

St George's, Widdrington & Great Bavington United Reformed Churches Newsletter



February
2021

Website: stgeorgesurcmorpeth.org

A Message from our Minister, Revd. Julian Sanders

Dear Friends

We are now well into the New Year and we are living through a time of mass vaccination that is perhaps more widespread, and more responsive, than any in our history. This time last year the Coronavirus was just something that happened overseas, and had started to be seen in pockets within our country. Who could have believed the changes that would be brought about, and the impact on all of our lives, that this virus would have on us in the following 12 months.

Noah's ark has been a recurring image for me during this pandemic. It resonated with the idea of us being kept aboard the ark in safety while the rampant virus covers the whole land. Our lockdown has been a case of keeping us out of harms way until the wave of this pandemic dies away. And at the beginning of the pandemic, you will remember, rainbows were everywhere and came to symbolise the hope that was placed in the NHS to see us through this crisis. There are things we can learn from the story of Noah and the ark that serve us well in life:

1. Don't miss the boat.
2. Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.
3. Remember, when it comes down to it, we are all in the same boat.
4. Stay fit. When you're 600 years old – God might ask you to do something really big!
5. Don't listen to the critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.
6. Build your future on high ground.
7. When you're stressed....just float awhile.
8. No matter the storm...when you are with God, there is always a rainbow waiting.

I have been listening to an audio version of Yuval Harari's "Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind" and in one of the early chapters he talks about The Flood narrative which can be found not only in Genesis, but in many ancient cultures. He considers how the movement of our human species around the world coincides with the extinction of many species in the animal kingdom. As humanity spread across the globe, and populated different continents, the impact on the fauna was devastating. Due to deforestation and changing the environment or hunting animals that would provide sustenance for a growing tribe, the impact on many species was their eventual extinction.

Is it this extinction of much of the animal kingdom which these stories of a great flood seek to explain and give meaning to? Is it the eradication of so many species, and so much of the animal population, that is caused not by God's action but by our very own? These last 12 months have seen a small but noticeable recovery in the natural world from the effect of human impact on the environment. Animals have been seen in places not usual encountered due to the interference of our human species, the air has become cleaner, and birdsong more prevalent. It is through our very isolation in our individual 'arks' that has perhaps ironically allowed the animal population to recover. As we see signs of the floodwater starting to recede, we perhaps look forward to a time when we are released to roam again and to live in freedom. Let us hope that as we do, we do with a much better appreciation of the world around us. That we don't resume old ways and habits that were so destructive to the environment, and to those we share the planet with, but instead step onto a renewed earth recognising our place within the creation, under the rainbow of God's love.

With every blessing, Julian



Christian Aid Christmas Collection

A huge "Thank You" to everyone who donated money to CA over the Christmas period. Some of you may well have donated directly, but the gifts you collected in church (including those given to the "communal Christmas card" initiative) amounted to £150 which we sent to Christian Aid as a contribution towards their special Christmas Appeal.

Commitment for Life

Commitment for Life is the United Reformed Church's global justice programme. Commitment for Life is a way in which local congregations are enabled to participate in actions for justice around the world. Commitment for Life belongs to every congregation. Many choose to support a region in the world through prayer, learning, advocacy, and action for justice. We support the region of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Commitment for Life partners are Christian Aid and Global Justice Now. The four partner regions are Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Central America (Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala).

Information about "Commitment for Life" can be found on the website:- urc.org.uk/moving-stories.html

Every month we have a retiring collection for Commitment for Life. 2020 has been very different as due to lockdown and also fewer people attending church when we have been able to worship together there has not been the opportunity to have our monthly collections for "Commitment for Life". However, St George's still managed to send a donation of £273.50 to the charity. Please continue to give to this very worthwhile cause.

Sarah Cleverley Link Person

Margaret Johnson

Refugees and Asylum Seekers February 2021

West End Refugee Service

WERS was able to provide festive food parcels, goody bags and activity packs to 80 families and 80 individuals at Christmas. WERS reports positively that despite the increased restrictions brought about by the recent lockdown and the risks attached to the new variant coronavirus they are managing to continue to support their clients. They are still running their drop in sessions twice a week but these are held either at the door or outside. They are still maintaining their telephone support service and providing practical support in terms of toiletries, cleaning products, clothes and food. They say they have sufficient stock at the present to be to respond to the requests that are being made. They are also continuing with their befriending service, either outside or remotely and the Skillsmatch programme is continuing on line.

