

THE REVIEW

DECEMBER 2019



**WADDINGTON STREET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH,
DURHAM CITY DH1 4BG**

Church Website: www.durhamurc.org.uk

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY AND CHURCH NEWS

Ministerial Services – Anyone requiring the services of a Minister should contact their own Elder who will make enquiries on their behalf.

Time of Sunday Services – 10.45 a.m.

WEEKLY NOTICE SHEETS –

Please forward details of items and events for the weekly notice sheets to Peter Galloway – email pagalloway@hotmail.com or mobile phone number **07 763 912 670**.

COPY DATE FOR THE FEBRUARY 2020 REVIEW IS – SUNDAY 19th JANUARY 2020.
There will be no separate issue of The Review in January.



How would you like to ...

name one or two of your favourite Bible characters and say why?

Please let me have your article (no more than 2 pages of A4 size) about either one or two Bible characters and say why you admire or like them. It strikes me that we could do with more religious or religion related content in The Review and I am finding it very hard to come by articles that are not copyright or way-out. I really would appreciate articles with a religious or philanthropic angle. **Thanks to those members who have already responded to this request. Editor.**

Revd. Marcus Hargis ... Marcus has intimated that he hopes to move to the North East in the week commencing 17th February 2020. Work will be done at the Denewell Avenue manse to make it suitable for the family's needs.

Interim Moderator ...

Following the illness of John Drew it has been arranged that **Barry Hutchinson** will act as Interim Moderator until John is able to return. John is reported to be making a good recovery and we wish him well. We are grateful to Barry for filling the position meantime.



Visiting Preacher, Susanne Stonehouse, refused a payment and kindly agreed the sum could be donated to our charity – Hope for Justice. Her generosity was much appreciated.

Donation to Mind Charity ...

A letter of thanks has been received from the charity **Mind** for the donation of **£395** collected at Christ Church, Stanley, when Revd Marcus Hargis “preached with a view”. All 5 churches in the Group were represented at that service and helped make this donation possible.



Two of our former members have died: **Mrs. Eleanor Stronge**, former teacher and missionary in Western Samoa. Eleanor joined a church nearer her home but avidly followed events at Waddington Street through The Review. Freda had word that **Stanley Coton** died in October. His family say he left them “full of faith” with the words “Good, all good.” They say he was a fantastic Dad, Grandpa and Great Grandpa who will be much missed but they are so grateful to God for Stanley.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY AND CHURCH NEWS



Christmas Greetings from the Hargis Family

We're looking forward to moving up North,
living among you and working together
to share the light of Christ for all.

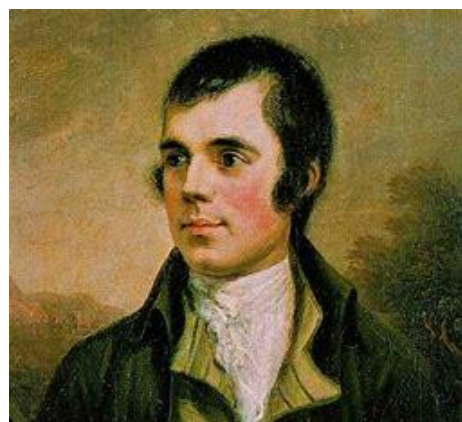
*Marcus, Joshua, Jaya, and Benjamin,
wish you a joyful and peaceful Christmas,
as well as a positive start to the New Year.*



'BEST DEMENTIA TEAM' AWARD AT NATIONAL EVENT

Congratulations to our Dementia Service Team who have been recognised as 'Best Dementia Team' at the Tenth National Dementia Care Awards. This award was made to 'the best dementia-focused team which has developed and maintained a superb standard of care within any care setting'. It recognises the excellent standards of dementia care we provide both within the Hospice in the Living Well Centre and In-Patient Unit and also out in the community with the Namaste Care Service. Congratulations to all staff and volunteers who have helped to propel our dementia services into national recognition.

[The above notice is from the Hospice Volunteer Newsletter. Well done St. Cuthbert's Hospice.]



Burns Haggis Meal ... Sunday 19th January 2010 in the Hall after morning service - the Fundraising Group will stage a Burns celebration (with Haggis on the Menu).

This event is in aid of our Charity **Hope for Justice** which fights modern day slavery across the world and in this country. So get out your tartans and come along to support this effort – it should be very enjoyable. All are welcome. Please let Win or Judy know if you intend to come.

Jean and Geoff Graham kindly shared these photographs of their new grandson **Joshua Sam Graham** and his big brother **Zach** (parents are **Malcolm and Lyndsey Graham**). Joshua Sam was born on 18th October, weighed in at 7 lbs 5 oz, and mother and baby are well.



Yvonne and Douglas Melville attended the christening of their twin grandchildren in November. Matilda and Charlie behaved very well and big sister, Evie, enjoyed the occasion. The proud parents are **Jeana and Stuart Melville**.

Photograph (left) shows Jeana with Matilda and Stuart with Charlie, while big sister, Evie, leads the way.

EDITOR'S LETTER

DEAR READERS,

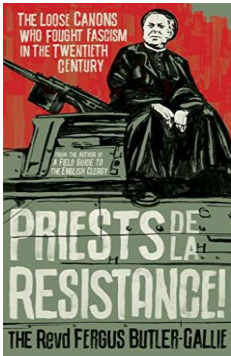


I can hardly believe that it is once again time to produce the December Review – this year has gone past on roller skates! The Church year has been a busy one, especially on the fund-raising front. We have enjoyed some excellent fellowship and tasty goodies at the various events and I never fail to marvel at the stamina and inventiveness of the fundraisers.

