

# *Group News*



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The monthly magazine for:

**Guisborough URC**

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Our churches are members of the Cleveland Pastorate

Part of the URC Northern Synod – [www.urch-northernsynod.org.uk](http://www.urch-northernsynod.org.uk)

[www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk](http://www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk)

# Pastoral Letter

*'Epaphras, from among your number and a servant of Jesus Christ, sends greetings. He is always wrestling on your behalf in prayer, asking that you may stand firm, mature and fully assured if the will of God'*

*Colossians ch. 4: v.12*

'I'll pray for you'. Countless individuals must have made that promise innumerable times over the years, but what does it actually mean? Sometimes, it's little more than a platitude, a suitably pious sounding way of avoiding the need to offer any more concrete help. Usually, though, we offer it in all sincerity, but, despite our best intentions, we fail to act upon it. We mean to pray, but there are so many needs to pray for and so little time in which to do it. Meaningful prayer tends to go out of the window, reduced to a few cursory and general words. Contrast that with the tribute paid by Paul to the man at the centre of the passage above. Epaphras, a man who was always 'wrestling in prayer' for the Colossians. Of all his gifts, this, in Paul's opinion, is what made Epaphras stand out, - his dedication to prayer.

So what can we learn here? First, for Epaphras, prayer wasn't a casual take-it-or-leave-it activity; it was part of his life, a privilege and a responsibility that he wrestled with day by day.

It wasn't a vague activity either. he knew for whom he was praying, what he was praying about and why he was praying. Equally, his praying wasn't simply concerned with his own affairs or his immediate circle. It reached out to others, concerned with their needs and ultimate welfare.

Finally, and most importantly, he acted upon his prayers. 'I can personally testify', Paul went on to say 'that he works tirelessly, both for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.' What exactly he did we aren't told, but it's clear that Epaphras didn't leave it all to God; he played his part in ensuring his prayers were answered.

'I'll pray for you'. It's a wonderful promise if we really mean it!

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

Shalom

Jan

# Cleveland Pastorate

The secretaries of the churches that form the Cleveland Pastorate recently met with Kim Plumpton (Synod Moderator) and Kate Hackett (Convenor of Pastoral Committee). Discussions focused on the continuing vacancy and possible options for making the Pastorate more appealing to available ministers. One suggestion was for the East Cleveland Group to cede from the vacancy and continue under lay leadership with support from Synod. This would leave the remaining four churches with a viable vacancy.

The East Cleveland Group Elders meeting has subsequently discussed this possibility and believe it is appropriate to seek further guidance from Church Meetings. The Elders meeting contained mixed views and makes no recommendations.

The following is a copy of the relevant minute from the East Cleveland Group Joint Elders Meeting:-

**East Cleveland Elders Meeting Response:** An extensive discussion took place between the elders recognising that this was a complex matter with no simple solution. Elders held a variety of views and it was agreed that this should be shared with our church meetings so that we can discern a way forward.

- i. **ECG** remains a recognisable unit within the current vacancy with the elders from the three churches wishing to continue to work together. The ECG has now functioned for over 8 years under the guidance of the combined eldership and officers without input from a minister in post.
- ii. **Pastoral Friends and Interim Moderators** have provided significant support to the ECG over the years of vacancy. Their input has been greatly appreciated by the combined eldership.
- iii. **Cleveland Pastorate** appears to be too large a unit to be appealing to a single minister as a 100% stipendiary post.

- iv. **Pastoral Committee** has some additional ministerial resources available which are not currently allocated. It may be possible to persuade the committee to increase the scoping of the post to 130% or 150%. Recruitment to a part scoped post is likely to be difficult.
- v. **Rev Sue Walker** is currently providing ministry to the Redcar Church and Mission Project. She is tasked to provide guidance and support as the various relationships develop. This post is time limited so as not to interfere with the long-term development of the pastorate. It has a 30% scoping. Sue has family commitments to the area but is unlikely to wish to increase her current commitment.
- vi. **East Cleveland Group** could withdraw from the vacancy and elect to continue long term under lay leadership with support from Synod. It is unclear as to whether such a change would reduce the MOM commitment. The nature and extent of any support that may be available from Synod would need to be explored. With the ECG outside the Cleveland Pastorate, the four remaining four churches would provide a sustainable vacancy.
- vii. **Cleveland Pastorate – working arrangements:** The Cleveland Pastorate has put in place the necessary financial arrangements to meet their obligations to an incoming minister. Some consideration has been given to how Sunday preaching obligations could be managed. The ECG elders are used to working together and would be happy to relate to an incoming minister through a joint ECG elders meeting. There is no similar history of elders working together north of the river. Outside the requirements for the vacancy, there has been no meaningful joint working across the whole pastorate to date. We have held a successful whole Pastorate service. Without significant joint working we are in danger of expecting our minister to chair an endless stream of meetings and leave little time for the other aspects of ministry.
- viii. **Pastoral Committee/Synod** will need some time to consider how they can progress the Cleveland Vacancy including any additional resources that may be accessed by the group. In considering our future options we would find it helpful to know if a scoping above 100% is possible and believed to have a reasonable chance of recruiting the