Justice and Peace

Sara Harris, Refugee Project Coordinator, reports that the project has now relocated to its new base at St Vincent de Paul's Support Centre on New Bridge Street in Newcastle. She says this has been an exciting venture as it brings many benefits and opportunities. It enabled a phased reopening of a face to face service for clients from 9th December. Despite the increased lockdown restrictions since they have managed to keep the centre open safely. She reports that they are seeing clients on Wednesdays and Fridays and have been concentrating on supporting those who actually live in Newcastle and trying to encourage others from Sunderland, Gateshead etc to receive support from their local food banks & other support providers, which J&P has then been supporting as necessary.

J&P is now in a position to accept deliveries of food donations on a Monday. This support will enable them to replenish stock and to continue giving out food bags to their clients. However, where this is not possible financial donations are, as ever, welcome. The priorities for food are tinned tomatoes, chick peas, tinned fish and biscuits, but no tinned meat except corned beef. Sturdy bags and bags for life would also be greatly appreciated.

Through working together with SVP they can now make use of the clothes store there. SVP will accept donations of clothes (including children's and babies' clothes), shoes, and sheets. These can then be given to vulnerable people, including refugees and asylum seekers.

Obviously at the moment it is less easy for people in Morpeth to make the usual collections through churches but Donald Marr, from St Robert's, is happy to store food items in his garage as a temporary measure. Please contact him in advance on 505573.

Of course, both WERS and Justice & Peace will be grateful for financial donations to support their work.

Margaret Brock

We would like to express our appreciation in which Julian and the elders are coping with the pandemic, with keeping the church together, with stewarding when the building is open and coping with the situation generally. They are doing a magnificent job.

George and Janet Brown.

On a different note, I woke up the other morning with this thought about the near future.

A weary old virus named Covid
Looked down at the earth as he hovered.
He said "I should hit you
While you are in situ,
But frankly, I'm no longer bovvered."

Let's hope it is so!!

Janet Brown

Wordsearch for February

February opens with Candlemas – the naming of Jesus in the temple. Simeon and Anna praised God to see the promised Messiah, sent by a loving God to save his people. February also celebrates the love between a man and woman: Valentine cards and romance abound. 'Love' as in social compassion is also remembered: Fair Trade fortnight, Holocaust Memorial Day, World Leprosy Day, and National Nest Box Week.... Love is truly needed by everyone!

Naming Christ Candlemas
Simeon Anna temple love
Valentine romance Matthias
Fairtrade Fortnight coffee
Bananas chocolate justice
Poverty nest box marriage
Wedding Holocaust leprosy

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Solution on page 19

Pandemic

It's like a war.
'Over by Christmas' is a bitter joke
(We've heard that one before!)
To show we know we bear a common yoke,
Just like a war.

It's like a war.
We'll spend just what it takes to tackle it;
That's what taxes are for.
Employment, though, will have to take a hit,
Not like a war.

It's like a war.
Shortages are caused by panic buying
(Hoarding, we used to call it), but you still can
buy olives and wine.
Not like a war.

It's like a war;
Counting the dead in thousands, deeming it
Success that they're not more,
While those who let them die claim the credit,
Just like a war.

Dermot Killingley, November. 2020

Submitted by Christine Oakes.

The natural environment can make a real impact on your mood. Mountains can leave you feeling more optimistic, while the ocean can help boost your inspiration.

A recent study at Goldsmiths University of London found that water is most effective at increasing positive emotions, such as happiness and inspiration. Woodlands can help you forget your worries, and fields and meadows can enhance your energy levels.

It's all in the spelling...

G – God
R – Ran
A – Alongside
C – Carrying
E – Everything

Have you done something which haunts you?

Do you ever worry that your past failings mean that God will not accept you now? Some of us have done many things which we regret, things that have caused us, or others, great pain.

We've given our children short shrift, we've betrayed our marriage partners, we've been dishonest at work, we've been ruthlessly greedy and ambitious, no matter what the cost to anyone else. And now the memory of the wrong we've done lingers, and makes us ashamed. Our past failings make us very reluctant to turn to God. Why should He forgive the damage we have done?

If you think this way, then you have a big surprise waiting for you: God isn't like that. You haven't yet encountered His GRACE. God knows all about you, and most of all He knows you need His help. Jesus said that He came into the world to reach sinners, to help anyone who turns to Him in true repentance to find forgiveness, and a new start.