Thank you

As always, the flowers in Church have been a delight for the eye and the donors and Jean Graham, who supervises the Flower Rota, are to be congratulated and thanked. Visiting preachers have been delighted to be sent on their way with some of the flowers. Our Organists – Peter and Bob – make such a difference to the service with their musical skills and we should not take them for granted. Those who serve us coffee after the service do a great job too, as do those who set up and clear away in the hall, so thank you for this. Our Property Committee and our Elders work very hard on our behalf and it takes up a lot of their time, so again, thank you.

Les has done a great job in seeing that we have a Preacher each week and we have enjoyed a huge variety of styles and content. David Thornborrow looks after the offerings and the envelope side of that. Michèle continues to act efficiently as our Treasurer – a job which is notoriously difficult to fill within organisations. The Review would not appear without the efforts of Sandy and Win, so a huge thank you to them both. Apologies if I have missed anyone out! My thanks also to those who have contributed articles during the year and whose efforts have, hopefully, kept The Review fresh, informative and interesting. It is always good to have your reactions to articles.



Looking for a book to give at Christmas?
You might like to take a look at
The Revd Fergus Butler-Gallie's
Priests de la Resistance! *The Loose Canons Who Fought Fascism in the Twentieth Century.*
Featuring 15 people including Canon Fèlix Kir, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Princess Andrew of Greece and Denmark (mother of Prince Philip), the stories offer a fascinating look at people who displayed courage, cunning and a refusal to submit to Nazi rule.



*It only remains for me to wish each of you
a happy, peaceful and God-filled Christmas
and a happy, healthy and prosperous*

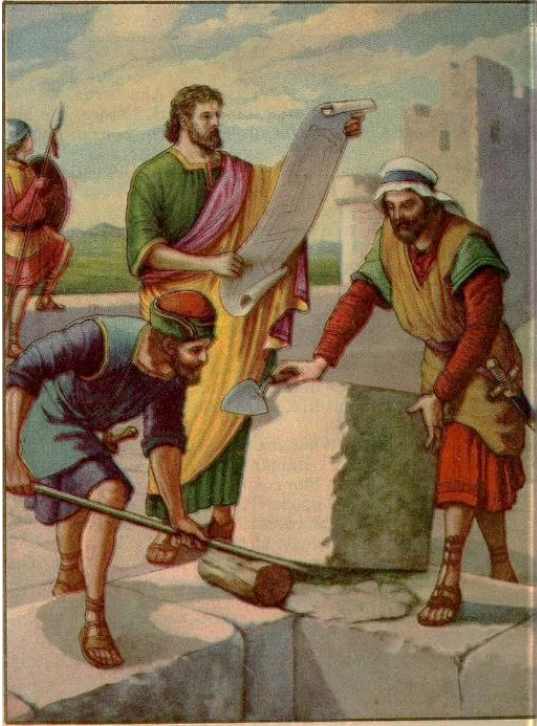
New Year in 2020.



I should be grateful if any contributions to The Review for February 2020 could be sent to me by the date given below. **Lucille Thomson**

The next issue of The Review will be published on **Sunday 2nd February 2020.**
Contributions please to Lucille Thomson at church or BY POST or **Tel. 0191-3861052**
or e-mail **lesthomson@talktalk.net** - no later than **NOON on Sunday 19th January 2020.**

MY 2 FAVOURITE BIBLE CHARACTERS



My favourite Bible character is *Nehemiah. Some readers may remember that when I lived in Durham between 1975 and 1987 I worked for the County Council, and when I left Durham, it was to go to work for Trafford Borough Council in that part of Greater Manchester which includes both the cricket and football grounds of Old Trafford. I am now a member and reader emeritus of St. Bride's Church in Old Trafford, and secretary of the Church Council (session clerk).

It is because Nehemiah was like a local government officer that I am attracted to him. But not only that. He sets us a good example. In *Nehemiah 2:4* he prays to God while in conversation with the king. We can multi-task, if it involves talking with God ("Help!") at the same time as doing something else. Indeed, God walks with us through all experiences. That is a comfort to us. Chattering with Him about what is happening, or about our worries is natural.

(Above: Nehemiah rebuilding Jerusalem, illustration by Adolf Hult, 1919)

Nehemiah is practical. He is not too heavenly minded to be any earthly use. Chapter 4 of Nehemiah's book is a great example of prayer and elbow grease and team work, even if they didn't have time to change their clothes (*verse 23*).

My second favourite Bible character is Daniel.

Daniel was a civil servant who worked for the government through a very long life. He was very good at his job. His faith affected the way he lived. In the first chapter of Daniel's book he learned the language and ways of Babylon benefitting from the opportunity to study, but he did not eat the rich food which he was offered, and showed that he could thrive on a vegetarian diet which did not offend Jewish law. He was wise to recognise what was important, what was just different, and what was cultural. These are distinctions which most of us do not think about sufficiently deeply, and which we sometimes get wrong. Later on in the book, he shows courage in refusing to worship anything or anyone but God.

Graham Cooper



***Nehemiah** is the central figure of the Book of Nehemiah, which describes his work in rebuilding Jerusalem during the Second Temple period. He was governor of Persian Judea under Artaxerxes I of Persia (465-424 BC). Most scholars believe Nehemiah was a real historical figure and that the Nehemiah Memoir, a name given by scholars to certain portions of the book written in the first person, is historically reliable. [From Wikipedia]

MY FAVOURITE BIBLE CHARACTER IS RUTH ...



One of my favourite Biblical characters is RUTH. She was a woman from Moab whose mother-in-law Naomi had moved to Moab because of famine in her own land of Bethlehem Judah. When both Naomi's and Ruth's husbands died, Naomi decided to return home as the famine had passed. She told Ruth to go back to her own mother's house and to marry again. Ruth did not want to leave Naomi, so she said one of the most poignant expressions of loyalty ever told:

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to refrain from following thee. For whither thou goest I will go and where thou lodgest I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God. Where thou diest I will die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also if ought but death part thee and me."

