

Group News



** 2016 * November * 2016 **

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

www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk

From Our Synod Moderator

Dear Friends,

I enjoy those aspects of our church life which remind us of a bigger picture: our twinning with the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique, participation in North East Churches Acting Together (NECAT), workplace chaplaincies, support for Christian Aid, the list can go on.

The people of God are frequently reminded of the bigger picture, the history of their salvation, and the nature of God who calls them forward in faith. Such reminders occur again and again in both Old and New Testaments. We stand in an inspired stream of faith.

In their vulnerability, congregations in the New Testament Church are constantly reminded that although they may appear to be weak in the eyes of the world, Christ the head of the Church is a cosmic Christ, God's reign is an established fact, and consequently whatever their circumstances, it is quite reasonable for Christians to live in hope.

Are we living in hope? Local church life feels a challenging experience for many of us today as we adjust to changing circumstances and necessarily explore new ways of being Church. What does it mean to serve Christ in our community today? How do we engage in God's (note, not our) mission? What new resources are at our disposal? Which 'old ways' impede progress? We too can feel vulnerable, but nonetheless we are also called to live in hope; because the God we read of in the Bible and the God who inspired our forbears has not changed. There continue to be prophets, evangelists, teachers, and signs of God's reign all around us for those who care to see. God's spirit continues to touch and transform people's lives.

We are all part of a much bigger picture, ranging from the ever-increasing circles of belonging to a conciliar church, to ecumenical relations at regional, national and global levels, through to mystical

communion with the Church past, present, and to come in the love of an eternal universal God through a cosmic Christ.

To use the image of John Moschus, a 6th century monk and ascete, I see the Northern Synod as being like a spiritual meadow; and my calling as your Moderator is to spread the hope and encouragement of the broader experience of the Church with local congregations and ministers, cross-pollinating examples of what is working and lessons learned through issues and challenges faced elsewhere in the Synod, or anywhere from The Bigger Picture.

I am humbled and excited to have been called to such a ministry of hope, creativity and encouragement. Revd Lis Mullen's support and encouragement for our whole Synod has been a great strength, and I am thankful for her good example. I have been touched, encouraged by, and thankful for the many messages of support from both within and beyond our Synod, and the assurance of many prayers. Anyone who knows me will appreciate I have a lot to learn! I am old enough to appreciate we are all un-finished business: work in progress. Not one of us is the finished product. No doubt I will on occasion unintentionally frustrate and disappoint co-workers in Christ. However, I begin this new ministry trusting that my calling is, again, part of a much bigger picture, a context that brings a confidence not in my own capacity, but in seeing how through the millennia God has been able to use the most unlikely people in the unfolding divine plan.

Together, hopefully with the bigger picture in mind, we will be enabled to see the inevitable changes ahead as opportunities rather than threats. Rather than allowing new ways of being church to make us anxious, let's be glad to embrace change, because change is an indicator of life and growth!

It is my hope and prayer that everyone within the life of our congregations will share that same sense of humility and excitement I am experiencing as I look ahead to a regional ministry among you, as we explore our common calling together in the years ahead. In the coming years a key priority for me is to be alongside as many

as possible, listening very carefully in the first instance, and sharing encouragement wherever possible as we all work out in our localities what our discipleship and calling is in the communities to which we belong.

I close with words from Paul's Letter to the Romans: "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 15: 4-6).

As ever, and in Christ,

David Herbert

Let us not forget



Autumn Synod

Synod met at St George's Church in Hartlepool on 8th October 2016. The meeting welcomed the URC's Secretary of Global and Intercultural Ministries who introduced Synod to online resources on sacred conversations on migrations. He reflected that we can feel disorientated by change around us, and by moving around the country or the world. These ideas were followed by short videos about living in strange places and Bible study considering the parable of Lazarus.

The Synod Executive Committee brought forward proposals about the Next Steps on the Way Forward. These have been built on discussions with church members over the last two years. As ministry becomes more stretched, we need to find a new way forward, as we cannot continue with the current way of doing things.