You can't do anything to turn yourself into a good person. But you don't have to. All that God asks of you is that you turn to Jesus in prayer, and say you are sorry, and ask Him to forgive you, and to put His Spirit within you. Then you find His GRACE – which means His loving-kindness, beginning in YOUR life. Just try it.

Today let God begin to set you free from the past!

16th Feb: Shrove Tuesday, Pancake Day

Ever wonder why we eat pancakes just before Lent? The tradition dates back to Anglo-Saxon times, when Christians spent Lent in repentance and severe fasting. So on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, the church bell would summon them to confession, where they would be 'shriven', or absolved from their sins, which gives us *Shrove* Tuesday. At home, they would then eat up their last eggs and fat, and making a pancake was the easiest way to do this. For the next 47 days, they pretty well starved themselves. Pancakes feature in cookery books as far back as 1439, and today's pancake races are in remembrance of a panicked woman back in 1445 in Olney, Buckinghamshire. She was making pancakes when she heard the shriving bell calling her to confession. Afraid she'd be late, she ran to the church in a panic, still in her apron, and still holding the pan.

Flipping pancakes is also centuries old. A poem from Pasquil's Palin in 1619 runs: "And every man and maide doe take their turne, And tosse their Pancakes up for feare they burne."

Some people have noted that the ingredients of pancakes can be used to highlight four significant things about this time of year: eggs stand for creation, flour is the staff of life, while salt keeps things wholesome, and milk stands for purity. Shrove Tuesday is always 47 days before Easter Sunday and falls between 3rd February and 9th March.

17th Feb: Ash Wednesday, a good time to admit you are sorry.

Have you done something which haunts you? Which makes you feel restless and defensive, every time you think of it? Why not deal with it this month, and put it behind you? Whatever your mistake has been, consider what the Bible has to say to you: 'I have not come to call the virtuous but sinners to repentance' (said Jesus). (Luke 5.32)

'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55.7)

'Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.' (Joel 2:12-13).

God is inviting you to come to Him this Ash Wednesday. What a wonderful offer! Make the most of it and remember how the prodigal son was welcomed back by his compassionate father.

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Sudoku Solution on page 19

Old Age

On the outside: why so faded,
Colours chipped and hair awry?
Ageing's price has been exacted,
Hope extinguished, love gone by.

Middle Age

Halfway there with lines appearing,
Self-help books are piling high.
Dreams still beckon; future
yearning,
Life has not yet passed me by.

Adolescence

Teenage daring, risk unflinching;
Health and vigour promise more
Every passion lurks, so tempting
All sensations to the fore.

Childhood

Child amazement, world untested;
Safely kept in others' care.
Now emerging, trusting, fearless
Stain-free soul to taste the air.

Moral



Cast off now your stubborn pride.
Liberate the child inside.
(See Matthew 18:3)

By John Barton

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Dear Knitter Natterers and friends

Another year, hopefully better than the last.

I hope you are all bearing up and staying positive.

Our Christmas tree was much admired, my thanks to Linda for joining the squares. I personally was impressed, and liked the knitted ornaments.

The jumpers, cardigans and baby clothes went to local needy children, some in the Lions Christmas parcels and others via social workers.

Your blankets also went to needy families; some went to a family with 3 little girls who were evicted the week before Christmas.

Thank-you to you all for your generosity with both time and wool.

Someone said to me, "I'll put the flags out when we get back to normal", and I thought knitted bunting to put around the church would be good and cheerful.

What do you think?

Until we meet again stay safe.

KNITTED BUNTING No. 8 needles

Cast on 35sts

knit 2 rows

Row 3 K2 (wool round needle, K2tog K1 to the end of the row

Row 4 Knit

Rows 5 and 6 K1 K2tog. (through the back of the loops) Knit to the end

Row 7 and 8 Knit

Repeat rows 5-8 until 3 sts remain

Knit 2 rows

slip1 K2tog. pass slip stitch over and fasten off.

Joan Cooper

SAVING ROBIN'S WAISTLINE ----CHURCH FUNDRAISER

Would you like some home baking to cheer up a "can't think what I'd like to eat day"

We are making a limited menu:

Apple or Plum Pie for 1, 4 or 6 portion, 50p, £1.50, £2.00.

Microwave Sponge Puddings, Apple, Treacle or Plum. 1-2 portions £1.00

Apple Crumble 2 or 4 portions £1.00, £2.00

Cake, Chocolate, Victoria Sponge ¼, 1/2 or whole £1.50, £2.50, £ 4.00.