This speech is sometimes used in marriage ceremonies as an expression of loyalty to ones partner. The version quoted is from the King James Bible Chapter One verses 16-17.

Barbara Tinsley

SCRIPTURE CAKE - All the ingredients for this cake are to be found in the bible.

INGREDIENTS:

225 grams Judges 5:25
200 grams Jeremiah 6:20
1 large teaspoon I Samuel 30:12
3 Jeremiah 17:11
175 grams I Samuel 30:12
175 grams Nahum 3:12
60 grams Numbers 17:8
250 grams 1 Kings 4:22
Pinch each of II Chronicles 9:9
Pinch of Leviticus 2:13
1 teaspoon Amos 4:5
3 tablespoons Judges 4:19

METHOD:

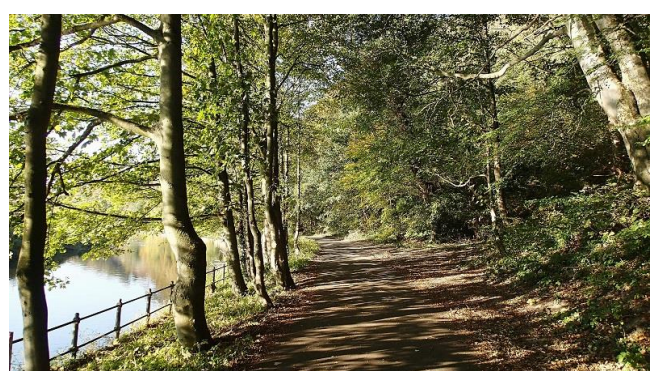
1. Heat the oven to 160°C and base line a large loaf tin or 8" round cake tin.
2. Cream together the first three ingredients.
3. Beat in the 3 eggs one at a time until the mixture is light and creamy.
4. Sift together flour, spices, salt and baking powder.
5. Add these dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and continue to beat.
6. Add the fruit and chopped nuts and mix well.
7. Add the milk.
8. Pour the mixture into the tin and level the top.
Bake in the middle of the oven for 1 hour 20 minutes – test with a wooden skewer and if it is not cooked, return it to the oven for 10 minutes intervals, checking with the skewer each time.
9. Leave it to cool for 10 minutes in the tin before Turning it out to cool completely.

SOLUTION:
1. Butter. 2. Sugar. 3. Honey.
4. Eggs. 5. Raisins.
6. Chopped figs or dates.
7. Chopped almonds.
8. Flour.
9. Spices such as cinnamon,
Allspice, nutmeg.
10. Pinch of salt.
11. Baking powder. 12. Milk.
Optional: chopped apricots.



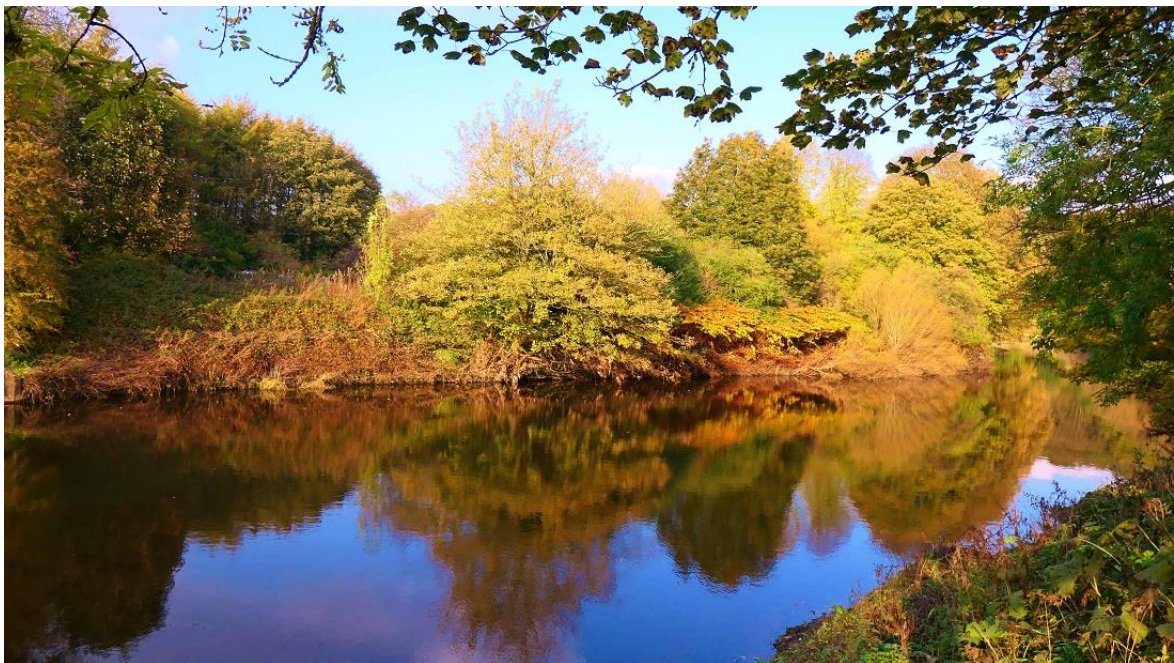
Autumn in Durham

While Jan and I were in Durham, we decided that as it was a nice day, we would have a walk along to Old Durham Gardens and say hello to friends of ours who volunteer there. The trees were ablaze with colour along the riverside walk and the sun shone in a blue sky.



After visiting the gardens, we decided to continue walking as far as Poplar Tree Garden Centre at Shincliffe and have a meal in the cafe there. On our way back we saw ducks resting and watched an otter swimming in the river, occasionally coming up to eat a small fish. The late afternoon sun was catching the colourful trees and they were reflected in the calm waters of the River Wear. It was a nice way to spend a few hours without driving miles out into the country.

Angus and Jan Robson.