The idea was to create teams of people to support groups of churches, which would include ministers, paid lay workers, and other lay people, each using their own gifts and skills. Funding would be provided for training and developing skills and for lay workers. Synod Executive stressed that although they would provide the overall framework, it was very much up to local churches to shape it to fit their own situation and mission needs. After debate it was agreed to proceed on this basis, initially with an urban and a rural pilot. Look out for further details in the coming months.

After lunch the Synod looked at the wider church family with a report on the work of belonging to the World Church programme. This included Northern Synod's link with the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique.

Other business concluded during day included:

- Affirmation of the 2017 Synod Budget
- Mission Grants to Newcastle City Centre Chaplaincy, St Cuthbert's Centre Holy Island and a school chaplaincy in Rothbury.

- Formal agreement for the closure of Barnard Castle URC
- Appointment of the Convenor and Secretary to Pastoral Committee
- Congratulations to Grant Wilson on completing post ordination training and Matthew Prevett on achieving his doctorate.

The next meeting will be at West End, Newcastle on 11th March 2017

Extracted from the Northern Synod Web Site

Offertory Envelopes and Gift Aid

The freewill offering envelopes for 2017 will look quite different from the ones we are using this year. They will be larger (as requested for easier insertion of notes and cheques) and bright yellow in colour. For the past two years the envelopes have been ordered by the Group as it is far too expensive to have small quantities printed separately for each of our three Churches. It is important for you to know that the money you give goes to your Church - it does not come to Group funds even though it says East Cleveland Group on the envelope.

This system is organised through the envelope numbers as follows:

Envelopes numbered 1 to 20 are for Guisborough Church

Envelopes numbered 21 to 36 are for Redcar Church

Envelopes numbered 37 to 52 are for St Andrews Church

So even at a Group Service the envelopes can be sorted for the correct church!

Envelope giving is a reliable way of ensuring that your gift is regular even if you are not able to be there every week. You do not need to Gift Aid your giving to use envelopes. Please note that with the changes to the taxation rules which came in 2016 you will be probably be paying less tax, especially with interest on savings being at a historical low. If you are not a tax payer, please do not sign a gift aid form at all.

However, due to the vagaries and complexities of the tax system, all loose cash in the offertory in amounts of £20 or less from one person, and weekly donations in envelopes containing £20 less come under another scheme known as the Gift Aid small donations (GASDS) on which tax relief is automatically claimed by the Church.

Any questions you may have about this please speak to your Treasurer (Peter Etwell at Guisborough, Brian Stephenson at Redcar, and David Dawson at St. Andrews).

Your continuing support of our Churches is very valuable and greatly appreciated.

Jane Tomlin

Guisborough

Dear Friends, when I was casting round for something to write about I thought of our recent holiday in Norway. Neither of us is fit enough to climb real mountains anymore, and even walking in the Alps is a bit too challenging.

I run out of puff too quickly as does D. But his sense of balance is also getting worse. He's had a few tumbles out in the hills. The first time he he was very relieved when after about five minutes a woman on a bicycle stopped helped him up, and walked him back to his car. She turned out to be a GP. Some people are just born lucky!

	Vestry	Communion	Door	Flowers
6 Nov	B Ward	R Tunncliffe	R Tunncliffe	L Reeves
13 Nov	P Etwell		S Griffiths	M Robson
20 Nov	D Moore		D Houston	V Beattie
27 Nov	J Reynolds		M Houston	M Ward
4 Dec		GROUP SERVICE MARTON		

Guisborough Calendar

Wed 9th Nov 7.00pm Group Elders meet at

Mon 28th Nov 7.15pm Church 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.

It reminded me of the story of the good Samaritan in the Bible. Except that the NHS worries about Doctors who stop to help strangers. Too many ambulance chasing lawyers around these days.

Back to our story. Our Norway trip was with the ‘Hurtigruten’ (fast ships) who sail up and down the coast calling at every little port between Bergen in the south and Kirkness up on the Russian border. You can get off and explore locally or join a trip which returns you to your boat a few stops along the line. Anyway surely even D can’t get himself in trouble on a well-organized trip like that? But we had forgotten, a ship goes up and down with the tide and so does the gangway. Sometimes it was surprisingly steep and D felt very insecure. But there was never any shortage of good Samaritans. Usually members of the crew, but other passengers, total strangers, never failed to step in and help my wobbly lame duck. It did much to restore my faith in human nature.

