

# Footsteps

Newsletter of the Northern Synod

...sharing **GOOD NEWS** around the Synod

## Welcome to the Footsteps Newsletter

By Dave Herbert



Welcome to this first edition of Footsteps. We hope you will find Footsteps an inspirational and informative read. In the following pages you will discover current thinking and developments across the life of Northern Synod, but also get up to speed about many other developments and trends in the wider United Reformed Church and further afield.

By sharing news about fresh resources coming to fruition available to us to help our congregations in our own local communities, telling one another stories about what has worked so well, we can share ideas and good practice, and cross pollinate fresh thinking and approaches as we enjoy

the adventure and challenge of faith in our own localities.

This first issue covers a rich palette of information and resources to stimulate and encourage new ways of being and doing Church. We live in a time of transition for many of our congregations, and Footsteps will hopefully bring hope and encouragement to those who read and share its contents with their wider local congregation whether in worship, Church Meetings, informal conversation and small groups.

Once you have read this issue, pass it on, share it with someone else, and talk about what you've read!

As ever, and in Christ, David.



## The Way Forward: Jesmond thinking day

By Melanie Campbell

**Remember this?! It was the Thinking Day in Jesmond, two years ago, when we began to discern a way forward for our churches. We started in a place of despondence and have moved to see other synods and denominations far and near, encouraged to form groups with team ministry, to begin to let go of buildings and be church in community... just as we are.**

Conversations about the gifts we enjoy as individuals and together, are leading to ideas, about what might be possible. Across the synod, plans are developing for groups of churches west of Newcastle, in mid-Northumberland and north-Northumberland. In the south of the synod, East Cleveland are beginning exploratory conversations and discussions across County Durham are continuing. For those of you in and around Newcastle, a consultation event is being held to consider how and where groups could be put in place - as soon as we have the date, we will let you know.

## Our Mission and Discipleship Journey

By Dave Herbert

“Missional what??”

**Something is happening, spontaneously: the Church in the British Isles across the denominations is being prompted by God's Spirit to explore and celebrate a fresh emphasis on what is called 'missional discipleship.'**

The term missional discipleship is used to reflect on the role of a disciple as someone who is engaged in God's mission in the world. Missional disciples are on a journey, becoming more like Christ, investing their lives in others, and embodying lives of love for the sake of others.

Northern Synod's Way Forward values collaborative ministry, finding creative partnerships in the wider community, new groupings, but most importantly, seeks to explore and then release the unique ministry all believers are called by God to exercise.

As a denomination standing in the Reformed tradition, missional discipleship is already in the DNA of the United Reformed Church. As a denomination we are well placed to accommodate and nurture such a movement.

I sense God's Spirit moving us to consider how we all have a part to play in engaging in God's mission in the world. We each have a unique part to play in God's unfolding plan.



# Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today

By Jane Rowell

Walking the Way is the URC's exciting focus on lifelong Christian discipleship and mission. It moves beyond a set of programmes into the world, where each step we take is accompanied by Jesus, helping us to bring about change in our own lives and, ultimately, in Church culture and society.

We in Northern synod launched Walking the Way at October Synod by giving all members of the synod meeting a copy

of Holy Habits by Andrew Roberts and encouraging them to be involved in the adventure of discipleship. Holy Habits explores this adventure through a rich mix of biblical material and inspiring stories.

The URC is in the process of producing resources for Walking the way including a study guide for Holy Habits and liturgies for worship – for more details please contact Jane Rowell at the synod office or visit the URC website [www.urb.org.uk/our-work/walking-the-way](http://www.urb.org.uk/our-work/walking-the-way)



## Celebrating Growing Leaders

By Peter Rand

What does it take to give leadership in a local church? Have you got what it takes? Do you know someone who has? Are you thinking "Someone needs to do it...?"

'Growing Leaders' is a course spread over ten months that helps people think about what leadership is and whether God is calling them and gifting them to give leadership in their local church.

Over thirty people across Northern Synod are currently doing the course. They say:

"I am excited about the journey...", "Learning about Jesus' style of leadership is interesting...", "Lots to ponder on...", "I am learning about my relationship with God and I hope, with God's help, to develop as a leader."

The course has ten sessions, run in different venues across the Synod, including a 24-hour residential (subsidised by Synod).

There are exercises for self-reflection but no written assignments.

For more details, contact Jane Rowell or Peter Rand.

Walking the Way



## A supportive Trust Board

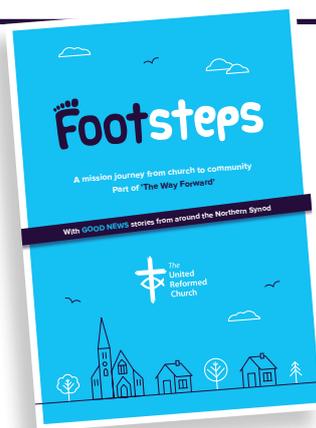
By David Grosch-Miller

In a time of rapid change all church structures have to hold in creative tension both stability and innovation. There has to be confidence that we have what we need and a willingness to take risks to create something new.

The Synod Trust seeks to manage these polarities by prudent investments and careful management of resources while at the same time encouraging the Synod to think expansively. The substantial resources at our disposal are to be used to further the mission of the United Reformed Church in

the Northern Synod. The funds that have been built up over the years help to support local church needs as well as Synod wide initiatives and staff costs.

The Way Forward will mean letting go of old assumptions in order to grasp new opportunities and the Trust will play its part in managing the tensions that are part of the changes we must embrace.



## Footsteps launch

By Ian Buchanan

Are you interested in a mission journey from Church to community?

The Footsteps programme, consisting of a brochure, a dynamic and interactive

website and a social media platform was launched at the March Synod. It offers advice on starting a Mission project, with examples of Good News stories from around the Northern Synod, opportunities for two-way communication between the Synod and individual church members and most importantly opportunities for discussion between church members.

Each month there will be a leading article or blog inviting your comments. The first blog will present an update and a view on the Synod Way Forward, asking for your comments and feedback on its progress.

If you are a church member, an Elder, a Minister of Word and Sacraments, a Lay Leader or a Convenor of a Faith & Life committee, and would like to know more please contact me at [info.buchanan@btinternet.com](mailto:info.buchanan@btinternet.com)

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