

June / July 2018  
Abbreviated Edition

# Footsteps

Newsletter of the Northern Synod

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



## Welcome to the Footsteps Newsletter

*By Dave Herbert*

There are those delightful individuals we know who light up a room when they walk in; and there are people we know who always leave us feeling better for having been in their company.

As this latest edition of Footsteps comes round and I read its rich palette of testimony, the one word which springs to mind is encouragement.

Encouragement is vital as we travel along the adventure of faith together as it ever was. I hope and pray you are encouraged by the following reports and reflections.

Encouragement is an important word for St Paul in his letters. We read in the New Testament of how a key co-worker in Christ for Paul, a Cypriot Levite called Joseph, was nicknamed Barnabas, because he was an encourager. 'Barnabas' literally means 'son of encouragement' (Acts 4:36). The early church acknowledged his gift of encouragement, and saw it as vital.

Later in the book of Acts (20:2), we see how when Paul was preparing to move on from Ephesus to Macedonia and Greece, he 'sent for the disciples; and after encouraging them and saying farewell, he left for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given the believers much encouragement, he came to Greece, where he stayed for three months.'

We need encouragement as missional disciples in the world today. And I believe we have a generous serving of it in this edition of Footsteps.

Be encouraged!

In Christ,

David

---

## From the Editor

In this latest edition of Footsteps, inspiration and its many facets seems to be a strong theme running through the articles.

Inspirational gatherings and events and inspirational figures whether public figures or people known to us on a more personal level feature in articles.

Roberta Ritson, Horsley Church Member reflects on the 'Growing Leaders' course and an inspirational mentor. Minister, Ray Anglesea talks about the recent inspiring and challenging ministers' gathering at Yarnfield Park. He also reflects on how he was inspired as a teenager and still is today by Martin Luther King Jr. Fifty years after his untimely death the civil rights leader still inspires those who follow his call for justice and equality in the world. Alison Shiel reflects on an inspirational day led by John Bell of the Iona Community at Jesmond URC.

It's probably difficult for most of us to be inspirational in our everyday lives but when we get the opportunity we can all be inspired to help others. The Seeds of Hope Mission 2018 article gives us some ideas on how we can do just that.

# Mission Discipleship Trendy Trend or Vital Idea?

By Dave Herbert



Something new and exciting is happening across the Church in the west, and that is a fresh emphasis on missional discipleship.

The term *missional discipleship* describes 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. This view puts the church in a new light and sparks a movement dedicated to engaging every context, particularly local situations, with a mission-shaped heart. A missional disciple is a follower of the life and teachings of Jesus and is committed to being a witness. Too often, this missional language has been divorced from the local church because it was seen as something only missionaries did – not what every local church member does. However, missional discipleship reconnects the relationship of the church to mission and provides a theological and practical approach to discipleship.

It leads us to immerse ourselves into the humanity of our neighbourhoods and cities in order to relate the gospel to people and their needs. Being a local missionary demands humility of heart to listen to the stories of others, to empathise with their frustration, suffering and brokenness and to redemptively retell their stories through the gospel. Through chaplaincies I have served I learnt it is paramount to listen first before 'earning' the right to speak and reflect on what has been heard.

To sum up, as missional disciples we are called to work within our local, distinctive context; to not only focus on individual lives but through acting local and thinking global address brokenness in the whole of creation; to witness through telling stories (Including our own); and to humbly listen before we have the right to speak.

I wonder, what does any of the above lead you to think and feel? Let me know!

As ever, and in Christ

David

Read the whole of Dave's leading article on the Footsteps website [www.footstepstoolkit.com](http://www.footstepstoolkit.com) or in the full version of the Footsteps newsletter ..... available from your Church Secretary.

---

## Holy Island

By Ian Buchanan



The Northumberland coastline affords the visitor and residents a rich diversity of treasures, but the jewel in the crown is surely the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. This Sacred place has a recorded history dating back to the 6th century AD. The United Reformed Church has a unique presence on the island and visitors are warmly welcomed to 'come to the quiet centre' at St Cuthbert's.

Warden, Rachel Poolman, passionately speaks about the Centre's vision 'to share sacred space to create opportunities to meet with the Divine and to enable reflection and spiritual journeying'. Last year 29 groups visited the Centre, 23 pilgrims came for spiritual renewal in the bothy, in addition to the many day visitors of some Faith or none.

This is truly a place where everyone can experience an encounter with God!

I recommend a visit soon.

## ‘Growing Leaders’: reflection from a course participant

*By Roberta Ritson*

I have been taking part in the Newcastle based ‘Growing Leaders’ course. My home church is in Horsley, just ten or so miles to the west, alongside the Hearth Arts Centre and Café.

Fellow course members are like a family where the challenges of following Jesus and leading others to Jesus are shared freely in an atmosphere of trust. The monthly sessions are a source of great mutual encouragement and strength.

I appreciate the stimulus for personal reflection. Themes have included matters of character and integrity, creative patterns for devotion and whether leadership can be shared or ‘circular’. Participants were encouraged to choose their own mentors and I knew immediately who I wanted to ask. The wisdom, generosity, gentleness and quality of listening given by this person is itself inspirational. I hope I too will be able to give like this when the time comes round.

I grew up in the Churches of Christ and have had many years’ experience of Quaker meetings and also the Anglican church. Horsley Village Church is the most ecumenically ‘colour blind’ community I have ever known. In this way its inclusive approach reflects my personal journey while nudging me out of my comfort zone at times. Relating to friends, visitors and artists next door, showing up as a humble, listening and supportive church, a quiet, strong Christian presence all takes skill and practice.

Being part of the ‘Growing Leaders’ course has helped, perhaps more by providing space to study and pray rather than specific practical things. Although I first came to Horsley offering music I feel deeply fulfilled leading and encouraging others to lead worship. This is affirmed and supported. I am especially pleased to have ‘come home’ to the wider United Reformed Church, meeting people from all over the north-east.

In the seventies I was growing up in a rural backwater, home alone with a father whose greatest loves were land and livestock. It could be tough. “That’s not for people like you”, he pronounced, noticing a leaflet on formal church ministry among my books for English, German and Religious Studies.

Perhaps even then I had a hunch that he was wrong. Today ‘Growing Leaders’ is opening new possibilities. May it do so for many and have an enlivening effect throughout and beyond our churches.

**You can read reflections from other course participants and the course leaders in the full version of the Footsteps newsletter**



## URC News Ministers’ Gathering 2018

*By Ray Anglesea*

More than 340 United Reformed Ministers and Church Related Community Workers from across the denomination’s 13 synods, spent four days being inspired and challenged.

The URC’s first Ministers’ Gathering took place at Yarnfield Park Training and Conference Centre, between 30 April – 3 May 2018, as part of ‘Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today’. The gathering offered ministers and CRCWs an opportunity to reflect on their own roles as disciples of Jesus and to consider what it means to serve in a Church that seeks to empower everyone in their call to and participation in missional discipleship.

**Read the whole of Ray’s article in the full version of the Footsteps newsletter**

## Readers' comments and social media posts

We are looking forward to receiving your comments and feedback for the July / August edition of the newsletter.

The copy deadline for the July / August edition of the Footsteps newsletter will be 26<sup>th</sup> June 2018.



Readers can contact The Editor with comments and views at:

United Reformed Church Northern Synod Office  
4 College Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8JJ  
Tel: 0191 232 1168  
[wendy.watson@urc-northernsynod.org](mailto:wendy.watson@urc-northernsynod.org)

