

# Footsteps

August / September 2018  
Abbreviated Edition

Newsletter of the Northern Synod

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



## Welcome to the Footsteps Newsletter

*By Dave Herbert*

Dear Reader

I have sometimes identified a thread or common theme running through pieces written for Footsteps, but cannot do so this time without it becoming contrived.

Yet the very variety below brings to mind how I often reflect on how the Church is like a multi-faceted diamond, each facet radiating one of a rainbow of colours. To look at the Church from one angle consistently is to miss her dazzling diversity and captivating inspiration shining in different directions, catching the light in different ways.

Read on and enjoy the variety, and I hope and pray something in each article will catch your eye and encourage you to reflect on possibilities within your congregation and surrounding community. Pray your way through the following, and thank God for all that this issue contains, and that it might inspire new seeds to be sown by all who read and share its content.

As ever, and in Christ

David

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## From the Editor

This month's edition of Footsteps features the reflections of those who attended General Assembly in Nottingham last month – from those who've attended many times to those like Alison Greaves who was attending for the first time.

All of the accounts help to give a good all round picture of the event.

Two articles highlight the talented knitters that there are in the Synod. Widdrington URC recently displayed the popular Knitted Bible whilst St George's, Morpeth's Knit and Natter Group have been featured in a national magazine with their 'trauma teddies'

Peacemaking in the light of the forthcoming Centenary Anniversary of the end of the First World War is the subject of Jane Rowell's leading article, Remembrance 100 whilst Mary Taylor writes about Crookham's Cross of Nails Service and its Peace Garden.

Hopefully these articles will give you some ideas of how your church might celebrate peacemaking in the coming months.

As always please keep the Good News stories coming

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# Remembrance 100

*By Jane Rowell*



I wonder what your church is doing to commemorate 100 years since the end of the First World War? Will you be having a Remembrance Sunday Service in church or joining with a community or ecumenical event? Will you be having a display of poppies? Will you be organising a trip to Crookham URC in Northumberland to visit the Peace Garden? Many churches have already been engaging in the 100 year commemorations over the last few years – from planting poppy seeds in church or community gardens, to researching the names of those who are on our memorial boards in churches. Many have been involved in working with local community groups to create art installations or musical events.

The United Reformed Church is engaging with an initiative to commemorate 100 years since the end of the First World War called Remembrance 100. It began on the 4 August with 100 days of prayer. The following is from the United Reformed Church News [www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)

Remembrance 100 – organised by Hope Together; a Christian charity – will run until Armistice Day on 11 November upon which the centenary falls.

The United Reformed Church is a partner in the initiative, which encourages local churches, schools and communities to observe the centenary in different ways. On each of the 100 days, those who sign up are invited to spend just a few minutes taking part in prayers and other activities.

Tuesday, 4 August 1914 was the first day of the war in which some 8.5 million soldiers were killed through combat, 21 million were wounded and 7.7 million were taken as prisoners of war. Millions of civilians also died as a result of starvation, disease, massacres or military encounters.

In 1918, 4 August was observed as a National Day of Prayer following King George V's request. 100 days later, the war ended. The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that day brings a particular resonance to Armistice Day 2018 and to the prayers for peace that will precede it.

Nationally planned events include a rally for peace at Trafalgar Square in London on 21 September.

Remembrance Sunday itself will see URC congregations join thousands of others in marking the centenary with Remembrance services, many of which will be followed by peace parties.

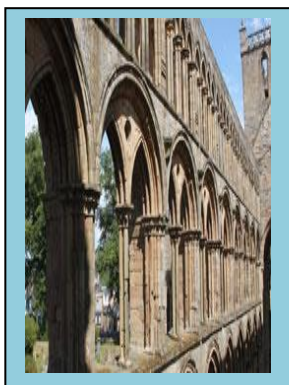
Local churches planning events should check the Remembrance 100 website regularly [www.remembrance100.co.uk](http://www.remembrance100.co.uk) as it is being continually updated with resources. These will include a guide on how to hold a peace party, a short video about peace, based on Revelation 21:3-4 and a pocket-sized booklet that can be handed out at events. Other resources for activities and reflection, produced by the Bible Society [www.biblesociety.org.uk](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk) include:

Hear My Cry – a book of reflections, Bible verses and stories from the First world War, priced at £1.50 each

Free lesson plans for school teachers

A free copy of Lifewords' First World War active service Gospel distributed to soldiers, prisoners and refugees in 1914.

I wonder what your church is doing? Please let us share our events and ideas across the synod; get in touch with Jane Rowell, Synod Mission Enabler at the Synod Office



## Synod Pilgrimage 2018 Border Abbeys Way

John Durell has written an interesting account of the latest Synod Pilgrimage. You can read his account by clicking on the link below

<http://urc-northernsynod.org/pilgrims-on-the-border-abbeyes-way/>

This is the link to the photos taken on the trip.