ministers. If ECG is to cede from the vacancy, then the resources Synod may be able to make available to support ongoing lay leadership may be key. Clarity from Synod about MOM payments for Churches in ongoing lay leadership would also be helpful.

- ix. **Lay Leadership:** if this is accepted as the long-term option for the ECG then we are released from the vacancy process and can direct our energies to the work of the church. Conversely, there is concern that under lay leadership we would not have enough drive and vision to provide enthusiasm and challenge to the churches.
- x. **Elders** suggested that one way forward is to remain part of the vacancy process, for the present, and work with Synod with a goal of amending the pastorate and/or vacancy to make ministry more appealing. If this fails to make progress within a reasonable timeframe, then we retain the option to cede from the vacancy and move towards lay leadership.

### **A Motion for Church Meetings**

The Group Elders asks that Church meetings consider and it appropriate agree to the following motion:-

- ◆ This meeting notes the report of the discussions that have taken place regarding the vacancy at the East Cleveland Group Elders meeting held on 31st July 2024.
- ◆ This meeting asks that their representatives continue to engage with the Synod in discerning a way forward for the vacancy.
- ◆ This meeting asks that the option of the East Cleveland Group withdrawing from the Cleveland Pastorate and continuing under lay leadership with support from Synod is included in these discussions.
- ◆ The meeting asks for a formal report of progress to be made to church meetings in early 2025.

# *Synod Prayers*

## **1st September**

Churches: St Columba's North Shields; Minister: Revd Dr Trevor Jamison. St Andrew's Crook, LEP;

Minister: Revd Christopher Humble.

Our second world partner: the United Church of Christ.

## **8th September**

Racial Justice Sunday. Our Racial Justice Advocate: Pat Poinen.

## **15th September**

Ecumenical Colleagues: Newcastle Methodist District Chair: Revd Stephen Lindridge; Darlington Methodist District Chair: Revd Richard Andrew; Roman Catholic Bishops of Middlesborough: Rt Revd Terry Draine; Hexham and Newcastle: Rt Revd Stephen Wright.

## **22nd September**

International Day of Peace (21st). Aspirations for peace.

## **29th September**

Churches: Trinity, Gosforth LEP;

Minister: Revd Alex Mabbs.



# Guisborough

## 3 X Thank you.

I wonder if anyone else has a copy of a list of blessings, on an A4 sheet, from Norma.

Revd Norma possibly used this compilation of 'blessings' in one of her services, perhaps as long ago as when she was our minister. I re read it recently so it has prompted me to consider what I would add – limited to 3 extra personal thanks

### **Slow stitch**

I enjoy embroidery, something I have written about before. I am especially attracted to working with colour and texture on fabric. There is a particular style of embroidery called 'slow stitch'. Free from the stress of trying to perform neat regular stitches or to follow a planned design, anyone can relax into the process of passing thread through fabric, layering up cloth and thread and hopefully re purposing some reclaimed linens to be admired afresh.

However it is described, this process helped me fill some of those dark and wet days over the winter months, keeping my mind in a good place. Thank you #1

### **Trains**

I recently booked a train journey to Dorset. I needed a number of connections to work neatly for me to arrive by tea-time.

I'm grateful to say that is exactly what happened – the trains were on time, clean and comfortable.

But it isn't only the Northern Rail and Azuma engines on the main line that are highlighted as blessings. My grandson and I certainly watch train activity on Saltburn station but also enjoy many hours with the Brio train set on the living room floor. What a joy to make up stories which connect us both in shared fun. Thank you #2

### **BBC Radio 3**

I have recently driven a number of longer journeys, something which I have not done for a while. I have driven for many years but mostly now shorter journeys close to home.

## Guisborough Calendar

### Weekly

Thursdays 9.30am – 11.30am Market Day Coffee Morning  
10.30am Church open for Private Prayer  
11.30am Quiet Time in Church for Prayers and Reflections.

The relaxing background of varied music, provided on BBC Radio 3 I discovered, helps me to remain focused but less tense.

