

Around the Synod

May / June 2017

News highlights from the Northern Synod



From the Moderator.....



Dear friends,

The next General Election, June 8th, is around the corner, and with it comes a responsibility to listen and draw our own conclusions regarding the various manifestos: what do we feel are the best policies for the long term common good of not just people

within our own nation,

but also the impact of our government's policies on the global scene, especially among the poorer and more vulnerable parts of the world?

We need to make the time as individuals to listen to all the policies being presented by all the political parties, not from the perspective of what personal benefit there might be for ourselves individually, but through the faith filter, or lens, of asking ourselves what will work best for the common good.

Engaging in the democratic process and discerning which policies help the most people is a very Christian process; for example, it is often ecumenical Churches Together groups who initiate hustings across our constituencies. It might not be very fashionable, but I happen to believe that politics is a high vocation, and that most politicians are motivated by their party's vision of a better future for all. Dismissing politicians, as many seem to, is corrosive, and leaves a vacuum that extremism will always be ready to fill.

The Methodist, Baptist, and United Reformed Churches speak with one voice through the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT). Check out their website (www.jointpublicissues.org.uk) for a wealth of resources to help Christians both discern and exercise a prophetic voice in the political arena of current affairs.

If you have a chance to organise, or to simply

attend hustings, ask the candidates about their party's policy on Overseas Aid, for example. As Church, let's play an active role in the coming weeks encouraging political reflection in a spirit of respect and open-mindedness.

Most importantly as well as casting a prayerful vote, this is a time when we can pray for all those who are prepared to serve us all through political service: that God will grant them the necessary wit and wisdom to help steer us through a complex and needy world, where injustice and poverty, conflict, and environmental abuse will continue to create havoc without courageous and visionary leadership.

As ever, and in Christ,

David.

Calling all knitters and crocheters!!

The URC planning group for this year's **Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival** are wanting to tap into **your** skills. As Synod Mission Enabler Jane Rowell explains:

"As part of this year's theme of **More than Welcome**, we are preparing a knitted food themed treasure hunt. The hunt will take festival goers to hampers dotted around the site where they will answer questions on food and feast stories from the Bible and collect various knitted food items.

"In order to do this we need around 4000 palm-sized pieces of knitted and crocheted food – and we are asking the whole Church to get involved! If you or your church can help us then we will be delighted to hear from you! There are many patterns available for everything from knitted apples to crocheted carrot cake!



"This food production needs to start as soon as possible if we are going to get enough food for the August Bank Holiday! Contact me for more information at jane.rowell@urc-northersynod.org or phone synod office - 0191 232 1168"

- Are you thinking about Local leadership?
- Are you being challenged to become a leader?
- Do you want to help your congregation embrace the Way Forward?
- Is there someone in your church who you think has the gifts and skills to lead? This course may be of interest!



Growing Leaders is a 10 month course (meeting once a month) exploring leadership within the local church. It's an exciting course which we will offer starting in September in three places across the synod—North, Central and South. We are holding three taster sessions in June:

3rd June 10.00-2.00 (with soup lunch) at Darlington

10th June 10.00-2.00 (with soup lunch) at Wooler

17th June 10.00-2.00 (sandwich lunch) at Synod Office

For more information and to book a place please contact Rev Jane Rowell (Synod Mission Enabler), tel: 0191 232 1168 (Synod office) or email jane.rowell@urc-northernsynod.org

Jeans & Coffee

In relaxed mode, come along and share freely about our dreams and hopes for the future as church. Jeans & Coffee are informal gatherings in garden centre cafés on the following Saturdays:



July 8th 10.30-12 noon @ Wyevale Garden Centre, Yarm Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 3SQ

July 8th 1.30-3.00 pm @ Pity Me Garden Centre, Stank Lane, Durham DH1 5GZ

July 15th 10.30-12 noon @ Tyne Valley Garden Centre, Mickley Square, Stocksfield NE43 7BT

July 15th 1.30-3.00 pm @ Dobbies Garden Centre, Street Houses, Ponteland NE20 9BT

September 9th 10.30-12 noon @ Heighley Gate Garden Centre, Northumberland NE61 3DA

September 9th 1.30-3.00 pm @ Berwick Garden Centre, East Ord, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2NS.

Be part of a think tank on the move, and let's see if there are ideas to cross-pollinate some fresh thinking across our Synod. All are welcome. David, our Moderator, will help the conversation flow.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Elaine and Gordon Brown retired from ministry and from their pastorates in Gateshead and North West Durham at Easter. We wish them well in their new home in Dundee.

We were saddened by the death of **John Storer** on 12th March. An Elder at St Columba's, North Shields, John served as Synod Treasurer from 1969 to 1983, and was active on various synod committees and Newcastle District Council. We offer our sympathy to Brenda and to all the family.

Celebrated Durham artist **Judy Hurst** is again spending a week at the **St Cuthbert's Centre** on Holy Island. The Centre will be open each day from May 27th to June 3rd, and there will be opportunity to meet and talk with Judy, and see her work on vellum, paper and canvas.



Alphonsi Solomon of St George's, High Heaton is planning a trip to Uganda this year. He is appealing for children's books bibles, baby clothes and items and children's clothes and items (up to 15 years). Contact him on 07476 456 755.

A spectacular fire destroyed what was formerly **Trinity, URC Whitley Bay** in the evening of May 6th. No one was injured, but neighbours were forced to evacuate their homes while the blaze was brought under control.



The Upper Room at the **Keld Resource Centre** in the old Literary Institute was officially opened during a weekend festival held over the Mayday holiday

weekend. The festival was rounded off with a concert in **Keld Chapel** given by the Muker Silver Band.

Further down the Dale and a few days later, our moderator led an commemorative act of worship in the ruins of **Smarber Chapel**, the former shooting lodge of Philip, Lord Wharton, and the original meeting place of what is now our **Low Row** church.

Jesmond URC are holding a Bumblebee Picnic in the Haldane House Community Wildlife Garden on June 17th with a talk by Revd Ruth Crofton on bumblebees and activities for children. Tickets are available from Rosemary Towers on 0191 285 8645.



Keep the news coming in! -

Contact Wendy Watson at Synod Office
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*This newsheet can be downloaded from
www.urc-northernsynod.org,
and further links followed there*