

# Around the Synod

February / March 2017

News highlights from the Northern Synod



## From the Moderator.....



Dear Friends,

As I lead Sunday worship around our Synod, I am struck by the adaptability and creativity of local congregations enabling sustainable ways forward. Was it ever thus? – nothing stays the same for long. The mission context of our existing congregations

is changing; the culture of which we are part is forever changing; legislation and health and safety understandably requires changes to how we undertake church programmes and the buildings we use.

As a Synod, we cannot do much about the immediate situation of a shortage of stipendiary ministers of the Word and Sacrament. It is a situation most Christian congregations are facing in the British Isles. What we can do is accept and embrace that fact, and re-think how we are to look to the gifts and leadership to be nurtured and released from within our existing congregations. We already have an ordained local leadership team in most of our churches: the Elders. As a Synod, we are continuing to explore The Way Forward: taking a fresh look at groups and the pooling of resources, at how we can form team ministries across new groups of congregations. Just as previous generations of Christians have worked out new ways of being and 'doing' church, it is our turn now.

We already have all we need to be the people of God – with a minister or not, with a building or not, with money in the bank or not – through maintaining our fellowship and worship, through nurturing one another in the faith, and encouraging one another in our shared ministry and response to God's call together. God is not calling us into being disciples and leaving us without the necessary spiritual resources when we say 'Yes!' in response; this is The Way

Forward for all God's people in the life of the Church. Always has been, and always will be. We are a part of that rich stream of faith, and are already fulfilling much of what God is calling us to be; but, of course, there is always so much more to do and learn and change along the way, however long we have been Christians, and whatever our age.

These are exciting times, an era of dynamic change across our nation's churches: just as the journey with Jesus has always been, and always will be. I am looking forward to continuing to explore The Way Forward with people across Northern Synod through the coming year.

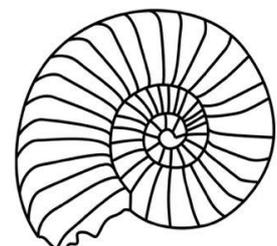
As ever, and in Christ,

David

### WALKING WITH ST HILDA

We will be walking St Hilda's Way on this year's synod pilgrimage, from Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June to Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Our residential hub will be Sneaton Castle, Whitby, home of the Anglican Order of the Holy Paraclete. Each day a minibus will take us to the start of a different walk of between 4 and 9 miles. Costs and registration details will be circulated shortly.

We are using a drawing of an ammonite as the pilgrimage motif, since ammonites are traditionally associated with St Hilda, and there are plenty of such fossils around Whitby.



To find out why St Hilda is associated with these particular fossils, and much much more about her life, context, and the lessons we can learn from her example, dust down those walking boots and come along for a week of prayer, reflection, fellowship and plenty of fresh air.

## PEOPLE & CHURCHES

Retired minister **Arnold Dawson**, whose ministries were mainly in our synod, died on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, a day short of his 94<sup>th</sup> birthday. We offer our sympathy to his daughter Margaret Humberston and all the family.

We congratulate synod children's work advisor **Hannah Middleton** on completing the TLS Gateways into Worship course. Her commissioning service as an accredited lay preacher will be held at St John's Kingston Park on Sunday March 19<sup>th</sup> at 3.00 pm.



**St John the Evangelist LEP** (Local Ecumenical Partnership) at **Kingston Park** celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their building on the Sunday before Christmas. Previous members and ministers and clergy were invited to attend – and as with all good birthday parties, all agreed that one of the best bits was the cake!

And cake lovers please note that **St George's, High Heaton** are holding a Bake Off on April 1<sup>st</sup>. There will be competitions for taste and for decoration, each with three age categories – and after judging all baked goods will be shared with visitors on the day.

**St Columba's, Billingham** kicked off the new year with some resolutions, based on their earlier challenging Vision 2020 statement:

- We will be a church that is more active in the life of local neighbourhoods.
- We will be a growing church with an increasing membership.
- We will be a church that is an active partner in God's global mission with other churches around the world.

Specific resolutions include working towards an application for a Church Related Community Worker, and upgrading the church's labyrinth garden.

**Jesmond URC**, in common with a number of our churches, has been marking the centenary of the First World War by delving into their archives and re-examining war memorials. As well as the 106 members of the congregation who served directly, 26 of whom did not return, many were indirectly involved in the traumatic events of the time through nursing, visiting the injured and through providing support and entertainment for those billeted in the church hall. Robert Shiel had written up a detailed account of the church during this time which can be accessed through the church website.

Traidcraft organiser **Jenny Medhurst** reports that her 31<sup>st</sup> annual Christmas Traidcraft shop in Middlesbrough took over £38,000 – the best result in over a decade. Two asylum seekers from West Africa were among the team of volunteer helpers, and new lines this year included soft-to-the-touch rugs made from various recycled goods. Once again our synod provided a free bridging loan to cover start-up costs.

Our **Winlaton** church, which closed in 2015, has now been sold and is being used by St Thomas' Indian Orthodox Church.

Stockton Road, Sunderland members **Neil & Helen Sinclair** have produced a book of letters written from Japanese-occupied China in the 1930s by Helen's mother. Marion Young was a Presbyterian missionary stationed with her husband in South East China, an area that had a number of connections with some of our churches through individuals who are still remembered, including Margaret Dryburgh, Ella Gordon, and George Hood. Letters from Manchuria by Neil T Sinclair is published by Little Knoll Press, price £25 – royalties to the orphans programme of Amity.

### *Is it I, Lord?*

Ministry Enquirers' Day : Saturday March 18  
10.00 - 4.00 at Luther King House, Manchester

*Details from Vivienne Williams 020 7916 8649*

## MORE MILES IN MOZAMBIQUE

A big thank you to everyone, individuals and churches, for responding so generously to our latest Mozambique appeal. So far we have raised over £4,500 towards the cost of a replacement vehicle to link churches with the Maputo HQ – and we know that there is more coming in, and also Gift Aid to apply to a proportion of the gifts. One of our recent fund-raising highlights was the moderator's Open House on January 21<sup>st</sup> which raised £800 on the day from visitors thrilled to see the delights of Ouseburn and to know where David now lives.



The United Reformed Church Past Case Review is an open invitation to anyone to raise concerns about the behaviour of anyone affiliated with the United Reformed Church since its formation in 1972.

***We'll respect your confidentiality.***

Tel 020 7916 8682

Website

[www.urc.org.uk/past-case-review](http://www.urc.org.uk/past-case-review)

### **Keep the news coming in! -**

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*This newsheet can be downloaded from  
[www.urc-northernsynod.org](http://www.urc-northernsynod.org),  
and further links followed there*