I particularly enjoyed the Breakfast Road Trips at the end of July presented each day of the week from a different location across the North East by Petroc Trelawny. He visited Lindisfarne, Bowes Museum, Vindolanda, Durham Cathedral and Tynemouth Priory all sites which I am familiar with providing a mix of music, natural sounds and interviews. What a way to begin a summer day. Thank you #3

And remembering to give thanks for the blessing of Revd Norma Johnson for opening my eyes to the need to be grateful for so much in my life.

*Joyce Basham*

### Don Beattie

Don Beattie, a long serving member of Guisborough United Reformed Church, sadly died on Wednesday, the 7th of August. This is a great loss not only for his family - Vera, his wife and daughter Gail, but also for our fellowship, for he is our fourth member to pass away in recent months.

Don was a proud Scot who, in his early career, travelled the world as a ship's engineer in the Merchant Navy. Later in life he continued working in engineering in local industry on Teesside. It was then that he joined Guisborough Church in 1970. During his 54 years as a member he served as an elder and as member of the Property Committee - being also active in other areas of church life.



Don's Christian faith was a strong, simple lifetime commitment - which was clearly demonstrated - for he was a friendly outgoing person - always at the forefront in welcoming newcomers into our fellowship or offering an optimistic outlook and encouragement to fellow members and friends.

You will be remembered with affection - so rest in peace, Don.

*Ray Tunncliffe.*

	<b>Vestry</b>	<b>Door</b>
1st Sept.	Peter	Martin
8th Sept.	Joyce	Peter
15th Sept.	Ray	Joyce
22nd Sept	Jenny	Ray
29th Sept	Martin	Jenny

## *Redcar*

### **Reverend Norma Johnson**

The funeral of Rev Norma Johnson was held in Redcar URC Church on 1st August 2024. The service was conducted by Donna Moore, with contributions from other ministers and family members.

The family and friends gathered afterwards in the Pavilion at Kirkleatham Walled Gardens.

George has since been in touch to thank those who gave to the collection at her funeral. A total of over £2000 was raised and this allowed £690 to be given to each of three charities which Norma supported:

Coatham House.

The Guisborough Bridge Project.

84 Station Road, Mission Project.

# *St Andrew's*

## **Coffee Morning**

The coffee morning held at St. Andrew's on July 6th raised £145.00 for Middlesbrough Food Bank.

They are extremely grateful for all our donations of food and money.

## **Soup Lunch**

In October we are hoping to have a Soup Lunch in aid of the Rosemary Fund. The date has yet to be decided. Keep looking in Group News.

## **Harvest Service**

Our Harvest Service is to be held on October 6th.

Donations of tinned or packet foods plus toiletries will be gratefully received for Middlesbrough Food Bank.

## **Churches Together**

We were welcomed to St. Mary's Church Hall in July for the Puddings and Prayers event and invited with friends to alternate visiting one of the prayer stations around the room with indulging in the mouth-watering selection of desserts - from cheesecakes to meringues, fruit flan or summer pudding to trifles. The prayer stimuli ranged from a map of the world (hello to Rosemary in Uganda), to the many who face challenging and sometimes dangerous jobs, and a prayer tree on which we could hang a heart with the name of a friend in need. Our environment, world-wide climate change issues were highlighted on another table, and a sticky plaster from a first aid box carried a prayer for someone in need of healing. For the finale we were invited into a huge circle to give thanks to God for our countless blessings uniting to support a multicoloured parachute. This proved to be a welcome add-on to CTMN annual programme.

*Shirley Moorse*

## Coffee for Charity

23rd June	Alzheimer's Society	£20.00
30th June	Boys' Brigade	£61.97
7th July	Middlesbrough Food Bank.	£21.40
14th July	Zoe's Place	£43.00
28th July	Zoe's Place	£30.00
5th Aug.	Middlesbrough Food Bank	£34.40

## St Andrew's Calendar

### Weekly/Monthly

Boy's Brigade

Details available from church elders.

# *Preachers*

	<b>Marton</b> <b>10.00am</b>	<b>Guisborough</b> <b>10.00am</b>	<b>Redcar</b> <b>10.30am</b>
1-Sep	Jan Harper Meeting	Donna Moore Communion	Redcar Baptist
8-Sep	Maranny Jones Parade	Guis Folk Meeting	Redcar Baptist
15-Sep	Jan Harper Communion	Bill Reynolds	Redcar Baptist
22-Sep	tba	Maranny Jones	Redcar Baptist
29-Sep	Ian Smith	Donna Moore	Redcar Baptist

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