<http://urc-northernsynod.org/pilgrimage-pictures-day-1/>

## General Assembly 2018

### *Reflections from those who attended*

This year's General Assembly was held from 6 - 9 July at the Albert Hall, Nottingham.

Some of the delegates from Northern Synod have put pen to paper to share their thoughts and reflections on different aspects of the meeting.

#### **An Afternoon of Welcome by Sue Fender**



On a very warm and sunny afternoon and following an inspiring act of worship, General Assembly settled down to business.

We were welcomed to the Albert Hall and to Nottingham by the Mayor of Nottingham, Councillor Liaqat Ali, who is also the Chair of the Interfaith Committee. Nottingham, he reminded us, was the home of Robin Hood and still echoes to the sounds of social justice.

In turn Assembly welcomed our Ecumenical and International guests, who are members of Assembly and bring their unique voices and views to our discussions and deliberations. From the Church of Scotland to the Presbyterian Church of Wales, from the Uniting Presbyterian Church of South Africa to the National Evangelical Church of Syria and the Lebanon, our sisters and brothers from around the world, offered us words of encouragement for our time together. Revd Joseph

Kassab from The United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, said that while there are divisions and wall building within the world today, the church presents a picture of unity and relationship building and must continue to do so.

Reflecting on his two years as Moderator of General Assembly, the Revd Kevin Watson spoke of his journey from Southport (GA2016) to Nottingham and how he has seen the church at the centre of the community. He told us of the 'thin places' he has visited, where the evidence of the Incarnate God becomes real and alive in the hearts of the people. He assured the Assembly that God is alive and well in so many places, offering life in all its fullness.

The Equalities Committee offered us a chance to reflect on the make-up of our committees and whether they represent the diversity of the membership of the United Reformed Church. There is still much work to be done in this area.

As with all organisations, sometime must be given over to looking seriously at how we conduct ourselves. The Assembly Arrangements Committee introduced their report on the future of the General Assembly which looked at the theology, history and tradition of our decision-making process. The book of Reports contained a very large number of resolutions regarding the future of GA. Assembly voted to hold General Assembly annually from 2020 with a reduced number of representatives, in a central location, most likely to be The Hayes Conference Centre at Swanwick.

12 faces of Hope – An Exhibition was launched by the Moderators, Nigel Uden and Derek Estill. It shows the faces of 12 people from Israel and Palestine with their hopes for justice and peace in the area. They are thought provoking and can be found on the World Council of Churches website at <https://oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/12-faces-of-hope>. I encourage you to take a look.

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#### **A First Visit to General Assembly by Alison Greaves**



General Assembly and 'What Do You Think' was an experience to say the least! Being the URC Youth Representative for Northern Synod, I felt understanding General Assembly and the National URC was crucial to ensure both the children and young people of the Synod and myself get the most out of my role. So as a first timer, I headed down to Nottingham to see what it was all about. I have to say I rather enjoyed myself.

'What Do You Think' is a two-day event before General Assembly that all young people who are attending General Assembly are invited to. Throughout the two days we grilled the top table of Assembly, discussed resolutions, shared worship together and most importantly enjoyed cracking food. Taking apart resolutions, to fully understand their aim and see their potential impact, sparked passion and empowered the whole group. This gave us all, myself included, a stepping stone to share our opinions with General Assembly, allowing the voice of the young URCers to be present in every discussion.

Then came the event itself. The big GA. First thought; dealing with the volume of people. I was surprised at how many people actually attended General Assembly and it was lovely to get to know a few people and hear the opinions and voices of individuals across the URC. Seeing everything occur on such a large, national level was great; highlighting to me the importance of all local churches being engaging and aware of the decisions made at General Assembly. This means we can move forward, together, as one church. Woohh!

As well as discussing and deciding on the future of the URC, deepening of faith is something I hope everyone at General Assembly experienced. Personally, it was the little things that caused the greatest impact for me; seeing three hundred paper planes fly across the Assembly Hall, hearing the sound of tiny hand fans being wound up behind me and being passed yet another bag of squashes (tasty as sweets) in business. All the small things remind me that this random body of people are a proper little family. It spurs you on both spiritually and within your social and professional life to share the message of the big G up in the sky and continue to value all individuals we have within the URC. Till the next time GA.

## Readers' comments and social media posts

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

The copy deadline for the September / October edition of the Footsteps newsletter will be 24<sup>th</sup> August 2018.



Readers can contact The Editor with comments and views at:

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