A Happy Christmas Greeting,
 I unto all do send.
 And may the changeless Love of God,
 Upon you all descend.
 May He guide your weary footsteps,
 Cheer up your aching hearts,
 Send sunbeams on your pathway
 And make anxious fear depart.
 May His blessings fall upon you,
 Like needed summer showers,
 To revive your drooping spirits,
 Raise your hopes to higher powers.
 To feel that God is with you,
 That on Him you can rely,
 He's the only friend that's steadfast,
 All others pass you by.

[Esther Gilbert Kinsey]



Notes from Elders' Meeting on Wednesday 6th November 2019

1. The meeting opened with reading Psalm 37 verses 1-7 and prayer.
2. The Foundation are seeking a folding compact snooker table and will advise us of the options.
3. The hiring fees for the premises will rise from 1/1/2020. These changes have been agreed with the Elders and Property Committee. A full account of the changes will appear in the next magazine and attached to the full minutes of this meeting.
4. District reports were given and prayers offered.
5. Vacancy update – Yvonne and Helen updated the meeting on where we are with the vacancy. Marcus has accepted the post and visited the area during October with his wife and family. They spent a lovely 2 hours with us in Waddington Street and were impressed with our premises and welcome. They are looking forward to moving to the North East in February 2020 and will be living in the Denewell Avenue manse at Gateshead. During John Drew's illness the Revd Barry Hutchinson has agreed to act as Interim Moderator for the group. The meeting discussed the draft Terms of Settlement contract required for Marcus. This to be discussed at the December church meeting.
6. Christmas and other special services arrangements were discussed and agreed. Details to be given to Peter for the notices and will also appear in the Church Christmas Card. The proof of the Christmas card has been agreed and we should receive the cards shortly. The Remembrance wreath will now be laid by Yvonne Melville.
7. The meeting agreed that Peter Galloway should purchase the necessary licences to provide the widest variety of music available.
8. Membership – It is hoped to have more members joining our church by transfer in December. The meeting looked at the need for increasing the Eldership with new active members. The meeting also discussed the need to have arrangements for getting regular members to Church on Sundays. It was agreed to draw up a list of car volunteers at the next Church meeting on 1st December. The Church Directory is being updated prior to issue of the Christmas cards.
9. Church Library – Books to be signed out. Books not required to be discarded. Prayer cards etc. to be displayed for anyone to take.
10. The next meeting will be on Wednesday 4th December 2019 at 7 p.m. - Sandy Ogilvie to chair and Helen Cockburn to do minutes.
11. The meeting closed with the saying of the Grace.

Yvonne Melville



Dear Lord, as once more Christmas draws near,
 Let us come to the manger in awe and delight,
 Fill us with thankful joy and banish all fear.
 Like the Wise Men of old, may we see the sight,
 Of Mary, Joseph and Jesus in that lowly stable,
 Safe from Herod's wickedness, let them take flight.
 Guard and guide this family until the child is able,
 To fulfil your plans and to put mankind right.
 Let us join the shepherds and the angel throng,
 To fall down and worship the babe in the manger.
 Listening as the air is filled with sweet angel song,
 Hoping that in our lives this child will be no stranger.
 Accept our thanks Lord for this gift awaited long,
 As we give our lives and love to the child in the manger.



Best Advent Calendars?

“Christmas is too short for boring advent calendars” according to the unsolicited email offering me 24 premium handpicked gins. I say “offering me”: all that was needed from me in return was the mere sum of £99.99. I don’t suppose I’d have earned a reduction by pointing out that Advent and not Christmas is the time for Advent calendars, whether boring or exciting.

The Anglican priest and writer Adrian Leak, one of the very few members of the clergy who enjoys the monthly challenge of writing for the parish magazine, investigated the subject of Advent calendars a few years ago. He noted the way in which Biblical images once found behind the closed doors had first given way to Santas, reindeers, sleighs and snowmen, then to be followed by the appearance of chocolates, which allowed parents to threaten “If you don’t behave yourself, then you won’t open today’s door.” But by the time Leak wrote his piece, things had moved beyond that, and he tells us that Harrods set the bar at its highest in 2010 “by marketing the world’s million dollar Advent calendar containing, among other goodies, a designer kitchen and an 8.5 metre speedboat.”

While we may all wish for simpler times, I hope human enjoyment in giving and receiving may still have a place in our preparations for the Christmas season – and even through Advent calendars. I remember how, when our children were small, a young German friend of ours sent them a home-made Advent calendar, consisting of gold painted walnuts clinging to a long hanging red ribbon. The thought of Christina carefully opening all those nuts without damaging them, then finding small sweets and treats to fill the empty shells, before gluing them together and painting them, made us realise the generosity behind this simple gift.

But there’s more to Advent preparedness than looking forward to whatever may be lurking behind the open door. I’ve seen another message asking “Who needs a chocolate advent calendar when beauty advent calendars exist?” which I admit wasn’t addressed to me – but £150 for a *Glittering Galaxy of Makeup Magic Advent Calendar* makes you think! Perhaps it’s time this Advent to cultivate the preparedness that the Gospel asks of us – that is, **to be ready for Christ’s coming and coming again**, rather than allowing ourselves to sleep through the current excesses of madcap advertising and overspending. As the old Advent hymn put it, “**Sleepers, awake!**” And, as with the calendars of old, let’s be ready to find the Christ child in the manger, there behind the very last door.