Please contact Joan Cooper on 01670 515682

Angels.....

Members and friends of Morpeth Methodist Church and St George's knitted and distributed 1,680 Angels in and around the Morpeth area.

A tremendous effort.

All residents and staff in every nursing/ care home in Morpeth, two in Bedlington and one in Cramlington received one. All residents in St Christopher's and Rennick House also received one.

The nursing staff in Northgate hospital also got some. The library put some in book bags they were putting together for some members.

As well as all this over 500 were put out around Morpeth for people to find during Christmas week.

I must say an enormous thank you to all those from both Churches who helped give these special gifts to lots of people. And a big thank you to the staff of Rook Mathew Sayer who collected, bagged and tagged 3 large bags of Angels., .

Patricia Gatherum.

Fairtrade Fortnight: 22nd February – 7th March

It has been a terrible year for farmers and workers in the global south.

In 2020, on top of the pandemic, they had to deal with the growing impact of climate change: more droughts and crop disease, locusts, floods, fires, and heat waves. No wonder their harvests were shrinking.

Yet with the help of Fairtrade, many of these producers of food, drinks and cottons can be equipped to meet more everyday needs, and to deal with the challenges facing them. So this month, why not visit www.fairtrade.org.uk and see how you can send some support.

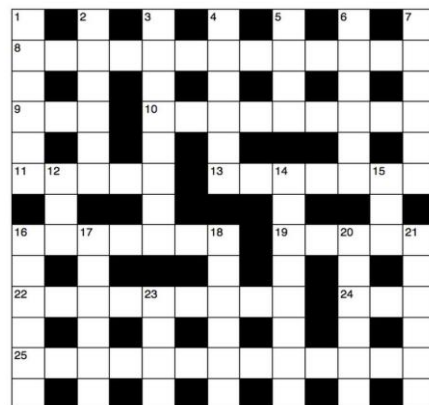
Seen on a birthday card:

Forget about the past, you can't change it.

Forget about the future, you can't predict it.

Forget about the present, I didn't buy you one.

Crossword for February



Across: **8** Interrogated (Acts 12:19) (5-8)
9 'Burn it in a wood fire on the — heap' (Leviticus 4:12) (3) **10** Tobit, Judith, Baruch and the books of Esdras and the Maccabees are part of it (9) **11** Science fiction (abbrev.) (3-2) **13** Clay pit (anag.) (7) **16** Went to (John 4:46) (7)
19 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to — your bodies as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1) (5) **22** David's plea to God concerning those referred to in 14 Down: 'On — — let them escape' (Psalm 56:7) (2,7) **24** Royal Automobile Club (1,1,1) **25** How the book of Ezekiel refers to God more than 200 times (Ezekiel 2:4) (9,4).

Down: **1** Seas (Proverbs 8:24) (6) **2** One of the sons of Eli the priest, killed in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11) (6) **3** Specialist in the study of the Muslim religion (8) **4** 'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but — him as if he were your father' (1 Timothy 5:1) (6) **5** One of Esau's grandsons (Genesis 36:11) (4) **6** Taking a chance (colloq.) (2,4) **7** God's instructions to the Israelites concerning grain offerings: ' — salt to — your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13) (3,3) **12** Confederation of British Industry (1,1,1) **14** 'All day long they twist my words; they are always — to harm me' (Psalm 56:5) (8) **15** The crowd's reaction to Jesus bringing back to life a widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:16) (3) **16** Disappear (Psalm 104:35) (6) **17** How Jeremiah was likely to die if he wasn't rescued from the cistern where he was imprisoned (Jeremiah 38:9) (6) **18** What the prophets do to a wall, with whitewash (Ezekiel 13:10, RSV) (4,2) **20** Made by a plough (Job 39:10) (6) **21** Noah was relieved when the flood waters continued to — (Genesis 8:5) (6) **23** Jesus gave the Twelve the power and authority to do this to diseases (Luke 9:1) (4). *Solution on page 19*

Miscellaneous observations on modern life.....

As any member of a church committee will tell you, after all is said and done, there's a lot more said than done.
 I used to eat a lot of natural foods until I learned that most people die of natural causes.
 If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.

Freda's Folk say THANK YOU

'Some good hymns in church and a cup of tea, please'; these were all the 'ingredients' for her funeral that Freda Pagan had ever let the family know that she would have liked. Hymns Mam got, and in St George's too - but no singing or tea. Sadly, 'the situation' prevented all but 30 folk attending the service, but nevertheless Mam would have LOVED the 'Tribute Tree' that met her at the church door (see the photo.) This was lovingly crafted by members of Knit & Natter, which was probably the last of the St George's groups that Freda attended after her stroke and while resident at Riverside House. THANK YOU so much for everyone that contributed to this heartfelt memorial.

