were told to get the airplane ready for an immediate landing. While this was going on another message arrived from Atlanta telling us about some terrorist activity in the New York area. A few minutes later I went back to the cockpit to find out that some airplanes had been hijacked and were being flown into buildings all over the US. We decided to make an announcement and LIE to the passengers for the time being. We told them that an instrument problem had arisen on the airplane and that we needed to land at Gander, to have it checked. We promised to give more information after landing in Gander. There were many unhappy passengers but that wasn't unusual.

We landed in Gander about 40 minutes after the start of this episode. There were already about 20 other airplanes on the ground from all over the world. After we parked on the ramp the captain made the following announcement. "Ladies and gentlemen, you must be wondering if all these airplanes around us have the same instrument problem as we have. But the reality is that we are here

Guisborough Calendar

Thu 10th Sep	12 noon	Elders meeting at in the Hall
Tue 15 th Sep	2.30pm	Belmont Care Home Service
Tue 15 th Sep	7.15pm	Church Meeting at in the Hall
Sun 4 th Oct		Harvest service

Weekly

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

for a good reason.” Then he went on to explain the little bit we knew about the situation in the US. There were loud gasps and stares of disbelief. Local time at Gander was just after 12 noon. Gander control told us to stay put. No one was allowed to get off the aircraft. No one on the ground was allowed to come near the aircraft. Only a car from the airport police would come around once in a while, look us over and go on to the next airplane. In the next hour or so all the airways over the North Atlantic were vacated and Gander alone ended up with 53 airplanes from all over the world, out of which 27 were American.

We were told that each and every plane was to be offloaded, one at a time, with the foreign carriers given the priority. We were No. 14

Guisborough Rota

	Vestry	Communion	Door	Flowers
Sept 6th	B Ward	D Beattie	D Cross	D Cross
Sept 13th	R Tunnicliffe		P Etwell	D Collins
Sept 20th	J Reynolds		M Burrows	B Ward
Sept 27th	D Cross		D Beattie	S Verrill
Oct 4th	J Basham	B Ward	D Cross	D Collins

in the US category. We were further told that we would be given a tentative time to get off the plane at 6 pm. Meanwhile bits of news started to come in over the aircraft radio and for the first time we learned that airplanes were flown into the World Trade Centre in New York and into the Pentagon in DC.

Passengers were totally bewildered and emotionally exhausted but stayed calm as we kept reminding them to look around to see that we were not the only ones in this predicament. There were 52 other planes with people on them in the same situation. We also told them that the Canadian Government was in charge and we were at their mercy. True to their word, at 6pm, Gander airport told us that our turn to alight would come at 11am, the next morning. That took the last wind out of the passengers and they simply resigned and accepted this news without much noise and really started to get into a mode of spending the night on the airplane.

Gander had promised us any and all medical attention if needed; medicine, water, and lavatory servicing. And they were true to their word. Fortunately we had no medical situation during the night. We did have a young lady who was 33 weeks into her pregnancy. We took really good care of her. The night passed without any further complications on our airplane despite the uncomfortable sleeping arrangements. About 10.30 on the morning of the 12th we were told to get ready to leave the aircraft.

A convoy of school buses showed up at the side of the airplane, the stairway was hooked up and the passengers were taken to the terminal for “processing” We, the crew, were taken to the same terminal but were told to go to a different section, where we were processed through Immigration and customs and then had to register with the Red Cross. After that we were isolated from our passengers and were taken in a caravan of vans to a very small hotel in the town of Gander. We had no idea where our passengers were going.

The town of Gander has a population of 10,400 people. Red Cross told us that they were going to process about 10,500 passengers from all the airplanes that were forced into Gander. We were told to just relax at the hotel and wait for a call to go back to the airport, but

not to expect that call for a while. We found out the total scope of the terror back home only after getting to our hotel and turning on the TV, 24 hours after it all started. Meanwhile we enjoyed ourselves going around town discovering things and enjoying the hospitality. The people were so friendly and they just knew that we were the "Plane people". We all had a great time until we got that call, 2 days later, on the 14th at 7 am. We made it to the airport by 8:30 am and left for Atlanta at 12 noon arriving in Atlanta at about 4:30 pm.

What passengers told us as they got on board was so uplifting and incredible and the timing couldn't have been better. We found out that Gander and the surrounding small communities, within a 75 Km radius, had closed all the high schools, meeting halls, lodges, and any other large gathering places. They converted all these facilities to a mass lodging area. Some had cots set up, some had mats with sleeping bags and pillows set up. All the high school students had to volunteer to taking care of the "Guests". Our 218 passengers ended up in a town called Lewisporte, about 45 Km from Gander. There they were put in a high school. Families were kept together. All the elderly passengers were given no choice and were taken to private homes. Remember that young pregnant lady; she was put up in a private home right across the street from a 24 hour Urgent Care type facility. There were medical staff both male and female available and stayed with the crowd for the duration. Phone calls and emails to US and Europe were available for every one once a day.