John Durell



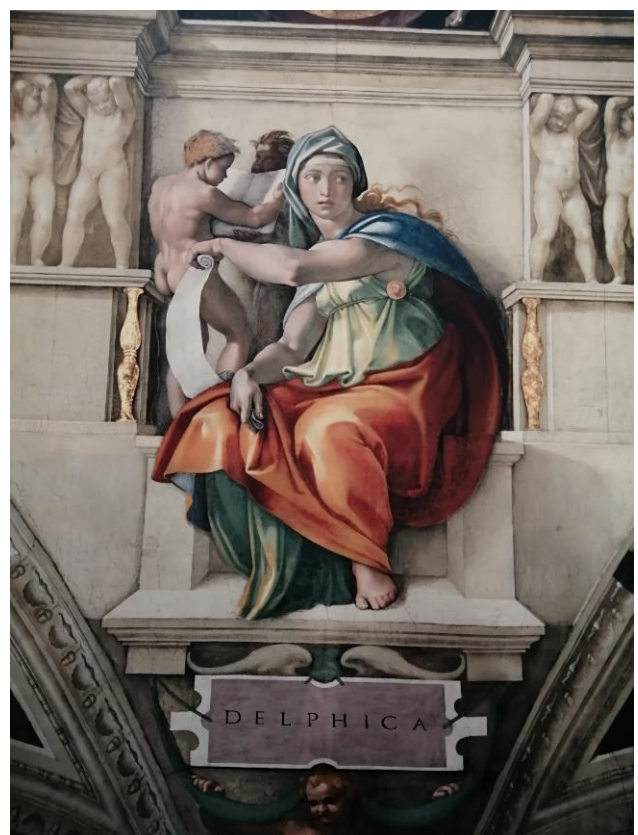
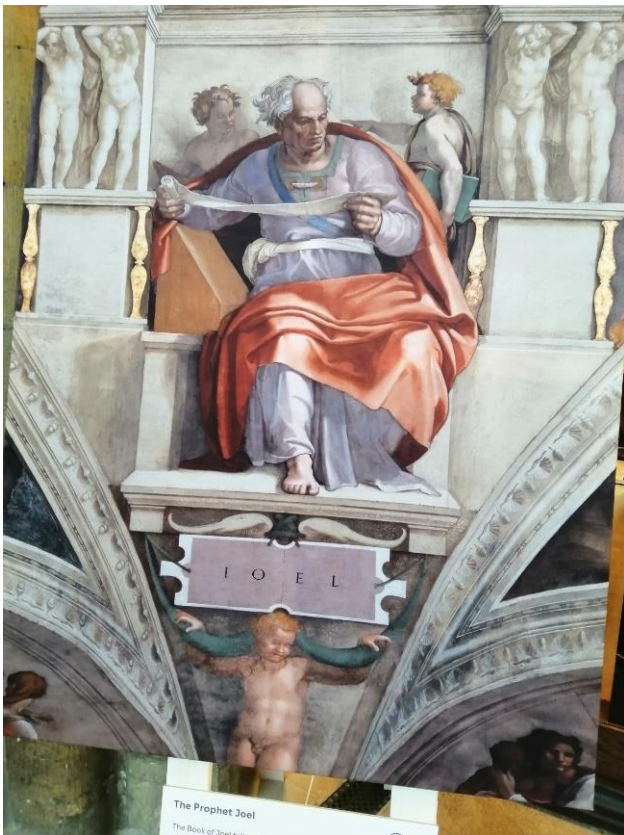
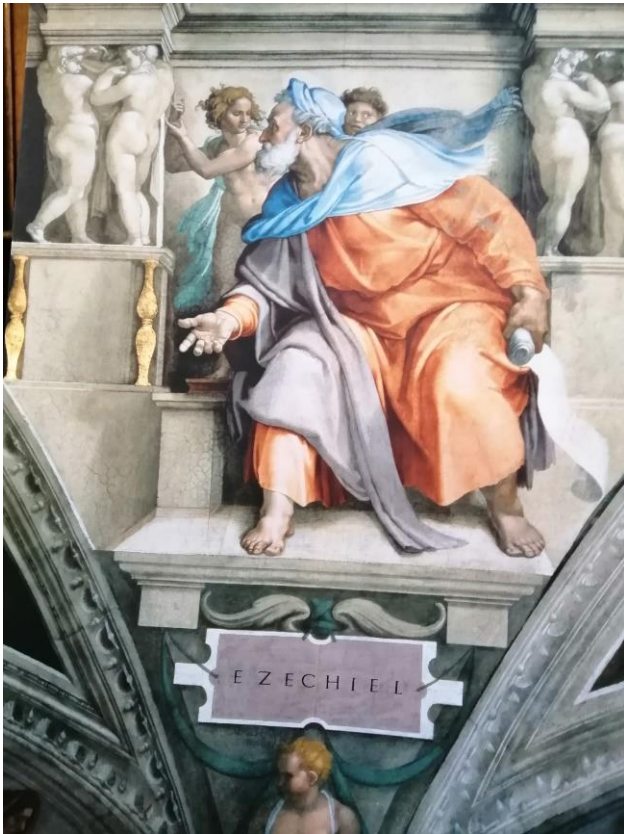
Sistine Chapel images ...

In October we were lucky to see the exhibition in Hull Minster of 50 large scale digital images of the 16th century Italian Renaissance artist Michelangelo's work from the walls and ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in Rome. This travelling exhibition (next stop Turkey) brought these amazing paintings "down to earth" being placed mainly on the floor of the Minster.

Being in such close proximity to the pictures was quite awesome as the planning, colour, scale and detail of the undertaking to cover the walls and the ceiling of the chapel became very evident. Words are just inadequate to express the visual impact of this undertaking.

Kath and Sandy Ogilvie





[Thank you Kath and Sandy for taking the time and trouble to share this amazing exhibition with readers of The Review. It is easier to see the details of each painting here than it is while actually in the Sistine Chapel and much easier than trying to gaze up at the ceiling while in the midst of a crowd of other tourists. Editor]

Some extracts from Synod's "Footsteps" ...

The work of Mission Committee

By Revd Grant Wilson

Mission Committee is one of four Synod committees reporting to Synod Executive. It 'encourages local churches to consider their mission and to engage in evangelism, coordinates synod responses to social issues, oversees ecumenical relations and supports local ecumenical partnerships and promotes international church relations'. (<http://urc-northernsynod.org/synod-committees>)

It oversees the work of members of the Synod team tasked with mission, specifically Mission Enabler, Jane Rowell. It also oversees the work of our Green Apostle, Trevor Jamison, which many of you will know about. They will write here in more detail about their own work at some point, I am sure.