Coming to Morpeth when Dad died over 23 years ago, from retirement in Lockerbie, St George's, was yet another church where there were already a number of family and friends from many years of previous ministry in the Presbyterian and URC Church in Carlisle, Newbiggin, Newcastle, Watford and Dumfries. St George's quickly 'home' too. As well as attending Sunday services and concerts,

Mam was often found - either washing up at the Kitchen Coffee Club or after a couple of games of bowls on Wednesday afternoons. These and other people-oriented activities punctuated her week; 'Freda's folk' not only included the family, but many others who have been so very kind to share your stories and memories of Freda with us, in cards and recent phone calls.

These have been of enormous comfort to the extended Pagan-Mills family and we thank you for them most sincerely. THANKS too for your financial generosity - donations are designated for both the British Heart Foundation and Ashington Grange Care home ... thanking the brilliant Carers for the tremendous support and love that they gave Mam in her last 12 months of life.

Julian and Ken's hard work, great care and attention to detail gave us all both support and great comfort at this hugely emotional time, too; thank you both very much indeed. The St George's family and friends has looked after Freda and our family for many years and it continues to do so; thank you and God bless,

With love from Alison, Gavin, Greg - Ian, Sally, Georgia, Jack & Charlie, Rachel, Matthew & Saebbi.

[Ps - for those who would have liked to attend St George's for Freda's Funeral, but were unable to do so, Julian has kindly put the service onto the Church web-site, where It will be available until the end of February. It can be accessed using the following link <https://youtu.be/EnhXZIT1P0>]



THE LIONS CLUB OF MORPETH (CIO)

Registered Charity 1175272
Serving the local community of Morpeth, Northumberland (UK)
since 1972.

St. George's URC Church – Morpeth

On behalf of the Lions Club of Morpeth I would like to thank the members of your congregation for their very generous contributions to our Christmas appeal. As you can imagine 2020 was a difficult year for all charities and we were no exception. Our normal fundraising events were all cancelled or postponed so without your help and the help of others we would not have been able to fulfill our commitment to Social Services to provide Christmas presents and food parcels. As a result we provided Christmas gifts for over sixty under privileged children and fifty five family food parcels.

Peter Crook. Lion President

St James the Least of All On why our church does not need health or safety...



The Rectory, St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

I appreciated your recent concern when you heard one of our parishioners had slipped on a gravestone. Your desire to help was entirely commendable, and I do know that sending your own church's health and safety officer to give us some advice was kindly meant. But the 200-page report was not welcome. If we implemented even half of your officer's suggestions, life would become unbearably safe.

St James the Least of All has survived perfectly well for the last 600 years without gutter cleaning inspections, path degreasing and electrical safety certificates, so I think we may survive a little longer without them. As far as I am aware, the only disaster to hit us was when Cromwell's soldiers stabled their horses in the nave – which I suspect a few of our oldest members still clearly remember.

The shock the sides men sometimes get when switching on the lights occurs only occasionally, is relatively mild and soon over – and if it happens when preparing for the 8am Service, helps to wake them up. The weight of the Duke of Clumber's marble sarcophagus is slowly detaching the south aisle from the rest of the church, but it is very slow – and the pews in that area are used only once a year when his relations visit from America to commemorate his death at Agincourt – which is probably just beyond remembrance of the oldest of our congregation. Leaks from the ceiling in the north aisle are solved with a row of buckets – and even you must concede that the fungi on the oak beams look really rather attractive when the sun catches them. The sapling growing out of the spire is certainly an issue – although it looks so attractive in Spring when in blossom. As for our fire extinguishers, they were serviced when my predecessor-but-two was in office, and I have the certificate to prove it.

So, do thank your health and safety officer for all his work and tell him we will bear his recommendations in mind. Also tell him I was so sorry he slipped and broke his leg in our choir stalls while he was with us. But that bit of floor has been out of alignment since 1748, and it seems a shame to disturb it now. If only he had arrived encased in bubble wrap, it would never have happened. Perhaps you could put that on the agenda of your next health and safety meeting.