During the days the passengers were given a choice of "Excursion" trips. Some people went on boat cruises. Some went to see the local forests. Local bakeries stayed open to make fresh bread for the guests. Food was prepared by all the residents and brought to the school for those who elected to stay put. Others were driven to the eatery of their choice and fed. They were given tokens to go to the local Laundrette to wash their clothes, since their luggage was still on the aircraft. In other words every single need was met for those unfortunate travellers. Passengers were crying while telling us these stories. After all that, they were delivered to the airport right on time

and without a single one missing or late. All because the local Red Cross had all the information about the goings on back at Gander and knew which group needed to leave for the airport and at what time. Absolutely incredible!

When passengers came on board, it was like they had been on a cruise. Everybody knew everybody else by their name. They were swapping stories of their stay, impressing each other with who had the better time. It was mind boggling. Our flight back to Atlanta looked like a party flight. We simply stayed out of their way. The passengers had totally bonded and they were calling each other by their first names, exchanging phone numbers, addresses, and email addresses. And then a strange thing happened. One of our business class passengers approached me and asked if he could speak over the PA to his fellow passengers. We never, never, allow that. But something told me to get out of his way. I said "of course". The gentleman picked up the PA and reminded everyone about what they had just gone through in the last few days. He reminded them of the hospitality they had received at the hands of total strangers. He further stated that he would like to do something in return for the good folks of the town of Lewisporte. He said he was going to set up a Trust Fund under the name of DELTA 15 (our flight number). The purpose of the trust fund is to provide a scholarship for high school students of Lewisporte to help them go to college. He asked for donations of any amount from his fellow travellers. When the paper with donations got back to us with the amounts, names, phone numbers and addresses, it amounted to \$14,500 US or about \$20,000 Canadian. The gentleman who started all this turned out to be an MD from Virginia. He promised to match the donations and to start the administrative work on the scholarship. He also said that he would forward this proposal to Delta Airlines and ask them to donate as well.

All this happened because some people in remote places were Good Samaritans to some strangers, who happened to drop in among them. Good out of evil. God will be smiling.

Peter Etwell

Redcar

Coatham House

Event meeting

We received a letter during the summer Event meeting to dis- from Coatham House thanking us for the cuss the **November** donation of Farm Foods vouchers. This **Bazaar** Tuesday 15th allows the young people to obtain fresh September in the milk and bread until they have some church at 2.00pm – All money to do shopping. They wished us are very welcome!! well for a lovely summer

From Deprivation to Celebration' Afternoon Tea

A huge thank you to all who helped and supported this event in anyway. It was a wonderful afternoon and lovely to see the hall to bursting point with Andy and Darren having to add more tables! The wall displays looked great and many comments were made about them by the visitors. Thank you too to the Ukulele band, the 'Stokesley Strummers' who also enjoyed the afternoon. A lot of hard work but worth it and in the process we raised £430!! THANK YOU!

Redcar Calendar

Tue 1 st Sep	2.00pm	Craft and Chatter
Sun 13 th Sep	10:45am	Church meeting

Weekly

Wednesday	11.00am	Singing Group (10.45am for coffee!).
Thursday	9.30am	Prayers
	10.00-11.30am	Pop-in Centre
	2.00pm	Prayer meeting at the home of Cath- erine Milburn.

St Andrew's

Mamie Pratt

It is with sadness that we have to announce the death last month of Mamie. We shall miss her. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family at this time.

Annual Bazaar Saturday 14th November 11.30am to 1.30pm

Helpers needed and donations of cakes, raffle and tombola prizes and bric a brac gratefully received.

Ladies' Fellowship

Ladies' Fellowship meets for the start of our new session on Tuesday 8th September from 1.30pm to 3.00pm. We will be sharing an afternoon tea and discussing the agenda for the new session.

All welcome.

Fundraising

The following monies have been raised for church funds. Strawberry Tea on 27th June raised £252.10. Coffee Morning on 23rd July raised £143.25

Many thanks to everyone

St Andrew's Calendar

Wed 23rd Sep	1.00 - 3.00pm	Knit 'n' Natter	All welcome.
Sat 10th Oct	7.30pm	Quiz, Pie and Pea Supper at St. Andrew's	

Weekly/Monthly

First Thursday	2.00pm	Home Prayer group at 31 Roseberry Mews
Boys Brigade		Details available from minister and church elders

Coffee for Charity

Shoe Boxes

5th July	RNLI	£18.00	We will be taking part in the Shoe Box Appeal in the autumn.
12th July	Larchfield Community	£11.60	
19th July	Macmillan Nurses	£14.50	This worthwhile charity event sends gifts to children in need.
26th July	Zoe's Place	£27.00	
2nd Aug	British Heart Found'n	£14.40	
9th Aug	Rosemary Fund	£16.20	

Preachers

	Marton	Guisborough	Redcar
<i>Subject to change</i>	10.00am	9.30am	11.00am
6-Sep	MartonWT Church Meeting	tba Communion	tba Communion
13-Sep	D Elliot Parade	C Morrison	C Morrison Meeting
20-Sep	C Morrison Communion	M Harris	tba
27-Sep	J Harper	L Mullen	C Morrison Parade
4-Oct	M Harris	C Morrison Harvest	C Morrison United Service

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

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