It set me reflecting on our own record. Thirty years ago we lived in Kuala Lumpur. A famously corrupt, but very popular, politician overstepped the mark even for that very tolerant country. He was arrested and put on trial. A guilty verdict resulted in a long prison sentence. He was offered a deal, but declined, preferring to call out his mainly Malay supporters and dare the authorities to arrest him. Riots broke out and for a while things looked ugly especially for

our Chinese friends. D said we lived in a well policed safe area. We had a large house. We ought to offer sanctuary to our local Chinese friends. Fortunately it all calmed down before our resolve was put to the test. Given the history of anti-Chinese riots perhaps we had not been entirely wise. But these people had been very good to us and there are family connections going way back.

Another good Samaritan was Jack Ship, D's opposite number in Pakistan. Jack and his wife organized, and I think financed, a baby feeding clinic for the many very poor families in his area. He knew he couldn't do more than dent a very big problem. But he did what he could. What happened when he retired, I don't know. I hope the local community took over. But I never found out

These stories have a long ago and far away quality which makes them 'safe'. We can nod approvingly without having to actually do anything ourselves.

Which leads me to think of people like Sandra Verrill, Guisborough URC's one woman social services department and universal Auntie to generations of our Sunday school children. But that's another story

God bless.

Maureen Houston

Redcar

Group Service

Please also note that on Sunday 4th December there will be a Group service at St. Andrew's, Marton led by Rev Hillary Colinson at 10.30am

Memorial Service

Please note the Memorial Service will take place on Saturday 3rd December at 10:30am followed by tea / coffee and mince pie.

Church Bazaar

The annual Church Bazaar is to be held on Saturday 12th November.

Donations of treat type items of food for the raffle bags, tombola prizes for Krysia and cakes on the day would be greatly appreciated. The cascade of poppies will be beginning to be erected on 1st November during the Chatter group as will some preparation for the bazaar anyone willing to help please come along!

Redcar Annual Bazaar

**Saturday 12th November
11am until 2pm**

Refreshments including soup and bacon butties will be available.

Local crafts people will be selling at this event, also our own raffle, tombola and cake stall.

A cascade of knitted poppies will also be on view especially for Remembrance weekend and throughout November.

Redcar Calendar

Tue 1st Nov 2.00pm Chatter in the Church

Weekly

Wednesday 10.30am Singing Group in the Church

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

2.00pm Thursday Prayers at the home of Catherine Milburn

St Andrew's

Annual Bazaar

Our Annual Bazaar is to be held on Saturday November 19th 11.30am to 1.30pm. Donations for raffle, tombola, cake and bric a brac stalls plus homemade soup will be very much appreciated. Proceeds are in aid of church funds.

Ladies Fellowship

The Ladies Fellowship will meet on Tuesday 8th November 1.30pm to 3.00p.m. when our speaker will be Doreen Moodie.

Our St. Andrew's Lunch is to be on Tuesday 29th November at the Linthorpe Tea Rooms at 12.30pm.

Shoe Box Appeal

The Shoe Box Appeal will finish on Sunday 13th November when all filled boxes will be taken to the collection point. If anyone wishes to donate or fill a shoe box please see Shona, Eleanor or Joan. Remember it costs £3.00 to send each filled box.

Christmas Social

Advance Notice - Our Christmas Social this year is to be held on Saturday 17th December at 7.30pm. Teas, coffees with mince pies. Raffle. Please do come along for a very enjoyable evening. Donations for Christian Aid.

Coffee for Charity

18th Sep	Coatham House	£20.00
25th Sep	Rosemary Fund	£14.50
2nd Oct	Alzheimer's Society	£16.00
9th Oct	Boys' Brigade	£40.00
16th Oct	RNLI	£13.50

Preachers

	Marton 10.00am	Guisborough 9.30am	Redcar 11.00am
6-Nov	J Harper	K Harris Communion	N Johnson
13-Nov	M Harris Parade	B Clare	K Harris
20-Nov	K Harris Communion	Guis Folk	J Martin
27-Nov	D Moore	M Harris	J Harper
4-Dec	*** H Collinson *** Group Service 10.30am at St Andrew's		

Material for the December/January Magazine to church editors by
Sunday 13th November please

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