You may well be thinking, this is probably too much for one committee to handle. How do we perform these many tasks? One substantial element of the Committee's meetings is receiving reports from members of Mission Committee who attend other committees on Synod's behalf. The danger is, we receive a report, but do nothing with it. The challenge is to capture the learning from the organisations represented on those other committees, and pass it on to Synod churches in ways that enable them to act on it.

The work of a mission committee really has to start with a definition of what mission is, and inevitably that begins with the Great Commission the disciples, received from Jesus: *Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation* (Mark 16.15, NASB).

For a long time, the church appeared to operate on the assumption that there was no need for mission in this country; the 'mission fields' were far beyond our shores. It is clear to us now, this understanding of mission is both paternalistic and patronising.

All the statistics now show that the real need for mission is on our own doorstep: Christians in our local communities are a dwindling minority. We have been here before; the difference is, in the days of the apostles, the tiny number of people who believed were anointed by the Spirit, and filled with a passion to spread the gospel to the whole world. They did not believe the energies of the church should be entirely devoted to self-care.

Revd Andrew Willett led an excellent day at St George's High Heaton recently on the challenge of 'Making More Disciples'. The day was based around his own experience of planting a church, along with his wife Sally in west Thamesmead, London. The traditional assumption is that a church begins with a hall full of chairs, the missional challenge being to fill them. The Willets began without a building, and looked instead for ways to bless their community by organising community events and actively encouraging people, to come along, sometimes going door to door to do so. They also tried simply to be a presence in the community, going out and about and greeting people where they found them. Instead of trying to make people believe, they helped people feel they belonged. They now have a diverse gathering of 80 people, mainly young families,



Andrew and Sally Willets

meeting regularly for worship in a local school.

Mission is transformative, for the people involved just as much as for the people it attempts to reach, often, even more so. Mission is counter-cultural; the church needs to change, at least as much as the world outside. We can hardly set out to change the world if we are neither willing nor able to change ourselves. As such, a committee charged with mission should never promote an ethos of business as usual. To employ a cliché, if you want to see change, be the change.

There are fuller accounts of their church plant [here](#) and [here](#)

Northern Synod's work on Holy Island

By Revd Rachel Poolman

The work of St Cuthbert's Centre on Holy Island is full of anomalies, we are a church without any members which holds services six days a week for people from all over the world. There is no local URC community, apart from the Warden but 750 people follow our Sunday prayers on Facebook. We are based on an island with a permanent population of 130, which receives 750,000 visitors a year. The visionaries from Northumberland and beyond who grafted to bring the Centre into being in the 1990s were certainly ahead of the game when it came to thinking about fresh expressions of church!

The ministry here is unique but after eight years here I think I have learnt lessons that are significant for all our churches in these times where we can feel uncertain about what God is calling us to be.

St Cuthbert's is a mission project and I've had more missional encounters here



with people outside the church than anywhere else in 30+ years of ordained ministry. There is something about being away from home, in a place where people have expectations of something spiritual happening, that means people are willing to unburden themselves and also tell their stories of struggles with faith. Sometimes it feels as if they don't have anywhere else where they can be listened to or to feel that their story is as important as those who they perceive as having greater need. For instance, we have a regular visitor who is in his 70s and is a full time carer for his

Interesting quotations ...

"I want to know God's thoughts ... the rest are details." (Albert Einstein)

"Do your best and then sleep in peace. God is awake."

"We set the sail; God makes the wind."

"The will of God will never take you to where the grace of God will not protect you."

"The task ahead of us is never as great as the power behind us."

[From *A Box of Delights* Compiled by J. John & Mark Stibbe]

dad, we can give him a space where he can put his own needs first for a few days and he can share the demands and anxieties of his role without feeling that he shouldn't be complaining. I had a precious moment at dawn on Easter Sunday praying with someone facing another course of cancer treatment, but worrying about her children who were sitting exams at the same time. These sorts of encounters are a part of daily life here – but often there is no way of knowing how the stories continue, as people journey on.

These fleeting, but profound, encounters have made me think how we can be tempted to see mission as something that must have quantifiable results. If we're not careful we're lured into measuring our sense of self worth as individuals or as churches by whether we're numerically successful. And yet what of Jesus, who consistently talked about the value God places on those who we think of as insignificant, who responded to the needs of those who felt crowded out and unimportant? We have no

knowledge of what became of many of the people Jesus encountered in the Gospels but the stories of healing and teaching show Jesus having all sorts of important encounters.

So many of our churches are good at welcoming and at listening in all sorts of creative ways. Maybe the long chat with someone at a coffee morning, seems inconsequential or you wonder whether the hard work of running activities is worth it when it never translates to new people coming to church, but what is the theology of that? Do we think that the Holy Spirit is absent from our conversations? That no seeds sown in faith will grow?

And what of the power of prayer? Every day in St Cuthbert's we pray with and for people whose stories we don't really know and who we can't physically help. They are reaching out with all sorts of needs which they leave on post-it notes on our prayer trees. We could analyse what is going on when people leave prayer requests and worry

that is about folk religion rather than faith, but I prefer to believe that their prayers and our honouring of them, are all part of bringing people into the eternal divine conversation where God is a constant presence of love. What place does prayer have in our churches? What opportunities can we create for our communities to participate in the divine conversation without feeling that they must pass some entry requirements first? A final lesson comes from those who come to stay in the Bothy and those church groups that use the Centre who speak of the joy of just being, with no demands placed upon them. I sometimes feel that we have forgotten that God wants us to enjoy life! Too often when we meet as churches our agendas are so full of things to do that we don't spend too much time enjoying God. Whatever our role in the church we can get very tired of simply keeping the show on the road. When Jesus came to offer us life in all its fullness I don't think he was calling us to packed diaries with no time to digest the good gifts he

offers to us so freely. Jesus modelled to us the need to take time out and be still, to deepen our relationships with each other and with God. Holy Island is different from many retreat locations – there is no cloistered monastic silence here, especially in the height of the holiday season, but I have found myself encouraging visitors not to feel that being on retreat or quiet days means that all the hours of the day have to be spent in serious study or intense reflection. God's good gifts include the beauty of creation, but also ice cream or fish and chips!