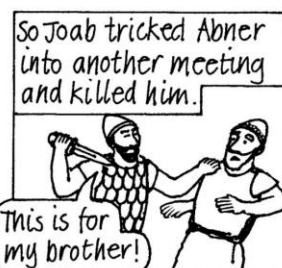
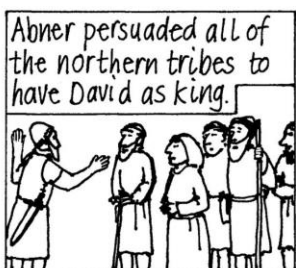
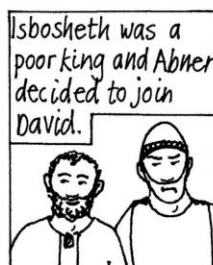
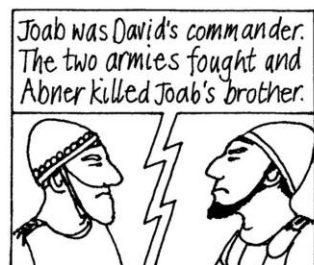
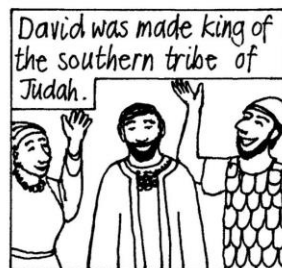
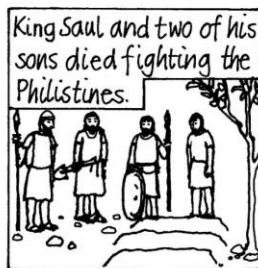
Your loving uncle, **Eustace**

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Josh 13:8-20:48
1 Sam 31:1-5, 2 Sam 2:4-24, 3:12, 17-27, 4, 5:1-5

When the Jews reached the place that God had promised them, each tribe was given land to live in. But they were surrounded by enemies.



Solutions:

Crossword: ACROSS: 8, Cross-examined. 9, Ash. 10, Apocrypha. 11, Sci-fi. 13, Typical. 16, Visited. 19, Offer. 22, No account. 24, RAC. 25, Sovereign Lord.

DOWN: 1, Oceans. 2, Hophni. 3, Islamist. 4, Exhort. 5, Omar. 6, On spec. 7, Add all. 12, CBI. 14, Plotting. 15, Awe. 16, Vanish. 17, Starve. 18, Daub it. 20, Furrow. 21, Recede. 23, Cure.

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T	O	P	M	A	T	T	H	I	A	S	T	G
C	O	M	E	D	A	R	T	R	I	A	F	A
O	G	E	L	A	H	N	O	R	L	O	C	I
F	Y	T	D	R	E	M	H	O	R	B	S	R
F	S	P	N	L	A	C	T	A	E	V	R	
E	O	O	A	N	G	O	N	N	C	G	A	A
E	R	V	C	E	H	I	A	I	N	L	N	M
L	P	E	E	C	G	N	T	I	D	N	A	I
O	E	R	E	H	A	S	M	N	A	N	D	N
V	L	T	T	S	U	A	C	O	L	O	H	A
E	O	Y	D	J	N	O	E	M	I	S	A	S

A senior's Version of Facebook.



For those of my generation who do not, and cannot, comprehend why Facebook exists: I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook while applying the same principles. Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell passers-by what I have eaten, how I feel at the moment, what I have done the night before, what I will do later and with whom. I give them pictures of my family, my dog and of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in the front of landmarks, driving around town, having lunch and doing what anybody and everybody does every day. I also listen to their conversations, give the 'thumbs up' and I 'like' them. And it works just like Facebook. I already have 4 people following me; 2 police officers, a private investigator and a psychiatrist.

Submitted by Gillian Irvine

Safeguarding Training

I am looking to set up safeguarding training for anyone who would like to take part. Matt Knowles, the Synod Safeguarding Officer believes that everyone who attends church should do safeguarding training, at the basic level at least. Those who have responsibilities in church should do the intermediate level training, and further training, at advanced level, is available for those with specific safeguarding responsibilities.

Currently training is being done via Zoom and lasts two hours. If we get sufficient people interested we could arrange sessions just for St George's, Widdrington and Great Bavington. So if you are interested please let me know.

Thank you, Margaret (511897, margaretdbrock@aol.co)

A February Rose

My love, she likes a red, red rose
Of deep magenta hue,
A gift for Valentine that shows
That someone's love is true.



But think on this, my bonnie lass,
As you admire the bloom –
That flower's been forced on under glass
You ought to wait till June!