It is wonderful that Northern Synod supports St Cuthbert's Centre, as a Synod we reflect the love of Christ to thousands a year in ways that cannot be measured, but in which God is at work. This may be a unique situation, but the lessons learned about valuing seemingly insignificant encounters, about the importance of prayer, and about God's call to us to enjoy fullness of life are timeless ones for us all.

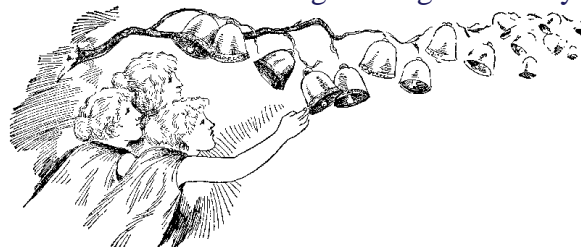
Christmas Chimes - A Fictional Short Story by Agnes Taylor Ketchum & Ida M. Jorgensen

Sweetly through the night, comes the distant chime of bells,
Hark, and hear the story that their joyous pealing tells;
Like the song of angels, to us mortals given,
Comes the silver music, sounding through the star-crowned Heav'n.

List! The happy music makes all nature sound,
Hear the answering hill-tops in echo sweet resound;
'Tis of One they sing, One of lowly birth,
Who left a crown of glory, and came to sinful earth.

Now they tell the tale of shepherds from afar,
Watching through the dark night to see the glittering star;
Now they tell the story, of the wondrous love
Of Him, who lived and suffered, the Great King above.

Chime, ye bells of Heav'n, o'er the sleeping earth,
Let your tongues sing out the story of the heavenly birth;
Chime throughout the long night, nor cease your joyful lay,
Chime until the awaking of the glorious day.





Durham Lumiere

“End over End” by Lucy McDonnell. UK



The Very Revd. John Christie, former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and a regular presenter of “Thought for the Day” on BBC Scotland, was guest preacher at Waddington Street URC Durham the Sunday of Lumiere Weekend.

John had been to visit some of the illumination sites and came across “End over End,” a giant rainbow toy slinky which appeared to tumble and disappear into the shadows. The slinky is formed of many moving rainbow colours.

From time to time we see rainbows in their full vivid colours, explained John, but more often than not we see rainbows partially concealed by rain clouds, we see them broken, piece by piece, when they glow dimly, sometimes we cannot see all of the many colours.

John referred to a hymn we were about to sing “O love that wilt not let me go” by the blind minister Revd. Dr. George Matheson (1842 -1906).

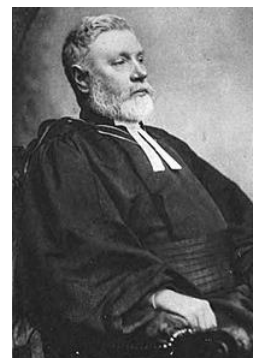
John explained that the hymn was written on the evening of George Matheson’s sister’s marriage. Years before he had been engaged until his fiancée learned he was going blind and that there was nothing the doctors could do. She told him she could not go through life with a blind man.

George went blind while studying for the ministry and his sister had been the one to care for him but now she was going away to be married. He was now 40 years old and his sister’s marriage was a fresh reminder of his own heart break. It was in the midst of these circumstances and intense sadness that the Lord gave Matheson this hymn which he said he wrote in 5 minutes.

As this hymn reveals, it was his faith in God that kept him going through the adversities that he suffered. He believed that God’s love would not let him go - and that God’s light would follow him all his way - and that God’s joy would seek him through his pain - and that faith made all the difference.

**“I trace the rainbow thro' the rain,
and feel the promise is not vain
that morn shall tearless be.”**

Ray Anglesea



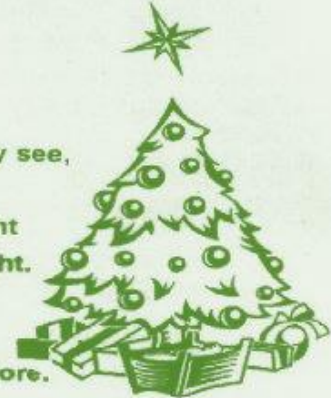
Link to article on George Matheson https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Matheson

God's Christmas Tree



Some people, when a Christmas tree they see,
may only think it's just a tree
with shining lights and a star so bright
and pretty colors that gleam in the night.

But to me it's so much more
than lights and stars and ornaments galore.
For when a Christmas tree I see,
this is what it means to me:



At the top is a star shining so bright,
like the one that shone that first Christmas night,
or an Angel, like those who to the shepherds did sing
"Glory to God..." for the newborn King.

The tree, made of wood, with its branches spread wide,
is like the cross upon which our Saviour died.
It's color, evergreen, means life everlasting
which can be yours if you will just ask Him.



It's lights, shining so pretty and bright,
are like "the Light of the World", God's Son, Jesus Christ.
Like pieces of tinsel, too many to count,
are God's unending mercies—they freely abound.



The ornaments are a bright crimson red
like great drops of blood that for you He shed.
Garland, gracefully wrapped around the tree,
is like God's grace which wraps you and me.

The gifts under the tree are as nice as can be,
but the greatest gift ever is Jesus, you see,
for He came to this earth to die on a tree
so you and I from sin might be free.



So give Him your heart and happy you will be
that His gift of life has made you free.
How pretty are these wonderful trees,
but none are as beautiful as God's Christmas Tree.



Merry Christmas!!

Elizabeth Gill

May peace break into your home and may thieves come to steal your debts.
May the pockets of your jeans become a magnet for £100 notes.
May love stick to your face like Vaseline and may laughter assault your lips!
May happiness slap you across the face and may your tears be those of joy
May the problems you had, forget your home address!
In simple words ... *May 2020 be the best year of your life.*

ROTAS - SUNDAYS - PREACHERS – DECEMBER 2019 AND JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020

DECEMBER 2019	1st Revd Ruth Crofton	8th Revd John Durell COMMUNION	15th Revd Alan Middleton	22nd Pauline James	29th Revd John Durell
JANUARY 2020	5th Richard Phua	12th Deacon Jane Middleton	19th Mrs. Barbara Ledger	26th Mrs. Maranny Jones	
FEBRUARY 2020	2nd Soo Illingworth	9th Revd Robert Fisher	16th Pauline James	23rd Revd Dr. Matthew Previtt	

Tuesday 24th December - Christmas Eve - 6.30 p.m. (mince pies/tea/coffee)

Revd. Ruth Crofton/Elders

Wednesday 25th December – Christmas Day – Service 10.00 a.m. Revd. Ruth Crofton

Sunday 29th December – Revd. John Durell – joint service with Durham/Gateshead Church Group.

ELDERS AND DOOR DUTIES – DECEMBER 2019 AND JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2020

DECEMBER 2019	1st	Mrs. H. Cockburn	Mr. & Mrs. L. Thomson
	8th	Mrs. D. Jackson	Mr. S. Ogilvie
	15th	Mr. R. Todd	Mrs. H. Todd
	22nd	Mrs. J. Sarsfield	Mrs. H. Cockburn
	29th	Mr. S. Ogilvie	Mr. M. Reay
JANUARY 2020	5th	Mrs. Y. Melville	Mrs. W. Surtees
	12th	Mrs. K. Clasper	Miss B. Tinsley
	19th	Mr. D. Shirer	Mrs. K. Clasper
	26th	Mrs. J. Thornborrow	Mr. & Mrs. L. Thomson
FEBRUARY 2020	2nd	Mrs. H. Cockburn	Mr. S. Ogilvie
	9th	Mrs. D. Jackson	Mrs. H. Cockburn
	16th	Mr. R. Todd	Mrs. H. Todd
	23rd	Mrs. J. Sarsfield	Mr. M. Reay

If in doubt about your duties any Sunday, please check the list on the Vestibule notice board.

Please remember – You are responsible for arranging your own replacement.

ELDERS' MEETINGS (1st Wednesday of month) at 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY 4th December 2019

There is no Elders' Meeting scheduled at present for January 2020 but this could change.

PROPERTY COMMITTEE (usually 3rd MONDAY of month) at 2 p.m.

But meet as arranged between the Committee Members.



FLOWER ROTA - SUPERVISOR each month is Mrs. J. Graham

December 2019

1st - Advent Ring
8th - Advent Ring
15th - Advent Ring
22nd - Advent Ring
29th - **VACANCY**

January 2020

5th - Mrs. Y. Melville
12th - Mrs. Janet Sarsfield
19th - Mrs. Janet Sarsfield
26th - Mrs. Janet Sarsfield



COFFEE ROTA December 2019 and January 2020

December 2019

1st Yvonne Melville, Jean Graham
8th Kathleen Casper, Barbara Tinsley
15th Win Surtees, Kath Ogilvie
22nd Helen Cockburn, Lucille Thomson
29th Fred Robinson

January 2020

5th Fiona Bowater, Malcolm Reay
12th Janet Thornborrow, Judy Banister
19th Heather Todd, Margaret Munro
26th Yvonne Melville, Jean Graham

Please decide and agree on who is responsible for bringing the milk.

You are responsible for arranging your own replacement.

LET IN THE LIGHT

‘Can I disturb you now?’ – the electrician wanting to instal a new night storage heater in my office, the grand name for our box room. So we pushed the filing cabinet into the only available corner, by the window. It prevented me having the large window I wanted and was a genuine blot in the room. Eventually I had to move it! The conference on re-siting was long and tortuous; but eventually, with some thought and physical effort, we did what we had said was impossible – re-sited the filing cabinet.

Immediately more light came into the room. It had been blocking a very small part of the window, but it was enough to create a blackness in the room. Now I sit here with the full natural light given by the window streaming in on me, and on my work. In reality the effort wasn’t that much after all.



Is there something blocking the sunlight from your life – a family dispute, a row with the neighbours, a falling out over something small at church or club or work?

You might be surprised to find how small the effort would be to resolve it; an outstretched hand, a smile, a few kind words, and you’ll let the light back in your life.

Jesus said, ‘love your neighbour as yourself’, but first you need to love yourself. And a little extra light might help you do that. Then loving your neighbour will come a lot easier.

[Anna McLeay]

Our Prayer

God of the year that lies behind us,
Lord of the years that stretch before,
Weaver of all the ties that bind us,
Keeper and King of the Open Door.

Grant us hope and a courage glowing
White and pure as the stars above.
Grant us faith in a full stream flowing
Down from the heights of Thy changeless love.

Out of the ruins of doubt and sorrow,
Out of the ashes of pain and tears,
Help us to fashion a great tomorrow,
Free from the anguish of blighting fears.

Build with us, lest our great walls crumble,
Broken stone upon useless day;
Walk with us, lest our feet stumble,
Grove, falter, or lose the way.

All through the seasons of sowing and reaping,
All through the harvest of song and tears,
Hold us close in Thy tender keeping,
O Maker of all our New Years.

Amen

Ralph Samuel Ervin