By Nigel Beeton



Great Bavington United Reformed Church

There will not be a service at Great Bavington Church on Sunday 7th February because of the risk from the new variant of the Coronavirus. We will review the situation in time for Sunday 7th March, so please see the church's Facebook page www.facebook.com/GreatBavingtonURC for updates.

Julian's Sunday services continue on YouTube – search for Morpeth and Area URC to find them. If you would like a copy of the service on CD, please contact Julian: sanders.julian@talk21.com, 01670 225539.

Widdrington United Reformed Church

PRAYING TOGETHER

During February please pray for:

People in war zones and refugees

Those suffering religious persecution (of any faith)

The work of relief agencies

Those suffering from Covid19 throughout the world, especially in countries where health services are less advanced

Health workers, shop workers, delivery drivers, postmen and anyone else doing essential work at this time

Farmers and farm workers

Researchers working on covid19 vaccine and treatments and teams working to deliver the vaccines

The elderly and those who may be particularly vulnerable to the virus. That those who have received the vaccine are now successfully protected.

The homeless

Students, school children, teachers and lecturers and parents, undertaking, delivering and supervising home learning.

Your neighbours

"Prayer, the Churches banquet, Angel's age,

God's breath in man, returning to his birth,

The soul in paradise, heart in pilgrimage,

The Christian plummet, sounding heav'n and earth" (George Herbert)

WIDDRINGTON CHURCH NEWS

I'd like to invite everybody to contribute information that they think might be of interest. Just give me the details **in writing** either on a piece of paper or by email to **elliemist@gmail.com** and I'll do the rest. (I'd still welcome articles though).

Perhaps you have some reflections on our situation which you'd like to share? The **Copy Date** for each magazine is the Sunday prior to the 20th of the month before the next issue. If you miss the deadline your contribution may have to be held over to the next issue.

The Newsletter is being delivered by email to those whose email address we have. If you have received a paper copy, and you have an email address, please contact me as above. As well as saving printing and posting costs, it will enable us to send you other relevant information, and links to worship resources.

At time of writing, it is very difficult to know what we will be able to do in February. Details of what will happen will appear on our Facebook page, and we will also communicate by phone or email, so that everyone will be kept 'in the loop'.

Flowers: Flowers for February (if required) by Kathleen, and March by Fiona.

Easy Fund Raising (Easy?) Do you shop online? Have you joined Easy Fund Raising yet? If not, now would be a good time to get busy! The chances are that your vendor will be part of Easy Fund Raising. Amazon and John Lewis are, for instance. This means that if you register for Easy Fund Raising at easyfundraising.org.uk and select Widdrington United Reformed Church as your Good Cause 1 or 2 % of the purchase price of your item will come to us at no extra cost to yourself. Please talk to Fiona about it soon (though you can easily register with no help from me, as all our members have discovered). We have raised over £310 so far with just nine members. I expect we'll get a pay out again this quarter.

Social: We will let you know when our social programme can recommence. Although we intend to carry forward last year's programme as far as possible, any ideas anyone has for activities would be very welcome.

Last year we lost all our fund-raising events. Please continue to put aside your usual weekly collection, by filling up your envelopes, or, if you use online banking, by direct transfer. Or you could set up a standing order. Please contact Kathleen for bank details.

Charitable giving: Thank you to everyone who sent cash donations to the Salvation Army in place of our usual gift service. Diana has had a letter of thanks from them, which tells us that our contributions have gone towards helping 218 children, 63 adults and a hostel for victims of domestic abuse.

The Christmas Eve service raised £100 for Shelter.

Worship:

Following advice from the Synod Moderators, and because of the rapid spread of the new variant of the virus, we decided, with regret, to close for services and private prayer from early January. We hope that Sunday worship can soon be held regularly again. Please join us if and when you feel able. Please wear a face covering if you can. You will be asked to sign in (for track and trace purposes - visitors will be asked for contact details) and to sanitize your hands on entry. Offering plates will be placed at the back of church. Please place your offering in them either when you come in, or before leaving. Please remember that we will not be standing to sing hymns. If you wish to sing quietly into your mask while following a hymn, you may do so.

We are sorry, but while the 'rule of six' is in place we will no longer be serving coffee after the service. Please avoid gathering in groups in the car park when you leave.

If you don't feel ready to return to church, you can continue to watch and listen to Julian's services online.

Preachers scheduled for February, should worship be possible:

7th Worship Team

14th Annetta Read

21st Rev'd Julian Sanders

28th Clive Kemp

(As we understand at the moment that no announcement is expected before February 15th, the first of these which may be possible is probably Julian's service on 21st)

Regular events:

1st Tuesday: Coffee Club **will** meet again on the 1st Tuesday in the month - sometime! However, regulations mean that we can't contemplate restarting at the moment.

1st Wednesday: Prayer Group: We are again meeting weekly (via zoom) during the lockdown. We are now meeting at 7.30pm. When services are able to resume, we will revert to monthly meetings, and look forward to being able to meet in person. If there is anything you would like us to pray about, please let any member of the group know. If you have Zoom and would like to join us, please contact Julian for an invitation.

Facebook: If you are on Facebook, have you checked out our Facebook page yet? Search for Widdrington United Reformed Church. Please like us and let me know if you think I've missed anything that should be on. The page now has over 120 (126 actually) likes, with another 5 people 'following'! Any information we have about service arrangements will be published there.

Please note: Sean, our sheep, has his own Facebook page! Search for 'Sean'. Sean now has 22 (+1 following!) page 'likes' but he wants some more, so please tell your friends about him! He loved seeing people again, especially the children, so he is very disappointed by the new lockdown.

The website is at: www.widdringtonurc.org.uk

I'd appreciate some help to improve it, as it's very wordy at the moment, partly because I'm happiest with words. I'm still looking for volunteers to be additional site editors. Someone with hardware that can post pictures would be good. We are now considering a relaunch - watch this space.

New ventures:

We have signed up to, or are in the process of signing up to the following schemes:

Sight Friendly Church

Breastfeeding Friendly Church

Ecochurch

Child Friendly Church

We will give you more information about the things we will be doing in relation to these over the coming months.

In relation to Ecochurch, we intend to develop the rough grass areas beside the church into wildflower meadows, with additional trees. We have also thought of some simple recycling ideas which we will launch when we return to regular worship.

Churches Together in Widdrington and Ulgham

We are happy that our Methodist friends have continued to join us for worship, and hope they will continue to do so when we can resume worshipping, until they can meet in the Community Centre.

At our Churches Together meeting on 18th January we discussed this year's World Day of Prayer service which is due on March 5th. We have agreed not to attempt to hold this year's service on the designated date, but instead will consider holding it in September. Meanwhile the booklets will be available from your rep (Fiona) if you would like to read it at the proper time. Rev'd Joanna Dobson is considering basing 'Church at home' for Sunday 7th March on the service. We also agreed that each church will donate £20 to World Day of Prayer in lieu of service collections. If you would like to help out with this, please let Kathleen have your contribution by the date of the service (in March)

FEM

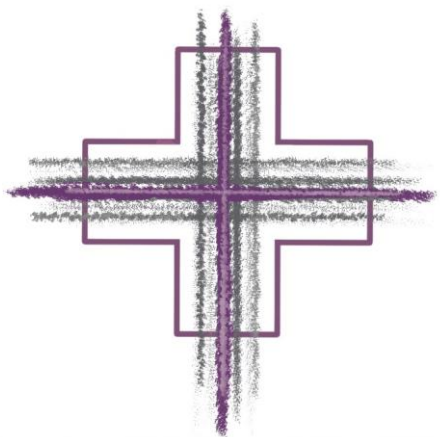
A note from our treasurer:

At the beginning of this New Year, may I say how grateful I am for the continuing support, both financial and personal, from church members and friends. The months since March 2020 have been difficult for everyone, in many different ways, and it has been uplifting to know that our church has remained to the fore in people's thoughts. We have, like all churches, charities and individuals, sustained losses to our income because of COVID restrictions, and it has been a sadness to us all that, for most of the time, we have been unable to meet in fellowship and worship. At this point I would like to thank Julian personally, and I am sure on behalf of all at Widdrington, for his dedication to meeting the needs of the Pastorate, through digital worship and pastoral care.

This is also an opportune time to remind people of the need to maximize the monies we receive as a result of Gift Aid tax relief. I would be grateful if any offerings/donations could come to me (by whatever means are convenient) by the middle of March, to be processed in time for me to make the Gift Aid claim. I am also grateful, on behalf of our members and friends, to SENEA for deciding not to collect the last quarter's financial assessment from churches within the Area. As Treasurer, I am optimistic that we can continue to meet our financial obligations whilst restrictions continue, while looking forward to the resumption of our full church life.

Thank you.

Kathleen.



ASH WEDNESDAY